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HOW DO YOU SLEEP AT NIGHT?

Investigating media representations and victim legitimacy of
homeless individuals in the New Zealand news media

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ABSTRACT

Homelessness is a complex social issue affecting in excess of one billion people around the world. Despite varying definitions and cultural variations, key issues associated with homelessness appear to be similar across countries. Although New Zealand was once a country with high home ownership, recent governmental and welfare changes have contributed to a growing homeless population. Since contact between housed and homeless individuals is often limited, media coverage about the issue plays a vital role in the dissemination and distribution of information about homelessness and affected individuals. Although there are numerous studies analysing the portrayal of homeless individuals in overseas media, there is a distinct lack of comparable New Zealand based research.

This study set out to investigate media representations and victim legitimacy of homeless individuals in the New Zealand news media, with a particular focus on how media representations and characterisations of homeless individuals may affect sympathy for them. This research encompasses both an overarching quantitative analysis of general reporting trends evident in the New Zealand news media (1995 – 2007), as well as an in-depth qualitative study of two particular case studies, namely media coverage following the murder of two homeless women, in order to further explore how sympathy can be supported or minimised, specifically during sad times.

Findings from the content analysis reveal that homeless people are predominantly portrayed as negative stereotypes. Most were identified as rough sleepers, often depicted drinking in parks and socialising in public spaces. Homeless people rarely address audiences, as stories were mediated by professionals, journalists and service providers. Although there were aspects of the coverage that promoted a sympathetic understanding of the issue and affected individuals and moved beyond narrow characterisations and discussions of homelessness, the majority

supported the typecasting of rough sleepers which resulted in a dichotomous, almost voyeuristic relationship between housed and homeless individuals. All in all, the New Zealand coverage appears unsympathetic as it typecasts individuals and perpetuates the 'othering' of homeless individuals

The violent death of two homeless women was expected to yield very sympathetic coverage and tragic storylines. The first victim, Betty Marusich, was a 69-year old homeless widow whose decomposed body is found in the Auckland Domain. The second victim was Sheryl Brown, a 45-year old homeless mother of three. Despite initial assumptions, the analysis revealed little sympathy for either victim. Instead a negative reporting framework supported by typecast terminology, reporting techniques, derogatory characterisations and implied blameworthiness, challenged each woman's victim status. Ultimately, this chapter questions whether either woman was ever considered a true victim deserving of public sympathy at all.

The study concludes with a discussion about the findings and how typecast representations, narrow characterisations, and marginal coverage can influence perception about the importance placed on, and extent of homelessness in New Zealand. Some suggestions for further research are discussed, as are recommendations to make media coverage more inclusive and less dichotomous in order to stress that homeless people are no different to housed individuals, but are merely individuals without suitable and affordable housing.

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Prior to this study's commencement, I admit that like many others, I was naïve to the complexities surrounding homelessness and oblivious to the extent of homelessness in New Zealand. Having completed the research, it has changed not only my perception of the issue, but I have been able to share what I have learnt with supervisors, fellow students, friends and family. This however, could not have been achieved without the help and support of some very important people.

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PREFACE: SETTING THE SCENE

Homelessness is a persistent issue around the world, understood and observable in a wide variety of contexts. It is a complex social phenomenon which has become particularly prominent since the 1980s (Buck, Toro & Ramos, 2004; Toro, 2007). Since then homeless individuals have become more visible around the world, and as a result, research increased and media started to take notice. As the issue has evolved through time, who we understand to be homeless is still being deliberated upon (Toro, 2007), and estimates are hard to produce due to varying understandings and conceptualisations of the issue (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 1992; Minnery and Greenhalgh, 2007). Despite this dynamic process and cultural diversity, key issues associated with homelessness appear to be similar across countries. An indicative factor of these common patterns of understanding and changes in the social positioning of individuals, is most evident in associated media coverage (Fenton, 2000; Marcos, 1989; Taylor, 2000). Representations of characters, key themes, causes and possible solutions are all discussed in news and current affairs programmes, which help frame homelessness and homeless people within society.

This thesis presents an analysis of the social construction of homelessness and the representation of homeless individuals in the New Zealand news and current affairs media between January 1995 and December 2007. The analysis documents how coverage can minimise public sympathy as well as encourage stereotypes about homeless individuals, which perpetuate their marginalisation (cf., Buck, Toro and Ramos, 2004; Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley, 2005; Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002; Lichter, 1989; and Widdowfield, 2001).

Encompassed in this research is both an overarching quantitative analysis of general reporting trends, as well as an in-depth qualitative study of two particular case studies. The quantitative content analysis provides an overview of homelessness related news coverage, focusing on characterisations, identified locations and typical behaviour to discuss stereotyping, and how sympathy for homeless individuals is supported or compromised through the reporting, and framing of stories. Related issues, such as identified causes and solutions, and the right to address audiences will also feature as these tell us something about who these people are, what they are like, and how society might respond to 'their needs' (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005). The qualitative analysis comprises two case studies, focused on the media coverage prompted by the murder of two homeless women whose cases featured frequently in the New Zealand televised, print and online news media. Both cases were specifically selected as violence against homeless individuals reflects the vulnerability of rough sleepers and the dangers they face by living in public spaces (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2008; Newburn & Rock, 2005; Stoops, 2005b). The analysis provides an in-depth look at how these two particular stories evolve over time and across media sources, which will provide a more inclusive analysis of homelessness coverage in New Zealand. Particular attention will be paid to the establishment or suppression of sympathy for these victims, as well as how this is achieved during sad time.

One of the key objectives of the empirical research is to establish whether or not New Zealand coverage follows the seemingly negative precedence observed within the international studies conducted so far (see Buck, Toro and Ramos, 2004; Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley, 2005; Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002; Lichter, 1989; and Widdowfield, 2001). My research suggests the New Zealand coverage is mixed, offering both sympathetic accounts of struggling homeless families, but also drawing on and perpetuating stereotypes about homeless individuals. Typecast characterisations of rough sleeping and drunk, middle aged men (Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002) feature frequently, and promote the dichotomous relationship between 'us', the civilised and housed public, and 'them', the unruly, lazy and often drunk, homeless population. Negative and narrow characterisations, in addition to an implied inherent difference between housed and homeless individuals, support discussions which imply that homelessness is caused by individual failure, rather than structural influences. The marginal role homeless people in society is mirrored, both in the amount of coverage dedicated to homelessness, as well as by homeless people's minimal participation within their own coverage. Stories are frequently mediated by intermediaries, such as professionals and service workers, rather than homeless people themselves discussing related issues and challenging stereotypes (Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley, 2005). Overall, the New Zealand media offers a restrained space for public deliberation regarding homelessness. Sympathy for individuals is rare, even in news reports about the violent deaths of homeless victims, as is discussed in Chapter Four.

The following chapter introduces homelessness around the world and in New Zealand. Stereotypes about homeless individuals and who is actually affected are discussed, as are possible causes and solutions, and the difficulties in defining such a complex social phenomenon. In addition, this chapter discusses the media's role in society and how opinions and understandings can be affected by related media coverage. How media, particularly news media, discuss the issue of homelessness and how homeless individuals are frequently characterised, is also discussed.

Overall, this chapter provides a context for the analysis to be discussed in upcoming chapters.

Chapter 2 discusses the methodology used in obtaining the data for both the content analysis and the case studies. It will review both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods and their merits, and explain why each analysis chapter used a different method of analysis.

Following that, Chapter 3, will present the content analysis of the New Zealand media coverage from 1995 to 2007. When homelessness features and who is shown will be analysed first, followed by an overview of where homeless people are depicted, who with and what they are shown to be doing. Causes and solutions, the right to address audiences and how the vulnerability and dangers many homeless individuals face because they are homeless, will all be discussed. This chapter will add to the general understanding of who is depicted as 'the homeless' in the New Zealand news media, as well as demonstrate how the local news media frames the issue, and supports the narrow and naïve perception that homelessness is a lifestyle choice, or something that affects a particular group of problem ridden others. Stereotypes are encouraged, a dichotomous, almost voyeuristic relationship between homeless and housed is established and sympathy for homeless individuals is systematically minimised.

Subsequently, Chapter 4 will present two case studies. The first features the death of 'Domain Vagrant' Betty Marusich, a 69-year old widowed homeless woman. Her death and subsequent police investigation generated a prolonged media storyline, which is analysed first. Then Sheryl Brown, a mother-of-three who was murdered on Karangahape Road just before Christmas, is discussed in detail. Each case demonstrates how media coverage can minimise sympathy for individuals, even during sad and tragic times. Through a series of attention-grabbing, newsworthy-increasing reporting techniques the coverage for each woman's case is lengthy. Through a series of framing issues, negative

terminology, implied links to prostitution and questionable characterisations, each woman's victim status is challenged (Greer, 2007), which leads me to question whether Betty or Sheryl were ever considered real victims by the media that report on their story.

The thesis will conclude with a final chapter that will tie the research together, which will argue that homeless individuals hold a marginal role in society, reflected in the amount and type of media coverage they receive. In addition, it will also argue that the New Zealand media perpetuate long held stereotypes about homeless individuals, and changing these will require coverage to allow homeless individuals to address audiences and related issues themselves. Furthermore, coverage needs to be more inclusive and move beyond typical storylines of personal failings and must stop portraying homelessness as a lifestyle choice in order to more accurately portray the complexities that often lead into, and keep people in varying stages of homelessness. With increased attention, comprehensive discussions about causes and solutions and people affected by it, media might support a more sympathetic framework in discussing homelessness. This in turn might go some way toward bridging the dichotomous relationship between housed and homeless individuals, which is prominent at present.

This thesis will conclude with a final discussion chapter, which will summarise the key findings discussed throughout this study. The marginality of homeless related news items in local media coverage, the homogenising of homeless individuals and typecast references, as well as the personal fault often attributed to homeless individuals will be discussed. Suggestions for further research are made, and recommendations for changes in the media coverage to portray homeless individuals more accurately, with more sympathy and less stigma, are also proposed.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“It is a tragic aspect of our culture that homeless people, in addition to suffering from the hardship of their condition, are subjected to alienation and discrimination by mainstream society. It is even more tragic that alienation and discrimination often spring from incorrect myths and stereotypes which surround homelessness.”

(National Center on Homelessness and Poverty [USA], 2002).

Homelessness was “once considered a problem confined to Third World nations and to periods of war and economic depression, [but] has recently emerged as a major social issue in most developed nations” (Toro, 2007, p.461). Since the 1980s in particular, homeless people have become more noticeable in communities around the world (Link, Schwartz, Moore, Phelan, Struening & Stueve, 1995), because they no longer keep to skid-row areas of the urban landscape. They are, therefore more visible and more often brought into the daily awareness of millions of Americans (Lee, link & Toro, 1991). As a result, homeless individuals have been, and still are, increasingly featured in media reports, governmental policies, legislation and academic research (Minnery & Greenhalgh, 2007). This trend is however, not

restricted to the United States, as similar patterns are also evident in New Zealand (Leggatt-Cook, 2007; Kearns, Smith & Abbott, 1991).

Although “homelessness itself is not new” (Minnery & Greenhalgh, 2007, p.643), how we have come to understand, conceptualise and frame homelessness is different and it is still evolving, which gives the impression that it is a ‘new’ social phenomenon. Recent and increasingly frequent research into the causes of homelessness suggests that it is much more complex than a mere shortage of acceptable accommodation (Wright & Rubin, n.d.; Olufemi, 2002; Toro, 2007). Moreover, the increasing variety of affected individuals (Kelly, 2001; Toro, 2007) means that long-held stereotypes about who we commonly understand as the ‘typical’ homeless person, needs to change (Klodawsky, Farrell & D’Aubry, 2002). Increasing discussions and focus on issues related to homelessness have also contributed to advances in the understanding of the complex array of factors and circumstances that contribute to individuals becoming homeless. Recent research suggests that there are a wide variety of causes that can result in individuals becoming homeless. Broadly classed into individual factors, market and public policy failures as well as structural insufficiency, it is often a combination of these that result in homelessness (Koebel & Abdelfattah, 2004; Minnery & Greenhalgh, 2007). Researchers now also agree that the majority of the homeless individuals are not personally inadequate but if it seems so, may be it is because they are most vulnerable to systematic deprivation (Fiske, 1999). Overall, the research seems to confirm the argument proposed by Minnery & Greenhalgh (2007), who believe that “there is a continuum of causes that cross both structural and individual issues” (Minnery & Greenhalgh, 2007, p.643) that lead people into, and keep individuals in varying states of homelessness.

These arguments are not restricted exclusively to the United States, but also feature in British and New Zealand-based research. For example, Shelter (2009), England’s Housing and Homelessness Charity, believes that homelessness is “caused by a complex interplay between a person’s

individual circumstances and adverse 'structural' factors outside their direct control" (para.3), which typically build up to crisis point, eventually leaving individuals homeless. Locally, the Auckland City Website (2009) seems to stress individual causes over any other kind. Although they admit that homelessness is rarely a choice, and is usually the result of a combination of issues, they do stress that "many homeless people have histories of physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse", and that many homeless individuals "also experience, issues around self-harm, addiction, domestic violence and mental health problems" (Auckland City Website, 2009, para.13). Although this could link back to the argument proposed earlier about society's most vulnerable being at an increased risk of becoming homeless (Fiske, 1999), this perspective could also imply that homeless individuals are different, deficient and flawed, in contrast to the housed majority. Although only a brief overview of leading discussions about the causes of homelessness, this introduction will further discuss some of the key issues linked to homelessness, which will provide a context within which this research is based. What is lacking thus far, however, is an overview about how many people are homeless around the world.

The United Nations Centre for Human Settlement estimates that between 100 million and one billion individuals are homeless around the world, depending on the definition used to define 'homelessness' (1996, cited in Olufemi, 2002). If the definition was to include anyone in need of adequate and secure accommodation, with basic provisions like running water and drainage, they estimate that this number would exceed one billion.

Accordingly, it is important to start with an overview of the varying definitions that exist around the issue of homelessness, as these are very influential in setting boundaries for research and who we understand to be homeless, as well as related discussions. After attempting to define homelessness, this chapter will discuss the issue in New Zealand, exploring how historical and governmental developments have shaped homelessness today. The extent of homelessness in New Zealand to date,

initiatives and control measures being taken by local councils, will also be discussed. Next, I will discuss the vulnerability homeless individuals experience by living in public spaces, and the dangers they face on a daily basis. After that, the role of the media will be explored, its function within society and the role it has in distributing and disseminating information. Following this overview, a summary of comparable studies are analysed and reviewed, with themes such as narrow characterisations, seasonality of coverage and marginalisation within coverage being key issues. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a brief summary, which will recap and set the scene for this research study. How it fits into the already available array of international studies and the local research will also be addressed.

1.1. CONCEPTUALISING HOMELESSNESS: A SIMPLE DEFINITION?

Although stereotypes suggest that homeless people are easily identified and homelessness is a narrow and easily defined concept, defining homelessness is a complex process. Understandings can depend on purpose, values and ideology, politics and different understandings between cultures (Olufemi, 2002). Also, there are major differences between developing and industrial nations as well as within these categories themselves (Glasser, 1994 cited in Olufemi, 2002). As this section will show, homelessness is a much more complex social phenomenon than first thought and one that is often without a simple and straightforward answer.

Conceptualisations and understandings of homelessness have evolved over time and have moved beyond the stereotypical assumption that homelessness refers exclusively to rough sleepers. In a recent Australian Census for example, only 16% of homeless individuals were classed as rough sleepers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008), with the remaining 84% in varying other states of homelessness. This suggests that visible

homelessness is only the tip of the iceberg, so to speak, and although it is now widely accepted that there are various kinds of homelessness (Minnery and Greenhalgh, 2007), the debate has taken decades to reach this point, and even now, is still ongoing.

The 1960s are regarded as the decade of the 'hobo' and the 'bum', dominated by references to, and images of 'skid-rows', which were inhabited by middle aged, single, alcohol-dependent men, living in "cheap hostels, run-down boarding houses and emergency accommodation" (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 1992, p.277). The number of homeless individuals visibly increased during the 1970s and '80s, and as they were increasingly different from the 'skid-row' pattern of the 1960s (Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 1992), a more inclusive definition of homelessness was needed. Discussions moved beyond the mere provision of shelter to question what made a home, as factors like security and social support were increasingly seen as important. It is unclear whether the number of homeless individuals steadily increased during this time, or whether homeless individuals themselves merely became more visible (Chamberlain and Mackenzie, 1992). Nevertheless, the increased visibility of homeless people on streets and the changing face of affected individuals meant that homelessness became an emerging global issue during the 1980s. As academic, political and media attention increased, the attempts to count homeless individuals first highlighted the need for a universal definition. To date however, there is still no universally accepted definition as cultural variations in the understandings of home and homelessness, make a universal interpretation particularly difficult.

