

2013

# A Comparative Rhetorical Analysis of Narratives of Homelessness in Canada as Represented in the National Press

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## Recommended Citation

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**A Comparative Rhetorical Analysis of Narratives  
of Homelessness in Canada as Represented in the  
National Press**

**Major Research Paper**

**By Stacey Daoust**

**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
The Masters of Arts in  
Cultural Analysis and Social Theory**

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**Canada**

**November 2013**

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**Introduction:**

Canada is a nation that is rich with many natural resources, making it a country that is economically strong within the global sphere. Being a prosperous and stable country means that Canada prides itself on being able to provide its citizens with benefits and assistance, creating a high standard of living. While many Canadians experience the various luxuries that come with living in a first world nation, this is not the case for everyone that calls this country home. It is estimated that two to three hundred thousand Canadians make up Canada's homeless population. For an industrialized country with a relatively small population, of only 35 million, this statistic is staggering. To put this figure into perspective, at the time of the 2011 census the population of Kitchener, Ontario was 219,153. That same census, recorded 98,780 individuals and families living in Waterloo, Ontario. When combined, these two thriving cities represent the number of homeless living within Canada. This figure becomes even more shocking, when it is taken into account that it has only been fairly recently that homelessness has even begun to exist as a concept, in part of this country's long history. In less than thirty years, Canada's homeless population has evolved from almost nonexistent to becoming a full-fledged social crisis. This has resulted in over 150,000 Canadians every year being left with no other option than to use homeless shelters (Richter et al 620). What this figure fails to highlight and does not disclose, is the number of Canadians that comprise what experts on homelessness have termed, the "hidden homeless". These are the individuals who do not frequent shelters but instead become what are known as rough sleepers. They rely on the kindness of friends, family, and strangers for a place to stay, and when this no longer becomes an option they seek refuge in the streets, parks and abandoned buildings.

With the number of homeless in Canada continuing to increase at unprecedented rates it is important to understand who the individuals are that make up this growing population. Before the 1980s, when homelessness was a fairly uncommon occurrence, those that found themselves without a permanent dwelling were largely single male adults (Gaetz 21). Today, there is not just one

particular demographic to identify this population, but rather the category of “homeless” has shifted to include men, women, and children of all ages and all socio-economic circumstances. In only three decades, this group has grown so dramatically while encompassing Canadians from all socio-economic classes, that there is no telling who may be at risk to face homelessness. This makes the notion of becoming homeless all the more threatening and renders the Canadian population vulnerable to the possibility of ending up homeless.

It is equally important to note that the rise of homelessness coincides with the adoption of neoliberal ideology. Additionally, the increase in numbers is shown to have a direct correlation to the hegemonic discourse that is perpetuated by neoliberal constructs. The foundation of neoliberal ideology as David Harvey outlines is based around the notion of “freedom”, as a means to accumulate wealth and better the nation as a whole. It is the idea that individual freedoms are achieved by creating freedom of the market (Harvey 7). This suggests, that in order to obtain the neoliberal desired “freedom”, the state must move towards deregulated markets, privatization, and a lean, efficient state. In shifting from the previous model of the Keynesian welfare state and adopting the conceptual ideals of neoliberalism, the previous common sense of liberal, representative democratic societies of the West, has been disrupted in favour of the individual.

With these practices being implemented through structural modifications and government policies within Canada, the former ideals have become eroded. Part of this erosion means that the funding for social programs, which are there to help and support those living on the streets, or those close to becoming homeless, have been severely depleted. The rise of neoliberalism and its power to influence dominant ideology has also meant a significant shift in the way the state intervenes. Issues that were once viewed as the responsibility of the nation, as a means to support the wellbeing of its citizens, have been replaced with the notion that one’s circumstance is the result of an individual’s faults and failures. This leaves the state free to wash its hands clean of any responsibility. As the gap in social inequality continues to grow and the number of homeless

dramatically increases, it is only a matter of time before the weakened structure buckles under the pressure and collapses in on itself, leaving an even greater disaster in its wake.

One of the ways in which the hegemonic discourse of neoliberal ideology became hegemonic amongst the Canadian population was through the use of media. In the West, we have become dependent on the various forms of media as a source of information and news regarding events and issues in our own country and across the globe. Understanding the central role of media and for the purpose of this project, specifically newspapers, is essential as they are integral in influencing the beliefs and notions formed by their audiences. Having spent time myself volunteering with the homeless and having had the opportunity to listen to their stories, I believe that these individuals who comprise this growing population also make up Canada's most vulnerable and undervalued. For this reason, it will be the aim of this research project to analyze newspapers, in order to determine the ways in which language, vocabulary, and discourse have the ability to shape and define the lives of these marginalized groups, while simultaneously reducing them to little more than disposable bodies.

The main question that will be used as the basis of exploration for this project is: how do the narratives found in newspaper articles create notions of the "worthy" and "unworthy" homeless? It is also important for a greater understanding of how this is achieved to ask, how do these stereotypes and representations become presented to society to create the current dismal conditions in which the homeless populations must endure? Building upon these questions, one must ask why it is that society is still so hesitant to respond in a positive manner to the plight of this group? Furthermore, the question what is it that makes the housed population so uncomfortable with the notion of homelessness requires consideration. By addressing these questions, it will be the aim of this research, to explore how language may act as a contributing factor to how the homeless are being presented and how that in turn, it may be impacting the rest of society's perception and willingness to act.

There has been research completed on examining the conditions of

homelessness; while separately, the different facets of media has also been analyzed. It can be noted, however, that there has been a lack of attention focusing on the connection between these two topics. Furthermore, there is a distinct gap in research on the representations portrayed in newspapers and the repercussions because of these figures. Consequences of these stereotypical representations include, allowing the homeless to be further victimized as a marginalized group, and for the rest of society to become complacent with this behaviour. This correlation may have been overlooked as the majority of the work that has been completed is focused on the journalists who write the articles for the newspapers. Another area of study that exists on this topic is on the themes and reasons for the stories depicting the homeless. While other projects examining homelessness in newsprint media have used newspapers distributed across the country as a sample. As an aim of this project however, I believe it is important to narrow down the size of scope I have to work with, in order to efficiently analyze the findings. The discussion in this project is essential because only once one can distinguish how these representations are being disseminated and reinforced, then that is when society can work towards eliminating homelessness.

### **Literature Review:**

Growing up in what would be considered a “middle-class family”, whenever I asked my parents for a material item, I was often met by my father with the question, “is it a want, or a need?”. If it was a “want”, and the majority of the time it was, I received the answer, “it’s good to want”. Without directly telling me no, this meant that I was to save my money, or was to wait for a special occasion. Like many children, it took time for me to realize that the response from my father was not his way of being unfair. Rather, it was his way of teaching me, among other things, the difference between “wanting” and “needing”. For many today, if they never have to make that distinction, the lines between “wanting” and “needing” can become blurred. But what happens to those whose “needs” become the various basic necessities one requires to survive, such as food,

shelter, or health care. What if one's "needs" become so great that "wanting" is not even an option? What if it becomes a question of, "I need to eat, but I also need a roof over my head"? How is it that in a society as wealthy as Canada, there are still those individuals who are unable to fulfill their "needs"?

Homelessness is not an issue that occurs overnight. Unfortunately, it is a small but sad reality of a much larger picture. For this reason, I believe it is important to examine not just the literature on homelessness, but also on poverty, for a greater understanding of where homelessness and common understandings of homelessness stem from.

### Manufacturing Poverty

While the main focus of this project is on the homeless, it is first essential to place homelessness in a larger sociological context, thus allowing for a more comprehensive approach to the subject. Research has shown, that homelessness is often intricately linked to poverty (Gaetz 22, Khandor & Mason 10). Living in poverty means making tough decisions between daily necessities and as a result, one is often stretched beyond their means. Works, such as *Poor-Bashing: The Politics of Exchange* by Jean Swanson, and *Poverty, Regulation & Social Justice: Readings on the Criminalization of Poverty*, edited by Diane Crocker & Val Marie Johnson, emphasize that those who experience poverty, regularly fall victim to a gross misuse of power, by those who comprise the dominant social economic group. Each of these works, take on a different approach to understanding how this occurs. In her book, Swanson focuses largely on language and the perceptions of the poor that these words help to create. She argues:

In asking wrong questions about poverty, the think-tanks have revived or invented a vocabulary about poverty which they pump into government bureaucracy, the media, and politicians' mouths. The problem is, you can't use this vocabulary without blaming the poor for poverty (72).

It is important to note, that after identifying how this vocabulary is created, Swanson examines how the media and politicians use these selected terms to



participate in “poor-bashing”. To do this, she outlines numerous examples from the early 1990s from across the country and found in different publications.

These examples illustrate how those who collect welfare are presented as taking advantage of taxpayers. Swanson states:

The lying, vicious, and distorted media stories made receiving welfare or UI seem like a crime. The put-a-human-face-on-poverty stories may not have intended to denigrate people who were poor, but they did help to make poverty an individual, not a societal issue, and kept the public from seeing the laws that caused poverty and the people who benefited from those laws (105).

What her work ultimately indicates, as is expressed with this quotation, is that although the poor are portrayed as being criminal or of immoral character, in contrast to the wealthy or middle class, it is in fact top socio-economic groups that are responsible for exploiting those with limited economic resources.

In her work, Swanson also compiles a list of common “myths” associated with the poor, as a means to expose how society contributes to “poor-bashing”. The myths which she draws upon include believing: “poverty doesn’t affect me”, welfare is a way of life passed on through generations”, “too many people are on welfare”, “our country can’t afford welfare”, “people make wrong choices and should live with them” as well as “people want to live on the street” (Swanson 176-7). The concept of “myth” that Swanson is drawing upon in her work is by defining myths as ideas and notions that people believe to be true, even though they do not originate from factual information. What Swanson illustrates through her writing is that by ignoring the truths of poverty and disseminating ill-founded stereotypes, these myths work to reinforce these notions and further perpetuate them as “facts”.

The pieces found in Crocker and Johnson’s book differ from Swanson’s work, in that they address how policy and legislation is a contributing factor to blame for the marginalization, of those suffering from poverty. This collection of work highlights the different acts and by-laws enforced throughout Canada, in various provinces. What becomes evident is that the state and private corporations are wielding an excessive amount of power, over those found on the

bottom rungs of the socio-economic ladder. This becomes evident in the article by Jeanne Fay, in which she outlines the implications of what is called, “man-in-the-house” rule. This out of date regulation stipulates, that a woman who lives with a man, cannot receive welfare in her own right (Fay 108). This has huge repercussions for single-mother-households, who often occupy the lowest level of poverty and are most at risk for homelessness. What this article and others, in this book argue is that the movement and actions of individuals living in poverty become severely limited by policies and legislation. These laws and stipulations are often put in place and enforced as a means to protect the “general public” from the individuals that these laws work to regulate. While the approaches found in Swanson’s as well as Crocker and Johnson’s books differ, it is significant to note, that at the core of these studies is the notion that they are trying to combat the misconceptions that society has of poverty. This is a misconception that is perpetuated and reiterated by mainstream media outlets.

Articles by Lisa Gring-Pemble, pertaining to welfare policy and its recipients, will also inform the basis of my research on homelessness. In one of her pieces, Gring-Pemble uses a rhetorical analysis of welfare reform. This is done to demonstrate how language and vocabulary with the help of narrative, work to legitimize particular public voices over others. Her work reveals how narratives are used to construct perceptions of individuals as a means to categorize groups. Gring-Pemble also uses the method of rhetorical analysis to expose how the hearings and debates, which lead to the highly controversial 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, in the United States, produced depictions of families on welfare. This then led to legislation being enacted favouring the traditional “nuclear family”. She argues, “depictive forms function as brush strokes in painting a vivid portrait of the typical welfare recipient and welfare family that serves as the basis for policy formation in the context of a public moral argument” (Gring-Pemble 343). It is by using a rhetorical analysis, that these two works by Gring-Pemble highlight how language and vocabulary may be manipulated by those with power, as a way to ensure that families who become trapped in poverty may never climb out.

It is important to include a context of poverty while examining homelessness because of how intertwined these two subjects are. Those who find themselves homeless, most often face the most severe degree of poverty. These are the individuals whose “needs” greatly outweigh their “wants”. This means that when it comes to the marginalization of poverty, those experiencing homelessness are not only the most marginalized but are rendered the most vulnerable. Drawing on the works in the Crocker and Johnson collection, as well as from Swanson and Gring-Pemble, I will be able to spend time examining how homelessness, as one particular aspect of poverty, is shaped by the language and vocabulary used in its representations in newspapers and their websites.

### Representations of the Homeless

In the *2007 Street Health Report*, one survey respondent stated, “Just the way they talk to you ... they look down on you and most of the time they are rude. I’ve stopped going to places because I know how they’re gonna react” (Khandor & Mason 42). In this quotation the respondent is revealing two important things. First, they are sharing how others perceive the homeless and their own personal reactions because of these perceptions. Secondly, they disclose how they have altered their life, as a means to accommodate these responses. What is unique about this report is that the research gathered is a direct reflection of the opinions and ideas of the homeless. This is similar to work done by Barbara Schneider, in which she does a content analysis on a blog belonging to that of a man living on the streets while battling addiction. What Schneider discovers with her work, is that through this blog the participant is able to cast off the perceptions others have imposed on him, as he exercises power over his own perception. Schneider traces the progression this man has, as he constructs his image for his readers and online audience using carefully crafted language and vocabulary.

There has also been work done on the representations of homelessness by Theresa Rogers and Elizabeth Marshall, and Moira Calder et al. What this research has shown is that the media plays a huge part in how representations of the homeless get disseminated to the rest of society. The work by Rogers and

Marshall, like that of Schneider also focuses on representations of the self and how that can be greatly impacted by external influences. It is important to note, however, that the research by Calder et al. focuses on the framing of homelessness in media and how that can generate particular stereotypes. The analyses of these works are concentrated on the representations that are created, rather than how these representations affect the individual. What is not addressed however, is how it is that these representations get produced as portraying either the “worthy” or the “unworthy” homeless. Furthermore, how these notions get taken up by society, as a means to categorize and alienate particular groups, is also missing from this analysis. I would also like to comment on the fact that aside from the work mentioned here, there is little written about the representations of homelessness in the Canadian media. It is by identifying the key words and phrases found in newspaper articles concentrating on the homeless and homelessness issues that I hope to be able to fill in the gap in the existing literature.

### Media & Homelessness

In the book, *Missing News*, by Robert Hackett and Richard Gruneau, it is outlined how Canadian news becomes filtered, and through the process stories get omitted or misrepresented. These stories fall into what the authors call “blindspots”. The central argument of this work, as in the work of Larry Patriquin, is the notion that what the media produce for readers is heavily influenced by several factors. These factors include language and vocabulary, a journalist’s perspective and a newspaper’s political stance. It is significant to note that while there is a fairly substantial amount of work produced on homelessness, there is not as much produced directly linking homelessness and the media. One piece that does make this connection is the work of Richter et al. What is significant about this work is that it focuses on multiple newspaper sources over an extended period of time, in which they collect articles to perform a content analysis. Work by Barbara Schneider also examines homelessness in the news, but from a much different approach. Schneider examines the reporting aspect of

newspapers to focus on the perspective of who it is that is responsible for the writing and their reasons for doing so. What these works indicate once more, is that there is a gap in the existing literature. For this project, I will be building on these approaches, while combining their frameworks with a theoretical basis as a means to examine who is taking part in writing about homelessness in the newspaper, and what it is that they are saying. These findings will aim to connect homelessness to the media as a way to begin to understand how the media contributes to the unfavourable and unfathomable conditions for those living on the streets.

