

RHETORICAL RESPONSE TO THE HOMELESS MOVEMENT  
ADOPTING DISCURSIVE UNITS IN COUNTER-FRAMES

A Thesis

by

KRISTIN SUMMER MATHE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2009

Major Subject: Communication

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## ABSTRACT

Rhetorical Response to the Homeless Movement

Adopting Discursive Units in Counter-Frames. (May 2009)

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American cities have a combination of policies that both provide emergency services and restrict the movements and activities of homeless people. These policies are the product of active public debates that construct narratives that explain the causes of homelessness and characterize homeless people. I identify both the policy opportunities and limits created by the way interest groups talk about homelessness by weaving together framing theory with analysis of discursive units employed in the public discussions about homelessness published in the *St. Petersburg Times*, in Pinellas County, Florida. This county is representative of other metropolitan regions that experienced rapid growth, gentrification, and are now seeing skyrocketing rates of foreclosures. I situate this local debate within the nationally circulated publications referring to homelessness to identify underlying assumptions that shape the outcomes in Pinellas County and set the stage for similar discussions across the United States. I examine how these narratives function in collective action frames of homelessness, the resulting opposing views of who should respond, and how the issue of homelessness

should be treated given the legal division between public and private property in our capitalistic society.

Frames must be considered rhetoric because they are employed to advance persuasive arguments. The various issue and collective action frames used to shape city policies each form an argument about homelessness. Discursive units are the building blocks of these arguments. Hence, I examine the place of the discursive units of thematic values, anecdotal narratives, and characterizations within these frames.

I find that the city council responds to the competing interest group frames by selectively adopting different discursive units from each group in order to frame the situation of homelessness in the region as a crisis. While maintaining the use of the same thematic values and anecdotal narratives, the government is able to transcend competing characterizations of the homeless, creating space for their new policies to pass and succeed with the support of constituents from opposed interest groups.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The American Dream supposes that every hard working honest person can follow in the footsteps of Horatio Alger and pull themselves up the economic ladder.

Throughout the history of the United States there have been those supposedly unwilling or unable to put in a hard day's work who have been referred to as tramps, bums, transients and hobos. Their failure at achieving the American dream has generally been blamed on individual physical or moral flaws. While the increasing gentrification of city centers during the 1990's and early 2000's suggests that many have indeed achieved the American dream through their hard work, determination and honesty, the increasing numbers of homeless people suggests another angle on the story of the American dream. This other angle sees the institution of market capitalism as a means for advancement for some, along with an inevitable failure of others. This version of the story places the blame for homelessness squarely on the shoulders of a society that endorses capitalism as an economic structure.

The sky high unemployment rate during the Great Depression meant that even many able bodied industrious men were unable to find work. Roosevelt's New Deal was the first major action by the federal government to take responsibility for those negatively affected by the economic system the American society chose to embrace. The

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This thesis follows the style of *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*.

New Deal also marked the beginning of the welfare state in the U.S. Most of these programs, however, were to help poor families make ends meet, not actually address homelessness.

Homelessness as we know it today did not become a commonly visible problem until the late 1970's. Along with the closure of state mental institutions, the federal government also redirected housing subsidies to home owners. This reduced the availability of low income housing. In addition to the former mental institution patients without a place to go, many families and low income individuals found themselves no longer able to afford shelter. In the 1980's the ready availability of crack, a cheap and highly addictive narcotic, contributed to the inability of many to work their way off of the streets.<sup>1</sup> Since then the demographics of those living on the streets have shifted with the fluctuations in the economy as well as programs available targeting specific groups of the homeless.<sup>2</sup>

Over the past thirty years the federal government has passed several policies that have both reflected and shifted the dominant views of homelessness. In 1983 the Federal Interagency Taskforce on Food and Shelter for Homeless was established to identify resources and help homeless people access those resources.<sup>3</sup> Temporary Aid for Needy Families and the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, assumed an individual responsibility for poverty and homelessness as opposed to viewing poverty and homelessness as an inevitable consequence of market capitalism.<sup>4</sup> The principle behind these policies stress that all people have a responsibility to work and support nuclear family units. These policies and their underlying assumptions have



been challenged by organizations of homeless people, housed advocates, and charities. The federal government contributed funding toward emergency services and shelter for the homeless beginning in 1983. While provision for emergency shelter was often made available to all subgroups of the homeless, assistance for families, children, mothers, and veterans have received far greater support than those for able bodied men. In 1987, the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act<sup>5</sup> was passed as the first broad humanitarian response to the homeless crisis. These policies contain the paradox of being a response to homelessness through social institutions, yet a denial of social responsibility. Getting off of the streets, as assisted by these pieces of legislation, assumes that the individual is ultimately responsible for pulling themselves up.

While this legislation was aimed at ameliorating the plight of the homeless, it was unable to slow the growth of the homeless population. The failure of these government assistance programs to end homelessness has pushed cities to take matters into their own hands. In the 1990's cities began to criminalize homelessness. Restrictions banned panhandling in certain locations, allowed police to seize possessions, and in 1994 Dallas passed a law banning sleeping in public.<sup>6</sup> Police enforced these ordinances through mass arrests and stiff fines. Since punishing homeless people for their status was not successful, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century cities began prohibiting the public distribution of food in the hope that charities would not draw more homeless people to the town.

Neither the federal support for emergency shelter and services nor the war on homelessness has decreased the frequency of people not having homes. While an

accurate count of how many people are homeless has proven impossible, it is fair to say that the visibility of homelessness is still prevalent enough to warrant passionate discussions in city centers. A report released in July 2008 by the Department of Housing and Urban Development found that 1,589,000 people used homeless shelters the previous year.<sup>7</sup> Since George W. Bush signed into law legislation that makes the receipt of federal funds for city programs, affordable housing, and shelters contingent upon the creation of a Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness, many cities now have a combination of policies that both provide additional emergency services and restrict the movements and activities of homeless people. The ordinances and laws passed are the product of active public debates that attempt to construct narratives that explain the causes of homelessness and characterize homeless people.

The local governments are not the only ones to take matters into their own hands. In 1982 the National Coalition for the Homeless formed to provide assistance to help homeless people organize and gain support for their own voices in the public debates. In addition to working with charities and other housed activists, homeless and formerly homeless individuals run this organization. The National Coalition for the Homeless operates on a national scale and provides assistance to chapters and other charities in cities across the United States. Church groups, charitable organizations, and nonprofit agencies have emerged as a response to homelessness from the private sector. These groups often work together to advocate for homeless people in their local communities.

Because homelessness tends to concentrate in civic centers, business owners and Chambers of Commerce also enter the public discussions about how to prevent homeless

people from driving away customers. Although it may seem that they would inevitably side with the local government, that has not always been the case. More than any other interest group, the business interests are most affected by the dialogue between homeless advocates and government officials.

### **Research Questions**

My study is guided by several questions. First, how is the voice of the marginalized listened to in the public arena? I begin with the understanding that those who participate and find a place in the capitalistic economy contribute to and shape the dominant social culture. Consistent with the Political Process/Opportunity model articulated by sociologists Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow, this group has greater access to government and elites to champion their cause.<sup>8</sup> In a country where the voice of the majority is usually able to enact public policies that favor their interests, those unable to contribute to the economic system would have less power and be less likely to be heard when voicing a need for change. Yet marginalized groups do bring about change as evidenced by the Civil Rights movement and more recently the environmental movement. Political opportunity models explain that social movements require cognitive liberation, indigenous networks, alliances with elites, and changes in the political opportunities in general.<sup>9</sup> Sidney Tarrow expands this notion by refining what constitutes a political opportunity, and also recognizes the importance of resonant collective action frames.<sup>10</sup> This theoretical approach allows for a dynamic relationship between the challengers and the polity. While Tarrow does point to framing as an important element in political opportunities, he focuses primarily upon the structural

opportunities of movements. I will be focusing on how social change occurs when private voices organize and enter the public arena. Social movement theorists describe the result of the organized voices as frames. I also ask how dialogue between opposing interests shapes the political discussion. My study will focus primarily on this question by examining the argumentative role given to narratives and characterizations by the major interest groups. For the purpose of this study, the homeless activists and business owners are the leading voices in the two competing interest groups.

These two angles of inquiry result in a more specific question: what rhetorical role do the discursive units play within the frame, the group promoting that particular frame, and in the frame's dialogue with other frames? While the bulk of the framing literature explores the various tasks of framing, it does not thoroughly explore the rhetorical nature of frames themselves. Frames must be considered rhetoric because they are employed to advance persuasive arguments. By examining the narratives and characterizations used in the homeless movement in St. Petersburg, Florida, I will be looking at the way each interest group and the city council builds its argument. So in addition to identifying what framing task is assigned to particular discursive units, I will also be looking at how those units serve to promote support from that group's constituents and also the function of those same units as they clash with alternative frames in the public sphere. These two discursive units are the content of the frames, and by understanding the rhetorical role of each, I hope to provide a better understanding of how frames actually function in the public sphere.

## Literature Review

I derive my understanding of the content of frames from Celeste Condit's book *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric*. Through following ideographs, narratives and characterizations in a close reading of the abortion controversy, she is able to show how vocabularies are adopted into policy. Condit's book is more than a close reading of the abortion controversy in the United States. She presents a model for understanding representative democracy that permits rhetoric to be considered as a mechanism for bringing about social change. Her own study shows how the interest groups dealing with abortion did just that. She does this by examining the interconnected relationship between the development of public vocabularies through the rhetoric of special interest groups and the political action of the courts, as well as the influence of these factors on private talk about issues over a time span stretching from the 1950's to 1985. Though she makes no attempt to broaden her model to account for rhetoric on other subjects than abortion, she does suggest that her own close study, and by extension other such close studies, lend credibility to the idea that rhetoric functions to bring about social change in representative democracies.<sup>11</sup>

The contention that rhetoric is a mechanism for social change is explored through the relationship between political, public, and cultural discourse. She focuses on the prominence of three different discursive units in these contexts. She looks at narratives, ideographs, and characterizations. She argues that these, "are central to the persuasiveness and impact of public discourse."<sup>12</sup> While political and cultural discourse

is certainly public, viewing it through political and cultural lenses allows a more nuanced view of the role of the various discursive units.

The case study of the abortion controversy illustrates both what the interests groups did, and what they failed to do that may have helped their position as the public contention continued. In the 1950's the abortion issue emerged as a public issue by the representation of private stories. Condit explains, "The public narrative was a strategic adaptation of women's experiences; the reporters shaped and selected the narratives in particular ways. To be persuasive to the dominant audience, the stories had to use rather than confront the beliefs and social conditions in the existing American repertoire."<sup>13</sup> This was accomplished by portraying ordinary but good women who ended up in horrible circumstances requiring an abortion which was performed with equally sickening methods. Condit explains the effectiveness of the early abortion narratives in Burkeian terms. The despicable scenes could be separated from the hapless agents. The narratives were supposedly successful because they portrayed situations that wage earners could identify with, and the general public could support. However, Condit says, "still today the story of illegal abortion is frequently and vehemently refuted by those who do not share the life conditions and beliefs of wage-laboring women."<sup>14</sup> She does not describe what sets apart the attitudes of the wage laboring woman from other women, and further suggests that Catholic wage laborers don't exist or count. Nevertheless, her argument that the power of the early abortion narrative is derived from, "the tale's structure, the pervasiveness of the conditions, and the relative social power of the affected groups,"<sup>15</sup> explains why it was resonant with so many. The issue

became more polarized because of the inadequacy of narrative form to bridge the old beliefs and new conditions. This was reflected in the competing characterizations of abortion doctors as the general narrative became part of the public discourse.

Although Catholics did not identify with the narrative promoting reform of abortion laws, Condit shows that they did indeed exist, and that they created a narrative to which they could identify. They responded with a hegemonic narrative that reconstructed history in the form of a narrative that captured their position on the abortion issue by showing progress toward valuing fetal life.<sup>16</sup> This narrative is criticized for having a limited authority and silencing the histories of non-Catholics and non-Christians. Even the Catholic authority was called into question because the perspective and theology of celibate males was inconsistent and distant from the needs of women. Its strength was that it was constructed on lines of good and evil that were understandable to the American public, and the Christiancentric nature of the history was consistent with grade school history lessons. Condit explains the result: “the particular interests of the Catholics were served, but only because those interests meshed fairly well with the values embraced in the broader social history.”<sup>17</sup> Although sanctity of life and the value of love might be shared by others, the identification of this narrative with the Catholic Church made it evidently a special interest group account and open for attack on that ground.

The conflict between groups accepting these two different narratives advanced the controversy by attaching their arguments to ideographs. Condit says, “In order to present a demand for social action in legal or constitutional terms, narratives must be

fitted to the broad network of constitutive public values called “ideographs.”<sup>18</sup> Because the concepts of “motherhood” and “family” were not being contested, the Pro-life movement associated the terms “fetus” and “life” and amplified that connection to increase the value of fetal life. This was accomplished through visual imagery and scientific backing. Condit suggests that the pro-life was actually a pro-natalist position. Nonetheless, using the ideograph of life allowed the anti-abortion position to be accepted by a larger collection of groups.

The advocates for abortion reform challenged the ideograph of life with those of equality and choice. During the 1960’s the claim that class determined one’s ability to receive a safe abortion raised the demon of discrimination. Calls for equality were thus salient and allowed feminist discourse to enter on this side of the debate. This ideographic argument meant that moderate reforms consistent with the early narratives would no longer provide this equality, so the policy goals became more sweeping. The weakness here was that inequality was borne out in an illegal realm and thus not under the purview of legislation. Equality then was in certain circumstances governed by various interest groups.

The ideograph of choice was then used to reunite the various groups standing behind equality. “Choice” arose out of the dire circumstances of the early narratives.<sup>19</sup> Biological choices allowed by new forms of contraception lead to the idea of social choices for having children. These ideographs allow Condit to examine the clash of narratives at the level of competing social values.