The limited agreement on the parameters for homelessness has resulted in a variety of definitions in a variety of different countries and contexts. For example, in the United States, homeless children and youth are defined as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence" (Mapstone, n.d., para.2). Australia on the other hand, defines a homeless individual as anyone without access to adequate and safe housing (Mapstone, n.d.). Sweden's definition is more expansive and includes

persons without their own dwelling, and without the possibility of permanently living in someone else's home. This includes residents in temporary accommodation, anyone living on the streets and in institutions, who do not have shelter when discharged or released (Mapstone, n.d.). While this is perhaps the most inclusive definition thus far, it appears too broad and is perhaps for that precise reasons, not discussed in any other literature. New Zealand researchers Kearns, Smith and Abbott (1991) note in their research that in addition to the visible homeless, there are the incipient homeless, who they define as:

people temporarily living in the home of their friends and relatives; in places they cannot afford; in dwellings from which they are in danger of being evicted; and in spaces that are not adequate dwellings, such as caravans, cars, garages, sheds and even boxes. (Kearns, Smith & Abbott, 1991, p.369)

A three-tiered approach to defining the issue is proposed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1991), an approach often considered at the forefront of establishing a useable and inclusive definition (Greenhalgh, Miller, Mead, Jerome and Minnery, 2004). Split into three distinct levels, the first level encompasses visible or primary homelessness, defined as rooflessness or rough sleeping and “includes people squatting in derelict buildings or improvised shelters, including tents and cars” (Leggatt-Cook, 2007, p.43). Secondary homelessness includes anyone in temporary accommodation, emergency housing or people staying with friends or family. Thirdly, the tertiary homeless are individuals living in medium- or long-term shelters or boarding houses, often without the “security of tenure and without a separate bedroom, bathroom or kitchen facilities” (Leggatt-Cook, 2007, p.43). Despite this tiered-approach being considered one of the most inclusive definitions of homelessness thus far, it is still not accepted as a universal definition, here or abroad.

In New Zealand there are a variety of definitions used by different agencies and service providers. For example, The New Zealand Coalition

to End Homelessness website cites Chamberlain and MacKenzie's three-tiered model as their understanding of homelessness. The Auckland City Website (2009) however, has produced their own definition, which includes rough sleepers, people in sheltered accommodation and people without permanent shelter who are sleeping on couches and floors. As this research was being conducted, a report published by Statistics New Zealand (2009b) highlighted the need for an agreed definition of homelessness in New Zealand, in order fill the gap so that "government and community groups can make well-informed decisions on the level and nature of homelessness in New Zealand" (p.4). The report offers a very inclusive approach to understanding homelessness, including not only those without shelter, people in temporary or uninhabitable housing, or individuals forced to share with friends and family, but also includes anyone on a waiting list for suitable accommodation, individuals forced out of their residence due to violence and threats, as well as people "who have housing in another geographic location, but whose living situation in their current geographic location is considered homeless" (Statistics New Zealand, 2009b, p.8). Similarly to this recent attempt to establish a national understanding of homelessness, this research also adopted a very inclusive definitional approach, including anyone in a precarious housing situation, including:

- rough sleepers and couch surfers;
- anyone in unaffordable and unsuitable housing;
- anyone staying in temporary or emergency accommodation; and
- anyone living in overcrowded, improvised or unsanitary accommodation.

A clear framework for defining homelessness can have many positive aspects, like the ability to accurately estimate of the extent of the problem (Scheiner, 2004). On the other hand, "the inability to robustly define homelessness impacts on the quality and quantity of statistics of homeless people" (Greenhalgh, Miller, Mead, Jerome and Minnery, 2004, p.1). Although these authors acknowledge that variations of data collection,

time frames and measures make it difficult to fully comprehend the extent of homelessness, they explain that some countries, like Germany, Greece, Belgium, Spain and Portugal, lack any rudimentary national appreciation for the extent of homelessness. This is also highlighted in research by Minnery and Greenhalgh (2007) who reviewed varying definitions of homelessness in Europe, and found that the lack of a common understanding about who is considered homeless makes it difficult to appreciate the extent of, and fully understand homelessness on a global scale.

On the contrary, while a succinct definition of homelessness may increase our understanding and awareness of the issue, a clear and precise definition may also impact negatively on individuals who do not meet the criteria to be defined as homeless. In setting definitional boundaries, we are in fact creating more margins, with the potential to stigmatise some, and exclude or further marginalise vulnerable individuals in society (Schiff, 2003). For example, by exclusively discussing only the visible homeless, we are denying that people living in unsuitable and unaffordable housing and people forced into shelters and emergency accommodation, are in fact homeless. Therefore, individuals who are in varying other stages of homelessness would be unable to gain access to relevant services. Scheiner (2001) argues that definitions can “make judgements about what is considered a home, and at what point a person becomes homeless” (p.2). Moreover, she believes that definitions provide an indication of public attitude, as it is an area for exclusion and a battle for resources. She proposes that there are ‘worthy’ homeless individuals, such as families, children, the elderly and the physically handicapped, who are often presented in contrast to the blameworthy homeless, such as the drug addicts, alcoholics and ex-criminals, on whom the housed public does not want to waste valuable resources—they are for the ‘worthy’ homeless (Scheiner, 2001). The biggest issue to arise from a universal definition would however, be that “only those who fall under the homeless definition will receive assistance from homeless programs” (Scheiner, 2001, p.2). This makes an inclusive and comprehensive definition vital to

'the homeless population', as they are otherwise marginalised and excluded even from a sub-culture that they are technically a part of.

All in all, this section has outlined some of the positive and negative aspects that a clear definition of homelessness may offer. Definitions can inform and help frame homelessness in news coverage, enable more accurate estimates of the extent of homelessness, and provide targeted services and policies to help affected individuals. Narrow conceptualisations may however, further marginalise an already marginal group in society, as definitions can act as exclusionary measures (Minnery & Greenhalgh, 2007). Furthermore, definitions may in fact promote notions of difference between housed and homeless individuals as they are often considered and talked about as if 'they' were a problem ridden group, distinct from the rest of the population (Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002). Terms like 'the homeless' promote a dichotomy between housed and un-housed individuals, who are framed as inherently different from each other, often promoted by a stereotypical understanding of the issue and affected individuals, a theme prominent throughout this research.

1.2. HOMELESSNESS: AN ISSUE IN NEW ZEALAND?

Homelessness is a global issue, and as such, even New Zealand is not exempt (Leggatt-Cook, 2007; Kearns, Smith & Abbott, 1991). As this section will demonstrate, a number of political changes and welfare adjustments have contributed to New Zealand's growing number of homeless individuals. It is important to briefly discuss these in order to provide some context as to how New Zealand, once a country with one of the highest home ownership rates in the world (Kearns, Smith & Abbott, 1991), now has a growing population of people who sleep rough, live in shelters and improvised lodgings or board with family members in overcrowded, and often temporary, accommodation. While the first section will provide a quick overview, the following section will discuss the extent

of homelessness in New Zealand today and what is being done for them, or to them, as the case may be.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In 1936, a Labour-led government committed themselves to providing adequate and suitable housing for all New Zealanders regardless of their income (Kearns, Smith & Abbott, 1991). By 1949, the state had indeed become “the major provider of rental housing for the poor, and also the source of most of the cheap loans used to boost the proportion of owner-occupied dwellings” (Thorns, 1986, cited in Kearns, Smith & Abbott, 1991, p.370). Home ownership rates continued to rise and had reached in excess of 70% by the 1970s (Kearns, Smith & Abbott, 1991). New Zealand subsequently gained an international reputation as the land of opportunity, which was reflected in widely used phrases such as ‘the quarter acre paradise’ (Kearns, Smith & Abbott, 1991). Since then however, significant political, economic and social change in New Zealand has led to declining rates of home ownership and the gap between the rich and the poor has grown, resulting in a “very high degree of inequality” (Hamilton, 2008).

Social and economic changes during the 1970s had a direct impact on the supply and demand of low-cost housing (Kearns, Smith & Abbott, 1991; Waldegrave, 2000). In addition to these changes, high levels of unemployment and an increasing occurrence of single-person households meant that “home ownership rates began to slide and competition for housing at the ‘affordable’ end of the market intensified” (Leggatt-Cook, 2007, p.17). Furthermore, the economic downturn of the 1980s compounded an already challenging situation for low income families, who were increasingly faced with rising house prices as well as mortgage and rental rates (Leggatt-Cook, 2007, p19), and by the late 1980s, housing stock, especially “the pool of rental properties in the lowest price ranges, had reached an all-time low” (Kearns, Smith & Abbott, 1991, p370).

New Zealand's first systematic study into homelessness, conducted by Percy (1982) for the National Housing Commission, found that if he used the definition of homelessness from the British Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, of the 559 households he studied in Auckland, 76 per cent would have been classed as 'homeless' (cited in Leggatt-Cook, 2007). Similarly, Lea and Cole (1983) carried out a Christchurch-based comparable study and found that of the 345 households that had contacted housing and social welfare agencies with serious housing needs, 77 per cent would have been categorised as homeless under the British Act (Leggatt-Cook, 2007). Although these are only two examples from a range of studies that emerged during this time, they indicate that during these early stages of homelessness in New Zealand, overcrowded living conditions and unaffordable housing were not mentioned in conjunction with homelessness, but were constructed as housing issues, rather than factors that could contribute to, or even be defined as homelessness.

The introduction of the Welfare Reform Act in 1991 by a National-led government is considered as one of "the most radical reforms in the history of state housing" (New Zealand History Online, 2007), as rents were no longer income-based, but supported by an accommodation supplement. Although there were varying viewpoints about this change (see New Zealand History Online, 2007; Leggatt-Cook, 2007; Waldegrave, 2000), the detrimental effects were felt by the most needy. Less than two years after inception, emergency accommodation workers in South Auckland reported that people were struggling and were sometime simply unable to afford market rents, forcing many to move in with friends and relatives. This resulted in many overcrowded houses and unhealthy living conditions, despite which, many state houses remained empty and untenanted (New Zealand History Online, 2007).

The Housing Restructuring Act of 1992 saw more political changes, but most importantly meant that 'Housing New Zealand' was now a business, and one that had to make a profit (Leggatt-Cook, 2007). Subsequently, after the cessation of income-related rents, the government "sold around 11,000 state-owned rental units to private buyers, revoked the state owned mortgages fund, and reduced maintenance on remaining state housing" (Leggatt-Cook, 2007, p.22). The Labour-led government elected in 1999, disagreed with National's market rent policy, and re-instated income related rents for state house tenants, which meant that eligible tenants paid no more than 25 per cent of their income on housing costs (New Zealand History Online, 2007). Nonetheless, since 1999, housing costs have escalated and demand for state houses far outstrips supply, and many are still in private rental with high living costs (Waldegrave, 2000). Consequently, families are often forced to miss out on other essentials, which forces families and groups of people together into smaller, often overcrowded and unsuitable houses, in order to make ends meet (Leggatt-Cook, 2007). This brief summary of key governmental changes and policy adjustments over the last three decades provides a context for the following discussion about homelessness in New Zealand today.

HOMELESSNESS IN NEW ZEALAND TODAY

The 1980s are almost universally seen as the decade of discovery of homelessness as a serious social issue (Toro, 2007), a trend which "undoubtedly contributed to the attention on homelessness in New Zealand" (Leggatt-Cook, 2007, p.27). Since then there have been ongoing attempts to obtain accurate estimates about the number of homeless people in New Zealand. This section will review these recent attempts at counting New Zealand's homeless population. It is hoped that this section will also provide a much better appreciation of the extent of homelessness in local communities, as well as highlight some of the difficulties

researchers encounter when attempting to count such a marginal, secretive and often invisible part of society.

In 2001 the New Zealand Population Census indicated that nationally there were “822 makeshift dwellings or shelters (such as garages or sheds) and six roofless and/or rough sleepers” (Statistics New Zealand, 2005, p. 9). By 2006 there were 2,391 people in improvised dwellings or shelters, 12 roofless or rough sleepers, 177 people in boarding houses and 18 people in night shelters (Statistics New Zealand, 2007, p.19). Service workers have since disputed these relatively low numbers, arguing that actual numbers were much higher. They do however, agree that numbers are steadily increasing (Collins, 2008a). Furthermore, they acknowledge that with a population that often doesn’t want to be found, getting a precise count is almost impossible.

In 2003, Jon May conducted some scoping research on homelessness in New Zealand. He seemed concerned about the ‘low’ numbers of visible homeless individuals, a fact he believes could have negative consequences on the perception of the extent of homelessness in New Zealand. In his unpublished notes, as cited by Leggatt-Cook (2007), May suggests that “the estimated number of rough sleepers in Auckland (which in 2003 was approximately 100-120 as estimated by Auckland agencies) would actually be considered quite high in the United Kingdom” (May, 2003, cited in Leggatt-Cook, 2007, p. 29). Furthermore, May’s research noted several factors that were supporting the invisibility of homeless individuals in Auckland. For example, he believes that New Zealand’s open geography and casual dress allow for an easy blend of housed and un-housed citizens to co-exist, and since many homeless people in New Zealand still receive welfare payments, typical behaviours, such as begging and panhandling are greatly reduced (May, 2003, cited in Leggatt-Cook, 2007). As a result, homeless people are less obvious and this lack of visibility is reflected in the limited amount of attention paid to homelessness in public arenas, such as through media coverage. May (2003) also observed that New Zealanders are inclined to be shocked

when travelling overseas, as they are confronted with extreme poverty and frequent examples of visible homelessness, often for, what they consider to be, the very first time. He believes that the invisibility of homeless people in our community leads New Zealanders to believe that 'real' homelessness is a problem occurring 'elsewhere' (Leggatt-Cook, 2007), which limits public understanding and appreciation of the fact that homelessness is a serious issue in New Zealand.

A Wellington-based street count of the literally homeless, estimates the number of people sleeping rough as anywhere between 20 and 200 on any given night (Wellington City Council, 2004). People involved in the count however, believe that "for each person living on the street there are a number of others who are living in unsuitable accommodation, often overcrowded, or living temporarily with friends and family with secure tenure" (Wellington City Council, 2004, p.2). In addition, these figures are affected by seasonal variations as well as attempts by many homeless individuals to stay below the radar of social service agencies and police (Wellington City Council, 2004, p.2). This is particularly applicable to rough sleepers, who are constant movers in order to maintain their invisibility and avoid attracting attention from the public or authorities, who will often try to monitor and control their behaviour. As a result, their invisibility diminishes the issue's importance as they are rarely seen, resulting in marginal public awareness of the issue.

The most recent count of homeless people in New Zealand was conducted by Ellis and McLuckie (2008), whose annual census count in central Auckland aims to provide a snap-shot of homelessness in our biggest city. The area is confined to a 3km radius reaching from the Auckland Sky Tower, and is always carried out at the end of June¹. In 2008, the enumerators counted 91 primary homeless individuals, which had increased from 65 in the previous year, 81 in 2005 and 64 in 2004². In

1 Since this is the middle of winter in New Zealand, there is the possibility many rough sleepers will not be sleeping in open and visible locations, but would instead be retreating to night shelters or are less visible, hiding in warmer and drier spots around the city.

2 No street count was conducted in 2006—reasons unknown.

2008, local boarding houses had a total occupancy rate of 891 across 22 boarding houses³.

At the time of the 2008 census, 604 beds (67.8%) were occupied (Ellis & McLuckie, 2008). Admittedly, this study is confined to a small countable area, but the overall trend across the years confirms that the number of homeless people particularly rough sleepers, are on the rise. Although Ellis & McLuckie (2008) acknowledge that the increasing trend could be attributed to the improved street contacts enumerators now have with the homeless community, which has made locating them much easier, they believe that increased living costs have been a key contributor to the increase in the number of primary homeless people over the years (Collins, 2008a; Ellis & McLuckie, 2008).

Moreover, results from the street count also seem to be reflective of common assumptions about the identity of homeless individuals. Typically thought of and portrayed as male, middle aged, and often as substance abusing individuals (Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002), the demographic results from Ellis & McLuckie's (2008) street count certainly confirm these stereotypes. They found that most rough sleepers were middle aged, with the category of 41-50 year olds increasing the most significantly from 13-14% in 2004 to 29% in 2008. They also found women to be under represented in the primary stages of homelessness (7%), as they were more frequently found in boarding houses (27%). Furthermore, the dominance of Maori and Pacific Island ethnicities, confirm that "as with many social issues those from economically, ethnically and socially marginalised backgrounds are over represented" (Groot, Hodgetts, Chamberlain, Radley, Nikora, Stolte, & Nabalarua, 2007, p.1). Although these counts are merely snap-shots of the number of homeless people at any given time, they provide some indication as to the extent of homelessness in New Zealand.

3 Six boarding houses chose not to reveal their occupancy rate and participate in the research.

This section set out to establish how prominent homelessness is in New Zealand. Despite the review of recent studies and street counts, counting and measuring the extent of homelessness seems an almost impossible task. The numbers here only indicate the extent of the issue at any one point in time. Conflicting definitions about who the homeless are, a hard to count population and a group of individuals who seem to shun attention, make it extremely difficult to get an accurate count of affected individuals.