### **Theoretical Framework:**

When the topic of my research comes up in conversation with friends, family and acquaintances, the reaction to my work is always followed by the same sympathetic nod of approval and affirmation that the work I am choosing to investigate is an important and worthy cause for exploration. More often than not, however, when the topic of the homeless or homelessness arises in casual conversation, through my daily encounters and unrelated to my research project, the response from those engaging in this conversation is not always as positive and open minded to the plight of this group. It is because of these conflicting reactions to the same topic, depending on the context of the conversation, that I believe it would be most beneficial to draw upon the works of Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer* and Wendy Brown's *Regulating Aversion* to provide a theoretical framework. It can be noted that there is a common theme at the heart and root of the arguments presented in the works of Agamben and Brown. Both of these pieces seek to explore the conditions of groups within society that experience extreme marginalization from the dominant population. How these ostracized individuals, such as the homeless, become singled out as "Other" is an important element in these works.

### “Tolerating versus Eradicating Homelessness”

In Canada as a westernized society, one is taught one must tolerate differences between individuals and groups. By inscribing “tolerance” into the vocabulary of a country as a fundamental concept rather than a term, such as equality, power sharing, or emancipation, this structure fosters and prescribes a tension, which in some cases causes conflict between those who are doing the “tolerating” and those who are merely being “tolerated” (Brown 150). Knowing that the idea of tolerance is perpetuated through Canadian culture reinforces and provides insight, as to explain the varied responses I have encountered in conversations about the homeless, of Canada, being a “tolerant nation,” however, only works to maintain the status quo. It does not work to create a sense of acceptance between those with differences and furthermore in the case of the homeless, the act of tolerating, does not provide a strategy in how to resolve the issue of homelessness. It is known that one of the prominent causes of homelessness has been a direct result of lack of affordable housing and funding for social programs. Yet, the resources that are being allotted are not great enough to adequately address the situation, but only allow for emergency services, such as temporary shelters and drop-in centers, to be established. In the greater picture pertaining to eradicating the issue of homelessness, these measures only provide a short-term solution. As Brown discusses in her analysis of tolerance, to tolerate others is simply an act of management. There is no opportunity for resolution or transcendence; it offers only a means of coping with the presence of those who have been categorized as the “undesirable” (Brown 25).

For the homeless living in Canada, being merely tolerated is an all too familiar concept. Through monitoring the way space is used and by whom, tolerance is disseminated through society. Architectural means such as mesh and wire fences, steel and concrete walls, or borders enforced by electricity are erected to create boundaries. Gated communities are used to lock privilege and wealth in, while those who do not fall into that category remain on the outside only to look in (Wanzel 95). Public space, which is intended for use by all, is

being regulated just as strictly. The “Broken Windows” theory, which became popular in the 1990s, was built on the idea that activities deemed as “nuisances” by society should be considered criminal offences, as they may only lead to more serious crimes being committed (Berti & Sommers 62). Berti and Sommers argue, however, that this theory provides a means to talk about poverty and homelessness successfully, without actually having to deal with the structural and institutional causes, which have generated these conditions (64). As a result the homeless and homelessness is rendered a problem of public order, “which can be treated through the questions of management and regulation rather than political intervention” (Berti & Sommers 64). This only works to further create the distinction between those marginalized, while leaving one to question who is included in the meaning of “all” when it comes to the notion of public space. Why are some groups permitted to move about freely, while other groups’ actions are only tolerated?

In her discussion on tolerance Brown also articulates how, “[m]arked identities, ranging from ‘black’ to ‘lesbian’ to ‘Jew’, are understood to issue from a core truth that generate certain beliefs, practices, and experiences of the world” (42). One can include “homeless” to this notion of marked identities. In her work, Jean Swanson reiterates this concept by stating:

Too often these so-called descriptions of the behaviour and beliefs of people who are poor are themselves nothing but poor-bashing. To think about poverty in a way that doesn’t blame people who are poor, we have to use language that doesn’t suggest they are to blame (3).

What these poor-bashing descriptions presumes is that everyone who falls under the category of “homeless”, can now be lumped into sharing the same characteristics and same experiences of what homelessness means. This becomes problematic because for everyone “homelessness” means something different. Brown further warns that, “Built as sites of identitarian truth that differ fundamentally from the truth of others, respective identities cancel out one another’s truths, threatening or canceling one another’s orthodoxies or

absolutes—and thus, in the case of identity, threatening one another as persons (42). By placing people in categories and attaching marked identities, such as “homeless” or “poor”, these individuals are losing their own identities and swapping them for what society has decided better represents this group as a whole. People can no longer see the homeless as a group made up of individuals with their own unique identities, but rather only as they believe them to be based on a particular label or category assigned outside of the individuals and group themselves. This also becomes dangerous when those with no home become marked by this identity and are positioned as “oppositional” to the housed population; this renders the people in this group marginalized and vulnerable to the dominant population.

By applying the concepts of tolerance as discussed by Brown and highlighted in this section as a basis of a partial framework, to the findings of my research I will unpack how the language and vocabulary of the dominant group create these marked identities. It will be important to evaluate what “core truths” seem to stem from the category of “the homeless” and further marginalize them as the “deserving” or “undeserving”. Once it becomes understood how language and vocabulary foster this sense of tolerance for the “Other”, then steps may be taken to examine how to move past tolerance to a country that promotes “acceptance” or “equality”.

### “The Homeless as a Modern *Homo Sacer*”

Through the use of newspaper articles, I want to also explore how it is that language, vocabulary, and discourse have facilitated the construction of the homeless as the equivalent of the modern day *homo sacer*. This figure, which is taken from archaic Roman law, is described as “one whom the people have judged on account of a crime. It is not permitted to sacrifice this man, yet he who kills him will not be condemned for homicide” (Agamben 71). According to the first tribunitian law, if someone kills one who is deemed sacred, it will not be considered a homicide; for this reason, it became customary for the bad or impure to be called sacred (Agamben 71). Since the adoption of neoliberal



ideology in the 1980s, policies and practices have been working against the homeless, restricting their mobility and access to those things they need to survive. It has progressed to the point where it is now essentially a “crime” to be homeless, making them according to tradition “sacred”. This becomes highly problematic because, as Berti and Sommers suggest, “If legislation and political ordering are allowed to render the poor and marginalized out of public sight, then being out of mind may quickly follow” (67). As a marginalized group, the homeless have very little power, and it is their wants and needs that are being ignored. If the state of homelessness continues to deteriorate in this manner, it begs the question, what next? How will these individuals continue to survive if no one is fighting for them?

Those who are homeless occupy a precarious position as the homo sacer. As Agamben outlines the homo sacer, is an individual who is set outside human jurisdiction without being brought into the realm of divine law (82). This is the idea of inclusion/exclusion and he goes on to state, “the life of the bandit is the life of the *loup garou*, the werewolf, who is precisely *neither man nor beast*, and who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither” (Agamben 105). Someone who is homeless often finds that they occupy this space; they are included in Canadian society as a whole, but realize that in the current system they are not afforded all the rights and privileges as everyone else. Canadians pride themselves on their health care system and access to medical care; however, the *2007 Street Health Report* identified that 28% of respondents taking part in the survey had been turned away or refused health care in the previous year (Khandor 40). The reason for this refusal was cited as not having a Canadian health card, which is difficult to obtain when you do not have a fixed address. To ensure one has the proper identification remains challenging and at times altogether frustrating because of the requirements necessary to obtain such identification. This includes not only having a fixed address to list on forms, but also the tedious time consuming procedures and costs that come with filling in the proper forms. The homeless are included in their right to access Canada’s health care system, yet they are excluded from accessing the services; as they

are unable to navigate the proper procedures to obtain the required documentation. This is just one way that the homeless are included while simultaneously being excluded.

It is also essential to note that every society is responsible for deciding whom it is that becomes the “undesirable” or who it is that will become “sacred”. This is extremely problematic and dangerous because as Agamben warns, “If it is the sovereign who has the power to decide which life may be killed without the commission of homicide, in the age of biopolitics this power becomes emancipated from the state of exception and transformed into the power to decide the point at which life ceases to be politically relevant” (142). When this happens, one begins to see that life is being categorized between a “life worth living” and “life unworthy of being lived” (Agamben 142). This concept is highly problematic and all together terrifying, knowing that the state has the power to decide the value of one’s life, based on the degree of marginalization by society’s dominant structure and ideology.

Returning briefly back to my introductory anecdote above about my interactions with others and their reactions to the topic of homelessness, it is important to realize that what I was experiencing with my engagement with these individuals is a result of an affective response. Every situation triggers an emotional reaction within an individual depending on different factors, such as that person’s past experiences, their background or whether they identify as part of the dominant population or with a marginalized group such as Canada’s homeless. Because of the different influences on an individual, each affective response will vary. It is pertinent to understand how affect circulates between individuals, groups and, particularly for this project, between the housed and homeless populations. Furthermore, affect ultimately impacts how each of these groups perceive themselves and others. As stated, everything one does generates an affective response, which is why I believe it will be valuable to apply Sara Ahmed’s work on affect in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, as part of this project’s theoretical framework. In her research, Ahmed examines how the

affect one experiences through an interaction with the world and with others, works to shape bodies by either creating or dismantling boundaries and barriers. By applying Ahmed's theory of affect it will help to determine how affect created through the language and vocabulary found in newspaper articles, contributes and reinforces the unfavourable conditions of the homeless. The affects that will be primarily focused on are fear, shame, and disgust.

#### "Affective Responses to Homelessness"

To be able to effectively evaluate how an affect, such as fear, impacts those that are homeless, it is first important to understand how fear works as an affective response. When one is feeling fearful, the affect does not just come from within and travel outwards, rather fear works to create a relationship between those who are afraid and those being feared (Ahmed 63). How this relationship is created is through proximity and through the ability to re-establish distances between bodies (Ahmed 63). Creating this distance may be done as simply as crossing the street for no other reason, than to avoid the street person sitting in a doorway or on the sidewalk. Proximity is also maintained by the act of rolling the windows all the way up and locking the doors when approaching an intersection, where panhandlers and "squeegee" people are known to frequent.

In Canada it has become common that the homeless population should be those feared by the dominant housed group. This in part occurs because of stereotypes and representations that become attached to the notion of "homeless". When this word is used it evokes a past history and associations, which are signified by this term. Ahmed states that, "fear works by establishing others as fearsome insofar as they *threaten to take the self in*. Such fantasies construct the other as a danger not only to one's self as self, but to one's very life, to one's very existence as a separate being with a life of its own" (64).

In January of 2002 the Ontario Safe Streets Act came into effect. This act was then Ontario's Attorney General's, Jim Flaherty's, fulfillment of "commitment to take action about behaviour that jeopardizes the safe use of the streets" (Glasbeek 125). This new legislation would not only prohibit but would criminalize

actions deemed to be “aggressive solicitation”, “obstructing the path of the person solicited”, “continuing to solicit a person in a persistent manner” and the “solicitation of a captive audience” (Glasbeek 125). In order to rid the streets of the “undesirables”, legislators worked to paint these individuals as “fearful” to the general public. During the process, one MPP even went so far as to state: “Do I feel apprehensive when I’m approached by a squeegee person or an aggressive panhandler? I may not. But I can assure you my daughter does; I can assure you my mother does; I can assure you your wives do” (Glasbeek 127). By shifting the focus of the issue to the female population, the MPP is utilizing the notion that women need protecting and it is up to the men to ensure this protection. It is by playing on the female vulnerability, that fear is being endorsed. Furthermore, statements like these are used to make it appear that the housed population are those that are most vulnerable and at risk if preventive actions are not taken.

Not only is fear used as a tool to ensure that the legislation is passed, but once this act becomes official, it only works to incite and create a larger opposition to and fear of the homeless, by the housed population. What this legislation is essentially suggesting to the general public is the idea that the government would not pass this act, unless it perceived these actions as potentially harmful. Thus making those who commit these behaviours people to fear.

But why is it that the housed populations are so fearful of the homeless? Ahmed writes that fear “is all the more frightening given the potential loss of the object that it anticipates” (69). Given the uncertainty of the job market and the increasing rate of homelessness in Canada, it should not be surprising that many Canadians transfer their feelings of becoming homeless to the homeless themselves. Swanson reiterates this notion in her work: “Many of the people I talked to observed that it is often those who are most at risk of needing welfare in the future who carry around a lot of society’s hatred for people who already receive it” (11). This hatred stems from the affective response of “fear” that they too will be unable to continue a fine balancing act and once the stumbling begins, they will fall from poverty to having next to nothing to call their own. Seeing the

homeless in the streets is a constant reminder that the threat of homelessness is real and that it could happen to anyone.

Fear not only is established through proximity of bodies, but fear also works to shape the bodies it inhabits. When one is afraid they shrink back and retreat from the world with the desire to avoid that which one is fearful of (Ahmed 69). In doing so, fear works to contain some bodies so that they take up less space (Ahmed 69). Applying this notion to the homeless, one can see how fear resides in these individuals by simply reading their body language. Berti and Sommers write:

the most prevalent perceived threats among the homeless were attributed to the actions of the gentrified public, including fear of drunken suburban youth beating them up for fun, judgmental community members, and police behaviour. In addition, the homeless have no private space to retreat to, no option of staying home in order to avoid these concerns (71).

This fear leaves the homeless with no choice but to make themselves as invisible as possible, curling and hunching their bodies in doorways, alleys, and abandoned buildings, as they attempt to remain unseen by the public eye.

When their presence is detected, often the affective response of fear is only intensified. As Ahmed puts it: “The more we don’t know what or who it is we fear *the more the world becomes fearsome*” (69). Not knowing who is trustworthy leaves the homeless in a vulnerable state. Berti and Sommers point out that “the primary reason that the homeless cited for not reporting their victimization was the perception that it would do no good and would not be taken seriously. Although the law views itself and presents itself as an equal force for justice, treating all equally, the reality is not so simple” (71). For the homeless living in Canada, fear is something that is experienced every day. From trying to discern who may be trusted to not knowing if they will have shelter for the night or a meal to eat, fear inhabits the bodies of Canada’s homeless leaving them feeling crumpled and disheartened.

Ahmed describes shame as an intense and painful sensation that is bound

up with how it is the self feels about itself and the response it has on the body (103). With the hegemonic discourse supporting neoliberal ideology and perpetuating the idea that individuals are responsible for their own fate—especially for their shortcomings and failures, it is not unusual that shame is an affective response that is common among the homeless population in Canada. In her work, Ahmed warns that in “experiences of shame, the ‘bad feeling’ is attributed to oneself, rather than to an object or other” (104), this often results in the individual looking to take cover and shrink away from whatever has caused this affective reaction. In an interview with Travis Smiley and Cornel West, one respondent expressed the shame he felt for losing everything: “It’s hard to see myself as a contributing member of society or a good provider now. My pride, my sense of manhood has nearly been destroyed, man” (32). When people are forced to experience extreme shame, such as the state of being homeless in a country where wealth is seemingly everywhere, they begin to turn against themselves to the point where it eats away at the person they once were. For this reason it is important to examine which words and phrases found in the media are used to elicit such a deep seeded sense of shame. Ahmed’s work on shame will assist in understanding how newspaper articles insinuate that the homeless are to blame for their circumstance, rather than failures and not that of the political economic system of Canada.