Persuasion is not just of outsiders. To activate supporters, the anti-abortion movement used powerful images to amplify their position and further connect “fetus” and “life.” Condit writes, “Although such persuasion does not change pro-Life advocates and supporters from a completely hostile to a supportive position, it does justify, integrate, and activate their beliefs.”<sup>20</sup> These images replaced the former hegemonic narrative. But, “It is in the translation of visual images into verbal meanings that the rhetoric of images operates most powerfully.”<sup>21</sup> It is through the captions on the pictures that this side of the debate was able to tell viewers what they were seeing, be it through metaphor, synecdoche, or hyperbole, in terms that would provide grounds for the anti-abortion position. She concludes, however, “that the pro-Life pictures bring us a weighty set of grounds and that those grounds substantiate the claim that fetuses are important and valuable and ought to be protected whenever it is possible to do so without treading on greater values.”<sup>22</sup> The persuasive power of the pro-life pictures would therefore justify the differentiation between abortions of fetuses at different points in their term, which indeed did become enacted in public policy.

The pro-abortion groups used visual images to summarize their narratives and reinforce the characterizations they developed early on in their campaign. This method served to repeat the narrative to supporters and thus played a similar reinforcement role as visual rhetoric for the pro-life movement. The main difference is that this visual rhetoric did not add to the argument in any substantial way. The images still focused on the scene and conditions that illegal abortions exemplified. Their strongest use of visual rhetoric was the association of their verbal messages with the Statue of Liberty. Condit

explains, “The symbol did not carry the force of the "seeing is believing" variety, as would a pictorial image, but it replaced that veracity with the force garnered from a powerful cultural icon.”<sup>23</sup> Although she does not say so, it linked the narrative with the ideograph of choice much more strongly.

These competing views of abortion were weighed in the *Roe v. Wade* decision as well as the depictions of the decision to abort in popular media. The court decision was articulated in terms regarding the characterization of womanhood in relation to motherhood. The ideographs of life, choice and equality had to be translated into the constraining legal vocabulary in order to become institutionalized.<sup>24</sup> Although this ruling gave weight to the pro-choice vocabulary, the debate over the Hyde Amendment favored the pro-life vocabulary. Thus, the abortion debate became institutionalized. The fact that neither side refuted the claims of the other prevented either side from experiencing complete success.<sup>25</sup>

Abortion became a matter of cultural significance through its enactment in television. This medium established the ideas about abortion as social norms by which to judge the issue. It returned the argument to the narrative form and developed a pragmatic combination of the vocabularies of choice and life that did not adhere to either philosophy completely.<sup>26</sup> This finding of a middle ground resulted in extremists turning to violence to forward their cause since they figured that the debate was, for all intents and purposes, over due to the practice of over-weighing. The example of the Gidion Four suggests that it was only the pro-life supporters that found a violent outlet.

As with all of the arenas, the private discourse of women about abortion was expanded from talking about individual wants to account for others. Condit argues that the private discourse of women followed the lead of the public discourse because the public discourse provided them with a vocabulary and broke the taboo on speaking about abortion.

Although Condit's reasoning and analysis of examples is extremely logical, her approach to the abortion issue would benefit from a more systematic look at each side that social movement research provides. Since special interest groups are central to her theory of rhetoric in representative democracies, there needs to be a more balanced look at interest groups. The Catholic Church is the main group she points to. It is not balanced by looking at the efforts of Planned Parenthood and other pro-choice groups. These formal organizations provide a structure and means for articulating messages intentionally to shape the public discourse. By looking at specific social movement organizations (SMOs), the need for the transformation of each side's discourse to expand to gain more constituents makes more sense. Organizations are not disembodied special interests, but rather organizations of private people who share common experiences, values, goals, or grievances. She suggests that there is a process that begins with narrative construction in public discourse, moves to political institutionalization of vocabularies that become enacted as cultural norms and thus enter the private discourse. Her last chapter examines which elements of the public discourse are adopted by women, and what might exist in that private discourse that does not appear in the public arena. While Condit looks at how the public discourse enters the private world, she does

not consider that it may have actually originated there. The research on social movement organizations and identity construction provides a theoretical framework that helps fill in the initiating steps.

Sociologists, organizational communication, and media scholars have studied the opportunities that permit organization and the construction of narratives in the first place. Their conclusions have been articulated in the theory of framing. Since Condit's book is focused on tracing how social change takes place, it does not take into consideration some of the factors that could be holding back sweeping change outside of the rhetoric of the abortion debate itself. By turning to the framing literature, I hope to better understand the limits constraining discursive units.

In the 1980's scholars began studying the framing processes of social movement organizations to better understand recruitment and the broader ideological factors explaining movement behavior. David Snow and his colleagues provide both a large proportion of the framing theory as well as empirical studies of its application to homeless movements in the United States. Snow roots his theory of framing in that articulated by Gamson. Framing "... denotes an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction."<sup>27</sup> In other words, frames are the shared way of viewing a situation by a given group of people. Ideological and cultural factors in social movements have been addressed through framing theory, which Snow and Cress explain is, "Rooted theoretically in the work of Erving Goffman, this perspective views movements not merely as carriers of existing ideas and meanings, but as signifying agents actively engaged in producing and maintaining meaning for

constituents, antagonists, and bystanders.”<sup>28</sup> If framing can be used to explain meaning making by movements, and since movements operate in complex opportunity contexts, it seems that the movement is not simply constructing meaning based on internal considerations. Instead, the meaning constructed by movements competes with alternate interpretations or frames offered by competing interests. The bulk of research on such dynamics examines the conflicts between competing organizational frames.

Arriving at such consistency in understanding takes several processes. Frame bridging, amplification, extension and transformation serve to spread the movement’s meanings to bring bystanders into active participation by bringing them into contact with the SMO’s frame. Amplification is the process of emphasizing common values, while frame extension is the broadening of values such that individuals who might otherwise not be interested in a movement’s goals may adopt the frame.<sup>29</sup> Frame transformation is the term used to describe the shift in values that individuals undergo in rejecting their old frames and adopting those of the movement. These four processes bring about frame alignment, that is, the “linkage of individual and SMO interpretive orientations, such that some set of individual interests, values and beliefs and SMO activities, goals, and ideology are congruent and complementary.”<sup>30</sup> The bulk of framing literature has examined these processes as they are used by social movement organizations. The use of these processes by governmental opposition to movements has not yet been explored. Although governments don’t engage in the same type of collective actions as challengers in social movement organizations, it is important to ask how these framing processes might work to explain government actions towards a movement.

The nature of framing that social movement organizations engage in is referred to as collective action framing. Snow and his colleagues have posited three specific framing tasks: diagnostic, prognostic, and mobilizing framing. Diagnostic framing is broken down further into naming and blaming processes. Diagnostic framing is key because “it problematizes and focuses attention on an issue, helps shape how the issue is perceived, and identifies who or what is culpable, thereby identifying the targets or sources of the outcomes sought.”<sup>31</sup> Prognostic framing is the process of presenting solutions and plans to achieve the organization’s solutions and mobilizing framing pushes the constituents of the organization into action. They argue that in order for SMOs to gain followers and participants in movements, and ultimately if the movement is to achieve its goals, there needs to be the right balance struck between all of these steps. Snow and Corrigan-Brown found that misalignment happens when a SMO strikes the wrong balance between naming and blaming.<sup>32</sup> Although this is useful for understanding movement mobilization, the counter forces of naming and blaming by the government and other members of the polity have not been examined. Beyond thinking of outcomes, this first step of diagnostic framing might have weight in swaying public opinion for or against government policies, and thus effect the nature of political opportunities. It is also at the diagnostic level that the initial boundaries of acceptable action are drawn. It seems that it is most likely to be in the prognostic task that frames would be most clearly engaged in persuasive acts, so I will look closely at the discursive units employed in prognostic framing. I argue that the construction of the discursive unit in both the diagnostic and prognostic steps contributes to the effectiveness of the frame.

The creation of frames within a movement has been discussed in terms of frame articulation and amplification. Frame articulation is the coherent alignment of events and experiences in such a way that a new angle for understanding emerges. Snow and Benford explain that amplification helps with this articulation process: “These punctuated or accented elements may function in service of the articulation process by providing a conceptual handle or peg for linking together various events and issues. In operating in this fashion, these punctuated issues, beliefs, and events may function much like synecdoches, bringing into sharp relief and symbolizing the larger frame or movement of which it is a part.”<sup>33</sup> In addition to the use of narratives within frames, frames can themselves be considered to be constructing coherent narratives. Kenneth Burke’s theory of dramatism can help explain the concept of frame amplification because it allows us to determine which elements of a particular narrative are being emphasized. Narrative analysis and dramatism have not yet been employed to understand how this frame articulation and amplification function rhetorically.

The framing literature primarily focuses on what movements do in terms of intentionally framing, while the bulk of counter framing literature looks at oppositional movements, or the frame disputes between rival SMOs.<sup>34</sup> In order to better understand the sort of framing processes engaged in by the government and political elites, I turn to the work of Ferree on soft repression. Soft repression, when considered as the repression through meaning construction, parallels framing theory. She argues that ridicule, stigmatizing, and silencing are processes that can be used to block the framing efforts of social movement organizations. Each of these processes are considered to take place at

different social levels. Ridicule at the micro, face-to-face level, stigmatizing at the meso group level, and silencing at the macro level where the media operates.<sup>35</sup> However, these concepts have not been explored in a dynamic relationship with the framing of the movements. The homeless population is widely considered to be a stigmatized group, but the fact that stories in newspapers and magazines are being written suggests that the homeless movement has not been completely repressed.

Rob Rosenthal's examination of framing within homeless movements has revealed three basic ways of naming the homeless: lackers, slackers, and unwilling victims.<sup>36</sup> This trio of labels have appeared both in frames and in instances of the cultural identity of homeless people. While Snow and Corrigall-Brown suggest that movements ought to choose a stance of victimage in the naming step of diagnostic framing, the other options have not been explored as ways of creating frame resonance for the members of the movement itself.<sup>37</sup> It also has not yet been examined how these diagnostic frames of the people themselves play out in framing conflicts between movements and the rest of society.

Although not typically considered alongside framing literature, the work on the identity construction of homeless individuals gives insight into how these diagnostic processes might succeed or fail given various target audiences. Considering that homeless people often become active in movement organizations, their own identifications should be examined in relation to the rhetoric of the collective organizations. Just as Condit found that the reformist narratives left out the values of certain groups, depictions of homeless people in the various frames in the public



discussion do not necessarily resonate with the way homeless people self identify. Snow and Anderson found that homeless people construct their identities through talk, and that identity talk takes the form of distancing from other homeless people, embracing the homeless identity, or fictive story telling. They find that those who have been homeless for a short time are most likely to distance themselves from the homeless identity, while chronically homeless are likely to embrace the identity of homelessness. Fictive story telling, when used to describe past events or actions, was often used to shape present interactions. When fictive story telling was used to imagine the future, it was a means to create a potential identity.<sup>38</sup> Given that these differences in identity construction and willingness to identify oneself as homeless evolve the longer one lives on the streets, it would follow that homeless movements would be faced by the challenge of creating frames that could adequately represent the wide spectrum of people who are homeless, but who might not be willing to accept that identity. It also explains why individual homeless people quoted in newspapers may try to distance or associate themselves with programs that affect them.

Katherine Boydell and her colleagues found that the majority of homeless individuals try to distance themselves from other homeless individuals. They write, “Instead of the customary conception of the self as passive and dependent on reflective appraisals, the self is viewed as active and rooted in emotion. Homeless individuals feel devalued, and they cope with that by using other relations as negative comparisons.”<sup>39</sup> While they see homeless as negative, they position themselves at the top of an identity hierarchy. , and often justify refusing services in order to maintain that they are not part

of the stigmatized group. It follows that the refusal to go to shelters is often a reaction against the stigma of homelessness, since shelters are for homeless people. These types of arguments pose a challenge to diagnostic framing for social movement organizations, and present a weak spot to target with diagnostic framing by the polity. So far, the problems between contradictory identities have not been examined alongside the efforts of the polity to repress a movement nor the reception of policies passed by local governments that incorporate language that reinforce stigmas against being homeless.

The majority of framing literature examines either the dynamic process of creating a frame that operates seemingly in isolation or looks at the competition between similar SMO frames on the same side of the movement. Croteau and Hicks state, “frame disputes can emerge as visible, audible conflicts between different frame sponsors that involve anger, hostility, and disruption. Thus, examining frame disputes more closely allows us to move away from the static portrait that results from considering only finished frames.”<sup>40</sup> Their work, however, just looks at the frame dispute within a coalition of social movement organizations. The frame disputes between social movements and the polity have not yet been thoroughly explored. Croteau and Hicks address the conflicts between individual identity and SMO framing in their discussion of creating resonant coalition frames. They describe coalition frames in terms of a pyramid that contains a wide range of individual identities, SMO frames, and the entire coalition’s frame. They find, however, that misalignment often occurs when individual identities don’t match the coalition frame. Since newspapers tend to frame a movement’s actions holistically instead of in terms of each SMO, the same sort of struggles for

consonance might be discovered. Furthermore, the larger impacts of misalignment on the outcomes of the movement beyond recruitment are not examined.

Social movement scholars seem to all be looking at public debates in terms of stagnant self-serving frames that don't engage alternate frames presented by other interest groups and the government. Looking at the discursive units as fulfilling different argumentative roles will explain how frames interact dynamically in vernacular discussions.