CONTROLLING 'THE HOMELESS'

Domiciled conceptions and understandings of the problem are likely to shape the way the homeless are treated (Link, Schwartz, Moore, Phelan, Struening & Stueve, 1995; Tompsett, Toro, Guzicki, Manrique & Zatakia, 2006). For some time now, the public have been presented with images and accounts of street life (Mayhew, 1861; Wardhaugh, 2000), which frequently represent homeless characters negatively. There are now, however, increasingly positive representations of individuals and understandings of homelessness in media reports although homeless individuals are still portrayed as different to housed individuals (Fischer, Shinn, Shrout & Tsemberis, 2008). Furthermore, negative typecasting has led to the establishment of rules and regulations to control 'the homeless', a trend which dates back to through history.

Efforts to control homeless populations and to remove them from the view of housed people, rather than address the issue, date back to England in the 1800s (Laurenson & Collins, 2007). Victorian ideas about controlling homeless individuals, who were deemed lazy and unwilling to work, were later adopted into New Zealand legislation. The Vagrancy Act of 1866 targeted those deemed to have chosen not to work and was also seen as a crime prevention measure given the assumed 'proclivities' of its targets (Henderson, 1989, cited in Laurenson & Collins, 2007, p.650). These vagrancy laws were challenged and abolished in the 1970s, when these

regulations were increasingly seen as inappropriate since they criminalised 'the poor', as opposed to certain acts and behaviours (Laurenson & Collins, 2007, p.650). More recently however, rules and regulations targeting behaviours frequently associated with homeless individuals, particularly rough sleepers, are increasingly being introduced by local councils and government. Gibson (1991), who is critical of the introduction of these policies, argues that "public policy generally requires a fairly clean statement of the problem in order to suggest a solution. Social issues such as homelessness rarely provide such clean problem statements" (p.41). Moreover, new legislation is often disguised under the banner of keeping the housed public safe and often masked with neutral language (Laurenson and Collins, 2006), but as will be explained later, this seems contrary to research which indicates that it is the homeless population that is most at risk, not the housed public (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2008; Newburn & Rock, 2005).

Laurenson and Collins (2006) also disagree with controlling and regulating homeless people's behaviour. They argue that the right to be visible in public is important to the rough sleepers, as by definition of their housing status, they simply have no private place that is their own. Furthermore, they also believe that these new regulations aim to remove homeless individuals from public spaces, a move they argue:

can be said to follow the same prejudicial 'logic' that underpinned vagrancy laws—namely, that homelessness, and poverty more generally, are the result of personal failings or choice, and accordingly, a punitive response on the part of state authorities is justified in order to discourage idleness and irresponsibility (Laurenson and Collins, 2006, p.185-186).

This line of thinking is closely linked to the debate about deserving and undeserving individuals (Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002; Widdowfield, 2001), and the reasons for their situation. Negative misrepresentations and stereotypes are fuelling potentially misguided attempts to keep the

housed public safe, and clear streets of homeless individuals, despite research suggesting that it is the homeless that are the vulnerable ones. Furthermore, the introduction of these regulations seems to do little to help the homeless, but rather work toward maintaining a dichotomous relationship between the housed and un-housed. Regulations further perpetuate negative typecasts of homeless individuals as different, deviant and criminal, as a breach of the rules will warrant police intervention.

The debate about rules and regulations to monitor the behaviour of homeless individuals is ongoing, as is the debate about how to ‘solve’ the problem of homeless people, particularly in Auckland and Wellington—an issue which is readily discussed in the news media. A comment by Auckland Mayor John Banks, perhaps best sums up the place that homeless people hold in the wider community when he was quoted as saying that “the city’s homeless...have just as much right to live in the city as stray rats” (Collins, 2008b, para.1). Although he quickly recanted his statement, offered reassurances not to “interpret anything we may have said publicly as treating you as second hand citizens” (Collins, 2008b, para.3) and discussed how best to keep homeless people safe during the Rugby World Cup in 2011—his view about homeless people seems clear.

New regulations about the use of public space and how best to control homeless people are common and are, according to media reports, in response to public complaints about things like “mattresses on footpaths, puddles of urine and people behaving offensively” (Gibson, 2008, para.2), as well as complaints of “assault and verbal abuse against council staff” (McCracken, 2008). One solution offered by Councillor Paul Goldsmith is to ask “parliament as loudly and clearly as we can to bring in legislation that allows the police to do the job—picking people up and moving them somewhere else” (Gibson, 2008, para.9). Such proclamations however, were usually followed by counterbalancing views by service providers like the Auckland City Mission. Diane Robertson for example argues that the first step in solving the problem is to actually give people somewhere to go. She says that if Auckland, for example, provided enough shelter beds

it would make a significant difference to the number of rough sleepers (Gibson, 2008). She also suggests that if the Auckland City Council were to follow international examples, they would first provide long-term housing solutions and only then introduce anti-vagrancy laws, as “we can’t just move them along if there’s nowhere to go” (Gibson, 2008, para.19). Borely (2008), a journalist for the New Zealand Herald, interviewed two homeless men in Auckland and put the proposed by-law to them. They responded simply by stating that “if their ‘beds’ were cleared away, all they asked for were alternative places to lay their heads” (Borely, 2008, para.3). Despite being in two minds, media personality and commentator, Kerre Woodham (2008), compares the proposed by-law to “rearranging the deckchairs in the Titanic” (para.11). She argues that whatever the reason for them being homeless, simply moving them along with nowhere else to go will neither solve the problem, nor help them. In fact, these by-laws will force homeless people to move to more marginal spaces, away from services that could help them get back into a permanent housing situation. Nevertheless, clearing the streets and restricting the use of public space seems a popular topic of discussion in the media, as it features frequently in related news coverage and public opinion polls (see Collins, 2008b; Woodham, 2008; Crewdson, 2005; Gibson, 2008). Two such examples are briefly discussed here.

The first is played out in media coverage about the Wellington City Council’s “proposal to get homeless people off the streets of the capital” (One News Website, 2003). Although Wellington City Mayor Kerry Pendergrast eventually backed down from the proposed legislation, instead setting up a Council Homelessness Taskforce to follow up on complaints by local residents about intimidating behaviour by the local homeless population, the debate about appropriate use of public space was again an issue for public debate. Kerry Pendergrast acknowledged that the by-law was a last resort but that it hadn’t been completely ruled out (One News Website, 2003).

The second example is based in Auckland, when attempts to control and regulate Auckland's homeless population featured in an online discussion forum on the New Zealand Herald Website in late 2008. The catalyst for these discussions was the Auckland City Council's proposal for "introducing a by-law to force homeless people off Queen Street and other central-city streets" (New Zealand Herald Online Forum, 2008). The by-law was to address issues of loitering, sleeping in doorways and begging—behaviours often exhibited by the 90 or so homeless people living rough around the base of the Sky Tower (New Zealand Herald Online Forum, 2008). Housed citizens and ratepayers voted for the council to spend \$50,000 on the development of a new law to manage homelessness issues (New Zealand Herald Online Forum, 2008), and submissions and comments from the public were requested. Admittedly, the comments published are, in all likelihood, only the most extreme and controversial in their wording and ideas, but they offered some insights into the public's thoughts and reactions about the issue.

When responses were downloaded in early December (04.12.2008), a total of 118 comments had been posted, many of which varied greatly in their perception of the issue, and importance people placed on this legislation. In addition, the amount of sympathy and understanding homeless people received was mixed, with comments from both sides of the argument. One individual from Grey Lynn states that:

"You're born into it or you're lucky and you're not. Don't point the finger at them, call them unwilling to work or useless."

In response, a female voice from New South Wales states that:

"Homeless people themselves are responsible for themselves being homeless, don't blame the system. In fact, don't blame anyone else. They choose to drink all day, they choose to not have a job, they choose to not pay rent and get evicted."

A gentleman from the Auckland International Airport agrees with this comment and suggests:

“Make begging illegal, enforce it and they’ll disappear overnight. There’s no reason whatever for homeless people in New Zealand—it’s a lifestyle choice funded by taxpayers. If they’re insane, put them in hospital.”

Responses about the causes and solutions were very varied, but one response from Auckland stood out.

“Have you ever experienced a world where everyone just wants you to go somewhere else...move you on? No-one cares about you or wants to know how you got there. Nothing is free, not even if you're lucky enough to score a bed in the Night Shelter at \$10 (\$70 a week). You get kicked out in the morning to forage for food and walk until you are so tired you have to find somewhere to drop.

You feel blessed when someone smiles at you. It is survival at primary level so you go where your needs are met; the inner city, where the social services are, the missions, the night shelter, the food and the unlikely potential of work.

Your case worker has a 9-5 job and only spends time with critical cases. You're not one of them—there are too many to help. When society realises that it causes the problem in the first place, it should take some responsibility to care more about the victims. Homelessness is not chosen—actually very few do. They just learn to live that way.”

Although only a small selection of the numerous responses published on the website are offered here, they do illustrate that the issue of homelessness provokes emotive and often polarised responses from

readers. Sympathy to the plight of ‘the homeless’ often gets mocked and ridiculed, with someone suggesting that “if your heart bleeds for them so much why don’t you take them all home”. It is unclear if the discussion achieved anything, or if Auckland City Council staff will even read, or consider them. What this discussion does offer, however, is a great insight into prejudices and stereotypical assumptions some housed individuals have about homeless individuals in local settings. The discussion reverts back to the division between ‘us’ and ‘them’, almost creating an online battlefield of responses and opinions.

This section provides a context for homelessness in New Zealand. It summarises how key political and welfare changes contributed to New Zealand changing from a country of high home ownership rates to one with an increasing number of rough sleepers and others in precarious housing situations. Although the exact extent of homelessness is hard to determine, research suggests that figures are relatively high. In addition, this section discussed controlling public spaces and regulating behaviour, which is a common feature in New Zealand discussions about homelessness. All in all, this section demonstrates that New Zealand has a growing number of homeless individuals in its community and rather than solve the problem, legislation is aimed at controlling ‘them’ and the public places they inhabit. How these characters and issues are further discussed in the media is the focus of this research study.

1.3. VULNERABILITY: VIOLENCE ON THE STREETS

The lack of safe and secure housing is “implied in the very definition of homelessness” (Wright & Rubin, 1991, p.937), but considered an important feature in keeping oneself and ones belongings safe (Lee and Schreck, 2005). Homeless individuals, particularly rough sleepers who live life in public spaces, do not have the luxury of a locked door to keep themselves safe, leaving them unprotected and vulnerable to hate crimes and violence (Stoops, 2005b), a risk often enhanced by the locations

many homeless individuals frequent (Lee and Schreck, 2005). This vulnerability leads Stoops (2005) to assert that “homelessness is no longer simply an issue of the right to affordable housing, but a matter of life and death” (para.9). This section will discuss the dangers homeless people face by living in public spaces, and the vulnerability that stems from being without permanent, and safe accommodation. How this is discussed in subsequent media coverage will also feature, as will the question of sympathy for homeless victims.

Rough sleepers and even users of temporary accommodation and night shelters are among the most vulnerable in our society (Newburn & Rock, 2005). A recent study conducted by the Australian Institute of Criminology (2008), found that:

compared with the public, homeless people were 13 times more likely to have experienced violence and 47 more likely to have been victims of theft. Almost one-tenth of those interviewed had experienced sexual assault in the last year, around half had experienced damage to property and one-fifth had been a victim of burglary (presumably while in temporary accommodation). Almost two thirds of homeless people reported having been insulted publicly and one-tenth had been urinated on whilst sleeping (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2008).

These exceptionally high levels of violence homeless people are exposed to, are alarming as many never get reported (Newburn & Rock, 2005), suggesting that actual figures might be much higher.

Clyde (2008), a rough sleeper himself who maintains an online blog about his life on the street, offers numerous accounts of homeless men that were victims of assaults and muggings, many were abused—others shot and killed. He insists that beatings are not uncommon and robberies are frequent occurrences, but that such events “rarely get any mention in the

media unless there is a fatality” (Clyde, 2008, para.7). He believes that crimes against homeless individuals rarely make headlines, as they are not considered newsworthy, unless “the incident is particularly gruesome” (Clyde, 2008, para.8), —a theme very prominent in both case studies (see Chapter 4). His claims highlight the selective nature of the news media, as only the most shocking, eye-catching and headline generating events are reported. For example: *‘Three men set homeless man on fire’*, *‘Homeless man beaten and robbed by six youths’*, *‘Group of teenage males shoot homeless man with paintball gun’*, *‘Homeless man beaten by police officer’* (The war against the homeless, n.d.). While these articles are just a selection, the stories they tell are horrific and frightening. Even in New Zealand, these horrendous crimes feature, like a recent story published in the New Zealand Herald, which reported that in the United States five homeless men were shot dead in a makeshift camp in an area by the freeway (“Five homeless shot dead in LA”, 2008). Although only a small selection, these headlines seem to confirm the argument proposed by Clyde (2008), namely that the news media only report the most newsworthy and attention-grabbing violence towards homeless individuals. Minor crimes like theft and non-lethal assaults, rarely make headlines.

Despite the media reporting only the most gruesome crimes against the homeless, there are numerous studies discussing the high rate of victimisation against homeless individuals. For example, Stoops (2005b), who was mentioned earlier as describing homelessness as a struggle for life and death, cites statistics indicating that since 2002, deaths amongst the homeless had risen by 67% which was in addition to a rise in non-lethal attacks by 281%. These figures are also supported by the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions (2009), who found that as many as one in five homeless people had been attacked during the year in which their study was conducted. In a similar study published by the National Coalition for the Homeless (2006), figures showed that between 1999 and 2005, in 42 states including Puerto Rico, 472 violent acts against rough sleepers, and 169 deaths due to violent attacks, were

reported. Of these, 358 victims were male, compared to only 48 who were female (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006), which in light of discussions from earlier sections, may indicate a link in the predominance of male rough sleepers to these higher victimisation figures.

As mentioned, the exact number of homeless individuals who fall victim to violence, theft or abuse is not known, and Nieves (1999) believes that we may never know the full extent. Police departments do not tabulate crimes against the homeless, and many, if they do survive their attacks, are often too frightened to report them. But even without accurate data, it is clear that “living on the street is becoming more dangerous” (Nieves, 1999). Nearly all attacks happen while the homeless are sleeping and are at their most vulnerable. John Urquhart, a spokesman for the King County Sheriffs Departments in Seattle believes that homeless people are targets “because they are accessible, anonymous and stigmatised as ‘throwaways of society’” (cited in Nieves, 1999). Whether the media coverage about homeless individuals is fuelling this perception is unclear, but given that only a limited number of housed people have in-depth interactions with the homeless community, and a large proportion of the housed public get their understanding and knowledge exclusively from media coverage (also see next section, pg...), perhaps a loose correlation between the two could be suggested. In an attempt to better understand where these preconceived notions of inequality and superiority come from, Nieves (1999) conducted a study at local high schools where he asked students about their ideas and feelings toward homeless people. The general trend among the responses described homeless people as bums and drunks, and as too lazy to work. In light of these findings, Nieves (1999) believes that media representation and stereotypical assumptions about homeless individuals are at least partially responsible for the younger generation’s perception that homeless people are not worthy of our respect. If homeless people are regularly portrayed as worthless and not as legitimate members of society, it is possible that they could become victims of neglect, poor treatment and even violence.

The figures and studies discussed in this section merely provide a small snap-shot of the amount of research attesting to the dangers homeless individuals face daily, and statistics are likely to only present a fraction of the actual number of attacks particularly rough sleepers are subjected to. What is clear from these results is that being homeless is very dangerous and many will become victims of crime. Media coverage only features stories that tell the most vicious, most gruesome and attention grabbing accounts and whether these even present homeless individuals who fall victim to crime as legitimate victims (Greer, 2007) worthy of sympathy is questionable (see Chapter 4). Although crime is a prominent feature in the New Zealand news media, and New Zealand clearly has a notable homeless population, there appears to be no comparable research about the dangers local homeless individuals have to deal with. Subsequently, there are also no studies examining how homeless victims are depicted in related news media, a gap in the research this study hopes to fill.

1.4. THE MEDIA: ITS ROLE AND FUNCTION

The media is a central part of society, “interwoven tightly into the fabric of our daily life” (Beg, 2006, para.7). The U.S. Census Bureau reveals that if the weekly and daily average of media consumption for individuals continues for the next year, they would be equivalent to five months of non-stop media exposure (Beg, 2006). Although these are American-based statistics, the New Zealand data reflects a similar pattern. Results from the most recent Time-Use Survey conducted by Statistics New Zealand for the period between July 1998 and June 1999⁴, revealed that most people watched almost three hours of television or videos daily (Statistics New Zealand, 2002), with research by the New Zealand Television Broadcasters’ Council suggesting that this is set to increase (NZTBC, 2001). Despite some variation on the amount of media consumed by men and women, as well as across the different age groups, it is clear that media consumption is a prominent, and increasingly

⁴ At present, a new Time Use Survey is being conducted (September 1, 2009 to August 31, 2010 with results available from mid 2011.

frequent and time consuming activity that many New Zealanders engage in on a daily basis.