Disgust, like shame and fear, is an affect that causes the body to react by reshaping and creating boundaries. When one feels disgust, the body pulls away from the undesirable object, almost involuntarily, as if the body was thinking on behalf of the subject (Ahmed 84). Disgust, however, is not that simple; rather it is an ambivalent affect, which involves a desire or an attraction towards the very objects that are felt to be repugnant (Ahmed 84). When it comes to marginalized groups, such as the homeless, disgust towards these individuals is manifested through the actions of the dominant group. People who find the homeless off-putting and insulting to their taste may cross the street and roll their windows up. Yet, they cannot help but watch these individuals from the corner of their eye,

although they are careful not to make direct eye contact with them. After all, to be disgusted is to be affected by that which one has rejected (Ahmed 86). When bodies are disgusted they feel a certain rage, a rage that the object has got within a close enough proximity to sicken (Ahmed 86). As a way to manage and avoid this situation, Canadians have taken part and witnessed the sanitization of space. Through zoning processes and by-laws, the use and value of space is regulated, which allows for those in charge to dictate who is permitted to be within which areas (Wanzel 100). This ensures that those marginalized individuals whose presence threatens those of the dominant population may be monitored and ultimately removed from particular spaces. It is important to explore how the language and vocabulary is used in newspaper articles, to see how affects such as disgust become perpetuated and further reproduced by society.

**Methods:**

In their work, *The Rich and the Rest of Us: A Poverty Manifesto*, Smiley and West write:

Unless and until we rethink, re-imagine, and redefine how we confront poverty, it will never be eradicated. Unless and until we honestly tackle the greed and dissect the political, economic, and societal black holes that allow it to flourish, increasing and intractable poverty will remain (69).

One method to begin process of re-thinking how poverty is confronted is by examining the language and rhetoric that currently defines the issue. Rhetoric is the process of persuasion through the use of carefully constructed language. When used correctly, the right words have the power to incite change. They have the potential to convert an individual's opinion, or influence the mentality of the dominant group. This change, however, can be in a positive or negative manner, depending on the context of the situation. It is because of the effect words have in influencing what becomes hegemonic ideology, that this study will use a rhetorical analysis to examine Canadian newspaper articles focusing on the

homeless and homelessness. The aim of this research is to unpack how it is that notions and stereotypes become embedded into the dominant discourse as common sense. Understanding how this occurs is the first step in what Smiley and West outline as confronting poverty, and all the turmoil that is generated from this condition.

What is essential in this process is identifying the use of “loaded terms”. These are words or phrases that contain highly positive or highly negative connotations. Using loaded terms in the discussion of a topic is an attempt to convince the reader that the idea, individual, or group of people, such as the homeless, are either “bad” or “good”, “worthy” or “unworthy”. The use of loaded terms means utilizing emotionally charged language as a way to create support for a specific way of thinking (Patriquin 29). The method of rhetorical analysis will allow for loaded terms and phrases to be identified. Patterns of representations may begin to emerge and ultimately how these are presented to the general public to be explored. Rhetorical analysis will also assist in determining who becomes the voice of authority when dealing with the issue of homelessness and what kind of tone is projected. This methodological approach will contribute to my research in determining how language, vocabulary and discourse has the ability to shape and define the lives of the homeless, reducing them to disposable bodies.

Living in such a fast paced and interconnected world, Canadians rely heavily on the various forms of media to keep themselves up to date with what is occurring around them and in particular, their own country. For this reason, the rhetorical analysis completed on the topic of the homeless and homelessness will be specifically focused on Canadian newspaper articles. The newspapers selected for this project are the *National Post* and the *Toronto Star*, and the two years that are being analyzed for this project are 1999 and 2009. These newspapers are the primary focus for this research as a result of the way each publication circulates and positions themselves politically. The *Star* is Canada’s widely circulated newspaper and is viewed by Canadian standards to be “liberally” aligned (Richter et al 629). The *Post* is one of only two nationally



distributed papers in the country and is known to be conservative in the perspective it takes on news coverage (Patriquin 4). It will be interesting to note, whether or not there is a connection between the way each paper aligns itself on the political spectrum in regards to the vocabulary and language depicted in the narratives reported.

A gap of ten years has been chosen as a means to see if one can compare or trace a difference in the discourse being disseminated around the issue of homelessness. The years to be analyzed have been selected specifically for their historical significance. In 1999, Mike Harris was victorious in becoming elected to his second term as Ontario's Premier. His campaign was built on the platform around the idea of the previously explained Broken Window's theory. His party pledged that if elected, the Conservatives would get tough on street crime, making the streets a safer space for "everyone". It also was during this time in 1999 that the Safe Streets Act was introduced and implemented. The controversy this piece of legislation created, was cause for bringing the conversation of homelessness to the forefront. While all this was occurring, homelessness was being deemed a "national emergency", resulting in much focus and attention on this issue.

The articles from 2009 are as equally important to explore, as it is just one year after the beginning of the financial crisis of 2008. While the markets were continuing the struggle to recover, the reality of the situation was beginning to reveal just how immense the impact was actually going to be. Businesses fought to stay open by downsizing and restructuring, thus creating added pressure on employees. While those who were already seeking employment, faced the difficulty beginning to mount during these uncertain times. It is also important to compare how the language and vocabulary differs from 1999 to 2009, not only have the roots of neoliberalism had the chance to strengthen their hold on Canadian ideology, but the instability of the markets are having an effect on all. The coding process for this project will be divided into several steps. Not only will the articles be separated by years and by publication, but also it is critical for each article to be analyzed for specific elements. Articles that contain the search

word(s), “homeless”, “homelessness”, and “vagrancy” will be further sorted before being analyzed. They will be broken down and categorized by articles pertaining specifically to the homeless in the area of Toronto or by the homeless populations found elsewhere in Canada. Omitted from the analysis will be articles that have been initially yielded from the search, but do not directly focus on homelessness, or only focus on the homeless from outside of Canada. Once the articles are placed into the appropriate category they will be analyzed looking for this criteria:

What genre of article is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opinion piece/ reaction piece</li> <li>• Editorial</li> <li>• Feature</li> <li>• Obituary</li> <li>• Special Feature</li> <li>• Regular news- ‘hard news’</li> </ul>
Who wrote it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Columnist</li> <li>• Editor</li> <li>• Freelance Journalist/Staff Reporter</li> <li>• Member of public</li> </ul>
When was the article published	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What month was this article published</li> </ul>

The reasoning for identifying the author and what kind of article it is, allows for a sense of tone to emerge. It indicates who is becoming the voice of authority on this issue and what kind of message they are promoting. Furthermore, it is essential to the discussion of this project, to identify when these articles were being published, to get an understanding of when this rhetoric is most likely to occur. Is there a pattern to when homelessness becomes important, and/or when these ideas are disseminated?

After the articles are examined to establish the who, what, and when, it is important to code the themes that are presented in each article to help understand how rhetoric produces representations of the “worthy” and “unworthy” poor. Through the codification of themes, it may be determined if one area of

writing on homelessness is more likely than another to reinforce dominant ideology. From each year, loaded terms and phrases, will be isolated from the applicable articles to recognize patterns of representations and stereotypes. They will then be placed in the appropriate heading of whether they produce images of the “worthy” or the “unworthy” homeless, or if it is a negative or positive way of talking about the issue of homelessness. First, however, articles must be properly separated by content; the criteria used to analyze and categorize articles for their themes will be:

Economic Contributors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government spending/cutbacks</li> <li>• Economic factors – job loss/creation, minimum wage, recession</li> </ul>
Housing Related Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable housing requirements</li> <li>• Emergency shelters – building, maintenance, lack of.</li> <li>• Area complaints/protests of shelters</li> <li>• Eviction of homes</li> </ul>
Health Related Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental illness</li> <li>• Alcoholism/drug abuse</li> <li>• Access to health services</li> <li>• Susceptibility to dangers to health – disease, weather (extreme heat/cold), hygiene, sanitation.</li> </ul>
Community Support & Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acts of charity – donations, volunteering, fundraising.</li> <li>• Support programs in the community – food, clothing,</li> <li>• counseling</li> <li>• Protests – sit-ins, tent cities, marches</li> </ul>

**\*\*Chart continued on next page.**

Profiling the Homeless or Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homeless children/teens</li> <li>• Personal plights/successes</li> <li>• Profiling character traits</li> <li>• Statistics and surveys of the homeless</li> <li>• Looking at the actions the government is taking in reducing/contributing to homelessness</li> </ul>
Illegal Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Panhandling/squeegee activity</li> <li>• Participating in illegal activity</li> <li>• Being victims of crime or illegal activity – murder, abuse, theft, being forced to move from certain locations.</li> </ul>

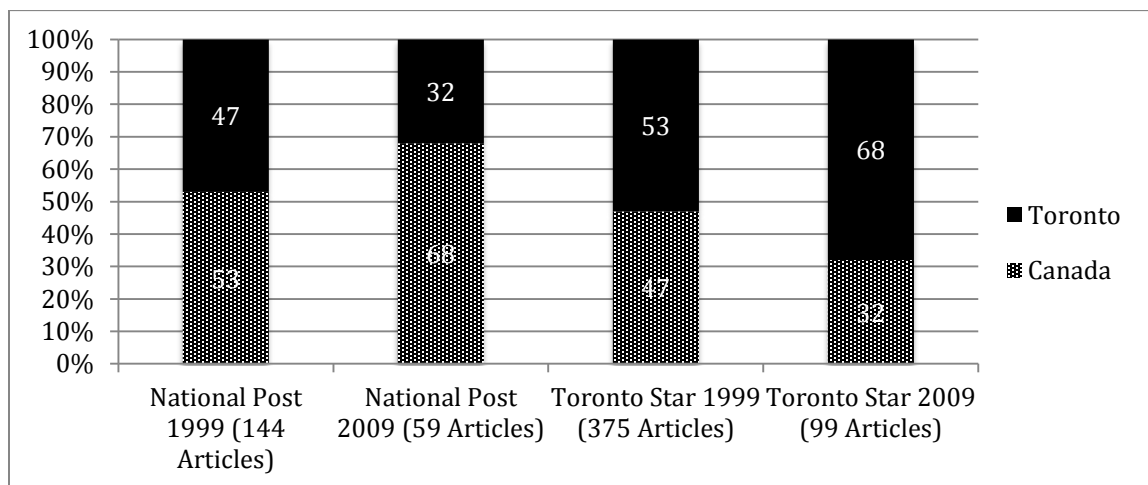
Once the articles have been thematically categorized, it becomes essential to analyze them more closely by further separating them amongst their categories. This subsequent division will be done based on whether the articles are claiming that the underlying cause of homelessness is a result of systemic failure, or because of personal traits and faults. Although these articles have already been coded to determine who is writing them, it also becomes important to understand who these people are in regards to their societal role may impact how homelessness is perceived. For example, if the writer is a “member of the public”, it is critical to the research process to further differentiate whether this individual is an advocate on behalf of the homeless, or an “expert” in the field. The reason that it is so important to also identify articles by systemic failure or personal traits and faults, as well as who is contributing to this material, is to uncover patterns. When discovering the genre of the article the author type, and the cause of homelessness that is being portrayed, may help determine how the homeless are represented as either the “worthy” or “unworthy”. It will be from these reoccurring patterns that my analysis will be built.

### Findings:

After omitting 1,352 articles, which were found to be non-applicable due to their lack of relevance to homelessness or the homeless of Canada, search results were reduced to a sample size of 677 articles. Reasons why articles were deemed inadmissible included those, which mentioned the search term(s) once or twice, but did not actually discuss the homeless or issues of homelessness. Articles were also omitted, which focused on the homeless living outside of Canada (and these were often only as a result of a natural disaster). The results can then be broken down by year and publication. In the year 1999, the *National Post* ran 144 articles covering issues regarding the homeless and homelessness. The *Toronto Star*, for that same year published 375. Ten years later, in 2009 there were only 59 articles found in the *Post*, which matched the same criteria. Additionally, the *Star* only featured 99 articles pertaining to that topic for 2009.

What these figures indicate is that there was a substantial drop in coverage. To put these numbers in perspective, this would mean that in 1999 the *Post* on average would contain an article on homelessness every two to three days. In 2009, however, an article would appear every six to seven days. This being the case, the coverage in 2009 was only 41% of that in 1999. Using the same reasoning, one or more articles pertaining to the homeless, could be found every day in the *Star* in 1999. By 2009, this figure dropped to one article every three or four days. This resulted in the *Star's* coverage for 2009 only being 26% of what it was in 1999. Figure 1 shows these changes in the two years by publication, as well as by being separated by the articles that are concentrated on Toronto and those focusing on the rest of Canada. These drastically dropping figures are alarming when considering the fact that the number of the homeless living in Canada, has only continued to increase during these ten years.

**Figure 1: Number of articles published on homelessness in 1999 and 2009 for the National Post and Toronto Star**



The findings regarding what time of year in which the articles were published are quite interesting. To get a better understanding of the data, the months were broken up by the general seasonal conditions. The colder months consisted from October to March and the warmer months of April to September. It was found that for the *National Post* in 1999 and 2009 as well as the *Toronto Star* in 1999, that 58% of the articles written during those years were done in the colder months. Only 42% were written during the warmer season of April to September. While not yielding the same results, the *Toronto Star* in 2009 had a similar outcome of 54% of its articles on the topic of homelessness written during October to March and 46% from April to September. While this may not be a vastly dramatic change in coverage between the seasons, there is still enough of an increase during the colder months to note a pattern. What these figures, along with the consistency in data over a ten-year gap and by the two different publications suggest, is that coverage on the homeless is more likely to occur when the weather turns cold than during the warmer months of the year. This is significant, as it allows one to question if the reason for the colder months to yield greater coverage, comes as a result of tolerance. Why is it that Canada's awareness for the homeless and homelessness is greater when the temperature drops, could this come as a result of seasonal holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas? Do these holidays, which are known traditionally as a time of

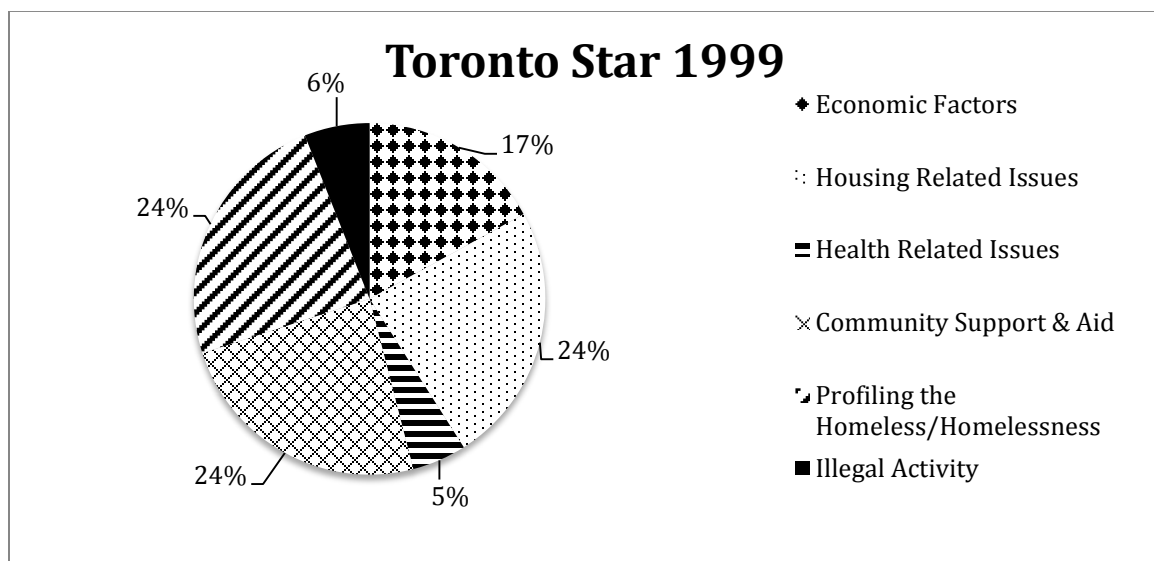
year to be charitable to one another, in turn help to create an increased sense of tolerance to the issue of homelessness? If this is the case, what does this suggest about Canadian society and its willingness to act on issues such as homelessness? These are ideas that will be further built upon through a deeper analysis of the themes presented in these articles and the rhetoric that helps to construct them.