This framing literature emerging from sociology has focused on what the media scholar Dietram Scheufele refers to as individual framing. He argues that further investigations of frames ought to consider the relationship between mass media frames and individual frames. Some scholars have found that media frames and individual frames often emphasize different elements of an event, but that they may also coincide. Not much is known about media effects for individual frames.<sup>41</sup> This lacuna presents a gap in understanding frame bridging, and the overall effectiveness of SMO frames that get picked up and reframed by the media. Jerney Reynolds, however, has looked at how the depiction of homeless people in the media educates viewers about homelessness. While he does not make a direct connection between what viewers learn and the policies passed, he does call for reporting that more accurately reflects the identity of the homeless population.<sup>42</sup> My study will move one step further and look at how those views disseminated by the media find their way into public policies. Other scholars have explored how the media portrays homeless culture.<sup>43</sup> While these studies emphasize the inaccuracies in the media's portrayal of homeless people, they do not juxtapose the

media's depictions alongside the policy decisions made at the time of their distribution. The understanding of identity construction and the role of the media in transforming private opinions of housed people will open up lines for studying the different groups with a stake in passage of public policies meant to change the conditions of homelessness or the rights of homeless people.

Since it is a dynamic process, frame disputes might better be understood as a dialogue. Marc Steinberg explains, "Unquestionably, framing is strategic, but in the focus on calculation and persuasion, frame analysts have neglected the constraints and limits that discourse itself imposes on such agency."<sup>44</sup> He proposes that frames need to be considered in their discursive contexts, which extend beyond the dynamics within a given SMO or even a coalition. Discursive contexts include the political opportunities and greater social context in which frames are made by various groups. He finds that individual frames are an inadequate way of speaking about the meaning making processes because of the ever changing dynamics. His study sheds light on the idea that repertoires of discourse function similarly to repertoires of contentious action inasmuch that new methods of meaning making take place at the margins of these repertoires. What this study does not do, however, is engage the clash of frames as dialogues.

Schón and Rein also look at multiple frames. They study how to resolve frame controversies when opposing interest groups come to an impasse.<sup>45</sup> Their work, however, views frames as still operating in isolation, though they do call for more direct clash. In the book *Making Sense of Intractable Environmental Conflicts: Frames and Cases* the authors propose a spectrum of degrees of intractability. Linda Putnam and

Julia Wondolleck propose that, “Conflicts may be rooted in the parties, the issues, the social systems, and the conflict processes.”<sup>46</sup> They suggest that looking to how these elements are framed by opposing groups will illuminate points of contention and room for otherwise opposing frames to shift.

The studies of homeless policy do not look closely at the public understanding of homelessness. Instead, they examine the impacts of policies on the number of homeless people, or what can be done to obtain more accurate understandings of the nature and extent of homelessness to better target programs to the needy. These studies often overlook the public sentiment in their proposals and underestimate the influence that the general public’s opinion plays in creating opportunity for these better policies to be passed. Many of the studies of homelessness that examine policies do so with the underlying assumption that policies are discussed with only evidence and reasoning. They seek to determine the validity of claims made by governments and charities and assess the effectiveness of legislation all with a scientific approach. While these studies provide insight into part of the policy making process, they tend to overlook the role of the public. The nature of policies that are shaped by the public agenda is different from those that originate within legislative bodies. Policies initiated and debated by the general public rely upon narratives, characterizations, and values. By examining these discursive units I will provide a more complete picture of how homeless policy comes to be.

Ken Kyle’s book *Contextualizing Homelessness: Critical Theory, Homelessness, and Federal Policy Addressing the Homeless* is noteworthy because it examines the role

of ideographs, narratives and characterizations in U.S. federal homeless policies. His study, however, only looks at these discursive units as used by the government. While this provides significant insight into the federal government's understanding of homelessness, it does not look closely at the competing frames from homeless organizations and charities. His study will serve as the foundation of my understanding of federal homeless policy.

Although collective action framing is a useful way to examine the rhetoric of the homeless activists, the theory does not precisely describe the framing engaged in by the business interest or the government. George Lakoff writes, "Framing is about one's moral worldview, core values, and underlying principles."<sup>47</sup> This more general description of a frame provides guidance for identifying those frames employed by the business owners and city council. Gail Fairhurst and Robert Sarr acknowledge that leaders are skilled at managing meaning, and that framing is, "A quality of Communication that causes others to accept one meaning over another," and offer advice on how to elevate a preferred meaning.<sup>48</sup> It appears that the same tasks of diagnostic and prognostic framing from the social movement side are necessary anytime framing is used.

Other elements of the existing literature about homelessness provide histories and attempt to distinguish today's street people from the past depictions of the rootless. Paramount in many of the books written in the 1980's and early 1990's is the act of defining what it means to be homeless<sup>49</sup> and determining a useful definition for creating policies that will reduce the visibility of homelessness. These scholars look at homeless

people in terms of their citizenship and personal identity.<sup>50</sup> This vein of research provides context for my own study even though I do not seek to contribute to it directly. My study takes their findings into consideration inasmuch as the concepts of citizenship figure into the formation of the narratives, characterizations and values, as well as to determine how differences between homeless identity and perception effect the coherence of frames.

### **Methodology**

It is my objective to shed light on how society handles the paradoxes embedded in the presence of homelessness in increasingly gentrified American cities. Not until the 1980's and 1990's did cities find themselves unable to simply ignore the existence of homeless people living on public property. The determination of what to do, and who should do it was taken up by many metropolitan centers and a variety of policies were enacted. However, homelessness has not disappeared, and in some places it has become even more visible. I will focus my investigation on Pinellas County, Florida because it is the latest location of an active public debate about how to handle the homeless living in areas trying to be "upscale." This particular county includes the cities of St. Petersburg, Clearwater, Largo, Tarpon Springs, and Pinellas Park. While I am most concerned about the city level of policy making, counties are now required to develop a Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness in order to receive support from federal funds. The result is a loose coordination between cities in a given county. Public discussion about homelessness escalated in 2006 beginning in St. Petersburg. As that city began addressing the issue, the other cities began to consider how best to address homelessness as well. The public

discussion is now settling down as the results of the public making of meaning are institutionalized in the form of city ordinances and policies. This is not to suggest that everyone is satisfied, but it does seem that the social movement cycle is in decline. The current economic crisis is being blamed for increases in homelessness across the country. Cities will be dealing with how to balance the aesthetic and economic interests as well as human needs of all socioeconomic classes of their citizens. St. Petersburg and Pinellas County as a whole, present the way issues of homelessness are typically handled by local governments.

Since the legislative process is the mechanism by which social institutions and reality is altered by the institutionalization of values and ideas, the process of getting these policies passed will be central to understanding this balancing act. Condit explains, “Only through public discourse can material realities be expressed and ideas materialized. Public discourse serves as such a bridge because it is both a concrete material practice and the bearer of ideas.”<sup>51</sup> Public discourse is therefore a fitting place for seeking to understand how the paradox of gentrification and homelessness is dealt with.

Public discourse implies that there are certain power relations within the polity that influence the policymaking process, yet those power relations cannot be constant when the relationship between values and institutions is being contested. Rhetoric is used by interest groups and individuals to leverage power. Since policy decisions are often the product of drawn out public discussions, the arguments put forward by interest groups coalesce into frames. Individuals also adopt elements of those frames when



articulating their own arguments. I will examine the rhetorical nature of frames to understand how interest groups alter the power dynamic.

Public discourse happens through both vernacular<sup>52</sup> and political rhetoric. I distinguish the two because vernacular rhetoric is potentially open to all to engage in and observe, while political rhetoric may have limitations based on official position or institutionalized restrictions. For example, vernacular rhetoric includes the articulation of arguments by virtually anyone in society. This could range from an anonymous blog entry to a newspaper column to a person preaching on a street corner. On the other hand, political rhetoric is distinguished by having a politician or candidate using their office or position to perform a rhetorical act. While a radio commentator's criticism of a city would constitute vernacular rhetoric, the mayor's response would be political rhetoric. This distinction is necessary for my study because it will help distinguish between the various actors as well as provide lines by which to judge changes in the position of government and the homeless.

Since political rhetoric is often published in alongside what I am calling vernacular rhetoric, I will need to begin by separating out the record of political rhetoric. In Pinellas County, Florida, the local newspapers contain both types of rhetoric. For the purpose of my study I will examine newspaper articles appearing in the *St. Petersburg Times* beginning in January of 2006 through September of 2008, to construct a coherent understanding of the rhetoric engaged in by the homeless and their housed advocates, the business owners and their supporters, as well as the local government. I will also

separate out editorials by city mayors and look at them in conjunction with the city policies passed as the text for political rhetoric.

The first step will be to distinguish the various arguments employed by the three interests in the homeless discussion. I will also need to identify points where the representations of the homeless shift. Since newspapers present stories that often combine multiple points of view, I will determine the narratives and characterizations favored by particular interests and the values espoused by particular groups. The government's narrative will be constructed from the editorials by mayors and supplemented by the ordinances passed. I will track the specific uses of the discursive units in the prognostic and diagnostic framing tasks.

Although advocacy groups and charitable organizations attempt to represent the homeless, it is typically housed or formerly homeless people who are recorded speaking about homelessness on behalf of the homeless. Potentially any conversation including a homeless person is public. So, if a homeless person is complaining to a friend about other homeless people, people nearby take what they have heard into their image of the homeless as a whole. That scenario would then be considered vernacular rhetoric, but of course I would not have access to it in a reference. To deal with the public image of homeless people in relation to their own identity, I will turn to existing studies about homeless identification to supplement direct quotations from the selection of newspaper articles. I can then evaluate the arguments in the homeless debate against the self described reality experienced by homeless people to better understand the place of the homeless people themselves in the policymaking process.

I will also analyze the controversy by examining any changes in frames or the particular uses of discursive units over time. Condit explains, “Charting the changes in the units of discourse that appear in a controversy across time and relating these changes to the general and specific forces of rhetoric can produce better explanations of the processes that operate to bring about the particular forms that social changes take.”<sup>53</sup> With that in mind, I will be examining the narratives and characterizations about homeless people in Pinellas county appearing in the primary texts leading up to and following the decision in 2007 by the government to create the tent city Pinellas Hope after destroying an unauthorized tent city created by the homeless population. This event and response will be the pivot point for comparing shifts in rhetorical frames.

My study will also require looking to the circulation of portrayals and frames about the homeless and homelessness on the national level. I will explore the use of the discursive units in widely circulated popular sources.

The broadest of these units of discourse is what I refer to as the thematic value. These are values that are central to a particular issue frame.<sup>54</sup> These thematic values are closely related to issues of proper behavior related to property and the opportunity to pursue happiness. Condit pointed to the concepts of life and choice in the abortion controversy. In the case of the homeless debate, the concepts of property and the pursuit of happiness figure most prominently, but the way they are used, and who uses them, shifts over time.<sup>55</sup>

Narratives are the stories told as part of the public argument. In *The Cultural Prison*, Sloop presents the narrative of the prison system through the lens of race and the

characterizations of the prisoners. These descriptions of the individuals and the causes of their incarceration combine to present a story that drives both perception and future changes to the prison system. Condit explains that the topic of abortion entered the public arena through narratives describing specific experiences of women who were harmed by dangerous illegal abortions. She writes, “To be broadly successful in challenging existing beliefs (at least in contemporary America, the locale on which we focus), rhetorical narratives must produce personal involvement and emotional arousal of a large audience.”<sup>56</sup> Although there are particular narratives of homelessness found in the local papers, the narratives circulating with larger national distribution are also relevant since depictions of individuals are used to represent entire groups regardless of location. The reproduction of themes from these narratives from popular public sources in the *St. Petersburg Times* serves to remind readers of the general storylines with which they are already familiar. Often the larger narratives appear as anecdotes in larger stories. As I will argue, narratives tend to be less frequently used, which contributes to the expanding disconnect between the city governments and homeless citizens. The narratives of homelessness function differently depending on what they emphasize. Some focus on the causes of homelessness or the circumstances and hardships of living on the streets, and still others emphasize what it takes to get off the streets. Depending on who is telling the story, the particular experiences described, and the audience, these stories kindle or harden hearts of those in a position to effect the homeless.

Likewise, particular characterizations within these narratives function persuasively. I will trace the various characterizations of homeless people to determine

the types of policy and attitude changes that result from the various characterizations. The specific characterizations that appear in this county are: alcoholics, drug addicts, pan handlers, mentally ill, employed, and veterans. These labels trigger responses that either strengthen or undermine the arguments being put forward, and also are employed in different phases of the homeless debate. Since families, mothers and children are most often protected by existing legislation, they do not figure prominently in this discussion. In his study of the prison system, Sloop shows that at one time violence was the characterization of African American prisoners while female inmates were characterized as redeemable mothers. He found that the racial, gender, and sexual orientation of inmates contributed to their characterization in the eyes of the criminal justice system, though those characterizations evolved over time.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, I will look at the implications for the use of particular characterizations. Generally, homeless are characterized as deserving or undeserving of assistance, but I will be looking at how each of these groups is characterized more specifically and by whom. More importantly, I will look at the consequences of those characterizations in the larger interaction between opposing frames.

Although Condit acknowledges the importance of organizational and institutional forces for understanding future action, I will be looking more closely at how the dynamic within a given organization contributes to public discourse. When multiple groups engage on a given issue in the public realm, their opposing frames engage in a sort of dialectic, but each group's frame has bounds to how it can react to its opposition while maintaining its strength and viability. Through determining the goals of particular

organizations and interest groups and understanding their constituents and audiences, we can determine the standards and limitations that guide their messages and responses. I will rely upon the work of other scholars to fill in a picture of how those working with and for the homeless organize. I can then examine how the units of discourse in their frames and rhetoric take into consideration the conditions in which they are formed and the outcomes they seek to shape. Central to this process will be understanding the attribution of agency in each frame.