Chris Etling (2008), writer for the Northern Arizona University online paper, Jack Central, believes that news media in particular, have a moral obligation to cover social issues with sensitivity and balance. Although the partiality of media reports is not the focus of this thesis, it is important to note that what the media choose to cover, discuss and present is in itself a judgement. The stereotypes that are often seen within the coverage are merely an extension of judgements and beliefs about certain topics by the news agencies and programmes. “The most apparent function of the media is to provide information to the public” (Marcos, 1989, p.1186) but they exert their influence not only by what is reported, but also in what is considered newsworthy and the way in which stories are organised, framed and presented. Based on this argument, it becomes clear that the media is more than a mere reflection of society. Lull (2000) even goes as far as to argue that “media reflect views, opinions and perceptions and influence views, opinions and perceptions” (cited in White, 2000), a statement difficult to dispute in light of our daily media exposure.

Today’s society is saturated with media images, message and judgements. Audiences “learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position” (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p.176). Despite a once ‘traditionalistic’ journalistic focus on balance, objectivity and impartiality (Mahtani, 2001), this does not mean that everyone receives equal treatment in media representation. News only becomes news once a story is considered newsworthy, whereby the selection criteria favours the unusual, strange and unexpected (Marcos, 1989). Mahtani (2001) describes how minority groups are regularly marginalised or even totally excluded from coverage due to their perceived lack of newsworthiness, while dominant culture is reinforced and seen as the norm. Ryan, Carragee, & Meinhofer (2001) argue the media seem to rediscover their interest in social issues and marginalised individuals, like the homeless,

during times of controversy and conflict. Attention is also seasonally dependent, as the plight of homeless people emerges annually during the festive season (see Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley, 2005; Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2004; Lichter, 1989). Each of these studies was conducted in the Northern hemisphere where winter and the festive season coincide, resulting in very dramatic coverage (see also section 1.5, page 42). Since New Zealand has its festive and winter seasons at different times of the year, the analysis will pay particular attention to how the local media coverage about homeless individuals compares to these studies.

MEDIA AND HOMELESSNESS

The media today often provides commentaries on social concerns and relationships, and characterises marginal groups (Hodgetts, Hodgetts & Radley, 2006). From these commentaries, the mass media is ever more responsible for the establishment of available meanings for people to draw on as they try to make sense of their situation (Fenton, 2000). Since many housed individuals have limited, or even no personal contact with homeless individuals (Lee, Link & Toro, 1991, cited in Link, Schwartz, Moore, Phelan, Struening & Stueve, 1995, p.534), media coverage about the issue is important, as housed audiences are able to get a sense of the importance placed on the issue through the amount and placement of media coverage about homelessness. They also gain some understanding about individuals affected by, and issues relating to homelessness.

The media often presents marginal groups, like the homeless population, in a negative light. Lealand and Martin (2001) argue that negative representations that are “not balanced by equally frequent positive representations of the same groups, lead to stereotyping, moral panic and consequent social control” (p.148-149), aspects which have been discussed in relation to homelessness thus far. Although some negative stereotypes can be widespread, Hodgetts and Chamberlain (2007) argue

that increasingly in New Zealand and elsewhere, there are opportunities in media to understand or present minorities such as the homeless, in a more positive light. This however, does not ring completely true in this research. As the analysis will demonstrate, although there are mixed media reports and opportunities to challenge negative stereotypes, this rarely occurs in the New Zealand media. Coverage frequently portrays individuals as deficient and different to housed individuals, perpetuating stereotypes and minimising sympathy. Comparable studies and their findings are discussed next, as these findings guide both the research process and discussion for this thesis.

1.5. MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS: AN INTERNATIONAL OVERVIEW

Homelessness is not a new phenomenon, and “vagrants and the impoverished have lived on the streets and under bridges throughout history” (Kobel & Abdelfattah, 2004, p.15). Despite this, it appears that the 1980s are most readily considered the decade of their discovery, as the number of visible homeless increased dramatically during this time (Cockburn, 1989; Firdion & Marpsat, 2007; Link, Schwartz, Moore, Phelan, Struening & Stueve, 1995; Klodawsky, Farrell & D’Aubry, 2002). Similarly, as homeless individuals became more visible, so did media coverage about the issue, exposing housed audiences to a ‘new’ social phenomenon (Link et al, 1995). During the modern ‘discovery’ period, media rarely discussed the causes of homelessness which led Cockburn (1988) to comment that “you would think that the homeless were born on the street or had dropped out of the sky” (p. 14). His research also indicated that media coverage, often presented with a hostile tone, omitted any broad assessment of homelessness. Furthermore, opinions and thoughts were “expressed by both the people being interviewed, who are almost always those being asked why they give or do not give money, never the homeless themselves, and by some reporters and editors” (Cockburn, 1988, p. 14). Lichter (1989), however, who also conducted media research during this time noted contradictory results to those

proposed by Cockburn (1988). Lichter's (1989) findings seem to suggest that media were more sympathetic toward homeless individuals, as news reports were filled with emotional language to engage the audience to join the battle against homelessness. Furthermore, homeless individuals were rarely discussed negatively, with few mentions of homeless people as unemployed, drug or alcohol users, mentally ill or as having had a criminal past (Lichter, 1989), stereotypes that feature frequently in more recent studies.

Researchers like Hsiao (1998) and Buck, Toro and Ramos (2004) have suggested that interest in homelessness peaked during the 1980s and has been declining since then. Despite this, homelessness has remained a topical and global issue, as was discussed earlier in this chapter. Although not to the same extent as during their time of discovery, homeless people still feature in local and international media, and researchers continue to try and better understand this complex social phenomenon. Subsequently a number of media analyses have appeared, and despite varying settings, time frames, study focus and methods, common themes have emerged. Narrow and often stereotypical characterisations of homeless individuals, places, issues and behaviours associated with them and reporting trends like a seasonal attention span, have featured frequently in related international studies (see Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005; Hodgetts, Hodgetts, & Radley, 2006; Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002). Although there are no similar research studies conducted in New Zealand to allow for comparison at this stage, the findings from these studies will guide and support the New Zealand-based research, as this study aims to fill this gap.

This section is presented in four parts. The first discusses the often narrow and stereotypical characterisations of homeless individuals within related media coverage, while the second discusses how the proposed causes and solutions can hinder a sympathetic understanding of the issue and promote its marginality and key stereotypes. Following that, the third

section explores the power struggle often observed within homelessness media coverage, as homeless individuals are rarely afforded the right to address audiences. To conclude, there is a brief section on how seasonality can affect both the amount and type of media coverage homeless individuals will receive. Each of these four parts will demonstrate how findings from these studies support the stereotyping of homeless individuals, which minimises sympathy for this marginal group of individuals.

NARROW AND STEREOTYPICAL CHARACTERISATIONS

Homeless individuals hold a marginal role within domiciled society—a fact reflected in the type and amount of media coverage they receive. The media often characterise homeless people as inherently different to the housed public, present stereotypes to explain who they are and homogenise homeless individuals as ‘the homeless’ (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005; Klodawsky, Farrell & D’Aubry, 2002). As was discussed in the previous section, the negative and exclusionary characterisation of minorities within society “can perpetuate feelings of exclusion—especially when we place value upon those representations as fair and equitable mirrors of our nation” (Mahtani, 2001, p.1). In addition, these characterisations can also influence the amount of sympathy and public understanding individuals receive. By presenting homeless individuals often in contrast to housed individuals, and often as a homogenous entity, and either as deserving or undeserving of public sympathy and understanding, stereotypes and narrow understanding about the issue are encouraged. For example, research conducted about London’s homeless revealed that it is common for news media to depict vagrants as socially disadvantaged people, often as diseased and voiceless, whose problems can only be addressed by dedicated charities, service workers and governmental policy (Hodgetts, Hodgetts & Radley, 2006). Similarly, Canadian researchers Klodawsky, Farrell & D’Aubry (2002), found that after their analysis of ‘The Ottawa Citizen’, homelessness is often

represented as something that affects a “particular group of problem-ridden ‘others’ that are altogether different from the housed readers of the newspaper” (p.135). In one-third of the articles, homeless people were linked to substance abuse and infectious diseases like tuberculosis, HIV and AIDS. By linking homeless individuals to contagious diseases, housed individuals are prompted to maintain a safe distance between them and ‘the homeless’. Coverage also regularly omitted any reference to demographic diversity and the complex histories of individuals, instead regularly presenting homeless individuals as passive and isolated, mainly white, male and often substance-abusing rough sleepers. Should complexities such as gender, race and age be mentioned, Klodawsky et al (2002) note that they “come with subtle messages about the deserving individuals who might be redeemed, in contrast to the hapless majority” (p.126). Another example of media making judgments according to characterisations of homeless individuals as either deserving and undeserving, is provided by Widdowfield (2001).

Her review of media representations of homeless individuals in the regional and national British press between 1995 and 1999 revealed that homeless people were predominantly categorised as falling into one of three main categories, namely ‘the other’, the ‘criminal’ or the ‘poor victim’. Characterisations of homeless people as ‘the other’, imply that homeless individuals are different to the housed—an argument supported with the use of binary language like ‘us’ and ‘them; ‘we’ and ‘they’, and ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’, which feature frequently throughout the coverage (Widdowfield, 2001). Characterisation of homeless people as criminal were encouraged in a couple of different ways. Firstly, homeless individuals were linked to the ‘easy’ money made on the street, with coverage stating that “not only are people on the street acquiring money through fraudulent means, but they are seen as using the money for unworthy or immoral purposes” (Widdowfield, 2001, p.52). Secondly, being homeless was frequently linked to violent offenders, who are often described as homeless during media reports about their court proceedings. This further strengthens the link between homeless

individuals and criminals, which supports the implied connotation that ‘the homeless’ are undeserving non-citizens.

In contrast to characterisations of homeless individuals as ‘the other’ and as ‘criminal’, the ‘poor victim’ of homelessness is often portrayed with much more sympathy throughout the coverage. Widdowfield (2001) argues that this could sometimes even veer toward being sentimental, as stories that are too sympathetic and too personal may contribute to the de-politicisation of homelessness. For example, a local homeless man, Ben Hana, also known as ‘Blanket Man’, is a well known, icon for homeless people in New Zealand. He is easily recognised by his eccentric lifestyle in central Wellington, his loin cloth and worship of the sun goddess (Lloyd & McGovern, 2008). With repeat references to his eccentricities, according to the argument by Widdowfield (2001), we risk losing the real issue at hand. Discussions about causes and possible solutions for homelessness are minimised in personalised accounts about behaviour and lifestyle, a trend also noted by Min (1999), who believes that these personalised news accounts can “become dramatic documentaries about unfortunate individuals [and] the real issue is lost in the midst of humanism” (cited in Widdowfield, 2001, p.53). Likewise, Widdowfield (2001) concludes that the media’s “particular view of homeless people and their situation which, while not a fabrication, fails to tell the full story” (p.53), as the media marginalise individuals and the issue at hand. In addition, by classifying homeless individuals as one of three key character types, coverage makes judgements about deserving or undeserving individuals, a theme which can influence the level of support and assistance homeless people may receive from the housed public, from charities and the government. Whether this is just a reporting trend overseas, or whether the New Zealand coverage makes similar judgments about deserving and undeserving homeless individuals, will be one of the core questions this research will attempt to answer.

CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

The causes and also the solutions discussed in media coverage can make distinctions between deserving and undeserving individuals (Rosenthal, 2000), as well as encourage negative characterisations of homeless people, which minimises sympathy for them. If homelessness is linked to structural causes, such as lack of housing, unaffordable rent, high mortgage rates or unemployment, feelings of sympathy are generated, creating a deserving homeless person (Rosenthal, 2000). If homelessness is attributed to personal fault, like addiction or choice, then homeless people are deemed to be undeserving (Rosenthal, 2000). The implication of being in the latter category suggests that homeless people would have no “valid claim on the sympathies and resources of others; less still have the right to call for far-reaching structural changes” (p.111-112). Similar arguments were raised by Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley (2005), who found that although news coverage seemed to imply that social inequalities were the primary cause of homelessness, responsibility for finding a solution was placed in the hands of affected individuals and charities. It is deemed the responsibility of individuals to fix or overcome their own issues, in order to rejoin society (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005, p.37). The prevailing view is that while welfare and housing issues may be root causes, it is each homeless person’s individual job, duty or responsibility, to get themselves out of that situation. As a result, people who are sleeping rough and are not seeking ways of getting themselves out of their situation are deemed to have chosen to stay as they are, and are therefore not deserving of sympathy.

Russell (1991) argues that “if the homeless are viewed as stereotypes rather than as individuals, they can too easily be relegated to the status of ‘a problem’” (p.13). Moreover, notions of individual responsibility and deviant characterisations, as were discussed earlier, have also been the driving force behind initiatives to control and regulate a problem homeless population. For example The National Law Centre on Homelessness and Poverty found that of the 50 largest cities surveyed, three-quarters had

“enacted laws aimed at ‘curbing’ homelessness” (cited in Rosenthal, 2000, p.112). While Williams (2007) reports that “there are some crazy laws that make it illegal to feed homeless people in public places” (para.1), more common regulations include restrictions on panhandling, begging and curb side sleeping rules. In Ottawa, Canada, legislation restricts “where, how and when beggars can ask for help” (Rosenthal, 2000, p.127), with by-laws on gathering and loitering aimed at controlling public movement. Russell (1991) provides numerous examples of these initiatives: In Phoenix, garbage was declared public property so that anyone who stole such public property was jailed. In New Orleans, people were arrested for loitering while waiting for their welfare cheques. Atlanta and Miami introduced “No Trespassing” signs in parks, and in Nevada, police drove the homeless into the desert and left them there (Russell, 1991). Hsiao (1998) comments on these ‘tidying up the city’ strategies, which he believes are aimed at moving homeless individuals out of sight, and therefore out of mind. Although some may perceive these initiatives as helping the community rid itself of its homeless population, it is merely pushing the matter underground and further to the margins of society.

These laws serve to maintain a physical barrier between housed and homeless individuals, enforced through media representation of the issue, with the implied notion that homeless people are different and expendable, and streets need to be cleared of them. The idea of controlling ‘the homeless’ is also a common theme within much of the New Zealand news coverage, as was discussed in an earlier section, and will be further discussed in the Content Analysis (see Chapter 4). Although New Zealand police officers, at present, are unable to arrest people displaying ‘typical’ homeless behaviour, there is increasing pressure on local authorities to regulate their activities (Laurenson and Collins, 2006).

It seems clear that with news media featuring the clean-up of homeless individuals from local streets and cities, there is little sympathy expressed for them or their plight. They are typically portrayed as undeserving,

deviant and as people that the public and public places need to be protected from.

RIGHT TO ADDRESS THE AUDIENCE

The right to address audiences is a power struggle identified in numerous studies, as homeless people are frequently talked about, but only rarely get to address their own issues. Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley's (2005) British-based research revealed that charity and government representatives, professionals, and business leaders accounted for the majority of interview sources. They argue however, that "the simple prevalence of these characters does not necessarily capture their influence within the story" (p.38), since homeless people were interviewed the second most often, but "their testimony was limited to the personal implications of adversity" (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005, p.38). Overall, while charities and government representatives discussed wider issues, causes and solutions and possible initiatives to help homeless individuals, homeless people themselves were left talking about personal issues, their life and experiences. Members of the public were rarely questioned, often cast as spectators seen walking past homeless people on the street or in backgrounds occupying public spaces. This however, is not a new trend, as even Cockburn (1988) noted a similar exclusionary trend, referring to an editorial written by Butterfield who "talked to a total of one panhandler, mostly seeking his information elsewhere, from 'experts' and people troubled as to whether they should give money or not" (Cockburn, 1988, p.14). By sidestepping perspectives and thoughts from the homeless population, we limit our understanding of the situation and risk the perpetuation of misrepresentation and misunderstanding of this complex social issue and people affected by it.

The power to define, discuss and question issues around homelessness is of great importance to Schiff (2003) who refers to what she calls the 'individual-responsibility conception', a concept she believes dominates

the field of homelessness. By linking this concept to the earlier discussion about deserving and undeserving homeless individuals, she argues that “the degree to which they [the homeless] are viewed sympathetically (and thus forgiven) or harshly (and therefore condemned) varies greatly” (p.492). Furthermore, she argues that while there are “several versions of this concept, it mainly serves to explain away homelessness by focusing on individual problems and difficulties without looking at fundamental social causes, such as the lack of affordable housing” (Schiff, 2003, p.492). Through her research, she charges the media with writing these dominating ideologies which surround homelessness, into our daily media consumption, or what she calls, information-generation practices. According to Schiff, the media operates from a point of having an inherent right to define, set the scene, and educate, but in light of the advances in technology, audiences are now more able to participate, respond and interact with media relations. Nevertheless, media narrative “provides a systematic frame of reference through which the world view is created, maintained, and transformed” (Min, 1999, p.x). What audiences see, hear about and who they get this information from, shapes their understanding about social issues like homelessness. By not giving homeless individuals enough space to discuss their own issues, we are left with mediated versions of the issues at hand.