Although each year provided a wide range of topics the articles were categorized by six main themes. The results for each category in the *Star* were: economic factors 17% (1999) and 13% (2009), housing related issues 24% (1999) and 26% (2009), health related issues 5% (1999) and 4% (2009), community support 24% (1999) and 21% (2009), profiling the homeless/homelessness 30% (1999) and 24% (2009), and illegal activity 6% (1999 and 2009). What these results indicate is that in 1999 and 2009 the reporting tendencies of the *Star* regarding their coverage of the homeless remains relatively stable; there is only minimal change of exposure pertaining to each category. The consistency of coverage between these time periods, regardless of the substantial decrease in the number of articles, may signify that the political alignment of the *Star* as “liberal”, potentially influences reporting practices.

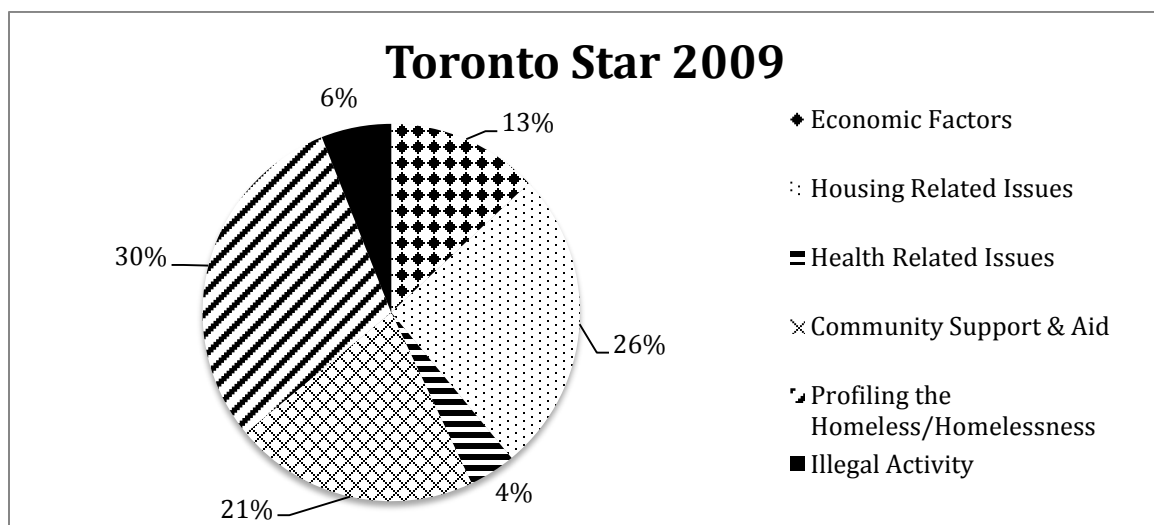
It is interesting to note however, that the greatest significant changes occur in the *National Post*. In 2009, one year after the financial crisis, there is a decrease of coverage to articles written about the economic factors to homelessness by 14.5% (23% in 1999 and 8.5% in 2009). There is also a fairly substantial increase by 11.5% (19% in 1999 and 30.5% in 2009) in reporting pieces regarding the homeless and illegal activity. For the remaining four categories there is little change in coverage between 1999 and 2009: housing related issues fluctuated by 2% (20% in 1999 and 22% in 2009), health matters increased by 1% (4% in 1999 and 5% in 2009), as did articles profiling the homeless/homelessness (16% in 1999 and 17% in 2009), and matters on community support and aid decreased by 1% (18% in 1999 and 17% in 2009). The findings from the *Post* evoke the question, why is it that during an economic

crisis, articles pertaining to economic factors to homelessness are decreasing, while stories focusing on the homeless and illegal activities are increasing? These figures along with loaded terms pulled from these articles, will aid in determining how it is that representations and stereotypes of homelessness, may get embedded into hegemonic discourse. How these articles frame issues of homelessness, contribute to the ideas promoted to the rest of society and ultimately, asks what the implications of these representations may be. The findings for each year by publication are found in Figures 2,3,4 and 5.

**Figure 2: Breakdown of Coverage for *Toronto Star* in 1999**

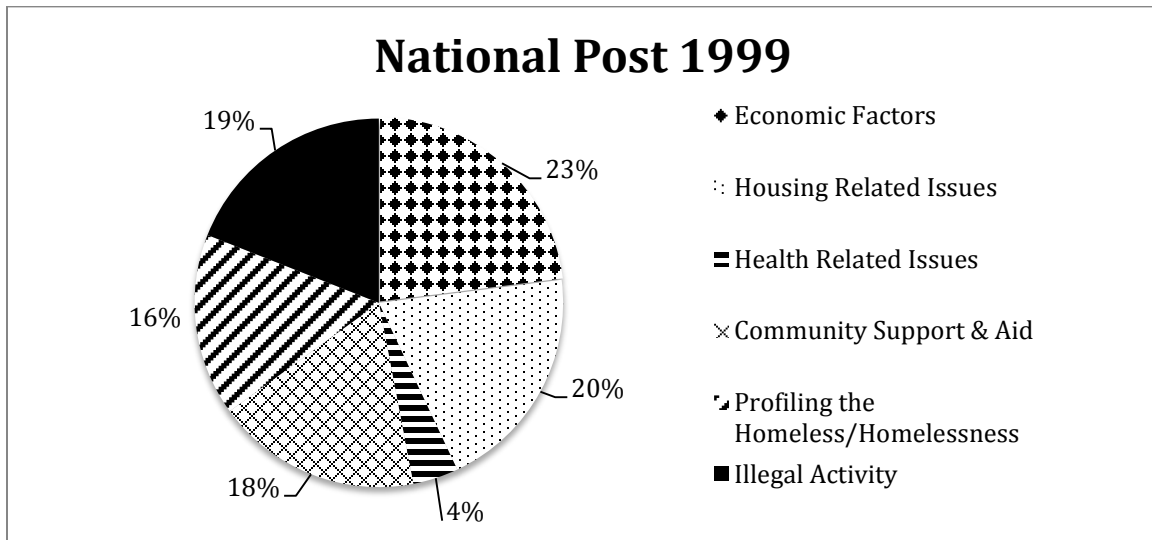


**Figure 3: Breakdown of Coverage for the *Toronto Star* in 2009**

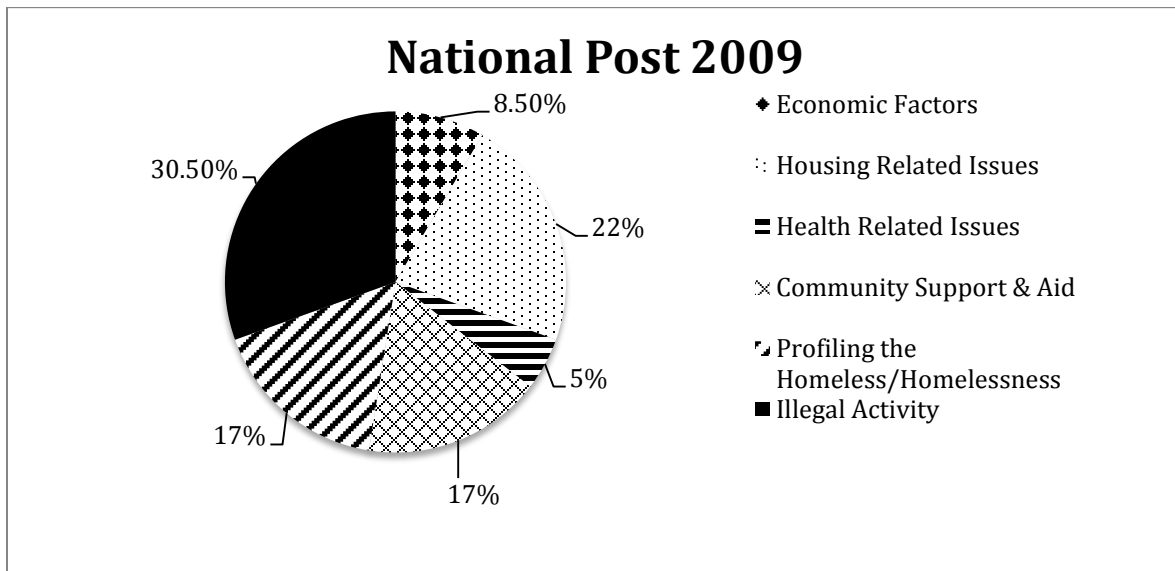




**Figure 4: Breakdown of Coverage for the *National Post* in 1999**



**Figure 5: Breakdown of Coverage for the *National Post* in 2009**

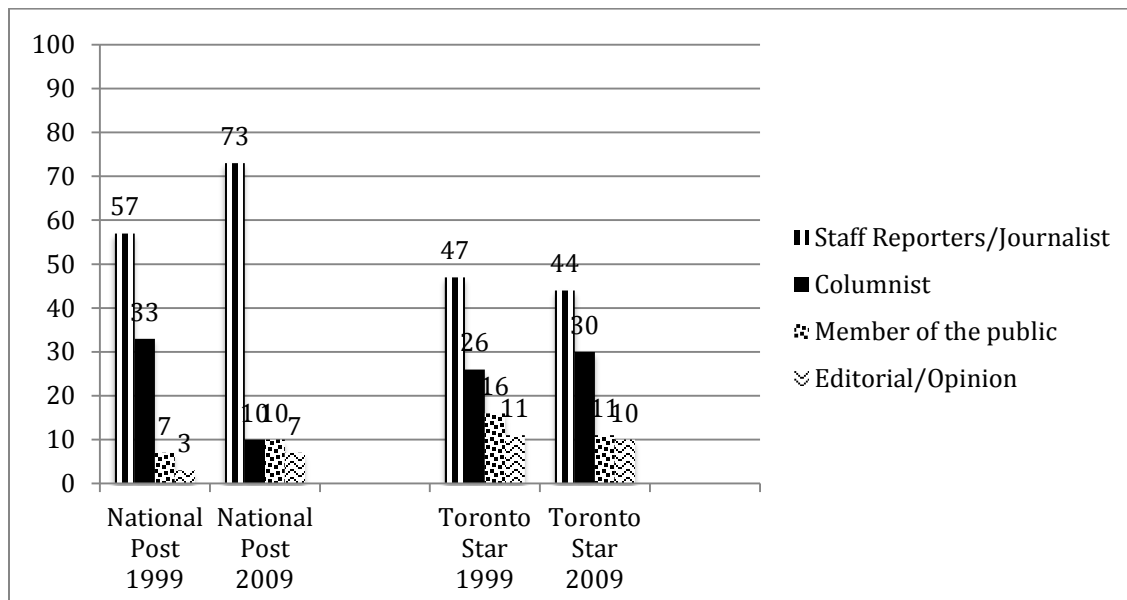


Even though the number of articles in each sample size for each year and newspaper differs greatly, staff reporters and journalists are responsible for the majority of the stories compiled. In the *National Post* for 1999, it was found that 57% of the articles contributing to this study are by journalists or staff reporters. This figure increased to 73% in 2009. During the ten-year span, the *Toronto Star*

maintained its news coverage by staff reporters and journalists with 47% in 1999 and 44% in 2009. Columnists were the second most numerous sources recorded for both the *Post* (33% in 1999 and 10% in 2009) and the *Star* (26% in 1999 and 30% in 2009), yet the *Post*, showed a significant drop in 2009.

The reason for columnists to be ranked in second place for coverage is that each paper has one or two key contributors writing specifically on issues surrounding homelessness. These columnists and their work will be examined in greater depth during the analysis portion of this project. Another essential group of contributors to the sample is from members of the public, responding to editorial pieces or submitting their opinions in the form of “letters of the day”. This group is important to analyze alongside journalists and columnists, as they provide an outside perspective from those not connected with the newspaper. One must remember, however, that it is still those working in-house who get to select the comments that are run.

The *Star* saw a decrease in responses from the public on homelessness from 1999 (16%) to 2009 (11%), while the *Post* increased from 7% in 1999 to 10% in 2009. The comments, which are responsible for the smallest percentage of the coverage, came from the newspapers’ editorial or opinion articles. In 1999, editorials and opinions made up 10% of the *Star*’s 144 articles on homelessness. This only minimally increased to 11% in 2009; however, with such a small sample size, this means that the actual number of editorials was fewer with only ten editorials published on homelessness. For the *Post* in 1999 only 3% of its articles were expressed as editorial comment, but jumped to 7% in 2009. The breakdown of the coverage for each newspaper and publication is depicted in Figure 5, for a clearer representation of the changes made to reporting habits between 1999 and 2009.

**Figure 6: Writing sources for National Post 1999/2009 and Toronto Star 1999/2009**

The above data, regarding the different genres of stories and their contributors, were subsequently divided by articles that were specifically focused on attributing homelessness in Canada to systemic failure or as personal faults. In 1999, 16% of the *National Post's* articles outlined homelessness as a result of systemic failure; this figure dropped in 2009 to 13.5%. Articles, which accredited the homeless population to personal traits and fault, were found to make up 7% of the *Post's* coverage in 1999 and jumped to 17% in 2009. Similar to the results of the *Post*, in 1999 the *Toronto Star* saw 17% of its articles focused on discussing systemic failure. By 2009, however, this figure dramatically increased to 36%. It is also interesting to note, that the *Star's* results remained consistent to that of the *Post*, regarding stories of personal accountability, with 6% in 1999 and 14% in 2009.