In the past three decades the public discussion has had several strands of argument consistently championed by specific interest groups and organizations. Since progress and economic success are measured by wealth, and more precisely the display of wealth in clean and aesthetically pleasing public places, the presence of homeless people and more generally homelessness has been named by mainstream society as a problem. By recognizing a problem space is created for other voices to be heard.<sup>58</sup> Although the discussion has now been open for almost 30 years, the discussion has not become stagnant. Because it is a public discussion borne out on the county and city level, the unique circumstances of each location and the immediacy brought about by the visibility of homeless people vitalize the thematic values, narratives and characterizations used to describe the problem. The local government, organizations, and interest groups also draw upon and contribute to established repertoires of discourse. Because these repertoires provide a sort of context for any particular city's discourse, I will begin by giving a general history of the homeless debate that began in earnest in the United States in the 1980's.

While all interest groups begin with the desire to rid the city of homelessness, the value assumptions underlying each group's narratives and characterizations create tension and partisanship. Policies resulting from these clashes structuralize these narratives and characterizations. Furthermore, as Ken Kyle explains, "... this [dominant] vocabulary of poverty not only circumscribes the political arena, but it also conveys societal expectations to those experiencing poverty."<sup>59</sup> While city ordinances and federal policies are thus important, the consequences of the rhetorical exchanges also impact homeless people's view of themselves.

### **Preview**

While this first chapter serves as the framework for my thesis, the next two chapters will explore the homeless debate in St. Petersburg, Florida. Chapter II looks to national publications to determine the ideographs, narratives and characterizations of homelessness with which residents in any city in the U.S. could be expected to be familiar. I will analyze widely publicized stories as in the blockbuster movie *The Pursuit of Happyness*, as well as less talked about but still widely circulated expose's in nationally circulated newspapers and magazines. I begin with this broad lens because many of the news stories in St. Petersburg draw upon those narratives without fully explaining them.

Chapter III then details how the specific discussion about homelessness in St. Petersburg negotiates the thematic values, characterizations and narratives about the homeless. In addition to identifying how this locale adapts the units of discourse to their specific needs, I look particularly at how those units of discourse function rhetorically in

the frames of the city council members, homeless advocacy groups, businesspeople, and the homeless themselves. I also examine the relationship of the ordinances passed by the city council as products of the public dialogue.

The final chapter will draw conclusions that address my initial research questions. It will also suggest what further research needs to be done.



## CHAPTER II

### HOMELESSNESS IN THE UNITED STATES

Although many Americans do not have cause to speak to homeless people and often go out of their way to avoid personal contact, the presence of homeless people is a taken for granted element of American cities. During the winter Holiday season cities, churches, and charitable organizations take notice of the homeless and poor living all across the country. Newspapers, magazines, news broadcasts, and radio shows feature stories about homelessness and what people can do to positively effect the lives of those in need. These seasonal moments present a fairly consistent story of homelessness that is familiar in the United States. All year round, however, newspapers and magazines continue to publish articles that reveal that there is no consensus on how to reduce the number of homeless people and reduce barriers to moving off the streets. The lack of consensus is strongly related to the legal construction of the concept of property rights and personal responsibility in the U.S. I will first examine this theoretical foundation in order to better understand the contentiousness of discussions about homelessness.

The laws of a society codify acceptable and unacceptable behavior. While most citizens are not aware of the intricacies of the legal system, they become aware of the laws when they are caught transgressing them. By examining the principles governing public behavior, it is possible to better understand the dominant views of homeless people held by housed citizens. The concepts of private and public hinge on an understanding of the role of property.

Property is the basis for the line between public and private. In the United States, having the rights to property allows a greater degree of autonomy in deciding how that property is used. Jeremy Waldron explains, “The rules of property give us a way of determining, in the case of each place, who is allowed to be in that place and who is not.”<sup>60</sup>

The concept of privacy is closely related to property because there are life sustaining behaviors that are expected to be restricted to privately held property. These include sleeping, relieving bodily needs, grooming, and procreating. The assumption built into the legal system is that all citizens will have access to private property either through ownership or permission, to perform these life functions. Public property then is designated for shared use: transportation/thoroughfares, recreation sites including parks, beaches and libraries, and sites required for the running of the society. These include government, police and fire houses.

Homelessness is problematic for a society with these notions of private and public based on property ownership because homeless individuals have no private property and are often denied permission to use privately owned property for their life functions. This leaves the public shared property. Cities have established laws that make rigid the distinction between behaviors acceptable in private and public places. Don Mitchell explains, “politicians and managers of the new economy in the late 1980s and early 1990s have turned to what could be called “the annihilation of space by law.” That is, they have turned to a legal remedy that seeks to cleanse the streets of those left behind by globalization and other secular changes in the economy by simply erasing the spaces

in which they must live— by creating a legal fiction in which the rights of the wealthy, of the successful in the global economy, are sufficient for all the rest.”<sup>61</sup>

While not attempting to radically overthrow the separation, homeless advocates have attempted to carve out an acceptable publicly owned place for private activities to take place. Jeremy Waldron explains the morality of a state in which the most basic needs are provided for when he writes, “The welfare state is a way of ensuring that no-one should ever be in such abject need that he would be driven to violate otherwise enforceable rules of property. Or, to put it another way: the welfare state provides us with an assurance that if somebody *is* violating property rules, abject need is most probably *not* his motive.”<sup>62</sup> Although such a welfare state does not exactly exist in the United States, there are some assurances that are used to protect the existence of those without private property. The Robinson Doctrine is most commonly used by homeless advocates to confront the rigid prohibition of existing as a homeless person in cities. The Robinson Doctrine established that punishing one’s status violates the 8<sup>th</sup> amendment as cruel and unusual punishment. It is thus unconstitutional to criminalize one’s status instead of one’s acts. Benno Weisberg explains that “judicial application of the Robinson doctrine allows legislatures to rely on the criminal law to target social problems as a substitute for complex, non-punitive solutions.”<sup>63</sup> This doctrine is invoked by homeless activists to overturn laws that criminalize the status of being homeless.

The issue of homelessness is tied to the most basic right of freedom. Waldron further explains, “Destitution is not necessarily passive; and public provision is not always a way of compounding passivity. By focusing on what we allow people to do to

satisfy their own basic needs on their own initiative, and by scrutinizing the legal obstacles that we place in their way (the doors we lock, the ordinances we enforce, and the night-sticks we raise), we get a better sense that what we are dealing with here is not just "the problem of homelessness," but a million or more persons whose activity and dignity and freedom are at stake."<sup>64</sup> This argument about freedom permeates the efforts of those working alongside the homeless to obtain shelter and the ability to legally perform basic life functions on designated public property. It also is the foundation for the argument against the claim that homeless people choose to be homeless. By pointing to the ways in which freedom of homeless people to get off the street is limited, activists attempt to demonstrate that there is not a free opportunity to choose life off of the streets.

### **National Issues**

In the 1980's these issues of distinguishing acceptable public and private behavior for those without property became prominent on the national level. The passage of the McKinney act was the first attempt to provide any coordinated effort at carving out shelter space and providing basic life necessities to the homeless. Ken Kyle argues that homeless policy, beginning with the McKinney act, is formed and argued through three basic perspectives emerging from English vagrancy laws, the formation of almshouses, and the New Deal. He labels these perspectives the conservative, which "view the homeless and poor as willful and responsible agents. From this perspective, the appropriate response to homelessness and poverty is to criminalize the aspects of this behavior that are offensive." The educator "to hold this stance is to consider the vast majority of homeless and poor to be willful and responsible agents who engage in

inappropriate and even criminal behavior because they have been led astray or because they do not know any better. Therefore, government is held responsible for the rehabilitation of these lost souls.” And the Liberal, “view the poor and homeless as victims of economic relations, social structures, and institutions. Accordingly, from this perspective, the appropriate response to poverty and homelessness is for the government to provide for the needs of the homeless and poor.”<sup>65</sup> These three perspectives permeate the discussions about homelessness and at times are blended such that causes of homelessness may be seen from the liberal perspective with solutions from the educator perspective. Over the past twenty years each perspective has had a period of influence.

When appropriating property for the homeless in the 1980’s, however, the public discussion focused upon the causes of homelessness. Reagan’s economic policies alongside the closure of mental institutions in the 1970’s meant that more people were living on the streets. By 1988, at the end of Reagan’s presidency, the McKinney Act’s first year of existence, the first wave in the debate about modern homelessness was underway.

The first position was best articulated by President Reagan: “‘They make it their own choice for staying out there,’ Mr. Reagan said in a farewell interview with David Brinkley of ABC News. ‘There are shelters in virtually every city, and shelters here, and those people still prefer out there on the grates or the lawn to going into one of those shelters.’”<sup>66</sup> Reagan posits the existence of masses of homeless people as a result of their choice to refuse offered shelter and services. In that same interview Reagan categorized the homeless as largely mentally impaired and blamed their presence on the street on the

American Civil Liberties Union for winning lawsuits that helped free them from institutions. The president's position was opposed by those who blamed the presence of healthy and employed people among the ranks of the homeless on "housing costs that have risen beyond the means of people with menial jobs."<sup>67</sup>

These two positions illuminate two things. One issue being sorted out is the place for blame: activists whose lawsuits helped close mental institutions, or the government for economic policy. The other issue at stake was which characterization of the homeless was more accurate: the mentally ill and others who were unable to participate in the economy because of a disability or those who are healthy and choose to live without a home, whether they have a low paying job or choose not to work at all.

In the 1990's attention shifted from major federal policies to address homelessness to how individual cities could regulate the behavior of those living on the streets. This attention at the local level meant that cities began passing and enforcing laws defining where homeless people could be, and restricting their activities. During this period media coverage suggested that "Compassion Fatigue" had set in, which highlights the tension between charity for the communal good and the individual responsibility to provide for oneself. In the mid 1990's a study was conducted on public opinion about the homeless and what policies would be favored. The researchers found that "the public tends to associate the homeless population with stigmatized groups—they estimate that fairly large proportions abuse drugs and alcohol or have been in jail. Moreover, in the public's estimation, irresponsible behavior and laziness on the part of homeless people contribute substantially to homelessness. Perhaps most important, many

people endorsed items that indicate a lack of empathy for the situation of homeless people—a majority endorsed the item suggesting that homeless people have a lot of free time, and over a third thought homelessness relieved one from worries about jobs and family. In addition, there is strong evidence to suggest that homeless people are seen as undesirable; most people believe their presence makes neighborhoods worse, spoils parks for families and children, and threatens the quality of urban life. Moreover, a majority of the public directly endorses restrictions on frequently used survival strategies such as sleeping over night in public places, panhandling, and erecting temporary shelters in public parks. In keeping with these results, we conclude that compassion for homeless people, as we have defined it, is not complete. In terms of willingness to help, the public's compassion is clear and consistent. However, when we examine indicators of the experience of shared suffering, we find that, alongside attitudes indicative of compassion are attitudes that set distinct limits on compassion.”<sup>68</sup> This circumscription of compassion for the homeless resulted in a split in public support for seemingly contradictory policies. “On the one hand, they consistently and without any evidence of compassion fatigue support increased spending and increased taxes to help homeless people. Moreover, they are favorable to policies like increased federal spending for low-income housing and other such solutions. On the other hand, they also want to ban begging and sleeping in public places. Briefly put, the public wants something done, but public opinion does not provide specific directions for policy makers, because no set of policy alternatives is clearly favored while another set is clearly disfavored.”<sup>69</sup> This split in public opinion meant that cities tried many different things with a variety of results.

For example, New York, by the late 1990's increased funding for city shelters, while cities like Dallas passed anti-sleeping ordinances.

### **Contemporary Debate**

From 1999 through 2008 the news coverage of homelessness that was distributed in the *Economist*, *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and *Washington Post*, present these old debates alongside several new disputes. The articles appearing in these periodicals typically pick up on multiple points of contention and present more than one side on each dispute. First, there is a debate over the effects of innovative housing strategies. One side of the issue argues that building more shelters or opening services will attract more homeless people. This is contrasted with the argument that the majority of homeless people blend into the normal population and aren't visible, that such facilities are successful at treating the visible chronic homeless population, and the necessity of services for reducing the number of homeless individuals overall. While this discussion is not limited to a particular housing project, many of the articles comment upon the "Housing First," policy that cities such as New York implemented. This program provides housing and then attempts to connect clients with drug treatment programs, psychiatric counseling, and other social services to help them remain housed. An offshoot of this argument is that a positive impact on the economic interests of cities will result from removing the homeless from view. This line of reasoning was used to defend the building of a new homeless mission in Los Angeles: "Despite the influx of luxury condos, however, mission officials say there has also long been pressure by surrounding businesses to get as many people off the streets as possible. And they say



the new 500-capacity mission dining room will put an end to food lines that stretched around the block three times a day at their old facility. They say new activity rooms with television and movies for grown-ups and a separate play space for children will do much to reduce the numbers of homeless who pass time on the streets throughout the financial district.”<sup>70</sup> This idea of removing homeless people from view is also justified by the idea that homeless are “a turnoff for tourists.”<sup>71</sup>

The second point of contention is over the rate or trends in homelessness. The numbers are used to comment on progress or lack thereof in solving homelessness, but these numbers are undermined by disputes over the method of collecting the data. The articles show little agreement over the definition of who counts as homeless, who actually got counted, and the relationship between the estimates and reality. A July 2008 report by the Department of Housing and Urban Development that supposedly cited a drop in the number of homeless people was picked up by national periodicals. The *Los Angeles Times* reported, “The number of chronically homeless people declined by 15% last year, according to a first-of-its-kind government report released Tuesday, though officials cautioned that part of the decline may be attributable to better counting methods.”<sup>72</sup> That same day, citing the same study, *The New York Times* reported, “The number of chronically homeless people living in the nation's streets and shelters has dropped by about 30 percent -- from 175,914 to 123,833 -- from 2005 to 2007, Bush administration officials said on Tuesday.”<sup>73</sup> Their coverage of these findings illustrates the difficulties and varying points of view on the legitimacy of such studies. The first question that comes to mind is how *The New York Times* could report a percentage drop

twice as large as the *Los Angeles Times*. The larger number comes from comparing the numbers found by HUD's 2006-2007 "first of its kind" study with point-in-time estimates from 2005. While neither article addresses the problems with drawing such claims from a study that has nothing with which its results can be compared, they do note the restrictiveness of the definition of homeless being used. This definition restricts homeless to mean the chronically homeless, that is, "a disabled individual who has been continuously homeless for at least a year or has been homeless at least four times in the previous three years."<sup>74</sup> This definition coupled with the method of counting based upon shelter records, marked a shift away from previous articles on the number of homeless people. Previously, These numbers were typically given alongside the number of shelter beds available. Implicit was the argument that there were not enough services to meet the need nationwide. Interestingly, after the coverage of the 2008 HUD report, articles about the number of homeless people avoided the pitfalls of counting and simply emphasized the shortage of shelter beds for the demand.