THE SEASONAL REDISCOVERY OF HOMELESSNESS

Having discussed what gets reported, how and by whom, when homelessness features in the media is just as important, and was a major feature across all the studies looked at. As early as the 1980s, Lichter (1989) states that the annual holiday season was marked by the media rediscovering homelessness in America, as his research revealed that there were twice as many stories on television networks from November to February, as during the remaining other months of the year. These reporting trends are still prominent in global media, almost two decades later.

In a media study analysing newspaper coverage about homelessness in the United States between 1974 and 2003, Buck, Toro and Ramos (2004) also found that “interest in the homeless and other disadvantaged groups (such as persons with mental illness) seems to be stimulated during the holiday season” (p.165). Similarly, research conducted in Canada by Bunis, Yancik and Snow (1996), indicates that seasonal sympathy is not only confined to coverage of the homeless or mentally ill. They established a similar pattern of seasonal sympathy for famine, when coverage increased in November, spiked in December and then fell in January. In Britain, seasonal attention spans and increased sympathy were also observed by Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley (2005), who noted that the vulnerability of homeless individuals was particularly prominent at this time of the year, and that “the need of sympathy and assistance at this time of year is reinforced by accompanying testimony from journalists and charity and government representatives” (Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley, 2005, p.36). In addition to added sympathy, coverage during the festive season also supported by the belief that no one should be alone at Christmas. Almost half of all locations identified by Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley (2005) depicted lonely homeless people, outside in cold public places such as streets, parks and subways. These were then contrasted with scenes of warm and happy homeless people, together receiving food and shelter at one of the many hostels which open during this time of year. In light of these findings, it is fair to state that sympathy “expands and contracts with the coming and going of the holiday season” (Bunis, Yancik and Snow, 1996, p.396). Although the festive season is universally considered to be during the end of the year, it does not always coincide with the winter months, as was the case in the studies discussed here. Since New Zealand is located in the Southern Hemisphere, the winter and festive season are at opposing times of the year. To date, I have been unable to find similar research conducted in the Southern Hemisphere to see if coverage will be centred around the colder months (June to August), or through the warmer, but festive season (November to January). Thus,

this will be an issue that needs further exploring, and will feature in the analysis in Chapter 4.

Overall, this section has reviewed themes common across comparable research. The importance of these reporting trends and framing of issues and characters lies in the media's role and function to both shape and guide understanding of social issues like homelessness (Mahtani, 2001). With limited media coverage, the perception that homelessness is an issue elsewhere and not in New Zealand is created, and with narrow discussions and typecast characters, stereotypes and often misguided understandings about homelessness are created. Since there is no comparable New Zealand-based research at this time, the findings from these studies will be used as a framework for this research, with particular attention to themes and findings discussed here, namely the right to address audiences, deserving and undeserving homeless individuals, controlling and solving the issue as well as seasonally influenced attention spans.

1.6. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter set out to introduce homelessness around the world as well as in New Zealand. Since homeless individuals became increasingly visible during the 1980s (Link, Schwartz, Moore, Phelan, Struening & Stueve, 1995), academic and media attention increased, as did public awareness about the issue. Today, homelessness is considered a complex social phenomenon affecting in excess of one billion people around the world (Olufemi, 2002). Although who we understand to be homeless is still changing (Toro, 2007), typecast, and often negative portrayals and assumptions about 'the homeless' feature frequently in daily discourses and media coverage (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005; Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002; Lichter, 1989; Widdowfield, 2001).

Governmental and welfare changes in New Zealand have contributed to the shift from a country with high home ownership (Kearns, Smith & Abbott, 1991), to one with a growing homeless population. Since many housed individuals have limited contact with homeless individuals, media coverage plays a vital role in the dissemination and distribution of information about the issue (Fenton, 2000; Marcos, 1989). Although there are numerous studies analysing the portrayal of homeless individuals in overseas media (see (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005; Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002; Lichter, 1989; Widdowfield, 2001), there is a distinct lack of New Zealand based research.

While key themes identified across international studies will initially guide the research, this study will also pay particular attention to how the vulnerability and the dangers homeless people face as a result of living in public spaces, are recorded and presented in the New Zealand news media – an area that I have thus been unable to find comparative research for. How sympathy is either promoted or minimised for homeless individuals throughout news items will also feature, in addition to discussions about marginality, dichotomy and stereotypes.

CHAPTER TWO: METHOD

The media is a central element of contemporary society (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2007), and news media in particular provide an important social forum for the depiction of homelessness and homeless individuals (see Buck, Toro & Ramos, 2004; Bunis, Yancik and Snow 1996; Min, 1999; Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002; Lichter, 1989; and Widdowfield, 2001). As indicated earlier, there has been no systematic analyses of media representations of the homelessness in New Zealand, which emphasises the need for this research.

This chapter outlines the methods used in this study, and is presented in four sections. Section one outlines the role news media plays in society, which highlights the need for this media analysis. Second, the merits of a quantitative media analysis are discussed, as is where the data was for the content analysis sourced from, and how it was analysed. The third section discusses how data was sourced and analysed for both case studies, which were specifically selected as coverage during sad times, like that following a murder, was expected to reveal how news media can be supportive, and offer a sympathetic storyline about homeless people. Finally, I will provide a quick summary of where the research will go from here.

2.1. NEWS MEDIA AND SOCIETY

As a central element in society (Barr, 2000; Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2007), the media, and news media in particular does more than merely inform the public about events of the day, as it also provides a venue for public deliberation regarding social issues and offers avenues for civic action to address such issues (Hodgetts and Chamberlain, 2007). The importance of media in daily life has also been noted in New Zealand. As was discussed earlier, the results from the Time Use Survey conducted in 1999⁵, found that watching television was the most popular leisure activity for New Zealanders (Statistics New Zealand, 2001). Despite the media's central role as a leisure activity and information station, "we must not forget that not all communities are represented equally or have the opportunity to represent themselves on their own terms" (Hodgetts, Barnett, Duirs, Henry and Schwanen, 2004, p.2). The agenda setting function of the media influences what the public considers to be important, and worthy of public discourse (Frost, Frank and Maibach, 1997). Accordingly, this study will focus exclusively on news and current affairs coverage, as these mediums are considered at the forefront of the agenda setting and information distribution about social issues like homelessness.

Marginal groups, according to Lealand and Martin (2001), are however, often constructed from the vantage point of more affluent members of society, creating an often dichotomous relationship between dominant and marginalised members and groups within society. Lealand and Martin (2001) also propose that news coverage often produces a hierarchical social order by presenting more powerful citizens as the norm, as opposed to socially marginalised citizens, like homeless individuals, who deviate from the norm. Rather than being accurate, impartial and neutral accounts and reflections of events in reality, the media offers perspective through the framing of stories, story selection and characterisations of individuals

⁵ At present, a new Time Use Survey is being conducted (September 1, 2009 to August 31, 2010 with results available from mid 2011.

and topics (Ryan, Carragee and Meinhofer, 2001). In this research, the creation of binary oppositions between 'us' and 'them' are key, as is the marginal role homeless people play within news media and within their own stories. In addition, the framing of stories and discussions of wider issues associated with homelessness are important, as these function to paint a particularly narrow and typecast picture of homelessness and homeless people in New Zealand, which minimises sympathy for particular individuals.

2.2. CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content Analysis research dates back to the 1920s and gained increased momentum as a credible research method during the 1950s, when its versatility in being able to study a wide range of texts was increasingly being recognised (MacNamara, 2006). Today, analysing media representations are commonly done through the use of a content analysis, broadly defined by Ahuvia (2001) as coding texts into categories in order to count frequencies. Within the same article, he later refines and adjusts this definition, arguing instead that "we view content analysis as a method for counting interpretations of content" (p.161), acknowledging that personal interpretation of data may play a role in the analysis of this research method. It is commonly accepted that a content analysis can involve either one or a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to collect and analyse media, from either verbal, print or electronic media (Kondracki, Wellmann, Fada and Amundson, 2002). Despite these varying data sources, the core aim of any content analysis is to describe, with some precision, the framing of an issue across particular media texts (MacNamara, 2006). In this study, the representation, characterisation and framing of homelessness and homeless people within New Zealand media, is the central issue.

This thesis will employ both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques. First, the complete data set will undergo a quantitative content

analysis, which involves “coding raw messages (i.e. textual material, visual images, illustrations) according to a classification scheme” (Kondracki, Wellmann, Fada and Amundson, 2002, p.224). The coding scheme is very useful in categorising data and reducing content down into measurable items, but its key limitations is its inability to cater to the complexities of media coverage (Kondracki et al, 2002). And although quantitative analysis research “can identify relationships and correlations between variables...on its own, it cannot explain how those relationships came to exist” (p.227). Kondracki and colleagues (2002) place particular emphasis on the ‘temptation’ of drawing “conclusions based on frequency of data to demonstrate the magnitude of a condition or response” (p.227), which they argue is not justifiable. Due to these limitations, this study will employ a quantitative analysis to explore general reporting trends, as well as a qualitative content analysis of two case studies to highlight the complexities within coverage, as well as minimise statements that merely reflect standard sentiments that skim the surface.

Both, the quantitative and qualitative research will draw on a text-and-context approach in its analysis, as this approach moves beyond the coverage and caters for broader social commentary and observation about relationships, representation and the framing of coverage (Hodgetts et al., 2004). By situating the research in a New Zealand context, this study will analyse how media are representing, discussing and continually contributing to the conceptualisation of homelessness and the role of homeless people in society. The local framework will allow the research to extrapolate key issues and understandings of homelessness, to offer a better understanding of the role homeless people play in New Zealand local communities, and perhaps suggest changes to better understand this complex social phenomenon locally.

A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH TO ANALYSIS

A 'Direct Approach' was used in the establishment of the coding frame for the quantitative content analysis, described by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) as using relevant theory or previous research to guide the initial set up of the coding frame. This research referred to key studies by Buck, Toro and Ramos (2004), Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley (2005) Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry (2002) and Widdowfield (2001) to guide the establishment of the content analysis coding frame. This approach offers support and guidance to the present study, as well as offering findings to guide later discussions. Nevertheless, it is important not to let previous research dominate the current research, as this could result in a biased analysis. Rather than dominate the analysis, similar studies should be used to inform the research process, such as the coding frame, and offer findings for comparison and discussion.

The coding frame is a way of organising and mapping content that allows for easy indexing in order to answer key research questions (Konracki et al, 2002). Vital to the validity and integrity of this method is that clear and precise coding processes and definitions are used, and that coding reliability checks are conducted (Mayring, 2002). First, key areas of interest identified from the aforementioned studies were coded for. Of particular importance were the characterisations of homeless people, locations identified, who homeless people were depicted with and what they were shown to be doing. Wider issues and the framing of stories, as well as possible causes and solutions were also noted as important to this research. In order to adjust for cultural variations across studies, 15 random clips were selected from the news coverage data set, which were then 'trial coded', and adjustments were made as issues unique to New Zealand were identified. Categories, like different types of 'homelessness' were added, and the initial category that noted causes and solutions, was adjusted to be more open and inclusive.

Following these adjustments, an inter-coder reliability check was carried out with ten clips selected at random. The check was carried out with a person naïve to the findings from comparable research, as well as the context of the research to date. What was required of the check coder was explained, and definitions for each code were reviewed prior to coding. Response matches were high between the two coders, but minor adjustments in the wording of questions and categories were recommended. For example, two ethnic categories (Maori and Pacific Island) were merged into the same category, as individual classification was deemed too challenging. In addition, difficulties were noted in relation to the depiction of groups of people, as often seen during the festive season. Coverage often showed large groups of people in public places, such as town halls, the Auckland City Mission and marquis, but coverage often did not explicitly identify everyone there as homeless. It was decided that people spending Christmas at a shelter or a charity organised lunch would fall into the homeless category due to their likely financial struggles, which often resulted in unaffordable and unsuitable accommodation. Families that attend these events were regulars at City Missions, food-banks and related services, so were included in the analysis.

DATA COLLECTION

Data for the quantitative content analysis is comprised of news and current affairs programmes broadcast on Television One (the channel with the largest news audience) between January 1995 and December 2007. News and current affairs clips were provided by the Television New Zealand Archives, after a search was requested. Key search terms included 'homeless', 'homelessness', 'vagrant', 'rough sleeper/sleeping', 'street life', 'food bank' and the 'Auckland City Mission'. In total, 131 clips were provided, of which 89 were deemed relevant and were used in the data analysis. Forty-two clips were excluded for a variety of reasons including: stories produced in other countries, homelessness due to natural

disasters, news items broadcast in Maori and those with technical issues such as missing audio tracks.

Of the 89 clips analysed, 71 (79.8%) stem from news coverage, while the other 18 (20.2%) were current affairs items. The clips were based around the main centres of New Zealand, with over half (n=46, 51.1%) being in Auckland. Wellington was the base for 20.2% (n=18) of the items, with Christchurch accounting for 10.1% (n=9), and the 'Other' category (encompassing Wairoa, Wanganui, Rotorua and Nelson) accounting for 7.9% (n=7) of the coverage. Two clips featured Brisbane, Queensland (Australia) and were included in the analysis as they featured a New Zealand backpacker, who was beaten and tortured by a group of homeless men in Australia. The remaining 9 clips (10.1%) were classed as 'New Zealand' and were for stories featuring multiple locations.

Analysis of the content was carried out manually, rather than with the aid of a computer programme, as complexities of media coverage called for a flexible analysis. Time restraints, as well as the small size of the research corpus supported this method of analysis. During the analysis process, it was noted that Question 11 in the coding frame, which questioned the framing of each story (see Appendix A), needed to be re-worded. The term 'positive' did not accurately reflect the framing of items, and was subsequently adjusted to 'sympathetic' during the analysis process. This change did not alter results, but merely reflected what was initially meant by that category more accurately.

2.3. TWO CASE STUDIES: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Two distinct cases were selected from the overall coverage to be analysed qualitatively. The aim of this qualitative analysis was to offer a more in-depth and holistic look at how stories, key themes and characters evolve through time and across different media, with a specific interest on the establishment of sympathy in these storylines. The two individual cases

feature and follow the stories of the police investigation prompted by the discovery of two murdered homeless women, both found in Auckland during the sample period. Although print news is considered the foremost forum of impartial and serious discussion (Loto, 2007), due to recent advances in technology, news items are now increasingly broadcast across television, as well as through online media. Therefore, looking across different media types will offer a more holistic understanding to, and analysis of each woman's story. Different media sources will also provide a more comprehensive analysis of key trends and issues as each woman's story evolves.

Despite each woman's story being reported in isolation of the other, and seen as individual cases for this study, they were not analysed in isolation. In contrast to the content analysis, the case studies will draw on television coverage, as well as print and online news sources. Fundamental to these analyses will be the framing and the tone of sympathy shown toward these homeless victims. But, in contradiction to initial expectations, coverage was not at its most sympathetic in the treatment of these women's stories, as their victim status (Greer, 2007) was repeatedly challenged through a selection of reporting techniques, implied links to prostitution, character references, negative terminology and repeat references to homelessness as a lifestyle choice. In addition to minimising sympathy, these also support the argument of dichotomy as the presentation of homelessness as a 'chosen' lifestyle serves to reinforce notions of difference, which help to alienate, and encourage the 'us' and 'them' distinction.

Each woman's news narrative was initially viewed and read to provide a timeline for each case, which produced a synopsis of each woman's story. After the establishment of each case's synopsis, news items were then re-read and examined for their content. Key themes and re-occurring issues were noted down, as was the framing and representation of stories and characters. Particular attention was paid to key issues from the content analysis such as stereotypical representations of characters, dichotomous relationships, who had the right to address the audience, as well as the

framing of stories. Furthermore, each woman's story was compared to notions of victim legitimacy and blameworthiness (Carrabine, Plummer, Lee, South & Iganski, 2004) and how sympathy was established and minimised.

DATA COLLECTION

As discussed, data for each woman's case study drew on televised, print and online news sources. An overview of how data for each case was collected, is summarised here.

Case Study 1 comprises coverage in relation to the murder of a 69 year old widow, residing in the Auckland Domain by 'choice'. The body of Elizabeth 'Betty' Marusich was discovered in the Auckland Domain and first reported on during the evening news in October 1995 (12.10.1995). From there, a large investigation began into the woman's death; she was often referred to as 'the Domain Vagrant'. In total, 42 different written articles and televised broadcasts were sourced. Televised news items were carried over from the content analysis, and written and online news sources were found using the online News Index New Zealand search engine. The search terms used were both 'Betty Marusich' and 'Elizabeth Marusich', as she was known by both names. Coverage evolved, first covering the initial investigation, and then merging to become one of New Zealand's unsolved murder mysteries. Despite the offer of a reward, and coverage spanning twelve years, with a late update on the case featuring in July 2009, to date, the case remains open and unsolved.