When these findings were first collected they appeared to almost be contradictory to the rest of the research. I found it surprising, when placed along side the other data and trends found in the rhetoric, that the results would be so high for articles with an emphasis on systemic failure. When placed in a larger context and examined with greater detail by further breaking the figures down, that is when the findings began to make more sense. The events occurring in 1999 suggest why 16% of articles in the *Post* and 17% in the *Star* outlined

systemic failure as the underlining cause of homelessness. As previously stated, not only was 1999 an election year, but Canada also declared homelessness to be a “national crisis”. This becomes significant when taken into account the articles that are typical in 1999, when focusing on systemic failure. More than half of these articles, for each publication report on either the lack of affordable housing, or on the various levels of government and their involvement in contributing/solving homelessness.

Being an election year in 1999, 43% of the articles for the *Star* and 26% for the *Post* reported on different political parties and politicians, looking to implicate one another, and remind readers how these parties contributed to the homeless crisis. Articles, which outline systemic failure by focusing on the need for affordable housing, is also prevalent with 28.5% of these articles found in the *Star* and 35% in the *Post*. What becomes problematic with these stories is that although the focus is on the lack of affordable housing available, the articles fail to address the larger systemic issues at play, which contribute to the high demand of subsidized housing. It should also be noted that an underlying theme within the articles that point to systemic failure as a cause of homelessness, recommend providing tax breaks, which would create incentive for the private sector to contribute to resolve the housing crisis. This notion was reiterated by journalists, as well as through opinion pieces written by guest writers, such as Milton Bogoch who is the executive director of the Calgary Apartment Association and the Alberta Residential Rental Association.

What this recommendation suggests, however, is one of the defining features of neoliberalism. The government is encouraged to step back, while the private sector is invited to intervene. The idea of neoliberal ideals being promoted in 1999 may also help to explain why in 2009 both publications saw an increase in articles regarding the personal traits and faults of homeless people. Additionally, it suggests why the *Post* experienced a decrease in articles reporting on systemic failures. These neoliberal ideals became embedded within hegemonic discourse, to the point where it is now common practice for the individual to be responsible for his/her own economic success, while the

responsibility of the state to intervene is no longer expected or encouraged.

When analyzed closer, the significant increase of 19% by 2009 in the *Star's* articles pertaining to systemic failure, can be associated to the economic crisis. Because the majority of the articles can be linked to the financial crisis, this implies that the system is failing as a result of the current economic climate. This means that once more larger issues, which only worsen the impact of the economic crisis, are overlooked as a contributing cause to the homeless population. It should be noted, that many of the contributors to this area of articles, are in the form of opinion pieces or special features from individuals working on boards of charities that support housing.

Another pattern that was found throughout this subgroup of articles is that the *Star* was more likely to profile those, who because of the economic crisis, were most in danger of becoming homeless on the Canadian streets. Examples of this pattern include an editorial by the *Star* about a group they refer to as the "905 Homeless", as well as stories by journalists Nicholas Keung and Lesley Taylor, which both depict young, educated, hard working immigrants. In these examples, these groups of individuals are at risk of ending up on the streets, regardless of their efforts.

It should also be noted, that a total of six human interest stories and updates were written about an elderly man named Al, who was evicted from his apartment and later died in hospital from contracting an illness in a shelter. These articles highlighted how the system failed Al and contributed to his eviction, ultimately leading to his untimely death. They also work to explain the increased number of articles in 2009 for the *Toronto Star*, under the category of articles on systemic failure. What these patterns in this group of articles suggest is that the representation of the "worthy" homeless is beginning to be reshaped as a result of the economic crisis. Furthermore, it is by profiling these new groups, which have become susceptible to homelessness, that those who were already in a vulnerable position before the crisis, become pushed even further into the margins. Although the *Star's* articles in 2009 regarding systemic failure jumps substantially, the patterns found within the articles when examined more closely,

do not necessarily imply increased awareness on homelessness. Instead, what these patterns illustrate is a shift in the way homelessness is framed and which groups may be defined as the “worthy” or the “unworthy” homeless.

The findings that highlight the loaded terms and phrases of each publication are the most significant to this project. The results indicated that the *Toronto Star* is more inclined to using rhetoric that creates a portrayal of the homeless as “worthy” or “good”. While this remains true for both 1999 and 2009, the way in which this is achieved differs. In most instances in 1999, when this occurs it is not the homeless population as a whole, but these terms and phrases are being used to describe individual scenarios. What was found is that these articles present the person in question in a similar sequence. The writer first chronicles some past misfortune or event, which has led to this person’s downfall. This may include a tragic loss, a horrific accident, or unfortunate timing coupled with bad luck. Rhetoric is then used to illustrate the intrinsic qualities that this individual possesses, which establishes a commonality with the reader. Examples of such characteristics that are often exhibited are, “intelligent”, “caring”, “loveable”, and “grateful”—qualities, which one hopes that everyone possesses regardless of circumstance. It is worth noting that these articles place emphasis on these individuals making changes in their lives for the better—battling addictions, procuring employment, and giving back to the community. By using language and vocabulary in this manner, the reader becomes familiar with this individual, which ultimately allows for the article to evoke a sense of “worthiness”.

The results showed that in 2009 the articles, published in the *Star* moved away from profiling the individual on the street, to profiling and presenting the “worthy” from the perspective of those engaging in community support. Writers began to focus on those who volunteered and worked for organizations helping the homeless, and why they believed it to be important. The rhetoric shifts from talking to the homeless, to talking about the homeless. It should also be noted that a major difference between 1999 and 2009, was that the language and vocabulary in the *Star* in 1999, focused heavily on the government’s role in not

only creating homelessness, but also applying pressure to the different levels of government to solve the issue of homelessness. This also works to show the homeless as “worthy”, as it implies that they are victims of circumstance. In 2009, there are very few articles dedicated to demonstrating the government’s involvement in the issue.

Findings for the *National Post*, not only suggest that this publication is more than likely to portray the homeless as “unworthy”, but it does so by using language in a way to position the housed public separate from those living on the streets. This is achieved by using rhetoric to play on reader’s fears. The language and vocabulary found for 1999 in the *Post* strongly implies that the homeless are, “dangerous”, “aggressive”, and suffer from substance abuse. Most importantly, the language in these articles suggest, that the homeless are to blame for their own condition, due to a “life choice”. This leaves the reader with the impression that these individuals are “unworthy”. The articles in the *Post* in 2009, not only generate the same feeling towards the homeless, but go a step further, to foster the idea that the rest of the population is made to suffer or carry a burden because of this group. This is shown especially through rhetoric linked to economic conditions and illegal activity. Furthermore, it is important to note that like the *Star* in 2009, the *Post* also relies on talking about homelessness, rather than including the homeless in the conversation. What the findings for both the *Post* and *Star* in 1999 and 2009 clearly illustrate is that rhetoric and vocabulary are strong indicators of how stereotypes and misconceptions of the homeless get perpetuated by dominant ideology.

### **Analysis: Tolerating rather than Eradicating**

The first thing that really became evident from the early stages of my research was the significant difference in coverage for 1999 and 2009, for both the *National Post* and the *Toronto Star*. Even without digging deep and examining what the language and vocabulary had to say about homelessness within these articles, the sheer decrease in numbers implies what some might call, a “tolerance” of the issue. In 2001, two years after homelessness was

declared a national emergency, the federal government along with all provinces and territories in Canada, adopted the Affordable Housing Framework Agreement (“Precarious Housing in Canada” 26). This became a fundamental step in creating a housing plan at the national level, which was aimed at lowering the numbers of the homeless and at risk populations. With additional initiatives in 2005, progress was slow but persistent. Unfortunately, in 2008, the financial crisis plunged the stable economy into turmoil and it was only one year later, in 2009, that homelessness in Canada took an all too familiar turn. The number of individuals and families without homes began to rise faster, than the numbers representing those placed into affordable housing.

One would think that with memories of the 1999 housing shortage still fresh in the minds of Canadians, the coverage would begin to increase along with the homeless statistics. The fact that it does not do so, implies that there is a disconnect and provides support for Brown’s argument on “tolerance” when she states: “it involves managing the presence of the undesirable, the tasteless, the faulty—even the revolting, repugnant, or vile” (Brown 25). The lack of media attention infers that those with the authority to dictate what makes it into the media, does not consider homelessness to be a serious issue. What it suggests is that this population is not “important enough” to provide sufficient coverage.

Where the disconnect may begin, may be found in the myth and thought process provided by Swanson that “poverty doesn’t affect me” (176). The statistics prove that the number of homeless is continuing to grow, which comes as a result of the unstable economy exposing faults in Canada’s fundamental structures. Many families are only one or two pay cheques away from living on the streets and yet, there is still hesitation to admit that one may be affected by poverty. One can argue that reinforcement of this myth is being shown by the decreasing coverage on homelessness. This becomes problematic as this idea of being protected against poverty and homelessness has the potential to further trickle down and become embedded in the mindset of the rest of Canadian society. It is by not making homelessness a media priority, that the presence of the homeless is being managed. If homelessness is kept at an arms length, in



this case, from mainstream consciousness, then it allows the issue to be “tolerated”. The homeless situation is altogether easier to endure, by believing poverty does not affect you, when it does not have the opportunity to get too close to being real.

This notion becomes reinforced upon analyzing the different ways in which the articles from 1999 and 2009 respond to the issues of homelessness. In 1999, there is a greater emphasis in the media to not only allocate responsibility for the homeless situation, but as well as to apply pressure to the government, as a means to find a solution. This is achieved by referring to the problem of homelessness using loaded terms, such as the ones found in this *Star* editorial; “Homelessness has been declared a national disaster by Toronto city council and a number of other municipal councils across the country...homelessness is more a national disgrace. And a national shame” (*Star* ‘Liberals abandon homeless at their own peril’). This editorial was selected, as an example because the language found in this article is representative of an overt response in 1999.

Canadians across the country take pride in their nation, but when “national” is put beside words like “disaster”, “shame” and “disgrace”, it conjures a much different reaction. By employing the word “national” this piece implies that homelessness is a shared responsibility, one that is to be responded to by all levels of government. There is also a sense of unspoken guilt that Canadians should demand action from their government. This becomes reinforced through the association produced by the words “disaster”, “disgrace” and “shame”. The word “disaster” implies to readers a sudden event or a natural catastrophe, where the words “disgrace” or “shame” indicates an event, which has been created and could have been all together prevented. This breakdown of word choice becomes extremely important when examining which parties employ which words. By municipal city councils across the country choosing to describe homelessness as a “disaster” it works to relieve the state of their responsibility in creating this urgent issue. The fact that the editorial uses “disgrace” and “shame” in their piece highlights the notion that homelessness in Canada has not been an issue that has organically evolved, but one that has been created by those in

power. Furthermore, together these words indicate that homelessness is a condition that cannot be “tolerated”, as its continued existence creates a stress on the nation.

In 1999 the typical tone in the *Post* is more condemnatory of the homeless than that of the *Star*. There is, however, a shared sentiment to designate responsibility and to solve this pressing issue. These notions are demonstrated through the example of a front-page article by John Ibbitson, in which he creates an image of the homeless population when he writes: “One lesson that’s been driven home over and over is that almost half the homeless have psychiatric problems beyond those that living on the street would produce in anyone” (Ibbitson A1). He also quotes a street person about his aversion to shelters and their patrons: “They’d steal the false teeth out of a dead man” (Ibbitson A1). These two statements work to portray some homeless as the “unworthy” by implying that the homeless are individuals who are unwilling, and in some cases incapable, of helping themselves. The second quotation is especially poignant as it indicates that those who frequent the shelters are of a character not to be trusted. Not only does this statement become memorable by how extreme it is, but that someone who also identifies as the “homeless” is making this claim. By using such an extreme example, it suggests to readers that this is a common occurrence, even if the individual providing this statement did not intend this. By framing the quotation in this manner it only further works to solidify the image of the “unworthy” homeless.

In this same article, however, he also quotes individuals interviewed, who blame the state of homelessness on the economy, by not providing enough jobs for “aimless young men with little education and few skills” which is further perpetuated by the “breakdown of the extended family” (Ibbitson A1). While again, the language does not depict these individuals in a positive manner it does, however, imply that homelessness can be attributed partially to societal influences. Like the previously discussed editorial from the *Star*, the language found in Ibbitson’s piece suggests that homelessness is a condition, which has been created and not merely a natural event. What Ibbitson reports in his article

to be the solution to the current crisis is “a somber Mr. Hampton” who “vows an NDP government would re-introduce rent controls, build more subsidized housing, and offer shelter allowances for the working poor” (Ibbitson A1). Once more the solution to homelessness is seen to be the responsibility of the Canadian government, while the word “somber” suggests that Ibbitson believes that the NDP leader considers the matter to be of great importance. Most significantly, however, like the editorial written in the *Star*, the language in this piece reveals that homelessness has become a societal problem that can no longer be “tolerated”.

To further underline this issue, as mentioned in the findings section, profiling of individuals living in shelters and on the street is found to be a reoccurring method of reporting in 1999. This is especially true for the articles appearing in the *Star*. One example, which adheres to this pattern, is a feature written by Elaine Carey. In her story she describes the children of families on welfare that live in a row of motel rooms. These motel rooms have been converted into temporary shelters as vacancy in the designated city shelters has reached capacity. Some of the loaded terms Carey employs are “poorest of the poor”, “lives are in danger”, “left in ‘questionable circumstances’”, “poor nutrition”, and “live with mice and cockroaches” (Carey ‘Insight’). The phrases used in this article are ones that would be associated with conditions found in a third world country. Living in a first world nation, to read that these environments exist in Canada, and for children to be subjected to these circumstances nonetheless, is alarming. Another example, which repeats this pattern of profiling, is from Maureen Murray. She uses phrases in her piece such as “fled abusive parents”, “a marriage break-up”, “a battle with colon cancer”, “heart trouble began his downward spiral”, and “looked at like a person, not unwanted garbage” (Murray E5). These terms depict scenarios which the individual experiencing them has no control over. They are events that have the ability to change one’s entire life. By using these descriptors, these two journalists are ensuring that, “subjects are identified and reduced to certain attributes or practices” (Brown 43). It is by profiling individuals with similar stories, who have ended up on the streets as a

result of being victims of fate and unfortunate circumstances, that Carey and Murray create “marked identities”. By reducing these individuals to these “marked identities” it creates a representation of the “worthy” homeless to readers. This is a common practice found in 1999 because these individuals are not homeless as a result of personal traits or faults, the profiles created by the newspapers generate a more compelling and urgent need for finding a solution to homelessness.

It appears that by 2009, however, there had been a shift, as the language found in the newspapers suggests that the mentality went from not being able to “tolerate” the issue of homelessness and actively seeking to find a solution, to not being able to “tolerate” the homeless themselves. Brown argues: “tolerance appears, then, as a mode of incorporating and regulating the presence of the threatening Other” (27). What can be found through a rhetorical analysis is that the homeless have become the “threatening Other”, while the housed population is “coping” with the issue by “regulating the presence” of these individuals, through social programs. Articles that exhibit this notion in 2009 largely focus on the programs found in the community. These programs allow this population to be sheltered (when there is enough space available), to eat, to access health care (when they have the proper identification), and to procure employment (again, only with proper documentation). These programs, unfortunately, for the most part, only deliver temporary short-term solutions to those living on the streets, while neglecting to resolve the underlying causes of homelessness. Because resources are allotted to emergency services, this gives the impression, which supports the myth that “our country can’t afford welfare” (Swanson 177), or in this case adequate social services. It is then because emergency aid only provides circular results, that the housed population only becomes discouraged with efforts being made and often do not support funding for the social services, which are actually required to prevent and solve homelessness.