The characterization of who is homeless also shifted during this period from 1999 to 2008. While there is the argument that the majority of homeless people blend in, the homeless people described in the articles tend to be disabled, veterans, or mentally ill. An increasing number of articles indicated the rise in the number of homeless children and families. The *Washington Post* in 2004 described the increasing presence of homeless families across the country. They reported that, "The nationwide count most often cited comes from the Urban Institute, a research group in Washington that surveyed homeless assistance providers in 1996. It found that at least 1.4 million

children and 2 million adults were homeless, but that number has surely grown as cities like Columbus, Ohio; Philadelphia; St. Louis; and New York have all reported surges at their homeless shelters for the last two or three years.”<sup>75</sup> Here the article notes the difficulty in counting homeless families and blames that difficulty in finding hard data on the inadequate government response to the particular subpopulation. Through descriptions of overcrowded family homeless shelters, the article corroborates the sketchy numbers. These families are further characterized as atypical families: “The Wilder center estimates that 61 percent of the heads of homeless families in Minnesota have at least one significant mental illness, chronic illness or substance abuse problem. “You can't try and pretend they are just like you and me,” said Ellen Shelton, a research scientist with the center. “Some are just down on their luck, but it is not the majority.””<sup>76</sup> Though this did appear in a nationally circulated article in 2004, by 2008 parents were typically described as wage earning individuals who can't make ends meet.

These characterizations of the poor and homeless are contrasted with the gentrifying city centers and the apparent prosperity flourishing despite homelessness. In response to a class-action lawsuit brought by nine homeless individuals in San Diego against the city for ticketing them for sleeping in public, the *Christian Science Monitor* explained, “As the once run-down downtown blooms with thousands of new condominiums and a new ballpark, the homeless have become more visible and less welcome.”<sup>77</sup> This highlights the final tension present in the nationally circulated articles that contrast efforts to criminalize living on the streets and unique programs to alleviate homelessness. Article attention focused on increases in bans on panhandling and the

2006 increase in laws banning feeding groups of people in public. An article in *USA Today* explained, “Such measures are often pushed by businesses that don't want panhandlers to scare away customers and by city officials who want to draw visitors to such attractions as sports arenas or entice the affluent to move downtown and into gentrifying areas.”<sup>78</sup> These articles identify “The meanest cities” in the nation. There is an attempt to categorize types of cities based on the services available.

This debate is closely related to the first inasmuch as it also highlights unique programs that have been implemented. An article in *USA Today* described the services major city libraries offer to help homeless individuals learn computer skills or connect with resources.<sup>79</sup> Others describe free exercise equipment available to the homeless or supportive housing programs in architecturally unique buildings. Within these articles is the tension between the Christian imperative to serve one's neighbors and the excessive elements of aid given. Interestingly, the articles tend not to distinguish between publicly funded and faith based services and programs.

### **Major Metropolitan Periodical Coverage**

The legal and social issues of homelessness are not immediately discussed on the surface level of discourse on homelessness that the general public is exposed to on a regular basis. Rather, housed individuals are exposed to issues of homelessness in a disjointed fashion, which allows them to pick and choose elements of various stories to piece together a coherent understanding of the propertyless class. While New York, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, and other such major metropolitan centers in the U.S. often devote newspaper space to reporting on their local homeless

issues, the stories that make it to national circulation are relatively rare. While some of these articles were circulated nationally, I am most interested in what themes consistently appear in metropolitan centers about homelessness in the last few years. For this study I did a LexisNexis search of *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The L.A. Times*. This resulted in 88 relevant articles from 2004 through 2008. From this document set I found that major metropolitan newspapers feature three basic types of stories about homelessness: those focusing upon the numbers and how they have changed, those describing attacks on passive homeless individuals, and inspirational stories of now financially successful individuals who were once homeless. These stories often do not go in depth about individuals who are homeless, but rather portray homelessness as a general problem.

The first category focuses on the demographics of the homeless population, how many homeless people there are, and the effectiveness or lack thereof, of government programs intended to lower the overall homeless count. The demographic information translates into characterizations of the homeless population: foreclosed families, children, Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, those who have jobs, etc. Within this set articles quibble over how many homeless there are, and how they are counted. The numbers articles often emphasize characterizations of the homeless population to help understand the numbers. In 2006-2007 the emphasis was on homeless veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2008 the focus shifted to estimates of families and homeless parents who also hold down a job. Often mentioned in passing are the numbers of mentally ill and disabled people living on the streets. These characterizations suggest that there is a

significant portion of the homeless population deserving of aid. In contrast to these socially positive connotations, there are also estimates of drug use and those who refuse services when they are offered. These numbers and characterizations tend to be presented alongside instances of increasing levels of homelessness or stories that show no improvement after a city implemented a new program or war on homelessness.

The second category highlights the danger of living on the streets, the lack of compassion by housed individuals, and the need for understanding if not charity. Newspapers in Florida and California covered these stories more frequently most likely because those two states have the highest crime rates against homeless people respectively. These articles are more troubling because they depict homeless people as vulnerable to the caprice of housed and privileged individuals. The crimes are seen as heinous because of the vulnerability of the victims, typically described as sleeping when attacked. The motives attributed to the assailants are senseless. Reasons include boredom, irrational hatred, and a distaste for the homeless people being around in general. Many of these articles do not focus on the lives of the victims, but rather on what may have driven the attackers to perpetrate their crime. This contrasts with articles reporting on crimes against housed individuals that often describe the life history of the victim.

The final category emphasizes the opportunities to choose life off of the streets and perpetuates the mantra that anything is possible in America. These stories highlight the opportunities available to homeless individuals through charities and government

programs. Attention is paid to individuals taking those opportunities to raise their socioeconomic status.

### **The American Dream**

The third category of inspirational stories is developed further in popular culture. In contrast to the call for individuals to contribute to charities, the other dominant narrative about homeless people focuses upon the presence of opportunities to pull oneself up out of poverty and misery in the United States. The 2006 award winning film *The Pursuit of Happyness* typifies this spin-off of the Horatio Alger narrative. This movie is adapted from the book by the same name about the real life experiences of once homeless-now millionaire Chris Gardner. Will Smith and his son Jaden portray Gardner and his son respectively. While the movie is based on a popular book, I focus upon the movie because it received far wider circulation and discussion, but acknowledge that the comment the movie and book make about homelessness are different.

December 15, 2006, Columbia Motion Pictures released *The Pursuit of Happyness* which played on 2,852 screens and earned \$26,541,709 in the U.S. on its first weekend in theaters. It went on to gross approximately \$162,586,036.<sup>80</sup> Both Will and Jaden Smith won numerous awards for their performances including some of the most prestigious awards in Hollywood. Will Smith won a Golden Globe Award for “Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture,” and was nominated for an Oscar for “Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role.” Jaden Smith won an MTV Movie Award for “Breakthrough Performance,” and was nominated for a Teen Choice Award for “Choice Movie: Breakout Male.” Additionally, the father/son duo won a Teen

Choice Award for “Choice Movie: Chemistry.” This last award is significant because the general audience would be familiar with the relationship of the two leading actors in real life. Will Smith is often written about as the ideal Hollywood dad. This aura of family values carried over into the plot of the movie, as noted by the Chemistry award.

The format of the story as a movie allows audiences to feel a part of the lives of the characters in the story, and because it is based on a true story, the audience feels they truly know what it must be like to be Chris Gardner or his son Christopher in this period of their lives. The story begins with Chris Gardner married to his wife Lynda, living with their son in a small apartment in San Francisco. Chris attempts to earn a living by selling bone density scanners to hospitals and doctors, but finds that his entrepreneurial venture does not have the demand he originally anticipated. His wife works double shifts to supplement the income, but between paying for their son’s daycare and the other bills, money is too tight. The financial strain accompanies tension in their relationship. In an attempt to bring in more money, Chris decides that he will become a stock broker because he saw a man who was a stock broker driving a Ferrari. Linda seems to feel that that will be as fruitless as his business venture given that he only has a high school education, and eventually Linda leaves. Chris is adamant that he wants his son. Linda leaves their son Christopher and disappears from the story. Chris and Christopher are left with less and less money and find themselves kicked out of their apartment into a Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotel, then ultimately onto the streets and in and out of shelters. When Chris finally manages to sell several scanners, the IRS takes the money for taxes that hadn’t been paid. Meanwhile, Chris is doing an internship at a brokerage



firm hoping to be the one applicant hired at the end of six months. Through extremely hard work and time management, Chris does receive the position and ultimately becomes a stock broker.

Several themes of note emerge from this narrative. First, homelessness is shown to happen despite constant hard work. While a poor business decision, namely to sell a product people weren't interested in, was a large factor, that seems to simply be something that could have happened to anyone. Chris is depicted as a person holding the same values as any working class person: responsibility to family, hard work, and independence. He does not take handouts from anyone, and is in fact seen to be taken advantage of by those with more money. The only charity he seeks out is a place to sleep in the privately run shelter at Glide Memorial Church, and this is done for his son, not for himself. In this way he is characterized as the average citizen. This serves to challenge the common stereotype of homeless drug abusing single men. The only commonality is that he is an African-American man, a minority as many homeless are thought to be. The fact, however, that Chris makes it into an all white company seems to neutralize any overtly racial intensions in the depiction of homelessness. If anything, his race reinforces the message that anything is possible in America through hard work.

This vision of homelessness is contrasted with other characterizations. Three other homeless characters portray other faces of homelessness. First, a homeless man seems to believe that Chris's bone density scanner is actually a time machine. He appears to be mentally disabled. He disturbs Christopher because of his outlandish behavior. The second character is a hippie girl who steals the bone density scanner,

which winds up in the hands of the mentally ill man. It is suggested that she uses drugs and doesn't have a job. The third vision of homelessness is in the lines at Glide Memorial Church. These seem largely to be single men. They seem threatening because of their willingness to fight Chris Gardner for the chance for a bed for the night. In many respects then, Chris is quite different from the "typical" homeless person portrayed in this movie.

Although the movie makes it clear that Chris Gardner only has a high school education and radar school training from the Navy, he is also shown to be extraordinarily intelligent. Not only was he called Ten-Gallon-Head as a kid because of his brain, but he also is able to do the Rubik's Cube faster than the CEO of the brokerage firm and television broadcasters. Alongside this uncommon intelligence, Gardner is shown to stick with choices he makes. It is his choice to make a lot of money, and he can achieve this choice because it is America. Thus the thematic value of choice works in tandem with that of opportunity to pursue happiness.

At several points in the movie Chris Gardner refers to Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence. Particularly, Gardner points to the inclusion of "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." Although the first two are mentioned, Gardner contemplates the third right. Much of the movie focuses on the concept of the pursuit. This value becomes dominant in the film.

The distinction between public and private also hinges upon the possession of personal property. Gardner has to go to great lengths to maintain control over his most prized belongings: the remaining bone density scanners that he must sell to afford food

for himself and his son. He spends one portion of the movie running after people who have attempted to steal his scanner. Even after losing his apartment, the possession of the scanners helps distinguish Gardner from the other homeless people. They are his only hope for an immediate ticket off of the street, although the internship would be his permanent ticket to being housed. In addition to maintaining control of his personal property, Gardner is seen to be carving bits of privacy out of public places. The first night without shelter, Gardner locks himself and his son in a public restroom. This provides both a measure of privacy and precarious safety. Throughout that night people bang repeatedly on the door and Gardner is visibly disturbed and uncomfortable. This contrasts with the privacy in public that the businesspeople Gardner works with are able to obtain. Chris makes a business call on a man whose investments he hopes to handle. They end up going to a baseball game and view it from a luxury box. This privacy in the midst of a teeming public is comfortable and also provides nourishing food. These two scenes highlight the difference in quality of privacy for those with and without property.

In the movie Chris Gardner is seen to be a victim of the economic situation and his own misguided business decisions. This blends both the educator and liberal perspectives on causes of homelessness. The solution seems to be a new spin on the educator perspective because Gardner figures out his own mistakes. There is the potential for self realization or self education. This shifts responsibility for ending homelessness off of society and back onto the homeless individuals.

## **Conclusions**

The conservative, educator, and liberal perspectives that Ken Kyle identified are woven together in the nationally circulated depictions of homelessness. The issues debated in the nationally circulating articles underscore the tensions brought about by the values of property and the opportunity to pursue happiness. One perspective emerges from the combination of these two values where happiness is equated with possessing private property. In this perspective individual responsibility for ending homelessness assumes that homeless people are characterized as “normal” Americans. Any decisions to fund services that make life on the streets bearable are accused of encouraging the choice to remain homeless.