Case Study 2 comprises the coverage of the murder of Sheryl Brown, a divorced mother of three. The victim of loopholes in a system aimed at supporting and helping its most vulnerable, the coverage tells of a once happy family life that later turned to addiction. Her body was found more than a day after her death in December 2002 (12.12.2002), next to a manned ambulance station along one of Auckland's busiest streets. The coverage

focused on the investigation, the 'mystery man' the police were hunting in connection with her murder and the subsequent acquittal of her accused. As with Betty's case, televised coverage was sourced from the content analysis data while written and online news coverage was sourced from News Index New Zealand, using 'Sheryl Brown' as the search reference. Coverage spans a total of 40 articles and television clips, and ends in June 2005.

2.4. WHERE TO FROM HERE

The aim of the research is to better understand how homeless individuals are portrayed and characterised in the New Zealand news media. In order to achieve this, a quantitative analysis of New Zealand's televised news and current affairs coverage will provide an overview of key trends, issues and representations, and will be discussed in Chapter 3. As a content analysis is only an indicator of coverage rather than a true reflection of the diversity and complexities of coverage, two case studies will offer a more in-depth look at two distinct narratives. These cases will draw on a combination of media types in order to offer a more holistic understanding of how coverage evolves over time, and how sympathy for homeless victims can be minimised even during sad times. The coverage of the murder investigations of two homeless women in Auckland will form Chapter 4. An overall analysis and discussion of the findings from both the content analysis and the case studies will be presented in Chapter 5, which will attempt to discuss the findings in light of wider implications and societal understandings of the issue.

CHAPTER THREE: CONTENT ANALYSIS

For some time, including the work of journalists and social commentators, the public has been presented with images and accounts of people sleeping on streets (Mayhew, 1861; Wardhaugh, 2000). There are, however, other forms of homelessness, such as individuals living in transitory, unsuitable, overcrowded and unaffordable lodging, often forced to rely on the charity of family and friends (Kearns, Smith, & Abbott, 1991). Although a diverse group in society, homeless people are often stereotyped in media coverage (Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002). Coverage often also fails to provide adequate engagements with the raft of complexities that lead people to homelessness and prevent some people from exiting street life (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005; Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002).

Clearly, news coverage is only one source of information in society about social issues like homelessness, and it is important that we do not become media-centric in assuming that the media is the sole cause of stereotypes of homeless people or the limited response to helping such people in society today (cf., Silverstone, 2007). That being said, the news media are storytelling institutions and provide ready-made frames for understanding

homelessness that many audience members may draw upon from time to time when making sense of such social issues (Hrast, 2008; White, 2008). Research has also shown that homeless people themselves shape their own understandings of their situations, in part, with reference to news coverage of homelessness (Hodgetts, Hodgetts & Radley, 2006). Therefore, it is important that we conduct systematic analyses of news coverage to ascertain the ways in which homeless people are being characterised and how homelessness and what society should do to address it, is being framed.

This chapter documents New Zealand news media's characterisations of homeless people. The locations (e.g., street, charity centres, police stations) in which coverage depicts homeless individuals, the times of year (e.g., Christmas, winter) in which stories are set, and the broader issues (e.g., charity, social responsibility, economic reform) tell us something about who these people are, what they are like, and how society might respond to 'their needs'. A key issue in characterisations of other people is that of sympathy. Are homeless people presented as citizens worthy of our support and care, or are homeless people presented as strangers to be avoided and neglected? The former supports efforts at social inclusion while the latter promotes marginalisation.

This chapter is divided into in eight sections. Section one presents a brief overview of general trends in news coverage. Section two provides an overview of who was shown and how homeless people were characterised within their media stories. The third section discusses where homeless individuals were shown, what they were doing, and who they were with. Fourth, an overview of visual stereotypes and how these feature throughout the media coverage to support stereotypes, and issues of marginality and dichotomy are discussed. Section five explores the power dynamics involved in addressing the audience, which is followed by a discussion about the framing of stories, as well as the proposed causes and suggested solutions to homelessness as suggested within the coverage, discussed in section six. Section seven presents the dangers of

street life, and how media coverage deals with issues of violence toward, and by, homeless individuals, with a particular emphasis on media sympathy. The final section provides a discussion of key findings from the previous sections in relation to existing literature and foregrounds issues to be explored further in the following chapter in relation to two qualitative case studies.

3.1. GENERAL TRENDS IN COVERAGE

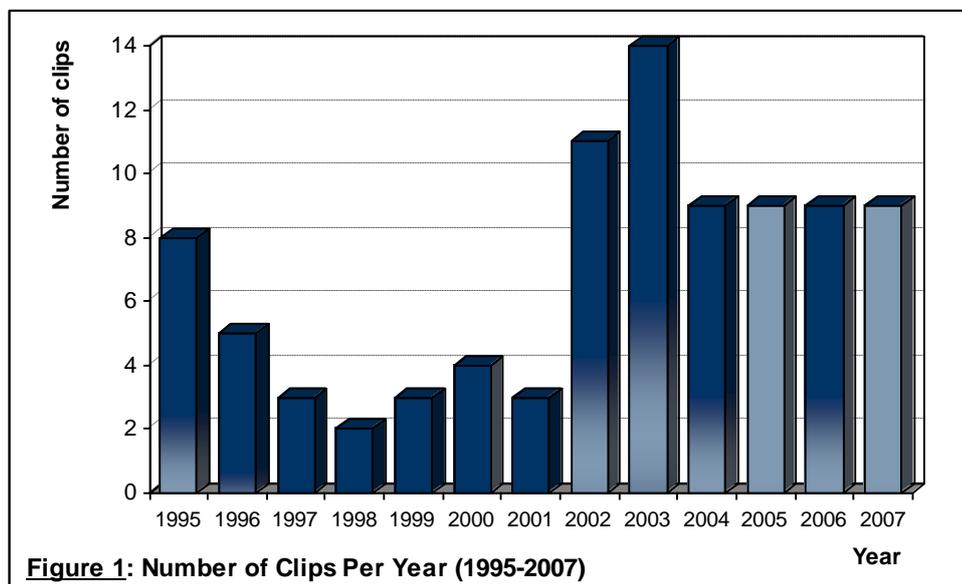
For some time, social scientists have noted that the news media does not tell people what to think, but coverage does have a role in terms of what people in society think about (Cohen, 1963; Lull, 2000). This is often referred to as ‘agenda setting’, in that the social issues that are reported on or attended to, are more likely to be the issues subjected to face-to-face discussions in living rooms, pubs and workplaces (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2007; McComb & Shaw, 1972). Clearly, other factors such as proximity to events in a day and personal interests among a particular social network also have a part to play in setting the agenda for social interactions in such settings. However, news media are also part of the dialogue. By examining when and how often homeless people feature in the New Zealand news reports, we can gain some understanding of the amount and nature of mediated resources available for public discussion. This section documents how often news reports on homelessness appear, seasonal variations in reporting and particular key topics shaping news reporting on homelessness, which will set the context for news coverage on homelessness in New Zealand between 1995 and 2007.

MEDIA COVERAGE (1995-2007)

Access to adequate, affordable and suitable housing is an inherent right for all New Zealanders (Human Rights Commission, 2008). Once a country with high home-ownership rates (Kearns, Smith, & Abbott, 1991), recent changes to New Zealand’s housing and welfare policies has

resulted in increased concerns about the affordability and availability of suitable housing (Leggatt-Cook, 2007). This has led to a steady increase in New Zealand's homeless population (Collins, 2008; 'Council to address homeless numbers in Auckland, 2008). Despite this, public debates about housing-related issues rarely feature homelessness (Leggatt-Cook, 2007), which is reflective of the amount of media coverage devoted to the issue.

As Figure 1 shows, homelessness features only marginally in news and current affairs coverage between 1995 and 2007, averaging just 6.4 clips annually. There is, however, a notable spike in coverage in 2002, and again in 2003, after which coverage becomes steady at 9 clips per year.



The sudden increase in coverage between 2002 and 2003 coincided with several ongoing storylines. For example, the murder of homeless woman Sheryl Brown and the investigation that followed, made regular headlines during 2002 (see Case Study 2, Chapter Four), and in 2003, Wellington's visible rough sleepers, featured frequently. Reports drew specific attention to their often anti-social, rowdy and drunken behaviour, frequently exhibited while they spent their days in the CBD. As a result, the Wellington City Council attempts to find a suitable solution on how best to control or get rid of them, as their behaviour is considered intimidating and inappropriate. Furthermore, the murder of prominent TV personality David

McNee by one of Auckland's rough sleepers also contributed to the number of news items recorded for 2003.

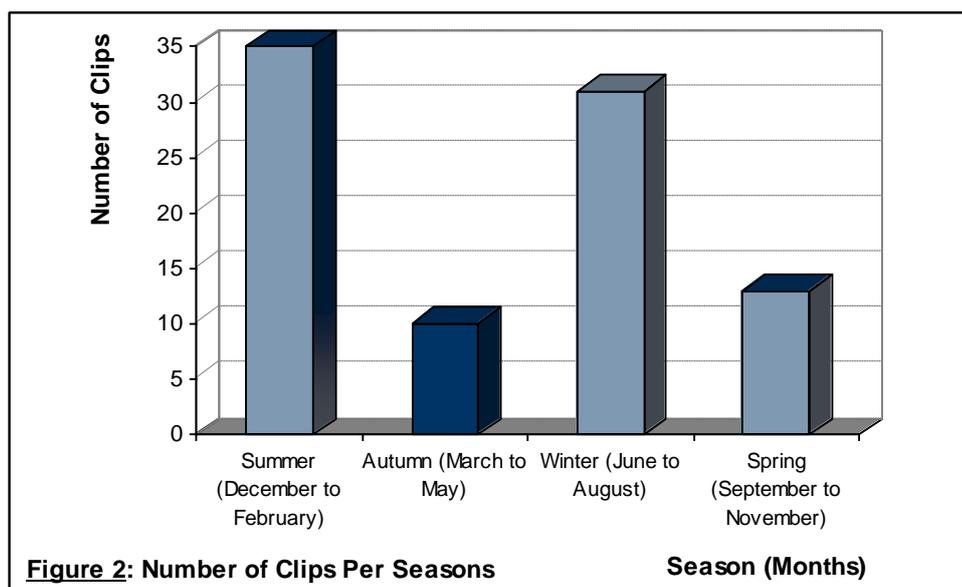
Despite these examples, fluctuations in coverage can, at least partly, be attributed to variations in more current and attention-grabbing issues at the time of broadcasting. Newsworthiness determines what is reported (Jewkes, 2004), and as such, the media often choose to "publicize 'new news' rather than the 'old news' of ongoing social concerns" (Tompsett, Toro, Guzicki, Manrique and Zatakia, 2006, p.48). This might suggest that homelessness holds a secondary role to more current, and perhaps exciting, news items. Although it is difficult to presume what constitutes an adequate amount of media coverage about homelessness and affected individuals, limited media attention about the issue may imply that homelessness is an issue elsewhere, which might go some way as to explain why "so few people—including politicians and policy makers—are aware of the scale of the problem" (May, 2003, cited in Leggatt-Cook, 2007, p.30). Overall, it appears that the marginal role homeless people have in society is reflected in the amount of media attention dedicated to the issue and their plight.

SEASONALITY OF COVERAGE

Christmas is, almost globally, considered to be a time of giving, forgiving and charitable generosity. Deemed as a time of "good will to all" (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005, p.35), the generosity is also reflected in the amount and type of coverage devoted to homeless individuals (Buck, Toro & Ramos, 2004; Bunis, Yancik and Snow, 1996; Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley, 2005; Lichter, 1989). Each of these studies was conducted in the Northern Hemisphere, where Christmas coincides with the winter season, which allowed coverage to feature many dramatic, and often very sympathetic, storylines and imagery. Homeless people were characterised as "vulnerable and in need of sympathy and assistance" (Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley, 2005, pg.36), reinforced with dramatic imagery of cold and

lone homeless individuals in public locations like parks, subways and under bridges, was contrasted with images of homeless people together in warm shelters and community halls (Buck, Toro & Ramos, 2004; Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley, 2005). Since New Zealand is located in the Southern Hemisphere, Christmas and winter do not coincide. Whether a similar seasonal reporting pattern is evident in the New Zealand coverage is discussed in this section.

The analysis revealed a distinct, but unique, double-peak feature, as more news items screened during the festive season and the summer months, as opposed to during spring and autumn. Although very similar, the summer and festive season (December to February) produced slightly more news items (n=35, 39.3%—see Figure 2) than the winter coverage which screened between June to August (n=31, 34.8%). Furthermore, December was the month in which the highest number of items were broadcast, accounting for almost a quarter of all clips that screened during the year (n=21, 23.6%). These seasonally oriented reporting trends confirm that the time of the year affects the amount of media attention a social issue like homelessness receives. The results show that reporting trends are both in line, and in contrast to the findings from studies based in the Northern Hemisphere.



Although comparable in frequency, widely different stories featured during the summer and festive seasons, when compared to the coverage from the winter months. For example, coverage during the winter months often featured stories about the harsh conditions of sleeping rough, often linked to inadequate shelter provision. This is in contrast to coverage that screened between December and February, when stories were often related to the festive season in particular, or the charity organisations that were working toward providing Christmas for needy New Zealanders. Similar to international studies (e.g. Buck, Toro & Ramos, 2004; Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley, 2005), reports often featured groups of needy and deserving people, like homeless individuals, being helped, supported, and cared for by willing charity workers and volunteers. News reports often featured festive atmosphere filled venues, happy guests and smiling volunteers. Reports often featured numerous locations from around the country in one clip, as is described in this example.

The news item which screened on Christmas Day (25.12.2002) features Christmas celebrations around the country. Town halls and community centres are shown from Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. Each features images of many happy people celebrating Christmas day together. The report explains how town halls and community centres get transformed at this time of year, assisted by donations and many volunteer hours.

The Auckland City Mission for example, features most prominently, as it is New Zealand's largest food bank and homeless drop-in centre, and annually opens its doors to well over 1,000 diners on Christmas Day. Images of happy, singing and eating guests are shown, as are Christmas hats and crackers, children with face paint, presents, local celebrities singing carols on stage and merry adults. Some 400 volunteers helped with the cooking and serving of food in Auckland alone.

Although coverage would be expected to end on a happy note, the reporter in this story finishes his cheerful Christmas coverage with this statement: "in Auckland they were serenaded by the stars, but tonight, there are some here that will return to sleeping under them".

Overall, despite the unique double-peak feature evident in the New Zealand coverage, the general reporting trend seems comparable with those from similar international studies (Buck, Toro & Ramos, 2004; Bunis, Yancik and Snow, 1996; Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley, 2005; Lichter, 1989). The media's seasonally motivated attention span, which often features dramatic images, as well as tragic and sympathetic storylines, appear to be a universal feature. In addition, sympathy for the tired, lonely, poor and homeless was particularly noticeable during the festive coverage, which often even used those precise terms to describe guests who attended charity-organised functions.

KEY TOPICS OF COVERAGE

In addition to discussing when and how often New Zealand news media features homeless individuals, it was important to understand the broad story topics of these news items. These broad reporting themes were adapted from similar studies (see Bunis, Yancik and Snow, 1996; Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley, 2005; Lichter, 1989), as this would allow for some basic comparison across studies. Most prominent throughout each of the aforementioned studies were stories focusing on 'housing related issues', which included all types of homelessness and housing related difficulties. In addition, stories discussing 'mental health', 'substance abuse', 'crime' and 'charitable giving', were common throughout these studies. As mentioned, these categories were then used to categorise local news items. It is perhaps noteworthy to point out that 'charitable giving' was adjusted into 'other' for this study, in order open the category up and allow it to cater for a variety of clips. This was done to avoid forced choice categorising, possible due to, cultural differences between the studies for example.