As this myth circulates, however, the responsibility to compensate where the state fails to support this population is transferred from the government to the citizens. This works to provide evidence that Canada’s housed population is

“tolerant” of these individuals, and as Brown writes to be tolerant of others, “anoints the bearer with virtue” (25). This becomes evident by a pattern, which emerges throughout both publications. Previously, the voice of the homeless was heard through profiling, by 2009 it becomes the voice of the volunteer or homeless activist. In an article confirming this pattern, which appears the day after Christmas in the *Star*, a column written by Debra Black begins by highlighting that the “demand” for food and clothing is up this holiday season (Black GT1). By using the word “demand”, Black creates a tone, or a sense of urgency that is required for food and clothing. She then uses phrases such as “devoting her holiday to those less fortunate”, “rewarding to help”, and “works tirelessly” to describe those volunteering at the centre (Black GT1). The language used in this story helps to create the image of the volunteers as “virtuous”. The timing of this column is also important to this portrayal, as the holiday season is seen as a particularly charitable or sentimental time of year. It is as if stories on homelessness appearing around the holidays serve as a reminder to the housed public that it is their “charitable duty” to give back to those less fortunate. Returning back to the findings section, this notion becomes consistent with the data that indicated that there are a higher number of articles written during this time of season than during any other time of the year. This gives the impression that for many a “charitable duty” is seasonal.

The phrases found in Black’s piece are also similar to those found in David Hayes article, in which he profiles Cathy Crowe, and her work as a street nurse and advocate for the homeless. It is significant to note that in 1999 Crowe appeared in an opinion column in the *Star*, in which she wrote about a homeless man named Danny and how he and the other homeless individuals had been affected by the Harris government. By 2009, however, it is not Crowe profiling the homeless, but Crowe being profiled. Hayes describes her using the terms, “indefatigable”, “youthful energy without the bitterness”, and “always in demand” (Hayes CL6). Through the phrases, readers are once more presented with the notion that these individuals are going above and beyond through their charitable contributions.

I would like to point out that I do not mean to diminish the critical work that these people provide for those marginalized and vulnerable groups; instead it is important to become critical of these types of articles in which they appear, as a means to recognize that the language represented in these newspapers has experienced a shift. The focus has gone from that of the government and eradicating homelessness, to simply tolerating the homeless and managing the issue through public donations of time and money. Tolerance, in this case highlights just how strongly Canadian society has been impacted by neoliberal ideology, and how language and vocabulary play an essential role in achieving this. As a result, this shift further works to perpetuate the myth that the Canadian government cannot afford the financial burden, to support these individuals through social assistance programs. It is because of this that it has become acceptable for only the bare minimum to be expected, or at times even just the illusion of the bare minimum.

To better comprehend how this shift occurred over the course of a decade, it is essential to analyze the writing practices of some of the key columnists from the *Post* and *Star* in 1999 and 2009. The columnists being discussed in this section were chosen because not only do their columns appear frequently, but also their writing represents the overall tones and views that each publication is trying to achieve. In order to understand how it is that the homeless have become a marginalized group to be tolerated, it is important to remember that Brown argues in her work that, “tolerated individuals will always be those who deviate from the norm, never those who uphold it” (Brown 44). This allows for the dominant group to create comparisons as a way to distinguish between “them” and “us”. Creating this dichotomy is one way that the columnists of the *Star* and *Post* are successful in maintaining boundaries between the housed and homeless populations. This notion becomes present as a theme that can be found reappearing through different articles.

Catherine Dunphy is a feature writer for the *Toronto Star* in 1999, who focuses on the issues and events impacting the homeless. Several of her articles use the method of profiling the lives of homeless, or more importantly those who

used to call the streets home. In these articles she is utilizing the myth that the homeless “want to live on the street” (Swanson 177). By sharing the details of those who have turned their lives around, Dunphy creates the perception of the “worthy” homeless. Those who become the “worthy” are the individuals who dig themselves out of poverty. If these individuals were adept in making changes, than others are just as capable—if willing. This reasoning suggests to readers that homelessness is not a result of systemic failure, but a casualty of personal traits and faults. Dunphy first does this by highlighting what behaviours it was that these individuals partook in that led to their downfall. For example, in one article focusing on recipients of awards for their success in business, she profiles the lives of a “former junkie” who found herself in and out of psychiatric care from the age of 15, a young woman with fetal alcohol effects who not only abused substances herself, but relied on “squeegeeing” to survive, as well as a middle-aged man who referred to himself as a former, “drunken Indian” (Dunphy ‘The Hard Road to Success’). What this article implies, is that it took time but with strength and determination, these individuals were able to go from someone to be “tolerated”, and who did not fit into society’s idea of “normal”, to receiving an award for their success at being a healthy and active participant within society.

Furthermore, what is being suggested in this article is that success is about personal traits. It is about choosing to “dig deep” and change one’s life; it is not about systemic failure and the reluctance of the state to intervene. Dunphy highlights this nicely in her article by stating that “these winners used to be losers. On the street. On welfare. Homeless. Now that they’re doing good things - hell, doing amazing things with their lives” (Dunphy ‘The Hard Road to Success’). By using the dichotomy of “winners” and “losers”, Dunphy is placing a value on one’s life. She is inadvertently indicating that anyone who does not conform to society’s standards may be categorized as a “loser” within a social hierarchy. This statement captures what Brown argues about tolerance and reiterates this notion to readers. Unless one is contributing to society economically and partaking in what is deemed to be “normal behaviour” than one is not worthy of being a part of the dominant group. How the dichotomy of “them” and “us”,

“worthy” or “unworthy” becomes disseminated to readers to become embedded in hegemonic ideology is captured in this example.

In 1999, Joe Fiorito was a regular weekly columnist featured in the *National Post*. Based in Toronto, it was natural that over the course of the year several of his columns dealt with homelessness in the city. The tone that Fiorito conveys in his writing is one of solidarity with the homeless. His rhetoric provides a lens for readers to understand what those on the streets go through, while portraying them as “worthy” of help and support. He does this by attempting to minimize the line that distinguishes them as “Other”. In one particular column, Fiorito writes about an old retirement home being renovated to accommodate several of Toronto’s senior homeless men. He writes how, because of their age, these men often become targets of the “harder, younger guys” (Fiorito A20). When approaching the question of how these seniors have ended up in this residence, he simply states: “Things happen. A man has trouble with the bottle; life swirls out of hand; maybe he just can't cope; there are as many answers as there are individuals” (Fiorito A20). Fiorito, like Dunphy, does not attribute the cause of homelessness directly to systemic failure, but subtly suggests personal traits or faults may be a cause. His rhetoric, however, implies that the underlying reason why they are there—or what it is that makes them deviate from the norm that society expects, is not as important as the fact that they are there.

What I believe to be the most powerful statement of the piece is when Fiorito writes, “and these old men, after a scant couple of weeks, have begun to do the things men do when they feel house-proud -- they have cleaned the yard, weeded the flower beds, swept the sidewalks, and hosed down the windows” (A20). He then reiterates this notion at the end of the article by stating: “when the snow flies, my guess is he'll be out there shoveling the sidewalk with the rest of the guys; because that's what men do around the house in winter” (Fiorito A20). The significance of these statements is that Fiorito is indicating that these men who have found refuge in this shelter, are just like any other man around the place they call home. Through this comparison, the columnist works to reduce the difference between these men and those who comprise the dominant



population. By diminishing this boundary, Fiorito challenges the myth that the homeless want to live on the street. It is important to acknowledge that his work humanizes and elevates this group of marginalized individuals who are often dehumanized and reduced to disposable bodies.

One difference that is significant to note between the articles from 1999 and 2009, is the fact that Fiorito moved from being a columnist at the *Post* to writing his column for the *Star*. This is noteworthy because of the way these publications align themselves politically. It suggests a shift towards a more conservative nature in regards to the *Post's* political stand. This shift may be explained as a stronger progression towards neoliberal ideology. The articles reveal that in 2009, Fiorito maintained his same story-telling ways at the *Star*, to portray the homeless as “worthy”. Examples include “she is determined to get up and out of poverty” (GT2) as well as “she drank and used drugs and she had spent time in jail. And that doesn't matter now and it didn't matter then. She was a hero. She saved her neighbours from an apartment fire” (GT2). The pattern that was revealed in the above example can also be found in this article. Although personal traits are quoted as the cause for life on the streets, Fiorito also indicates that this individual is trying to rise above. The use of the word “hero” in this article is important as it generates positive associations for the reader, which elevates the individual in the column. A “hero” is someone that is admired and looked up to and during a time of need. They are selfless beings that others feel they can turn to. By including the word “hero” in his description Fiorito challenges any preconceived notions readers may have while breaking down the dichotomy of “them” and “us”. Through his command of language and vocabulary this is commonly achieved by Fiorito's work.

In 2009, columnist Peter Kuitenbrouwer took a vastly different approach to representations of homelessness. No longer were the readers presented with images of the “worthy” homeless. Before, even though they may not have agreed with all of their life choices, because of the way the issues had been framed, readers were able to sympathize for the conditions in which the homeless were subjected to. Instead, Kuitenbrouwer leaves his readers with the impression that

to be without permanent shelter, that is both safe and warm is acceptable. By taking this approach in his writing, Kuitenbrouwer is supporting the myths that people want to live on the streets as well as individuals are responsible for their own fate.

One example, which exemplifies this pattern, is from a column written during the 2009 summer strike by unionized city staff. In the column Kuitenbrouwer stated: “pools are shut, 52,000 children have had their swimming lessons and summer camps cancelled, and basketball courts have become temporary dumps. But at least one group is happy and well looked-after: the city's homeless” (Kuitenbrouwer A11). He reiterates this notion once more further down the column, and follows it up by writing, “They seem quite comfortable” and “Yesterday I watched one man smoke a crack pipe on the fence just outside the shelter. Another man drank a beer. A third man lit a cigarette in front of the main door. He then yelled to a police officer walking by” (Kuitenbrouwer A11). By recounting the men outside of the shelter, whose behaviours implies substance abuse, Kuitenbrouwer presents these men as the “unworthy” homeless. This notion is only further reinforced when placed in opposition to the 52,000 children. Additionally, by framing his article in this manner Kuitenbrouwer suggests that the homeless are not victims of systemic failure, but victims of their own personal faults. Once more, the use of an extreme case is used as what may be perceived as a portrayal of a daily occurrence. What his article reveals is how very important language and vocabulary become in the way one frames the representation of the homeless.

In another piece from earlier that year while the city was experiencing harsh winter conditions, the columnist spoke with a couple of Toronto's rough sleepers, who had made their home a stoop and an overhang outside a theatre. The language in this article promotes that living outdoors, is not as bad as many imagine it to be. He writes: “The two homeless men on King West seem happier than Mr. Edward does in his squalid shelter. They have found companionship in each other, and warmth from the generosity of the good citizens of Toronto” (Kuitenbrouwer A11). Like the previous example, the homeless are portrayed as

content, supporting the myth that living on the street is a lifestyle choice. It should be noted that Kuitenbouwer describes these men earlier in the article by stating, “became homeless after a drunken plunge” and “they are well-fed” (Kuitenbouwer A11), only further reinforcing the myth being perpetuated. By using the phrase “the generosity of the good citizens of Toronto” Kuitenbouwer also uses language to strengthen the hold of the neoliberal ideology, which promotes the idea that the state is under no obligation to support the homeless, as the “good citizens” have chosen to do so.

While this article does not create the same image of the “unworthy” homeless, it still implies that these men have become homeless as a result of their own doing. Furthermore, Kuitenbouwer suggests that these men are satisfied with their circumstances, and while they may not be entirely the “worthy” homeless, they are the “happy” homeless. This is troubling because it allows readers to become complacent with these men who are “content”, as opposed to finding a solution. If these men can tolerate being homeless, then that means society can tolerate homelessness. Articles like these found in the *Post* only reinforces the notion that the homeless are on the street as a result of their own life choices and that homelessness is not a pressing issue.

As discussed thus far, there has been a significant change in approach from 1999 to 2009, in the way the homeless and the issue of homelessness have been written about. This shift has been outlined through the use of examples in articles, which exhibit language typical for the years in which they were published, as well as drawing attention to the myths they utilize. Furthermore, the *Toronto Star* and the *National Post* indicate that society has moved from not wanting to tolerate the idea of homelessness, to simply tolerating this marginalized group. From the argument put forth by Brown, this is highly problematic as it means that this population is only further made vulnerable by the inability of the dominant group to act. The findings from this research has also raised the question of the authenticity of the “tolerance” being perpetuated found in the articles from 1999. This year, coincidentally, also happened to be an election year, were those in power actually concerned about the national crisis, or

was it a convenient party platform? This is something that will be further questioned and analyzed by applying the framework of Agamben. What I have found to be important to take from this portion of the analysis is that whether the representation is of the “worthy” or the “unworthy” homeless, the message that is still being promoted is tolerance, rather than acceptance or inclusion. What Canada should not be able to tolerate is the fact that homelessness is still an issue.

**Analysis: The Homeless as the Modern *Homo Sacer***

The act of simply “tolerating” the homeless and the conditions, in which they live, has meant large repercussions for this marginalized group. To “tolerate” has condemned the homeless to the figure of the modern *homo sacer*. By reviewing the newspaper articles from 1999 and 2009, one gets the notion of how influential rhetoric has been in aiding this condition, as patterns within mainstream writing have been uncovered. Agamben argues, “sovereign is he who decides on the value or the nonvalue of life as such” (142). This is achieved when “power becomes emancipated from the state of exception and transformed into the power to decide the point at which life ceases to be politically relevant” (Agamben 142). What becomes problematic is that the power in which the “sovereign” possesses can now be used as an every day tool to decide which groups are “important” and which have become obsolete. The newspapers from 1999, demonstrate how the mayor of Toronto, Mel Lastman and the Conservatives executed their authority as “sovereign”, to administer the label of “unworthy” to those known as “squeegee people” or panhandlers as a way to eliminate their presence.

Articles from 1999 have quoted Lastman as describing those who survive off of squeegeeing as “horrible, disgusting individuals . . . who spit at cars and bang them and do all kinds of crazy things” (*Star* ‘Squeegee kid 'terror' is just a whitewash’). Another important example, which displayed this perpetuated sentiment, was when Jim Flaherty used his influence as a means to speak on behalf of the public in order to voice their “concerns”. He stated: “They feel

uncomfortable and intimidated and harassed by people coming at them, yelling at them, perhaps grabbing their arm against their will, attempting to clean their windshield and then expecting to be paid money” (Boyle ‘Tories to Take Swipe at Squeegee Kids’). The loaded terms found in these statements, create the image of the “undesirable” or “unworthy” by presenting them as a threat. This is achieved by highlighting how these individuals do not uphold social norms and conventions. If one does not conform to these societal expectations than they are “Othered”, and anything that is “other” creates a sense of the “undesirable”. It can also be noted that by using the word “they”, Flaherty encompasses and speaks on behalf of all of those who comprise the dominant population, excluding and marginalizing those who do not fall under that label. Using this word is a way to establish a sense of authority, as if the individual, in this case Flaherty, knows what is the best for those who fall under the category of “they”. What this really does, however, is further distinguish the dichotomy of “them” and “us”.