Another set of arguments emerge when one takes the perspective that valuing private property restricts acceptable uses of public property. This perspective points out the difficulty of accounting for the number and accuracy of attempts to characterize the homeless because of the elusiveness of measuring what does not, or should not, exist on public property. To clarify, this perspective underscores the contradictions that emerge when a capitalistic society attempts to deal with its propertyless class. While characterizations of homeless people vary in these arguments, they are seen as victims of the economic system. Society is portrayed as having a responsibility for providing opportunities for the homeless to pursue economic happiness.

### CHAPTER III

#### FRAMING

The tensions revealed in the national discussion of homelessness resolve into distinct ways of framing the issue of homelessness. Not only do these issue frames advocate specific stances on the issues, but they coalesce around a thematic value that guides the way homeless people are characterized and how agency is discussed within representative anecdotes. Although each different interest group has its own distinct motivations and goals, they approach framing in similar ways.

Social movements use collective action frames that are intended to mobilize action. Snow and his colleagues found diagnostic, prognostic, and mobilizing tasks to be central to the collective action framing process. Diagnostic framing includes naming and blaming processes that identify what is at stake and attribute culpability. They argue that in order for social movement organizations (SMOs) to gain followers and participants in movements, and ultimately if the movement is to achieve its goals, there needs to be the right balance struck between all of these steps.

However, the frames must shift when the objective is not to mobilize constituents, but rather to get the government to act. Art Dewulf and his colleagues look beyond social movements to describe this process engaged in by both governments and other interests as issue framing. They explain, "Issue framing focuses on how parties negotiate the meanings of issues in social interaction. In this approach, which Putnam & Holmer (1992) refer to as issue development, a frame is understood as the definition or

meaning of an issue, and issues correspond to topics of concern in the negotiation. Issues are not objective agenda items, however, but often equivocal discussion topics that are named, blamed and claimed through the way disputants argue about them (Felstiner, Abel & Sarat, 1980/1981).<sup>81</sup> . Collective action framing and issue framing are therefore identical through the prognostic step. The concept of claiming may extend into the mobilization step of collective action framing in the task of convincing the constituents and allies to act. Likewise, issue framing extends claiming to also encompass results of action. For the purposes of my study I use claiming to be synonymous with prognostic framing.

The various issue and collective action frames used to shape city policies each form an argument about homelessness, but those arguments have not been thoroughly understood to be engaged with one another. Celeste Condit argues that discursive units “are central to the persuasiveness and impact of public discourse.”<sup>82</sup> Hence, it makes sense to examine the place of discursive units within frames. The most apparent discursive units employed in the homeless debates seem to be thematic values, anecdotal narratives and characterizations. I look at the way each interest group and the city council uses these discursive units in the various framing tasks. So in addition to identifying what framing task is assigned to particular discursive units, I also examine how those units clash with alternative frames in the public sphere.

### **Case Study**

From early 2006 through 2008 the *St. Petersburg Times* reported frequently upon the active homeless movement within the city and the city council’s response to the

demands of both the activists and business interests. The news coverage of issues surrounding the homeless and homelessness in St. Petersburg, Florida chronicles the shifting understanding of both the extent of need and how best to reduce homelessness in the city. As the economy continues to decline, cities increasingly have to determine how to respond to increasing homelessness. St. Petersburg serves as an example of both the limits and abilities of activism to gain support services for the homeless. It is representative of cities across the nation.

The competing interests of homeless activists and businesspeople champion two distinct narratives about the nature of homelessness within this chronicle. In addition to the use of anecdotal narratives within frames, frames can themselves be considered coherent narratives. Kenneth Burke's theory of dramatism can help explain the role of each framing task in the larger narrative as well as how the anecdotal narratives function within particular framing tasks. Both interest groups also attempt to characterize the homeless in contrasting ways. I argue that the city council responds to these competing frames by adopting elements of the competing narratives depending on the situation and actions they are taking.<sup>83</sup> When neither frame is sufficient, they create a third frame to justify their actions by weaving together strands from the two competing narratives as evidenced by the newspaper articles from 2006-2008. By privileging their own role in this third frame, it is unnecessary for the government to appropriate a particular characterization of homeless people. Because these narratives are presented alongside one another often in the same article, and because the narratives exist within a contentious context over a three year period, I first extract each narrative from the events

of the day and show the limits to operating within each frame. Secondly, I identify the framing task assigned to the particular anecdotal narratives and characterizations. Then I explain how each narrative is in dialogue with the others.

### **Homelessness as a Social Problem**

Homeless people and their housed advocates begin with the premise that homelessness is a social problem that can only be solved by society as a whole. They contend that the economic conditions pushed people onto the streets and out of jobs. While homeless people are seen as victims of this economic environment, the increasing gentrification of the city prevents them from being able to get back on their feet. All that is needed is a hand up so that the individual can continue on his/her way toward being a respectable member of society. In this narrative the homeless person is a passive victim of the scene, but once their position in the scene changes, they will be endowed with the agency to improve themselves. Overall this narrative is presented in the tragicomic perspective.

While there are several groups who support the homeless in their bid for government support, Refuge Ministries emerges as the most outspoken charitable organization in St. Petersburg. Led by the Reverend Bruce Wright, Refuge Ministries organized the majority of protests and sleep-outs. Beginning on June 21, 2006 at Mirror Lake, Reverend Wright, Food Not Bombs, and Critical Resistance held a protest of the city's "increasingly hostile" treatment of the homeless. Reverend Wright led protesters in a march in front of the Mahaffey Theater prior to the Republican National Convention, and the day after Thanksgiving of 2006, he led another protest. All of these



protests culminated in the erection of a tent city on property owned by Saint Vincent DePaul in January of 2007. The city eventually responded to the visibility of homelessness by slashing the tents with box cutters claiming that the inhabitants were in violation of city code because they did not have fire extinguishers in the tents. Later this was proved to be a requirement that would have only applied to much larger tents. This incident gained national attention and was a turning point in St. Petersburg that the homeless were able to use to gain funding and support for additional shelter and services.<sup>84</sup>

Although the first large protest is not until June of 2006, the frame employed by the homeless and their activists is in existence by January of that year. On January 20, 2006 the *St. Petersburg Times* ran a story with the headline, “As Downtown Develops, Homeless Lose Refuge; Pushed out by Progress.” This article underscores the presence of two competing world views. Though the view of the homeless is highlighted, it is presented in contrast with the capitalist interests of business owners. The article focuses in on examining the conditions of the homeless in an economically booming city. Here we are given the opening scene of the impending contentious politics in St. Petersburg. While all interest groups are dependent upon reporters for reproducing their positions, the direct quotations and content of the articles distinguishes the various conflicting attitudes and positions.

The narrative in the article is representative of the larger narrative and begins with the building boom in control of the scene. Agency is given to the buildings, “The stretch of small stores from 601 to 659 Central Ave., long home to secondhand and

antiques shops, began attracting the homeless several months ago as businesses emptied out pending demolition of the building for a 15-story retail and condominium project.” The buildings are seen to “protect” until they say “No trespassing, No Loitering.” By not depicting the business owners or developers as people, they fade as actors. Their agency is given to the scene of economic growth in the form of the businesses themselves. The resulting scene strips away agency from the homeless people. William Loland, one of the homeless men who had sheltered in the path of the new condos explained, “I know the owners should be able to make money. I know that we can't fight progress,” he said. “But, it leaves us with nowhere to go.”<sup>85</sup> By the end of the article Loland is left looking both ways down the street, clearly divested of any real choice. This image presents readers with the two dominant characterizations of homeless people in this frame: lacking opportunities and as victims of economic progress. Although these characterizations fulfill the naming step in such a way that the homeless lack constructive agency, the prognostic framing step presents homelessness as a solvable problem.

The solution comes in the form of compassionate aid from both the public and private sector. First and foremost, food, clothing, shower and laundry facilities could be provided by either churches, charities, or the local government. In this frame the government ought to do its part by funding emergency, transitional and long term housing because, as “Some of the homeless who spoke at the St. Petersburg public hearing say all they want is a safe, comfortable place to sleep and somewhere to store their belongings while they try to get their lives together. And providing that baseline of

dignity is a goal the entire Pinellas County community should be able to support.”<sup>86</sup> This position means it would be unthinkable to make receipt of basic services contingent upon anything beyond dire need. Furthermore, it appears that this group is attempting to carve out public space for life sustaining activities and a baseline of quasi-private property for storage.

This pattern of framing comes to dominate articles characterizing the homeless as victims of violent crimes. In reporting the seven year sentence handed down for a man who stabbed Steven Witt, a homeless man, while he slept, the homeless are clearly seen as both vulnerable and unable to overcome circumstances without a little help. The story states, “He said he is still homeless, and recently lost a job because he no longer has any sensation in that arm because of the stabbing.”<sup>87</sup> This illustrates both Witt’s vulnerability sleeping on the street and his willingness to work despite continuous setbacks. The anecdotal narrative focuses on identifying working homeless and those who just had a moment of bad luck. Women, working men, families, and children are all groups that find themselves homeless. The negative behaviors of drug and alcohol abuse are portrayed as symptoms, not causes of homelessness. As a result, support services should be made available but not mandatory. It is implied that because homeless people are rational and looking for an extended hand, they will naturally accept aid when it is not being forced.

The report of the murder of two homeless men in January of 2007 highlights several of these elements of the social problem narrative.<sup>88</sup> First, the story begins by highlighting the slain men as individuals with interests including family, work, and

recreation activities. It is acknowledged that they are homeless, but none of the trappings of homelessness are initially attached to them. They clearly do not have close ties with the tent city and are thus nonthreatening to the housed readers of the paper. Furthermore, the article states, "Police found neither drugs nor weapons on the two men," which helps dissociate the men from the stigmatized image of homelessness. The specter of drugs does appear as a reason that one of the men, David Heath, could not hold a job. His son is paraphrased saying, "His arrest record {for shoplifting and cocaine possession} and lack of a driver's license made it tough to find steady work in recent years." This behavioral explanation is coupled with Heath's medical problems: bipolar and victim of a heart attack. The result is a once great guy fallen on hard times through a combination of bad luck and bad decisions. The other man, Jeff Shultz, is described as a boat engine repairman and sometime handyman. While both men tragically are killed ostensibly because they are homeless, within this tragicomic narrative future killings of the homeless can be prevented if the city fulfills its obligation to keep its citizens safe. Safety is equated with shelter, and given the report that "several homeless said they feared for their safety, especially now that the tent city nearby has been shut down," it appears that the government has been lax in that duty. This is reinforced when the reporters note, "There are about 250 emergency shelter spaces and 500 longer term housing spots in a city with about 2,250 homeless." This discrepancy in numbers implies that safety can be improved and crimes prevented if the government does what is right and its duty by evening out the numbers.

These characterizations and narratives fulfill several roles in collective action framing by the homeless and their advocates. First, the consistent characterization of homeless people as victims is used in the naming step of diagnostic framing. The individual stories of the homeless men move beyond the naming step and blame both progress and the city for the individual's inability to get off of the street. This narrative crosses into the prognostic function of collective action framing by pointing out the discrepancies between proffered aid and the vastness of need. The anecdotal narratives and characterizations point to the thematic value of creating opportunity. The frame calls for all good people along with the government, to contribute to fixing the social problem.

### **Homelessness as a Nuisance**

Housed members of the economic elite, business owners, and those concerned with the continued progress of the city root their frame in the idea that homelessness – and by extension homeless people—is a nuisance. While the economic scene is acknowledged as the background for increased numbers of homeless people, ultimately the individuals on the street are their because of bad choices: drug use, a desire to break rules, and/or laziness. In this frame agency is more important than the scene. No matter how good the economy is, in this frame there will always be those who choose to be homeless. For example, when the city responded to the tent city by offering the homeless residents tickets out of town or a bed in an emergency shelter, “some turned down the help as too little, too late.”<sup>89</sup> This situates the narrative squarely in the tragic frame. The tragedy is necessary because of the adherence to the principles of free market capitalism.

Although capitalism allows a few to grow wealthy and many to do financially well, there are inevitably those who cannot compete. Thus if capitalism is to succeed and continue as the economic system, society has to accept the byproducts: poverty and homelessness.

The frame is complicated, however, because progress is held back because of homeless people. As an article in the February 18, 2007 edition of the *St. Petersburg Times* put it, “With downtown in the midst of a renaissance, businesses are being hampered by an increasing population of homeless people.”<sup>90</sup> Anecdotal narratives are employed to prove this point. Consistent with the “customer first” mindset, the paper reported, “Stroud says many businesses would like to have offices downtown, but they and their employees are uncomfortable if being downtown means being harassed by homeless people on the street. He said most of the homeless are harmless, but none of his tenants likes to encounter them, and some feel threatened.”<sup>91</sup> In this narrative the needs of the business are privileged. Since they are endowed with the agency to choose not to set up shop downtown, the story asks readers to consider what could be done to help them to choose downtown. The answer is to make the businesses and their employees at ease in the scene. That can only be done by dealing with the nuisance of homelessness, namely by sweeping them off the streets or at the very least picking up after them. The business owners tell stories of homeless people panhandling to prospective customers, urinating in public, emphasize the increased visibility of homelessness on the streets, and complain about them generally being an eyesore. In a letter to the editor on December 16, 2007, Shirley O’Sullivan writes, “If our city workers remove anything that appears abandoned, some individuals retaliate by defecating on the

benches and sidewalks in Williams Park.”<sup>92</sup> This behavior is both seen as a childish response akin to a tantrum and emblematic of the need for a tough love custodial role for the larger society. The logical response is to create disincentives for choosing the homeless lifestyle.

Proponents of this frame support the criminalization of homelessness through the passage of city ordinances and enforcement of no trespassing laws. Businessman Mark Stroud is reported saying, “The more we provide, the more the homeless are going to be attracted. ... We're too nice.”<sup>93</sup> The idea is that if it is impossible to exist as a homeless person, homeless people will go away and leave the city to be a perfect tourist destination and bustling center of commerce.