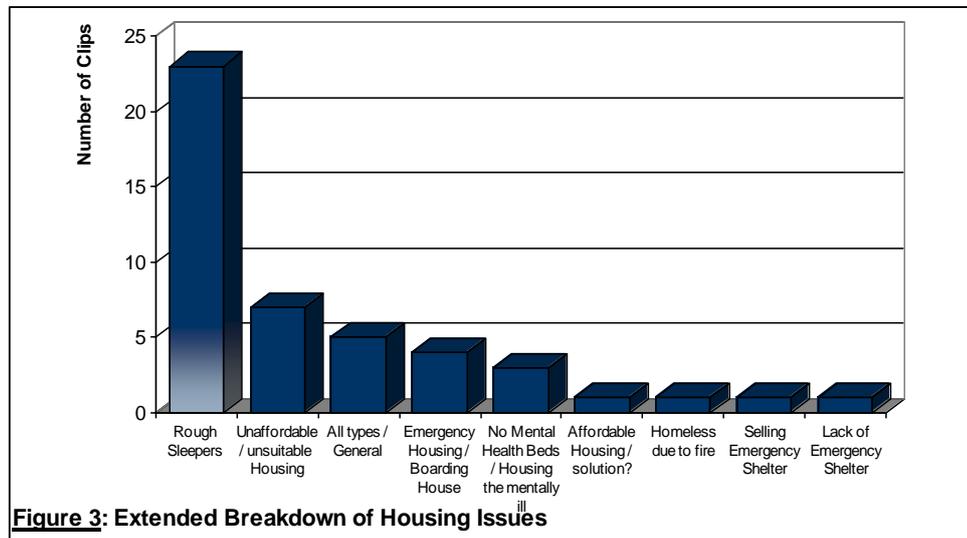
The analysis revealed that local news media only featured clips from three key areas, namely 'housing issues', 'crime' and 'other'. Although news items discussed and referred to substance abuse and/or mental health issues, these were not prominent enough during each story to be classed

as the core issue, and were therefore not classed as stand-alone topics in any one clip. As expected, stories about 'housing issues' feature most prominently in the coverage, accounting for over half of all clips (n=46, 51.7%). Stories classed as 'other' featured second more often (n=28, 31.5%), followed by 'crime' related stories (n=15, 16.8%). Similar results were noted by Bunis, Yancik and Snow, (1996) as well as Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley (2005). Although it might appear obvious that housing issues will be the most prominent category, it shows that issues and characterisations stereotypically linked to homeless individuals, such as alcohol and substance abuse, do not dominate the coverage, but rather the housing issue is most important. In order to better understand each of these three categories, each was broken down further, in order to provide a more complete understanding of each topic.

Housing related stories were dominated by visible forms of homelessness, with stories about rough sleepers accounting for almost half of housing related clips (n=23, 50.0%, see Figure 3, page 65). Other precarious housing situations, such as unaffordable and unsuitable housing featured less frequently (n=7, 15.2%), as did emergency and boarding house accommodation (n=4, 8.7%), and lack of bed space for the mentally ill (n=3, 6.5%). These findings confirm what has been implied thus far, which is that visible forms of homelessness receive more attention than more overt and less visible forms of homelessness. If this occurs because we typically link homelessness to rough sleepers rather than to people in shelters or unaffordable accommodation, or whether it is because they are more visible and therefore more accessible by the media, is unclear from these findings.

Clips categorised as 'other', featured second most often (n=28, 31.5%), and included a diverse range of clips, including one-off stories about a book award, a runaway teenager, a studio debate about begging on prominent public streets and a call for funding for a night shelter. This category also included the Christmas coverage, which scored relatively high (n=6), as did stories about arson attacks on buildings frequented by homeless people (n=5). This category shows that not all stories are about issues and problems stereotypically linked to homeless individuals, like

substance and alcohol abuse (Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002), but that a wide variety of stories that go beyond typecasts, are also possible.



The murder of, or by, homeless people dominated crime-related stories (n=8, 53.3%). Court cases and trials also featured (n=5, 33.3%), as did the torture of a New Zealand backpacker by a group of homeless men in Brisbane (n=2, 13.3%). Minor crimes against the homeless, such as verbal abuse, assault and robberies, did not make headlines and hardly ever featured. It appears that only sensational and newsworthy crimes against the homeless were reported, like the murder of Betty Marusich, the Domain Vagrant, and the murder of Sheryl Brown, a homeless mother of three, struggling with addiction. Each case featured numerous times and is analysed in detail, in the following chapter.

SECTION SUMMARY

This section sets out to highlight when news items about homelessness appear in the New Zealand media and what is reported during times of media attention. The amount of media attention homelessness receives in New Zealand is marginal, a result that seems to reflect their place in society. Furthermore, it appears that the media's attention span about the

issue and affected individuals is influenced by the time of year, as results show that homeless people feature most prominently during winter months and the festive season, when coverage is most sympathetic toward their plight. A unique double-peak feature was the result of being located in the Southern Hemisphere and still showing signs of a seasonal re-discovery, as was noted in comparable studies (see Buck, Toro & Ramos, 2004; Bunis, Yancik and Snow, 1996; Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley, 2005).

In addition to reporting trends, this section showed that homelessness-related news items were predominantly about housing related issues. Although obvious, this finding demonstrates that news items are not dominated by discussions about issues linked to homeless individuals, like crime, substance abuse or mental health, but that coverage discusses the issue of homelessness as its key issue, first and foremost. Although this section merely provides a basic overview of when homelessness features in local news media, and highlights broad reporting categories it provides a context in which the results of the next six sections are discussed in, as they discuss varying aspects of the coverage, which will show how the New Zealand news media marginalises homeless individuals, promotes their 'othering', and offers little sympathy about their plight.

3.2. CHARACTERISATIONS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

The individuality of homeless people is often trivialised in media coverage (Marsh, 2006), as they are frequently typecast as a homogenous group, as opposed to a heterogeneous group of individuals who happen to share housing, economic, health and perhaps relational difficulties. Klodawsky, Farrell and D'Aubry (2002) propose that "the mere presence of a 'type' of homeless person, in their case a middle aged, single, male panhandler, can become extrapolated to become 'the homeless'" (p.135), a term which implies that 'they' are inherently different from 'us' housed individuals. Media typecasts about homeless people are the starting blocks for stereotypical assumptions many hold about the identity of homeless

individuals in the community (Hodgetts, Hodgetts & Radley, 2006). Accordingly, this section seeks to answer the question of who 'the homeless' are that feature in New Zealand's news media. Their age, sex and ethnicity will be discussed, as will how they are characterised and portrayed within news reports. The latter will offer some indication of how news items are framed, and the potential level of sympathy available to the New Zealand homeless population.

AGE

Homeless individuals who featured in news and current event stories were categorised into broad age categories. The age breakdown of 127 characters⁶ revealed that nearly half were either under 18 years of age (n=31, 21.2%) or between 30 and 45 years of age (n=31, 21.2%). People between 45 and 75 years accounted for 31.6% (n=46), but surprisingly, homeless individuals aged between 18 and 30 years, only accounted for 11.6% (n=17). This was somewhat unexpected as, according to previous research (Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002), the middle-aged homeless man was a frequent feature in their studies. In addition, homeless individuals aged 75 years and older featured only twice (1.4%) in the New Zealand coverage, and on both occasions, their media reports centred around their lives, and in one case their temporary eviction, from the shelter they were residing in.

Although these findings suggest that coverage mostly features the very young and middle-aged homeless individuals, these figures neglect to show the type of homelessness associated with each age group. For example, homeless children under the age of 18 were predominantly shown in family situations, which typically featured in stories about emergency accommodation or shelter life. Homeless people aged between 18 and 45 years of age were more likely to be represented and featured as rough sleepers and they were typically shown in group

6 147 in total: 18 were unable to be specified and 28 were in group situations.

situations rather than on their own. The results suggest that age might play a role in determining what stage of homelessness any one homeless individual might be depicted in. From these results it is however still unclear whether age determines the stage of homelessness individuals are found in, or whether media coverage simply implies a correlation between the two.

SEX

Stereotypically, homeless individuals are typically thought of as rough sleeping males (Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002; Marsh, 2006), confirmed by results from this study. Results indicate that over half of depicted homeless individuals were male (n=93, 60.8%), while females comprised less than one-third of the gender breakdown (n=49, 32.0%)⁷. As attempts were made to find a possible explanation for the dominance of male homeless people over female, results from local and international street counts provided one possible explanation.

Ellis and McLuckie (2008), who conduct an annual street count of homeless people in the central Auckland area, found that there are more men sleeping rough than there are women, who were more readily found in shelters. Similar street counts conducted in France (see Firdion and Marpsat, 2007) and America (see Association of Gospel Rescue Missions in America, 2009) also report about this male dominance. Although these studies count the actual number of homeless people in certain locations as opposed to the media representations discussed here, they did recorded a similar gender breakdown. On the flipside, it could also suggest that media coverage simply repeats stereotypical images of rough sleepers throughout stories, as they are perhaps reluctant and unenthusiastic to seek out homeless individuals in other, more overt forms of homelessness. In the long-term, Leggatt-Cook (2007) argues that narrow depictions could have a

7 The remaining percentages were classed as being in group situations.

negative effect on the public's understanding and perception of homeless individuals.

ETHNICITY

In addition to describing age and sex trends of homeless individuals, their ethnicity is just as important in providing a comprehensive overview of homeless characters in the local news media. Due to the challenges that the ethnic breakdown created⁸, Maori and Pacific Island ethnicities were combined into one category, which might have contributed to this group accounting for nearly half of all homeless people shown in the coverage (n=60, 43.5%). Pakeha, or New Zealand Europeans, comprised slightly less at 39.1% (n=54), with these two categories accounting for 82.6% of identified ethnic groups. In addition to individuals in group situations, coverage depicted one Asian character in central Auckland (0.7%) and one homeless German, who was classed as 'other' (0.7%). Overall, the results suggest that Maori and Pacific Island ethnicities, who comprise a relatively small proportion of the general population (Statistics New Zealand, 2002), were largely over represented in news coverage about homelessness.

These media depictions also reflect similar findings from Ellis and McLuckie's (2008) annual street count. As mentioned earlier, despite their results describing actual numbers and not media depictions, their research also revealed that Maori and Pacific Islanders were over represented. The street count findings were reviewed by Patrick Crewdson, writer for the New Zealand Herald, who comments that "Maori or Polynesian made up to 58 percent of those sleeping rough, with Pakeha comprising 22 percent" (Crewdson, 2005). These similarities between media representations and the actual number of homeless individuals, could suggest that news media are perhaps providing a somewhat accurate snap-shot of the ethnic

8 See Chapter Two: Method, for more details.

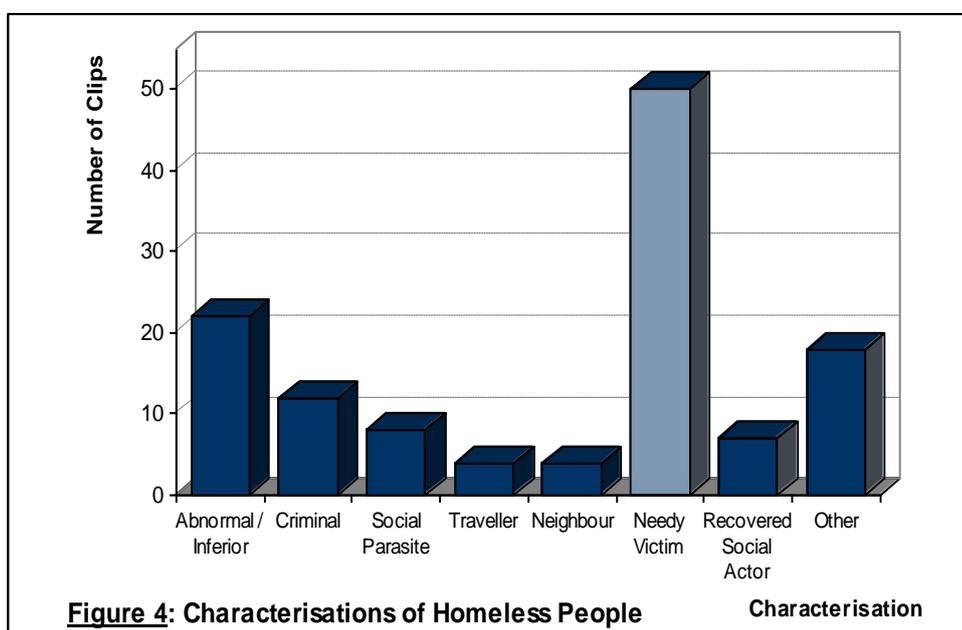
breakdown of Auckland's, and perhaps even New Zealand's, homeless individuals.

CHARACTERISATIONS

The characterisation of homeless individuals within news items can both support the building of sympathy for homeless individuals, or it can perpetuate stigma, as negative stereotypes “blame victims for their predicaments” (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005, p.40; Widdowfield, 2001). Characterisations have the potential to reduce homeless individuals to mere stereotypes, which can impact on the understanding and perception of individuals and their housing situation. This research adapted key characterisations identified in similar studies (see Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005; Widdowfield, 2001) in order to allow for some comparison across studies and cultures. The most prominent characterisations adapted into the coding frame were the ‘needy victim’, the ‘criminal’ and the ‘abnormal/inferior’. In addition, characterisations of homeless people as ‘neighbours’, ‘travellers’, ‘recovered social actors’ and ‘others’, were added in order to minimise potential forced choice categorising of individuals.

Overall, 125 different characterisations were recorded across the 89 clips analysed. Of these, nearly half characterised homeless individuals as ‘needy victims’ (n=50, 40.0%). According to Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley (2005), the dominance of this characterisation serves “to invoke pity and support for homeless people”, and highlights “the negative implications of government welfare policies, and invokes the need for charitable support” (p.41). On the flipside, these authors also believe that it might negatively impact on perceptions, as the dominance of the ‘needy victim’ coupled with images of homeless people receiving help, could imply that they are being managed back onto the right path, back into a socially acceptable and desirable lifestyle, often by charities and related organisations. This means that any homeless individuals sleeping rough must be there by

choice or personal failings, neither of which support a very sympathetic understanding of the issue at hand. Although discussed later in this chapter, it is important to note here that coverage that blames individuals for being homeless, minimises the potential for sympathy for them, as it implies that it is solely their own fault that they are homeless, rather than consider structural factors. Moreover, this perspective also perpetuates the dichotomous relationship between housed and homeless individuals, as homeless people are portrayed as fundamentally deficient and different to the housed community.



In addition to the 'needy victim', homeless people were also characterised as 'abnormal/inferior' (n=22, 17.6%), a category which in itself indicates there would be very little sympathy for them. Homeless individuals were also characterised as varying 'others' (n=18, 14.4%), a category which encompassed a wide variety of characterisations. For example, there were 'murder victims', 'druggies', 'street kids' and 'illiterate and uneducated' homeless individuals, as well as 'happy and deserving' homeless people, many of which featured during the festive season. Although homeless people are frequently thought of as people with a criminal past (Toro, 2007), the results from this study revealed that only 9.6% were characterised as such (n=12, 9.6%). Most dominant were stories about the

trial of a homeless man accused of the murder of TV personality David McNee and the torture of a New Zealand backpacker by a group of homeless men in Queensland, Australia. Although there were brief mentions that implied that homeless people were bludgeoning off the government, which was portrayed as a crime in itself, most characterisations were in relation to these key events.

Overall, the characterisations discussed here are comparable to those from similar international studies (see Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005, p.40; Widdowfield, 2001). Characterisations of homeless individuals as 'needy victims', the 'abnormal and inferior', the 'other' and the 'criminal' were most prominent, and it is argued here, that while these may provide a basic starting point for comparisons across studies, they may also be a source of much contention, as they can perpetuate stereotypes and influence understandings and the framing of storylines.

SECTION SUMMARY

This section describes the age, sex and ethnicity of homeless people that featured in the New Zealand news media. Overall, the demographic breakdown is comparable to results from actual street counts (Ellis & McLuckie, 2008), as well as similar research studies (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005; Widdowfield, 2001). The findings do, however, contradict the 'type' of homeless person described by Klodawsky, Farrell and D'Aubry (2002), as the New Zealand media frequently showed homeless people from a wide range of ages and from varying stages of homelessness. Accordingly, the results seemed to suggest a possible link between the age of the featured homeless individual and their current state of homelessness, as coverage frequently featured young homeless people in emergency accommodation and shelters, whereas homeless people aged between 18 and 45 were more frequently depicted as rough sleepers.

Similar arguments were put forward when results indicated that males featured more frequently than female homeless people. Results from street counts (see Ellis & McLuckie, 2008; Firdion and Marpsat, 2007; Association of Gospel Rescue Missions in America, 2009) and similar research (see Marsh, 2006) have also indicated that men are more likely to be in visible stages of homelessness, whereas females are more likely to be found in invisible forms of homelessness, like shelters and hostels. This could be because reporters have easier access to individuals who are visibly homeless, and therefore report more readily on rough sleeping men. In the long-term, this could serve to perpetuate the stereotype that homeless people are, as described by Marsh (2006) and Klodawsky, Farrell and D'Aubry (2002), mainly men who live in public spaces. In addition to sex and age breakdowns, results for the ethnic breakdown of homeless individuals revealed that Maori and Pacific Islanders were overrepresented, a finding also reflected in the annual Auckland street count (Ellis and McLuckie, 2008).

The characterisations of homeless individuals highlighted that even when coverage framed homeless people as 'needy victims', arguments can be made to challenge that presumed level of sympathy attached to that particular characterisation. Key characterisations, namely the needy victim, the abnormal or inferior, or the criminal, all serve to perpetuate the notion that homeless individuals are fundamentally different to housed individuals. The importance of these findings lie in their ability to contribute to the understanding of who New Zealand's homeless population is presented as. In addition, the characterisation of individuals, or the way they are reported on and about, can impact stereotypes and perceptions about wider issues such as implied causes and solutions, and are therefore vital to the dissemination of sympathy.