The language and vocabulary used by those on the crusade to end squeegee practices and panhandling, could also be found reappearing in articles linked to profiling these behaviours. This becomes problematic as these articles only work to further disseminate the notion of panhandling and squeegeeing as threatening to the public. Examples found on a front-page article include referring to these actions as “aggressive” and labeled the buckets and squeegees used as the “offending equipment” (Ibbitson A1). The use of these words work to emphasize the position that these practices are deemed detrimental to the general public. This is achieved through the careful selection of words, which allow the reader to associate them with the idea of “threat”.

Another example of the common language, which used to construct the homeless panhandler or squeegee kid as the “undesirable”, is reiterated through an article appearing in the comment section written by David Frum. In it Frum writes: “It is indeed a shame and a disgrace that our streets are thronged with the lost and the helpless. But the way to help those people is not by building public housing or reimposing rent controls. It is not by paying more welfare either” (A18). Frum goes on to argue: “Nor are we doing the ‘homeless’ any favours

when we tolerate panhandling, squeegeemen and other forms of city-killing urban disorder” (Frum A18). The rhetoric found in this piece suggests that the behaviour of this group is harmful to the housed public, as it is contributing to the deterioration of the city.

What is found to be even more alarming, is that Frum advocates that social assistance, such as public housing, rent controls and welfare payments, is not the way to “help these people”, nor should their behaviours be “tolerated”. This is problematic because it begs the question: what then is the solution? By referring to “our streets”, it isolates this group from the rest of society. In this one short article, Frum reinforces the myths found in Swanson’s work. He implies that there are too many people already on social assistance and that the country is unable to support “the lost and helpless”, which are in that position as a result of their own choices. The language and vocabulary found in this article, as well as others which follow this pattern, places a value on the lives of these marginalized people. It is by echoing the sentiments put forth by Lastman and the Conservatives that the newspapers are supporting the notion that the lives of the homeless are “unworthy”.

Another controversial topic which was a common theme found in the articles from 1999, surrounded the Safe Streets Act, and Toronto’s local Community Action Policing (CAP) program. Both initiatives were implemented as a solution to reducing crime on the streets; both, however, were instrumental in reducing the homeless to bare life. Advocates of the homeless in Toronto claimed CAP did not diminish crime statistics but only provided local police forces with more power. It was argued by advocates, that this power was often directed at harassing and detaining the homeless. As a means to resist and show solidarity with the squeegee kids and panhandlers, homeless advocates and anti-poverty activists, such as John Clarke, set up a “Safe Park” protest. This meant inviting the homeless to join supporters in an occupation of Allan Gardens. The peaceful protest lasted three days before the police swept in on the fourth, arresting those who would not vacate. The police chose to raid the park at dawn, leaving little to no warning for protestors.

It is important to examine the way in which these events have been reported in the *Star* and *Post*, as they illustrate what Agamben writes regarding the concept of the *homo sacer*: “Bare life remains included in politics in the form of the exception, that is, as something that is included solely through an exclusion” (Agamben 11). This notion around one who is included while simultaneously being excluded is also found in Agamben’s work when he compares the figure of the *homo sacer*, to that of a werewolf, because he states that this figure is “precisely neither man nor beast, and who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither”. The stories that were reported detailing this event focused on advocates and organizers, the reaction of the housed public—especially those living near the park, as well as the responses by the police, the mayor and by councilors. The only perspective that appears to be missing from all of the articles is that of the homeless. When this group is included, it is only to be quoted in a way that shows support for the perspective of the reporter or columnist, politician, police or housed public.

In more than one article, the story focuses on the event’s main organizer, John Clarke, and his absence at the time of the raid. Stories also provided attention to the fact that twenty out of the twenty-five arrested that morning were able to provide a home address. Some of the reactions written in the newspaper include: “The rest of the homeless protesters had. . . gone home” (Frum A14), “the so-called ‘Safe Park’” (Eby, B1), “Police said the majority of those charged were not homeless” (Eby, A4), and “Only four of those arrested claimed to be homeless” (DeMara ‘Park Protest Misdirected’). In an article by Bruce DeMara, he writes “Clarke, 45, who is not homeless and is paid more than \$20,000 a year in salary by his organization, was at home in bed at the time of the raid. He said he got no sleep during the two nights he stayed in the park” (DeMara ‘Park Protest Misdirected’). What these quotations achieve, through their use of language and framing, is that they draw the attention of the reader away from the main objective of the protest, and redirects the focus on inconsequential matters. These articles work to minimize the importance of the protest by creating a diversion. By failing to acknowledge the homeless with regards to the unfolding

events, and making the focal point rest on Clarke and other supporters, this allows for an inclusion/exclusion. The homeless are included in the political realm, in the sense that activists and advocates are working to raise awareness of homelessness, but the homeless are excluded from these processes. Instead, the media chooses to focus on issues, which undermines the credibility of the event. In one article featured in the *Post* in 1999, Lastman states, “People should feel that the parks are their’s” (Wanagas B2), but as illustrated by these articles regarding the park’s occupation, the notion of “who” is included in the word “people” is called into question. While the homeless should be included in the term “people”, it becomes evident through the rhetoric, that only the housed population has been afforded this privilege.

The concept of including the homeless while simultaneously excluding them is also evident with groups known as “Not In My Back Yard” (NIMBY). These are groups made up of homeowners who resist the presence of shelters and drop-in centres for the homeless in “their” neighbourhood. What is found as a common thread in the articles detailing NIMBYs in 1999, is that they often use language and vocabulary as a way to present the housed residents as those who are being wronged; while the homeless are those presented as the “unworthy”. An example of this appears in the *Star*, when one reporter highlights a resident’s concern: “ [he] condemned the region at last month’s public meeting, saying he didn’t want ‘drunks and druggies’ in his neighbourhood” (Star ‘Mississauga Shelter Finds a Different Home’). Further down the article, when reporting the venue change of the shelter, the same resident exposes his hypocrisy by stating: “It’s definitely a good compromise. Make no mistake, I’m not against a shelter for the homeless. Mississauga needs one and needs one badly” (Star ‘Mississauga Shelter Finds a Different Home’). By referring to the patrons who would potentially use the shelter as “drunks and druggies”, the article invokes the image of the “unworthy” homeless by relying on personal traits opposed to systemic failure, as a cause of homelessness. It suggests that because these individuals partake in dangerous behaviours, that they are not to be trusted and may even be a threat to others. The resident himself, redeems his appearance as virtuous



or as the “good guy”, by agreeing that the city does require shelters. He further insists, that he is not opposed to finding accommodations for the homeless, acknowledging the fact that these people require help. By creating this dichotomy, it allows housed residents to show that they “want” to include the homeless, but because this group lacks the ability to abide by social norms, residents feel they have to exclude the homeless from “their” neighbourhood. These actions work to reinforce the myth Swanson writes about in which, “people make wrong choices and should live with them” (177). It is suggested in this story that these individuals have created their own fate and as a result must live with the consequences.

This pattern in sentiment is reiterated by other articles, in which residents cite their reason for challenging the opening of shelters in nearby areas as: “concerned about safety for the kids”, “clients loiter and urinate in doorways, accost women on the street, aggressively panhandle, stash beer and stolen goods behind their buildings and often fight” (Dunphy ‘Hostel Tries to Appease Neighbours’), as well as “his company didn't specifically complain about the shelter but about the ‘lack of consultative process’ that went into the city's decision” (Lakey ‘Business Objected to Plan for Hostel’). What becomes evident by examining these examples is the way in which the language is manipulated. These articles frame the housed residents as “good” and the homeless as “bad”. Once more, the story is portrayed as not an opposition to this group, but to what residents believe these individuals represent. It is because newspapers continue to follow the same patterns in reporting techniques that these negative connotations get attached to these individuals to be disseminated as dominant ideology.

In 2009, while there are not as many articles pertaining to NIMBYs, the rhetoric of how the story gets represented remains the same. The nearby residents make the claim that guests staying at the shelter are “drug-injecting, weapons-wielding miscreants” (Hutchinson A4). It is reported in this particular article from the *Post*, that one homeowner even “witnessed first-hand incidents of violence and drug abuse outside his building” (Hutchinson A4). Furthermore, it is

important to note that in this article the gentleman interviewed states: “The target is not the homeless themselves, but rather the city’s rushed emergency shelter program” (Hutchinson A4). The pattern of the “unworthy” homeless that emerges in the 1999 articles is once more appearing in 2009. What is ultimately on display in these NIMBY stories from both 1999 and 2009 is that the homeless are being forced to occupy a precarious position. They are included in the political sphere, as society recognizes that this group requires assistance in the form of shelters and drop-in centres, but these individuals are being excluded in the process of creating these shelters. What is happening is that those with the power, in this case, the housed population are given the right to decide what happens. The homeless have become pawns, with the power to determine what happens to them, belonging to the dominant population. This essentially means, that the homeless have been reduced to bare life, and with it to the position of homo sacer. All the while, the rhetoric found in the newspapers and on websites continues to reinforce this notion.

One of the most important elements that defines the homo sacer is that he represents one that is sacred. Agamben argues: “Life that cannot be sacrificed and yet may be killed is sacred life” (82). He goes on to explain this by stating, “the unsanctionable killing that, in his case, anyone may commit—is classifiable as neither a sacrifice nor as homicide, neither as the execution of a condemnation to death nor as sacrilege” (Agamben 82). By analyzing the language and vocabulary in the newspapers from 1999 and 2009, it becomes evident through emerging patterns that the homeless of Canada have fallen under the category of “sacred life”. One way to understand how rhetoric has contributed to this condition is to compare and contrast the way homicides get reported.

In 1999, the trial of Rose Cece and Barbara Taylor was heavily reported, as the two women were charged with the murder of Toronto Police Detective-Constable Billy Hancox. Reporter Christie Blatchford describes the officer as “nice looking”, “a sweet bear of a young man” and “the kind of man women often call cuddly” (Blatchford A10). In another article, she describes the stabbing of

Hancox by stating that the knife “plunged through to the heart” (Blatchford A9). His wife, who was present at the trial, was portrayed as being a “regal young woman” with the “grave face of a widow” (Blatchford A1). The terms and phrases employed in these articles evoke a sense of grief and sympathy for Mrs. Hancox. This becomes especially true when contrasted to Cece and Taylor who are described in the same articles as “homeless, hapless, broke, suicidal and drug addicted”, who “might as well have been born dead” (Blatchford A1). The language that is used to describe the defendants is one that suggests “a life devoid of living” (Agamben 138).

That same year, Jean-Pierre Lizotte, who was living on the street, succumbed to injuries while in hospital. This occurred after being beaten by Montreal police officers outside a restaurant; he died six weeks later. Not only did Lizotte's death receive less than one-third coverage that the trial of Hancox's killers received but also the only description of Lizotte that was made in the *Post*, was when they referred to him as “a homeless man” (Campbell A7). Additionally, it is interesting that in the articles pertaining to Lizotte's death the focus is less on the event of what happened to this individual, and more on the scrutiny that the police force faced. It was almost two months after his death that the incident was finally made public. This in itself speaks volumes to the marginalized position the homeless occupy within society. In the one article, the Deputy Chief is quoted as saying that the delay was a result of “an innocent oversight” (Campbell A7). This leaves one to question whether or not this “oversight” would have been made had the victim been a member of the housed population. It is also significant to note that in 1999, two additional articles from the *Post* reported separate incidents of men living on the streets who were beaten to death. Both of these stories were no more than short news briefs, which like the Lizotte articles contained no more information on the individuals, other than they were “homeless”.

The sample for 2009 resulted in the coverage of two more incidents in which the homeless were beaten to death. Like the stories from 1999, the rhetoric describing the circumstances of their deaths is kept formal and brief. The

writing of each is kept factual and void of any emotion. I believe it is also important to comment on one article that appeared in 2009, although not directly linked to a homicide. The story in question is about John Massie, a man who had called the streets home since the 1980s. In the article from the *Star*, written by John Goddard and Michele Henry, they detail how Massie died from burns to eighty percent of his body when the alcohol of his spilled drink caught on fire from his dropped cigarette. Throughout the article friends and acquaintances of the deceased are interviewed to create a profile of this man. What was found, was that over time living on the streets caused Massie to be described as “miserable”, “depressed” and “increasingly anti-social and bothersome” (Goddard & Henry A8) man who became prone to starting fights. It is also reported in the article that because of these behaviours, Massie began to be banned from certain areas, which in the end “pushed him into his six-block corner” (Goddard & Henry A8). Because of these restrictions this man, who was in need, was not able to access a shelter referral agency or an outreach program, as they were beyond the limits of his boundaries. The language and vocabulary in this article suggest that this man possessed the qualities that would categorize him as the “unworthy” homeless and because of this his mobility and access to services providing assistance is restricted. While the death of this man was the result of a careless accident, it was a tragedy that could have been prevented. Furthermore, this article illustrates how easy it is to justify what happened to this individual when one is described as “miserable”, “anti-social”, and “bothersome”. As a result, this man was reduced to Agamben’s “sacred life” and is a true representation of the homo sacer.

Another story, which occurred in 1999, that is important to examine is the inquest to the 1997 police shooting of Edmond Yu. The rhetoric found in these articles, exhibit how it is that the homeless have become categorized to the point in which they resemble Agamben’s homo sacer. Additionally, this event has significant relevance and parallels to current events being reported in Canadian newspapers, regarding the shooting of Sammy Yatim. In each circumstance, Yu and Yatim were shot by police officers after an altercation broke out while using

public transportation in the city of Toronto. What is essential to comment on is that both of these individuals represent marginalized groups. It could however, be argued that there is a degree of marginalization, which may have contributed to the outcome of each scenario. Both Yu and Yatim identified as racialized bodies; Yu, however, also suffered from mental illness and was homeless. While the officer involved in Yatim's shooting has been charged with manslaughter, the police were cleared of any wrongdoing in Yu's 1999 case. During the inquest it was revealed that the officer who eventually shot and killed Yu, radioed to colleagues to warn "There's a nutbar on the bus" (Boyle "Yu called a 'nutbar'"). The officer's partner also "concluded Yu was homeless because of his many layers of clothing" (Boyle 'News'). Even though it is impossible to completely compare the two incidents, it is interesting to draw attention to the parallels to question how much influence the degree of marginalization has on the outcome. There is no doubt that a pattern can be traced in which the more marginalized an individual may be perceived, the more likely it is that they become a disposable body.

Another incident that occurred in 2009, which the *National Post* reported, was a story of a homeless man, who was shot and killed by a police officer. The victim was stopped and questioned as a suspect in an earlier robbery, when he pulled out a box cutter. It was determined only after he was killed, that the man was not the suspect that the officers were looking for. Like the other incidents reported, the language describing the event is concise. What can be concluded from all these examples is that the rhetoric has not changed from 1999 to 2009. The representations of the homeless that are being portrayed as "unworthy" or "deviants" often lead to hasty conclusions made by the authorities. The further lack of coverage when this happens, suggests that there is not anything wrong with this occurring. This becomes especially alarming when compared to the language and vocabulary that is used when the roles are reversed, and the victim is a member of the dominant population. As a result, the homeless have become "othered", marking them as "sacred" and ultimately occupying the role of the modern homo sacer.