The proponents of the idea that homelessness is a nuisance are not trying to rally collective action by housed residents, but despite that difference, they are trying to persuade the government to support them in their efforts to freely reap the benefits of capitalism without the shadow cast by the unsuccessful. This means that they still present their argument using the same framing tasks of collective action framing through the diagnostic and prognostic stages. The prognostic stage emphasizes claiming what needs to be done and by whom. Narratives are employed to blame the homeless for the woes of the city as well as to demonstrate individual agency in becoming homeless. Business owners tell stories of offering work and having it turned away as well as being taken advantage of when offering handouts. The focus of the narrative shifts when it is used for prognostic ends. Here the business interests focus on the sentiments of their customers and the blots on an otherwise prosperous downtown scene.

While there is not a specific call for mobilization in the form of protest as the homeless advocates call for, this frame claims that the government's role in this process is to aid economic progress. This is evident when, "Chief Assistant Attorney Mark Winn said one of the city's goals is to reduce interaction between tourists and the homeless."<sup>94</sup> That can be accomplished by pushing the homeless out of downtown.

Homelessness was solidly framed as a nuisance at the same time as the activists had formulated homelessness as a social problem. Because the nuisance frame is championed by powerful business interests, it is also picked up by members of the city council. Specifically, Councilman Bill Foster, the major proponent of anti-camping ordinances, is an early advocate of this frame. A story in February 2006 explained his stance, "He's received a lot of complaints from constituents about the growing number of homeless, particularly those living by the Mahaffey. The theater is scheduled to re-open in late April after being closed for more than a year for a \$20-million makeover, funded by city and county dollars. 'We've invested millions in this,' Foster said. 'And in that respect, it's not really fair for our city to have people living out there.'"<sup>95</sup> His remarks illustrate several of the key tenets of this frame: fairness is judged from the perspective of what one gets for their money and the city is beholden to the business and tourist interests so they will act to help them as long as they are aware of discontent. When behaviors of homeless people do not fit with these norms they deserve to be punished for being criminals. This explains the subsequent crackdown on homelessness following the June protests in front of the theater.



Within this frame homeless people are characterized negatively. They are, “The clowns. The nuts. The drug users. The troublemakers.”<sup>96</sup> Naming the homeless in this way squarely places the blame for their hardships on their own shoulders. Normalcy is not a possibility, so any solution to homelessness would be incomplete, which further enforces the tragic frame. These characterizations are able to stand because the anecdotal narratives performing the diagnostic framing tasks emphasize blaming the homeless person as a rational actor who chose to be on the street and reject the progress of capitalism. This frame hinges on the elevation of valuing choice. The scene of economic progress is washed out in the background letting agency take the stage. The contradictions of capitalism don’t emerge to ruin the story.

### **Homelessness as a Crisis**

Although the local government did not approve of the original tent city erected by homeless people in January of 2007, they did find the idea of a tent central to their next major policy. The city joined forces with Catholic Charities and businesspeople to fund Pinellas Hope, a tent city erected in an industrial zone of the city in December of 2007. The city also took the initiative to attempt to connect homeless individuals with services or bus tickets out of town. The trend of passing ordinances also continued with further restrictions on having possessions on the sidewalks.

“At an emergency meeting Friday {January 5, 2007}, a week after the homeless established a "tent city" near downtown, city and Pinellas County officials declared St. Petersburg's homeless situation a ‘crisis.’”<sup>97</sup> The concept of crisis was applied to the scene in the city for the first time, rather than as a description of the dilemmas facing

families finding themselves homeless. This shift in terms was necessary for the city council because the city council could not take sweeping action if it accepted either the perspective that homelessness is a social problem or a nuisance. If homelessness is a nuisance, then it deserves disciplinary action but not sustained attention. If homelessness is a social problem then it requires the sustained and compassionate attention of the government in conjunction with all residents including the business interests and also precludes denying aid to anyone. Either perspective presented government acting in concert with other interest groups which would inevitably limit the government's ability to exercise sole power. Furthermore, the tragic and tragicomic frames are incompatible because they result in mutually exclusive ends. Since various city council members personally identified with the opposing sides a third frame had to be adopted that could allow for a response to constituents holding either perspective. The result is the crisis frame.

The first line of reasoning states that the number and concentration of homeless people has reached a crisis point. This line of reasoning is an amplification of the nuisance frame. Frame amplification emphasizes common values. The creation of frames within a movement has been discussed in terms of frame articulation and amplification. Frame articulation is the coherent alignment of events and experiences in such a way that a new angle for understanding emerges. Snow and Benford explain that amplification helps with this articulation process: "These punctuated or accented elements may function in service of the articulation process by providing a conceptual handle or peg for linking together various events and issues. In operating in this fashion,

these punctuated issues, beliefs, and events may function much like synecdoches, bringing into sharp relief and symbolizing the larger frame or movement of which it is a part.”<sup>98</sup> This is seen to be happening when the *St Petersburg Times* reports, “‘It’s a crisis because there is a concentration of homeless folks in a tent city in a place they’re not supposed to be,’ said Sarah Snyder, executive director of the Pinellas County Coalition for the homeless.”<sup>99</sup> In highlighting that the homeless residents of the tent city are not supposed to be there, the homeless appear as unruly children who are hurting the downtown by making their presence obvious. This line of reasoning is brought out whenever the homeless gather in organized protests of city policies. When the government responds to such protests the magnitude of the scene is emphasized over the protesting actions of the homeless themselves.

Crisis also exists because even if homelessness is viewed as a social problem, there are not enough existing resources being directed toward mitigating it. The same article explains, “The city is woefully short of shelter beds, and more than a third of the beds it does have come with strict limits on how long a person can stay, generally just three to five days a month.” It is the existence of time constraints on the available shelter options as well as the overall shortage that seem unfixable by existing mechanisms. The concept of a housing crisis is blamed on both budgetary and location concerns. This line of reasoning is brought together with the argument that there is a crisis of concentration and quantity to form the larger crisis frame.

This crisis frame is developed by city councilmen James Bennett, who began in the social problem frame, and Bill Foster, who spoke out on behalf of the nuisance

frame. When the city council steps into the scene as a result of increasing numbers of homeless people, and as a response to the increased visibility brought about by the protests, they do so by labeling the scene a crisis. Government is the proverbial knight in shining armor rushing to the rescue of the besieged city. Notice that it is not the homeless or the business interests being rescued, but rather the city itself. More specifically, this frame is organized around the value of the pursuit of happiness. It is the government's job to preserve that right for all subgroups. The nature of government in scenes of crisis, however, is to be the agent of change. Narratives emerging from the crisis perspective focus on what the government is doing to solve the immediate problem: "Social workers have been dispatched to set up tables Monday morning to sign up those who qualify for rent vouchers, disability assistance or even bus tickets out of town if they have family or friends who can take them. The city has met with a real estate agent to find a building to use as a shelter. Officials plan to ask organizations that run cold-weather shelters to consider opening every night. And they'll canvass school officials to see if there are empty buildings that could be used to house the tent city occupants when they are displaced Friday." These types of catalogues of the actions of the local government means that it doesn't matter if homeless people are characterized as victims of the scene or slackers, because the government takes upon itself the responsibility to mitigate the crisis. This list of steps the government is taking responds to the nuisance frame by providing the means for homeless to get out of town and responds to the social problem frame by detailing steps to address the needs of those who do not leave.

While the responses offered speak directly to the nuisance and social problem positions, the crisis position uses anecdotal narratives to describe the success of government actions. When Pinellas Hope is opened, the tent city that the city council helped Catholic Charities to set up, the paper reported, “Aside from the free tents and toiletries, residents are provided showers, water, food, bathrooms, access to phones and computers, in addition to 24-hour security.” This narrative satisfies the social problem proponents because it shows that the necessities of existence are being taken care of. The location of the tent city in an area zoned as industrial satisfies the other constituents who wanted to see homeless people moved out of the tourist areas downtown. The fact that the center only has room for 250 of the approximately 1500 homeless is downplayed in the presence of the hope of men like Roger Anderson whose narratives prove success: “This is a chance for me,” said Anderson as he set up the free tent. ‘I’m going to make it work. I feel like I’m going to get my life back.’”<sup>100</sup> He is said to have arrived at Pinellas Hope after resisting the temptation to go into a liquor store. His personal triumph lends legitimacy to his claim that he can succeed given the opportunity the city has provided. These anecdotal narratives reinforce the idea that the government is protecting the right to the pursuit of happiness for the homeless individuals as well as the local businesses. In taking steps to mitigate the city’s crisis, individual crises are also helped.

De-escalation of the city’s crisis is the number one goal with the recognition that that may not require completely eliminating homelessness. But, because attention and exigence fade when the government claims to be acting, politicians can engage in symbolic placation so long as it appears they are satisfying the most prominent demands

of each group. This is seen to happen when the city promises to open another shelter, but does not do so because of budget cuts that have to happen as a result of reduced revenue because of tax cuts. The politicians do not risk losing support from their constituents so long as they claim to be planning action and reducing the air of crisis. The government can then condemn protests by activists as jeopardizing support from the larger community for the assistance that the government is offering. Councilman James Bennett responds to a scheduled rally of homeless people before the GOP convention being held in St. Petersburg saying, “‘We have had hundreds of people, both elected and not elected, working on this issue now for years,’ he said. ‘So I’m trying to understand how this (protest) is going to help anyone up off the sidewalk. How is this going to help St. Petersburg?’ Bennett said Wright could better serve the homeless by working with, not against, the city.”<sup>101</sup> Thus, the social problem is already being addressed as best as possible by the government so protests would be preaching to the choir. By painting Reverend Bruce Wright as opposed to the city, Bennett shifts the blame for any future escalation of the homeless crisis onto the homeless themselves. It also frames the protest as a nuisance.

In short, by diagnosing homelessness as a crisis and avoiding immediate blame, the government is able to claim a responsibility to act. Their actions allow failure to be blamed on the failure of individual homeless people who do not exercise their own agency to benefit from the proffered support. Success of government aid for ending homelessness, while acknowledging the narratives of those who accept the aid, emphasizes the benevolence of the government as rescuers.

## **Conclusion**

If government is supposed to be of the people, by the people, and for the people, the emergence of a third way of framing homelessness in Pinellas County was a necessary outcome of the public discussion. Local governments are composed of people from opposing viewpoints, beholden to varied constituents, and required to create room to act decisively. Both the conceptualization of homelessness as a social problem and as a nuisance highlight divergent causes of homelessness by employing the use of anecdotal narratives and characterizations that supported different thematic values within the diagnostic and prognostic steps of collective action framing, opposing appropriate responses by the city in general, and mobilize contrary demands upon the government. By amplifying the concerns of both views into the view that the city was facing a homeless crisis, the government was able to bypass the competing characterizations of homeless individuals and provide some satisfaction to both groups of constituents.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

The presence of homeless people on the streets of prosperous cities does not go unremarked. Since the 1980's public debate has flourished over who is homeless, how they got to be homeless, how many homeless people there are, why they remain homeless, who should be responsible for providing services, whether services will increase or reduce homelessness, what public behaviors ought to be criminalized, and the larger social and economic consequences of homelessness. Without looking too closely at particular homeless individuals, multiple sides of these issues are argued in nationally circulated newspapers and magazines. Major metropolitan centers look more closely at the discrepancies between the number of shelter beds available and the number of people without permanent housing, often getting sidetracked figuring out exactly how many people need shelter. On occasion, cities also worry about the vulnerability of homeless people to senseless attacks. Finally, the most distinct picture of homelessness presented at all levels from popular culture to citywide exposés, are the in depth stories of those homeless individuals like Chris Gardner in *The Pursuit of Happiness* who are able, through hard work and determination, to climb the economic ladder out of destitution and into the upper crust of society.

While these issues seem irresolvable at the national level, it is clear from the case of St. Petersburg, Florida that the considerations of multiple interest groups can influence the policies that attempt to address the issues of homelessness. The presence of



distinct frames in the public discussion of issues surrounding homelessness in St. Petersburg Florida reinforces the idea that framing is an important part of social movements. When homelessness was framed as a social problem, housed activists and other community supporters were able to align themselves with the ends desired by the homeless community. Although this frame may not have been resonant with the individual identity frames of the homeless themselves, the larger issue frame was able to unite a coalition of various parties around the shared thematic value.

The values of the economic interests in the city were incompatible with those at the heart of the “homelessness as social problem” frame, but were able to reach a sort of consensus that viewed homelessness as a nuisance. Those adopting this frame had an economic interest in maintaining the existing distinction of acceptable behaviors on public property.

Neither frame was projected into a vacuum. Each party directed their claims and points of view to the local government, but because there was no pressing need to act prior to 2007, and because the city councilmembers split fairly evenly on which frames they adopted, it seemed like both groups were being listened to but that the issue was intractable. Political opportunities allow for the city government to adopt a new way of framing the issues of homelessness that transcend the existing frames.

Central to viewing the opposing frames as nonstatic entities is the role the discursive units play. Although characterizations function to name who is homeless, they seem not to be engaged by alternate frames. The anecdotal narratives provide evidence

of who or what is at fault for the existence of homelessness and why, as well as reinforce the thematic values in each frame.

When the social problem frame blames the scene for the lack of agency for homeless people, those in control of the business scene, namely the business owners, respond by blaming homeless people for their “choice” to be on the street and refusals to accept assistance as though they were responding to a personal attack from the social problem frame. The nuisance frame organizes around the value of choice, which the social problem responds to by blaming economic forces. The final frame of homelessness as a crisis, in valuing the pursuit of happiness, assumes the central values of the two competing frames. If individuals are given the opportunities necessary to pursue happiness, then failure to achieve the end of that pursuit would reflect an individual’s choice. Insofar as the policies that emerged from this final frame do not meet the needs for providing acceptable public space for life’s necessities, it can be expected that the opposing interest groups will reinvigorate their respective frames. Future studies ought to investigate how frames respond to such discrepancies.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> See Chris Jencks, *The Homeless*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), for a more thorough discussion of the causes of homelessness and the role of drugs and alcohol in keeping people from gaining stable housing and employment.

<sup>2</sup> See James D Wright, Beth A. Rubin, and Joel A. Devine. *Beside the Golden Door: Policy, Politics, and the Homeless*, (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1998), for an evaluation of the effectiveness of policies.

<sup>3</sup> Kyle, Ken. *Contextualizing Homelessness: Critical Theory, Homelessness, and Federal Policy Addressing the Homeless*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 35.

<sup>4</sup> Jessica W. Pardee, “Welfare Reform and Housing Retrenchment,” in *The Promise of Welfare Reform: Political Rhetoric and the Reality of Poverty*, ed. Keith Kilty and Elizabeth Segal, (New York: The Hawarth Press, 2006), 139.

<sup>5</sup> Later renamed the McKinney-Vento Act in October 2000. This bill is named after two Congressmen who worked in the 1980’s to secure federal funding for programs to assist the homeless.

<sup>6</sup> Leonard C. Feldman, *Citizens Without Shelter: Homelessness, Democracy, and Political Exclusion*, (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Community Planning and Development, “The Third Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress,” July 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). Also see Sidney Tarrow, *Power and Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> McAdam, *Political Process*.

<sup>10</sup> Tarrow, *Power in Movement*.

<sup>11</sup> Celeste M. Condit, *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric: Communicating Social Change*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 11.

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<sup>12</sup> Condit, *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric*, 13. Although ideographs are central to the abortion controversy, they do not figure prominently in the issue of homelessness. I instead choose to speak of thematic values in the frames.

<sup>13</sup> Condit, *Decoding*, 25.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Benford and David A. Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 614.

<sup>28</sup> Daniel M. Cress and David A. Snow, "The Outcomes of Homeless Mobilization: The Influence of Organization, Disruption, Political Mediation, and Framing," *American Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 4 (January 2000): 1071.

<sup>29</sup> David A. Snow et al., "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation," *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986): 468.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 464.

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- <sup>31</sup> Cress and Snow, "Outcomes of Homeless Mobilization," 1071.
- <sup>32</sup> David A. Snow and Catherine Corrigan-Brown, "Falling on Deaf Ears: Confronting the Prospect of Nonresonant Frames," in *Rhyming Hope and History: Activists, Academics, and Social Movement Scholarship*, ed. David Croteau, William Haynes, and Charlotte Ryan, 222-238 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).
- <sup>33</sup> Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes," 623.
- <sup>34</sup> Deana A. Rhollinger, "Framing the Abortion Debate: Organizational Resources, Media Strategies and Movement Counter-Movement Dynamics," *The Sociological Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (2002): 479-507.
- <sup>35</sup> Myra Marx Ferree, "Soft Repression: Ridicule, Stigma, and Silencing in Gender-Based Movements," in *Repression and Mobilization*, ed. Christian Davenport, Hank Johnston and Carol Mueller, 138-158 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).
- <sup>36</sup> Rob Rosenthal, "Imaging Homelessness and Homeless People: Visions and Strategies Within the Movement(s)," *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless* 9, no. 2 (2000): 111-126.
- <sup>37</sup> Snow and Corrigan-Brown, "Falling on Deaf Ears," 226.
- <sup>38</sup> David A. Snow and Leon Anderson, "Identity Work Among the Homeless: The Verbal Construction and Avowal of Personal Identities," *The American Journal of Sociology* 92, no. 6 (May, 1987): 1336-1371.
- <sup>39</sup> Katherine Boydell, Paula Goering, and Tammy L. Morrell-Bellai, "Narratives of Identity: Re-presentation of Self in People Who Are Homeless," *Qualitative Health Research* 10, no. 1 (January 2000): 26-38.
- <sup>40</sup> David Croteau and Lyndsi Hicks, "Coalition Framing and the Challenge of a Consonant Frame Pyramid: The Case of a Collaborative Response to Homelessness," *Social Problems* 50, no. 2 (2003): 254.
- <sup>41</sup> Dietram A. Scheufele, "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects," *Journal of Communication* 49, no. 1 (March 1999): 103—122.
- <sup>42</sup> Jerney Reynolds, *Homeless Culture and the Media: How the Media Educate Audiences in Their Portrayal of America's Homeless*, (Youngstown: Campria Press, 2006).

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<sup>43</sup> See Eungjun Min, *Reading the Homeless: the Media's Image of Homeless Culture*, (Westport: Praeger, 1999).

<sup>44</sup> Marc W. Steinberg, "The Talk and Back Talk of Collective Action: A Dialogic Analysis of Repertoires of Discourse Among Nineteenth-Century English Cotton Spinners," *American Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 3 (Nov. 1999): 741.

<sup>45</sup> Donald A Schön and Martin Rein, *Frame Reflection: Toward the Resolution of Intractable Policy Controversies*, (New York: BasicBooks, 1994).

<sup>46</sup> Linda L. Putnam and Julia M. Wondolleck, "Intractability: Definitions, Dimensions, and Distinctions," in *Making Sense of Intractable environmental Conflicts: Frames and Cases* edited by Roy J. Lewicki, Barbara Gray, Michael Elliott et al., (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2003) 36.

<sup>47</sup> George Lakoff, "Introduction: Framing is About Ideas, and Ideas Matter," in Jeffrey Feldman, *Framing the Debate: Famous Presidential Speeches and How Progressives Can Use Them to Change the Conversation (and Win Elections)*, (NY: IG, 2007) XI.

<sup>48</sup> Gail T. Fairhurst and Robert A. Sarr, *The Art of Framing*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), XI.

<sup>49</sup> See Christopher Jencks, *The Homeless*, David A. Snow and Leon Anderson, *Down on Their Luck: a Study of Homeless Street People*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), and James D Wright, Beth A. Rubin, and Joel A. Devine. *Beside the Golden Door: Policy, Politics, and the Homeless*, (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1998).

<sup>50</sup> See Kathleen R. Arnold, *Homelessness, Citizenship, and Identity: the Uncanniness of Late Modernity*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

<sup>51</sup> Condit, *Decoding*, 3.

<sup>52</sup> I use the term vernacular rhetoric instead of public rhetoric because the notion of public seems to be in flux given the availability of publishing ideas on the internet and other new media. Vernacular encompasses the type of rhetoric that individuals can engage in as effectively as trained journalists and representatives of organizations.

<sup>53</sup> Condit, *Decoding*, 11.

<sup>54</sup> Condit referred to ideographs, but I avoid that term because it is too closely tied to ideology and does not seem to accurately represent what is present in the issue frames I found in St. Petersburg.

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<sup>55</sup> While Kyle (See Ken Kyle, *Contextualizing Homelessness*) points to the ideograph of science in the context of homelessness, I find that property and the pursuit of happiness are engaged more directly and frequently in Pinellas County.

<sup>56</sup> Condit, *Decoding*, 25.

<sup>57</sup> John M. Sloop, *Cultural Prison: Discourse, Prisoners, and Punishment*, (University of Alabama Press, 2006), 187.

<sup>58</sup> While in many ways naming homelessness as a problem is itself problematic, at times I may use that label when representing the dominant discourse.

<sup>59</sup> Kyle, *Contextualizing Homelessness*, 14.

<sup>60</sup> Jeremy Waldron, "Homelessness and the Issue of Freedom," *UCLA Law Review* 39 (Dec. 1991): 295-324.

<sup>61</sup> Don Mitchell, "The Annihilation of Space by Law: the Roots and Implications of Anti-homeless Laws in the United States," *Antipode* 29, no. 33 (1997): 1-18.

<sup>62</sup> Jeremy Waldron, "Welfare and the Images of Charity," *Philosophical Quarterly* 36, no. 145 (Oct. 1986): 479.

<sup>63</sup> Benno Weisberg, "When Punishing Innocent Conduct Violates the Eighth Amendment: Applying the 'Robinson' Doctrine to Homelessness and Other Contextual 'Crimes,'" *The Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology* 96, no. 1 (Fall 2005): 329-365.

<sup>64</sup> Waldron, "Homelessness," 324.

<sup>65</sup> Kyle, *Contextualizing Homelessness*, 98-99.

<sup>66</sup> Steven V. Roberts, "Reagan on Homelessness: Many Choose to Live in the Streets," *The New York Times*, December 23, 1988 online at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=940DE0D71639F930A15751C1A96E948260>

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Bruce G. Link, Sharon Schwartz, Robert Moore, Jo Phelan, Elmer Struening, and Ann Stueve. "Public Knowledge, Attitudes, and Beliefs About Homeless People: Evidence for Compassion Fatigue??" *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23, no. 4 (1995): 553.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 554.

<sup>70</sup> Daniel B. Wood, “For L.A. Homeless: a Gym, Movies, and Hair Salon,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 18, 2005, 01.

<sup>71</sup> Martin Kasindorf, “National Count of Homeless Puts Issue in Human Terms; Families Account for 42%, but New Programs Focus on Single Adults,” *USA Today*, October 12, 2005, Final Edition, 1A.

<sup>72</sup> Vimal Patel, “Number of Chronically Homeless is Down 15%; A Report Tracks the Problem Nationwide Over the Course of 12 Months, a Change From ‘Point-in-Time’ Looks,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 30, 2008, A9.

<sup>73</sup> Rachel L. Swarns, “Sharp Drop Reported In Chronically Homeless,” *The New York Times*, July 30, 2008, A12.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Leslie Kaufman, “Surge in Homeless Families Sets Off Debate on Cause,” *The New York Times*, June 29, 2004, A18.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Marty Graham, “Can a City Ticket Its Homeless?” *Christian Science Monitor*, December 20, 2004, 12.

<sup>78</sup> Larry Copeland and Charisse Jones, “Atlanta Puts Heat on Panhandlers,” *USA Today*, August 16, 2005, 3A.

<sup>79</sup> Carol Motsinger, “Libraries Increasingly Offering Services to Ease Plight of the Homeless,” *USA Today*, June 14, 2007, 2A.

<sup>80</sup> thenumbers.com: <http://www.the-numbers.com/movies/2006/PRHAP-DVD.php>

<sup>81</sup> Art Dewulf, Barbara Gray, Linda Putnam, et al. “Disentangling Approaches to Framing: Mapping the Terrain,” Theoretical Paper Submitted for the 18<sup>th</sup> annual IACM Conference (June 12-15), 2005, 15.

<sup>82</sup> Condit, *Decoding*, 13.

<sup>83</sup> “Frame” and “narrative” are used synonymously when referring to the coherent story told over a period of time by a given interest group. “Anecdotal narrative” refers to the



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narratives that function as discursive units. These narratives appear to make a point within the larger narrative/frame.

<sup>84</sup> The city funded Pinellas Hope, an authorized tent city, after responding so inappropriately to the grassroots tent city erected by the homeless and their activists.

<sup>85</sup> Graham Brink, "As Downtown Develops, Homeless Lose Refuge; Pushed Out by Progress," *St. Petersburg Times*, Friday, January 20, 2006, South Pinellas Edition, 1B.

<sup>86</sup> *St. Petersburg Times*, "Shelter, Empathy For Those in Need," Monday, January 15, 2007, South Pinellas edition, 18A.

<sup>87</sup> Abhi Raghunathan, "For Attacker It's Prison," *St. Petersburg Times*, Tuesday, April 24, 2007, South Pinellas Edition, 1B.

<sup>88</sup> Abhi Raghunathan and Alisa Ulfert, "Homeless Men Found Slain in Early Hours," *St. Petersburg Times*, Thursday, January 18, 2007, South Pinellas Edition, 1A.

<sup>89</sup> *St. Petersburg Times*, "Shelter, Empathy For Those in Need," Monday, January 15, 2007, South Pinellas edition, 18A.

<sup>90</sup> Paul Swider, "Dilemma at the Door: Businesses Have a Problem Amid All the Promise," *St. Petersburg Times*, Sunday, February 18, 2007, East Edition, 14.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Shirley O'Sullivan, "Homeless Cause Trouble," *St. Petersburg Times*, Sunday, December 16, 2007, East edition, 2.

<sup>93</sup> Paul Swider, "Dilemma at the Door: Businesses Have a Problem Amid All the Promise," *St. Petersburg Times*, Sunday, February 18, 2007, East Edition, 14.

<sup>94</sup> Carrie Weimar and Graham Brink, "Homeless in St. Petersburg; As City Rises, Their Prospects Fall," *St. Petersburg Times*, Monday, February 6, 2006, North Pinellas Edition, 1B.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Elena Lesley, "Park to Test Wills, Goodwill," *St. Petersburg Times*, Sunday, January 28, 2007, South Pinellas Edition, 1B.

<sup>97</sup> Alisa Ulferts, "Tent City Makes Officials Focus On Homeless Needs," *St. Petersburg Times*, Saturday, January 6, 2007, South Pinellas Edition, 1B.

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<sup>98</sup> Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes,” 623.

<sup>99</sup> Alisa Ulferts, “Tent City Makes Officials Focus On Homeless Needs,” *St. Petersburg Times*, Saturday, January 6, 2007, South Pinellas Edition, 1B.

<sup>100</sup> William R. Levesque, “Homeless Stake Out Hope,” *St. Petersburg Times*, Sunday, December 2, 2007, South Pinellas Edition, 1B.

<sup>101</sup> Cristina Silva, “Rally Would Put Homeless Folks On Nation’s Doorstep,” *St. Petersburg Times*, Sunday, November 25, 2007, East Edition, 10.

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