**Analysis: Affective responses to Homelessness**

After analyzing newspaper articles from 1999 and 2009 it becomes evident that by relying on certain myths that are perpetuated to society, the homeless are presented through rhetoric as either the “worthy” or “unworthy”. One way that the media and those with the authority, to perpetuate what becomes dominant discourse, work to distinguish between these portrayals is by using the notion of fear. This representation, which is activated by the affective response, becomes disseminated to the dominant population. Ahmed argues: “fantasies construct the other as a danger not only to one’s self as self, but to one’s very life, to one’s very existence as a separate being with a life of its own (64). By constructing the homeless as a threat or a danger to the housed population, voices of authority, such as reporters and journalists, are successful in reiterating the notion of the “unworthy” homeless. It is by creating the dichotomy of what is perceived as “fearful” and what is “not fearful”, that these newspaper articles work to maintain a distinct boundary between “them” and “us”.

This is a pattern that was found in 1999 and is carried through to 2009, where it also becomes a common practice to rely on a sense of fear to assist in how the “worthy” and the “unworthy” are constructed. Articles from 1999, which portray the homeless as a group to fear, utilize sentences containing loaded terms such as, “stench of feces, urine, and old food” (Gray A11), “hassled” and “intimidated” (Boyle “Tories to Take Swipe at Squeegee Kids”) and even going so far as labeling this group as a “potential danger” (Benzie A20). Not only are the homeless described with loaded terms which evoke negative connotations, but incidents pertaining to homelessness also get portrayed in this manner, which works to reinforce a response of fearfulness. One article, which exemplifies this method reports on a poverty protest occurring on Parliament Hill and uses phrases such as, “angry crowd cursed, kicked and jostled”, “roughed up” and “demanded to meet” (Bellavance A1). These terms suggest force or violence being used by protesters as a means to achieve their objectives. Just like

previously examined articles involving the 1999 Allan Gardens protest, by framing the event using this language, the journalist is successful in diverting the attention of the reader away from the main focus of the protest. Instead, the rhetoric works to portray the protesters as unruly and disobedient individuals.

It is also significant to note that the language used to illustrate the balloons filled with red paint that were thrown at the government building included “hurled”, “splattering”, “paint bombs” and “exploded” (Bellavance A7). When used, these words evoke harsh negative connotations to the reader. Using “bombs” and “exploded” force readers to make associations with war, which suggest an immediate sense of threat or violence. These associations once more help to support the dichotomy of “them” and “us”. By creating this boundary it suggests the issue is black or white, leaving no room to question the motives behind these actions. This ultimately helps to portray the homeless and issues around homelessness in a negative light. It suggests to the reader that as part of the housed population, they should be weary and fearful of allowing this group to get too close because they may be dangerous. By creating this fear as found in this example, newspaper articles are successful in establishing a boundary, a distinction between the “worthy” and “unworthy”, and ultimately a distance between bodies. It is exactly this distance between bodies that fear works to maintain.

Another affective response, which is particularly dangerous, is outlined by Ahmed: “The more we don’t know what or who it is we fear *the more the world becomes fearsome* [emphasis in the original text]” (69). While defining the parameters of my theoretical framework, I indicate that this notion of fear works to control the bodies, which are the most vulnerable. For the homeless, finding a safe spot, where there is no perceivable danger may alter the body language and reception of others. It also means that the homeless are always having to discern who is trustworthy or not, renders these individuals even more vulnerable. One of the most shocking and appalling examples of this was found in the news section of the *National Post* in 2009. The news brief on the incident shares the details about how two police officers from Calgary had been “acquitted of beating a

homeless man” (‘Officers Acquitted of Charges’ A4). McCormack, who was found sleeping in the stairwell of the police station, suffered a broken rib and required six stitches to a cut over his eye. The judge presiding over the case determined that the officers used “reasonable force” to remove the sleeping man who was “trespassing in a restricted area” (Officers Acquitted of Charges’ A4). While trying to wake the man, one officer admitted to initially, “kicking him lightly on the back of the head” and when the man then refused to show his hands “he punched him” (‘Officers Acquitted of Charges’ A4). Having sought out the stairwell in the police station as a refuge from the elements, people passing by and other potential dangers, McCormack demonstrates Ahmed’s concept of fear as a means to contain bodies. This sense of fear, however, only becomes reinforced by the behaviours displayed by these men in uniform.

Where this becomes even more problematic is that police officers are authority figures that society trusts to uphold the laws that govern our country as a means to ensure the safety of its citizens. The language found in this article indicates that there is nothing wrong with the behaviour of these officers. The fact that these officers were acquitted of their charges only condones their actions, and sends this message to the readers. When the homeless act in hostile or aggressive ways out of fear, the media and by extension society, label these individuals as deviant and blame it on some kind of character flaw. This can be shown with examples such as the man in the stairwell (William John McCormack), Edmond Yu, and Jean-Pierre Lizotte. When the situation is reversed, however, the notion that gets circulated to the dominant population is that these people, who have fallen through the cracks and call the streets home, are the ones to be feared.

The concept found in Ahmed’s work of not knowing who or what to fear, thus making the world a fearsome place, may also be used to explain the shortage of coverage in 2009, regardless of the fact the number of homeless continued to increase. As discussed in the theoretical framework section, the uncertainty brought on by the financial crisis of 2008, leaves many unsure and fearful of what the future is to bring. Not wanting to create a greater fear among



the housed population that they too could be out on the streets, may be an explanation for fewer articles on the topic of homelessness. By keeping the unknown at a distance, the public's fear may be managed.

The affective response of shame can be seen to take on different roles between 1999 and 2009. At the core of these articles, it becomes evident that it is about who is responsible for their situation and who should feel shame as a result. The rhetoric found in the articles from 1999, which were more likely to profile the homeless, focus on the individual and their "faults" or "traits" as a source of shame. After the 2008 market crash, the pattern present in the 2009 articles becomes about redefining who it is that should be shameful of the fact that they fall under the category of homeless. As this analysis has already highlighted in different sections, the homeless are often linked with loaded terms or myths that are associated with behaviours that result in them as "othered". It is important to understand that through this process an underlining sense of shame becomes attached to these notions. Some examples of phrases that re-appear throughout the articles, which work to produce this affective response include: "drug-addicted" (Blatchford A1), "helpless" (Galloway A6), "eyesore" (Gray A11), and "aggressive" (Goddard & Henry A8). The connotations that these words elicit from the reader only suggest negative attributes of the written individual, as they do not fall under what is expected of the "dominant" group. These words in no way work to address the root causes of homelessness but rather renders these individuals to blame for their circumstances. This places a sense of failure on the person, which only then further subjects this individual to a deep-seeded sense of shame. As Ahmed writes, "the 'bad feeling' is attributed to oneself, rather than to an object or other" (104), when this occurs it immobilizes the individual, causing them to retreat from the rest of society further from the help and support that they require. Instead, this group becomes isolated with feelings of failure and ultimately shame, for not being able to conform to the norms society has prescribed.

In 1999 there were two "human interest" pieces written about Hans

Scholze, a homeless man living in a wooden box he had built himself. It is interesting to note that in one of these articles found in the *Star*, the notion of shame is displayed in a different manner. Instead of looking at the individual living on the street, the story is told from the perspective of the man's daughter. The line that I found to be particularly powerful is when the reporter writes: "The hardest part, she says, is when someone asks about her father and she has to explain he lives in a box" (Brazaro Star). Her father, who suffers from mental illness, has chosen to make his home in the wooden cart, by the side of the road, and has been there for the last twenty years. What his daughter's admission reveals is the stigma that has become attached to these marginalized bodies. It is for this reason I believe it is important to include this article in this analysis. The quotation and by extension, this article highlights the strength and ability of neoliberalism, with its promotion of the individual to be responsible for their own well being, has on influencing the dominant discourse of Canadian society. This article also demonstrates how an affective response such as shame becomes implicated as a result. Because Hans Scholze has not fulfilled the social expectations required by the hegemonic discourse, his daughter feels a sense of shame on behalf of his "failures". In the two articles written about this man and his daughter, neither story addresses Scholze's situation as a result of systemic failure, but only that of himself and his family not knowing how to remedy the condition. This leaves Scholze essentially "helpless" until he decides to "help himself".

The articles from 2009, however, begin to shift tone, and the language and vocabulary begin to depict a different type of "homeless" than what was previously represented in 1999. Phrases and terms found during this period include "well-educated" ('905 Homeless' AA4), "ordinary" (McCormack A19), and "hard-working" (McCormack A19, Monsenbraaten GT1). The sense of shame, which is present in the previous decade, is not as ominous in 2009. It has become less about an individual's "failures" or "flaws", with the focus on systemic failure and the positive qualities that the dominant ideology promotes. It should be noted though, that this is only the case for those who fall under the category

of “hardworking”, “ordinary” and “educated”. For those who do not fit these labels and fall outside the margins, it is implied that the individual is still responsible for their condition. What is being perpetuated through these representations is the notion that one should only feel shame if homelessness is their “fault”. If they are striving to uphold social expectations prescribed by the dominant discourse, then they are depicted as the “worthy” homeless and therefore should not be shameful of their situation. Additionally, with the media’s focus concentrated on this “new” category of the homeless, those who do not fit into this subdivided group become further marginalized and their needs further ignored.

One of the ways to successfully gauge the notion of “disgust” taking place within the sample size, and whether or not there is a change in response, is by examining the rhetoric found in the editorial and comment sections. The pattern that was revealed found that in 1999 there are a significantly higher number of responses being written from the general public. Comments evoking a sense of disgust include those made by Klaus Krueger, where he states that it is “unfair” and “outrageous” that “certain people” have the ability to “heap their responsibilities onto the taxpayers” (Krueger ‘Star’). The rhetoric in this quotations suggests that the myths that Krueger is drawing upon are “our country can’t afford welfare” and “people make wrong choices and should live with them” (Swanson 177). By using these myths Krueger is working to produce the affective response of disgust in his readers. It is also significant to note the neoliberal ideals being expressed by these comments. The concept of the individual as responsible for his or her own faults and failures is prominent. Furthermore, it is not the responsibility of the state, but that of the “taxpayers”. While this notion is being perpetuated in 1999, articles from 2009 express “disgust” in a different manner.

As previously stated, there are fewer comments and editorials pertaining to the homeless and homelessness in 2009. It may be argued that as the impact of the financial crisis becomes apparent, the lack of comments from the general public may be seen a process of sanitizing space. When bodies become

disgusted they experience a rage, which implies the object has got within a close enough distance to sicken (Ahmed 86). By choosing to ignore the issue of homelessness, it distances oneself from the looming threat. This disgust of the “other” is also one that gives way to fear. Together these affective responses work to create the conditions in which the homeless must live.

It is also significant to comment on who is permitted to voice their reaction of “disgust”. In both sets of articles from 1999 and 2009, those who have become “voices of authority” on homelessness replaced the voices of the homeless. Instead of hearing the thoughts and opinions of those who call the streets home, reporters and journalists defer to anti-poverty activists, nurses and outreach workers as well as board members of charities and housing committees. By not permitting the voices of the homeless to be heard it suggests that they are not as important as the rest of society, but that they are just bodies living, but not engaging.

### **Conclusion:**

When I began my research project examining Canada's homeless population through a rhetorical analysis on newspaper articles found in the *Toronto Star* and the *National Post*, I was already aware of the marginalized position this group occupied within Canadian society. What I was surprised to discover, however, was the complex and influential effect the media has in perpetuating this condition. By examining the years 1999 and 2009 from these publications it is found that several noteworthy patterns begin to emerge. One of the most apparent of these patterns is the substantial decrease in articles from 1999 to 2009. This drop in coverage foreshadows what further analysis exposes. In 1999 articles surrounding the issue suggest that homelessness is not to be tolerated. By 2009, however, the response becomes that it is the homeless who can no longer be tolerated. When combined these patterns, along with others found in this project, reveal how the national press establishes representations of the “worthy” and “unworthy” homeless and how these stereotypes then become presented to society. This in turn only works to maintain the vulnerability of this

population.

One of the main questions, which formed the basis of this project, was determining how the language and vocabulary in the *Star* and the *Post* create representations of the “worthy” and “unworthy”. What was found by examining these narratives is that the use of “myths” regarding poverty and homelessness serve as the building blocks in creating these stereotypes. Several versions of the same repackaged “myths” are found within these articles, even though these ideas do not originate from factual information. These myths then work to reinforce the concepts being presented to society, further disseminating them as “facts”.

Many of these myths revolve around the discussion of homelessness as a result of systemic breakdown or personal traits and faults. In 1999 to be considered the “worthy” homeless, one must attempt to follow the prescribed social norms and behaviours, and most importantly be working to turn their life around. Following the 2008 financial crisis, the “worthy” homeless portrayed in 2009 are those people who have “done everything right”, but fall victim to fate and unfortunate circumstances. By choosing language containing loaded terms, the *Post* and *Star* are able to provide readers with associations that either creates a positive or negative image. These associations are important in producing an affective response.

The housed population also becomes hesitant to respond in a positive manner to the plight of homelessness, as the media uses the affective response of fear, when creating the image of the “unworthy” homeless. When the homeless is successfully constructed as “unworthy” it creates the notion of the “other”, and it has been a long tradition in western society, that anything “other” is to be feared. As outlined, the homeless also commonly feel a sense of fear. When both sides are reacting from this affective response, it creates a barrier between parties, which only works to maintain these boundaries. What the overall results from this project suggest, is that the media plays a significant role in contributing to the way the homeless are perceived. It is not only the language and vocabulary of what is being written about that affect this group; what is not being

reported is just as important to the outcome of homelessness. As the findings indicated, the voice of the homeless is one that is often not heard, instead being replaced by those who have become voices of authority on the issue. These stories and their portrayals, however, only leave the homeless a group to be tolerated, rather than promoting acceptance or equality. For the act of “tolerating” the homeless only allows this population to be further marginalized and forced into the role of the modern homo sacer. Once occupying this position, the homeless run the risk of being pushed to the extreme margins of society and all together forgotten. This occurs when society becomes complacent with the treatment that is provided to this marginalized group.

The work completed in this research project is important as it illustrates a correlation between the media and the way the homeless are represented and how these ideas get disseminated to society. What would be interesting for further research would be to expand the size of the project to include publications from across the country. Additionally, it may be significant to open the scope in regards to the years being examined. By continuing this research it would allow for the patterns discovered within this project to be further traced and the impact of the economic crisis to fully be explored. In turn this would provide a greater understanding of the implications facing the homeless. Once this is determined, society can begin to work towards creating change Canada so desperately needs. For far too long tolerance has allowed society to look away and permitted the government to manipulate their power, leaving the homeless population dehumanized and reduced to little more than bodies existing in a state of exception. They are forced to spend their days on the street existing, but not actually living. It is the role of Canadian citizens to not just tolerate, but to acknowledge what is happening in their country and it is with media and the influence of words that will provide a way to do this.

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