3.3. LOCATIONS, ACTIVITIES AND ASSOCIATES

Living rough and being homeless is linked to certain stereotypes. Typically, these typecasts refer to the identity and appearance of individuals, as media stories negate stories that feature demographic diversity (Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002). Although the New Zealand coverage revealed some demographic diversity amongst featured homeless individuals, locations identified in related news items can also “influence how homelessness is understood by wider society” (Marsh, 2006, p.34). Clichéd locations, such as parks, street corners, bridge underpasses and shelters, as well as activities commonly associated with being homeless, such as public intoxication, sleeping on park benches and begging, are all able to perpetuate stereotypes and distort public understanding of homelessness and homeless individuals. This section explores the public and private locations identified throughout the New Zealand coverage; activities homeless people are shown to be participating in and who they are shown to be with, in order to better understand whether local coverage supports the ‘othering’ and marginalisation of homeless individuals through their implied difference and unacceptable lifestyle, that is often attributed to them.

LOCATION

In total, 106 locations were identified, and each location was then coded as being either in a private setting or a public space, a split which revealed that only 21.7% of locations were based in private spaces (n=23), the majority of which were inside private residences (n=8, 34.8%). In addition, shelter rooms (n=4, 17.4%), garages that were being used as accommodation (n=3, 13.0%), court rooms (n=2, 8.7%), inside a Marae (n=1, 4.3%) and inside a police car (n=1, 4.3%), also featured. The majority of locations were however, identified as public spaces (n=83, 78.3%), which included streets, parks and bridges (n=40, 48.2%), general locations like cafes, libraries, car parks and schools (n=8, 9.6%), as well as town halls and community centres (n=7, 8.4%). The identified public

locations were then additionally coded for whether stories implied that homeless people had an inherent right to be in that setting (e.g. they were included—they belonged in that setting and it was good to have them there) or that they were excluded (e.g. let's get rid of them and they need to move on). 'Unclear' was also a possible option, as it soon became clear that not all situations were able to be classified⁹.

The secondary coding for public spaces revealed that most were defined as 'unclear' (n=37, 44.6%), and the split between 'inclusive' (n=22, 26.5%) and 'exclusive' (n=24, 28.9%) public spaces was relatively minor. This could suggest that the public locations identified in the coverage are more ambiguous than first anticipated. This holds particularly true considering the lengths councils are going to, in order to monitor and control use of public spaces (also see Introduction). Upon closer inspection, however, and as Table 1 (page 76) demonstrates, parks, streets and bridges comprised almost half of all public locations, of which nearly one-third were classified as 'excluding' homeless individuals (n=13, 32.5%), in contrast to only 4 locations that implied homeless people were included (10.0%). Locations designed to assist homeless individuals, like shelters and drop-in centres, which featured second most often, were more inclusive (n=6) than exclusive (n=3). Clips featuring the CBD, however, excluded homeless people on both occasions (n=2), compared to community and town halls, which accepted homeless people in each instance (n=7). Furthermore, public spaces where homeless and housed individuals interact, such as libraries, cafes, train stations, car parks and schools, spaces were predominantly defined as unclear (n=7), with only one clip suggesting they were included.

Similar findings were noted by Marsh (2006), whose research indicated that homeless people were predominantly shown in public spaces, usually outdoors—a finding she concludes has two distinct implications. One, the “emphasis on rough sleepers reflects a narrow approach to homelessness”, which suggests that “most homeless people are rough sleepers” (p.34). Secondly, Marsh (2006) argues that the locations identified in her sample

9 See Method section for explanation.

imply that homeless people are dangerous, undesirable and hold a marginal role in society, much like the spaces they themselves frequent. She concludes her research, much like the findings from this study suggest, stating that “homeless people are presented as disorderly and irresponsible people who pollute the landscape and create chaos” (p.40). Overall, these findings support this section’s proposed argument namely that the locations identified throughout related news media serve to maintain stereotypes about homeless individuals, and support their ‘othering’.

Table 1: Public Location Breakdown

PUBLIC	TOTAL	% of total	Included	Excluded	Unclear
Street / Park / Bridge	40	48.2%	4	13	23
General (incl graveyard, ATM, Train, Café, Library, Car-park, School)	8	9.6%	1	0	7
Shelter / Drop-in Shelter	10	12.0%	6	2	2
Bus Station / Shelter	5	6.0%		2	3
Hospital	2	2.4%	1	1	
Prison / Police	2	2.4%	1	1	
Town Hall / Community Centers	7	8.4%	7	0	0
CBD	2	2.4%		2	
Other	7	8.4%	2	3	2
Total	83	100.0%	22	24	37

The difference between housed and homeless individuals, and the ‘othering’ of homeless people, is also reinforced with the selection of camera angles used when homeless individuals are shown. Time and again, homeless people are shown from a great distance, like from a doorway of a café, across the road in the park, through bushes and through a glass window. The implication of this, as argued by Whang and Min (1999), is that homeless people are not “identified as autonomous individuals” (p.127), but rather as the homeless over there. This point of view serves to homogenise the homeless community, and strengthens the dichotomy between housed and homeless through the establishment of an almost voyeuristic relationship between the two.

WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

Typecast assumptions about typical homeless behaviour suggests that they are likely to be addicted to substances and drinking alcohol (Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002), which might give an early indication of what the news media might feature. Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley (2005), however, found that most of the “sequences containing images of homeless people [showed them] aimlessly wandering the streets or sitting in doorways and not interacting with other people” (p.40). Whether the New Zealand news media followed their trend, or excessively drew on stereotypes and showed homeless people drinking and abusing substances, is questioned in this section.

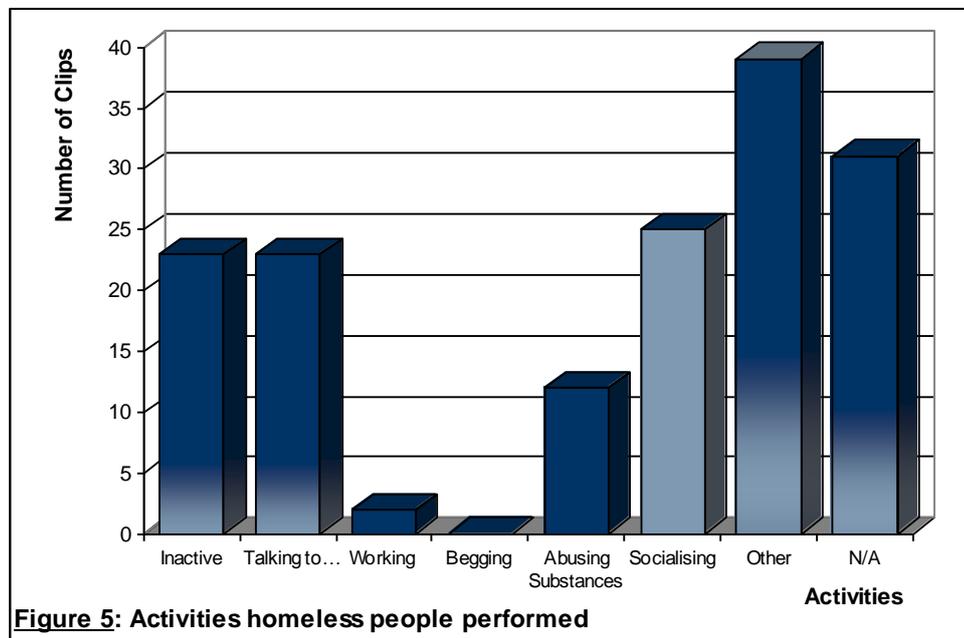
In contrast to the research discussed above, of the 124 recorded activities homeless people were shown to be engaged in, anti-social behaviours, such as sitting on park benches, sleeping or wandering the streets accounted for only 18.5% (n=23). Moreover, substance abuse, such as heavy drinking, using meths and sniffing paint fumes, featured even less, accounting for less than ten per cent of recorded activities (n=12, 9.7%). The following example, however, shows how substance and alcohol, when featured in homelessness coverage, are considered relatively ‘normal’.

For example, in one particular story, audiences are introduced to a previously homeless individual who briefly explains about his daily mission for food and money when he was living rough (08.10.2000). He then introduces audiences to Christchurch's weekly soup kitchen, who provide a free hot meal to Christchurch's rough sleepers, which is often their only hot meal in any given week.

Apart from cheerful and eating homeless people, audiences are also presented with a gaunt, middle aged homeless woman sniffing paint fumes from a plastic shopping bag. The coverage, however, does not make any mention of her behaviour, but instead focuses on a rough sleeper huddled up in a doorway.

The report moves on to interview another homeless woman about begging on Christchurch's streets, before re-interviewing the initial Recovered Social

Actor in his new permanent accommodation. They discuss the hard winters and the constant battle for food and shelter, before he proudly shows cameras how he has turned his life around.



As figure 5 shows however, begging, an activity generally defined as “asking passers-by for money in a public place” (Kennedy & Fitzpatrick, 2001, p.2001), and almost exclusively associated with homeless people, particularly rough sleepers (Kennedy & Fitzpatrick, 2001), was not depicted in the New Zealand news coverage media. Activities that are rarely associated with being homeless featured much more prominently, and since they were somewhat unexpected, were classed as ‘other’ (n=39, 31.5%). This category included a wide range of activities, like doing household chores, preparing lunch and dinner, cleaning, looking after children and making beds, which typically featured in coverage about families in emergency accommodation or shelters. Activities that were coded as ‘other’, but were related to activities by rough sleepers, typically included things like getting arrested, lining up for food at soup kitchens and dealing with police and security. As discussed in the previous section, locations such as parks, shelters and CBD’s were places many homeless individuals hung out. Accordingly, socialising featured second most often (n=25, 20.2%) among the recorded activities. The following example,

however, describes the somewhat more unconventional activities a rough sleeping woman was depicted doing as she featured in a current affairs piece that followed her for 24 hours.

'Holmes', a local current affairs programme, followed a middle aged homeless woman (name withheld) for 24 hours (27.09.96). Due to health and other problems, she is without a home. Based in Wellington, she epitomises the 'typical' 'bag-lady' look, as she wears a long coat down to her ankles, carries with her a big backpack, and has pigtails, scruffy shoes and a beanie.

The initial coverage shows her doing yoga and meditation in the local cemetery, before she moves to the local library, where she sews herself a rain coat from tarpaulin material. A supermarket stop off allows her to purchase some cat food, before she herself has dinner at a café. She then takes the train out of the CBD, to a local park. She finds a local neighbourhood cat, feeds her, and then sets up for the night in a local bus shelter. As it was winter, she used several blankets, a tarpaulin and numerous other items of clothing she had, in order to try to keep warm.

In an almost sarcastic fashion, her report is concluded with the reporter addressing audiences with a rhetorical question about whether Sandra gets her mail delivered to the local bus stop. After explaining that she has a post box, they as anyone has suitable accommodation for her, to please contact the studio.

This particular example challenges the typecast that rough sleepers are male, drunk and substance abusers who have chosen this lifestyle. Human interest stories such as these, however, are rare, but when shown, have the potential to frame homeless individuals in a more 'normal', more domiciled and perhaps more sympathetic light.

The results from this section show that the activities exhibited by New Zealand's homeless population challenge stereotypes, and are contrary to results from similar studies (see Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005). One might even suggest that the activities recorded here present homeless people as more than just stereotypes, since images of mothers struggling to feed their children, elderly residents forced out of their shelter due to

safety issues and young families unable to afford housing and living in garages, challenge the long standing typecast image of rough sleepers (Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002). Perhaps, this is the key to providing more sympathetic coverage, as homeless individuals go about similar activities to members of the domiciled community.

WHO ARE HOMELESS PEOPLE DEPICTED WITH?

In addition to locations and activities, who homeless people are depicted with is just as important. The results indicate that homeless people were mostly depicted with fellow homeless individuals (n=34, 41.0%), as opposed to being shown on their own (n=28, 19.4)¹⁰. These results are comparable with findings from Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley (2005) who also found that homeless people were predominantly featured with other homeless individuals (42.9%) or on their own (26.0%). When groups of homeless people featured in local coverage, most featured in public spaces, such as parks and shelters, the CBD, or community halls during the festive season. When homeless people were not in group situations or on their own, they were featured with journalists (n=12, 14.5%), family and church members (n=8, 9.6%), police and security (n=9, 10.8%) and community workers (n=8, 9.6%). Homeless people interacting with members of the public featured rarely (n=4, 4.8%), as members of the public were mostly cast as extras, often seen walking past homeless people or in the background (Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley, 2005). Only one story featured a person with an animal (1.2%), and individuals who were classed as 'others' (n=6, 7.2%), included a fellow student at school (n=1), a protestor (n=1), lawyers (n=2) and a public nurse and doctor (n=2).

Overall, this third of three sections about the portrayal of homeless people in the New Zealand news media indicates that homeless people are likely to

¹⁰ The remaining 21.5% were for clips where companions were deemed 'Not Applicable' (n=31). This was the case when homeless people did not feature in clips, as was the case in studio based stories, or murder investigations, when only a photo was supplied.

be shown either together or on their own, and members of the housed public are likely to be cast as extras (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005). This seems to confirm the limited interaction between housed and homeless individuals, which will be discussed further in a later section. At present, arguments can be made that the limited interaction between housed and homeless individuals helps to maintain the dichotomous relationship between the two groups.

SECTION SUMMARY

This section discussed the locations homeless individuals were shown in, the activities they were shown to be doing, and who they were depicted with. Recent research conducted by Marsh (2006) concluded that newspapers often portray homeless individuals as rough sleepers “who behave in anti-social, volatile and uncontrollable ways” (p.47), a statement contradicted by findings discussed in this section. Although homeless people were predominantly depicted in public locations (this was partly true because cameras were not allowed inside shelters and private boarding houses), the identified locations were presented as ambiguous. It was unclear whether homeless people were welcome in them or not, or whether it was their behaviour, rather than they themselves that made coverage imply that they were unwelcome.

The activities homeless people were engaged in within the coverage indicate that many participate in domestic activities. Families residing in shelters were often seen doing household chores, whereas rough sleepers were frequently depicted lining up for food and socialising. Admittedly, there were reports of outrageous drunken behaviour, but this was very minor in the overall coverage. Moreover, most homeless people were featured with their friends and family, housed or homeless, or on their own. This is in contrast to perceptions that they are often featured with police, who are called in to try and curb their “volatile and uncontrollable ways” (Marsh, 2006, p.47). Overall, this section could offer the key to

coverage presenting homeless people as more than just stereotypes, and offer a more sympathetic storyline.

3.4. STEREOTYPING WITH KEY IMAGES

The media often refers to homeless individuals as ‘the homeless’—a statement that implies that “homeless people are members of one homogenous group that look and behave in similar ways” (Marsh, 2006, p.36). Homeless people lose their individuality with references like these, and stereotypes are formed and supported through repeated use of these key terms and related visual imagery. For example, I conducted an online search in a leading online search engine for images relating to ‘homelessness’. Within seconds, images of dirty, unkempt older homeless men, sitting on street corners, holding signs, begging for money and ‘booze’ appeared. Women featured less frequently, and were often depicted with their faces hidden, pushing shopping trolleys or carrying multiple bags. Parks featured frequently, as did doorways and public street corners. These images confirm related academic studies, which suggest there is a perception of a ‘typical’ homeless person. Often, ‘the homeless’ are portrayed as rough sleeping men, predominantly white, maybe middle class, perhaps addicted to substances and alcohol (Etling, 2008; Klodawsky, Farrell and D’Aubry, 2002). This section, which is presented in four parts, will discuss how key images are used throughout the New Zealand coverage to reinforce stereotypes about homeless individuals. The first three examples show how a specific image can be used repeatedly throughout the coverage, irrelevant of storyline or location, to reinforce typecast understandings about homeless individuals. The fourth example is based on the lengthy coverage surrounding the Wellington City Council’s attempt to manage and control its homeless population. This example will discuss the key images used throughout this particular storyline, as these also promote character and behaviour stereotypes, but in a slightly different manner.

TWO MEN IN AN ORANGE BUS STOP

Filmed from across a busy road, and in the centre of the shot is a sheltered, orange bus stop. Two men are lying down in it, and pedestrians and cars are seen walking and driving past. In particular, two men are seen walking past, one of whom even points out the two men to his companion, before they appear to discuss them, and then walk out of the shot.

This image first features in an Auckland-based story discussing the publication of New Zealand's first comprehensive study into homelessness (12.12.2000). The image is blended in, but no commentary relating to it is provided. Three years later, the same shot appears again, this time in a Wellington-based story about the Council's decision to abandon a by-law to 'sweep the homeless off the street' (11.07.2003). Again, no explanation is provided. The shot flashes up and then disappears without being discussed. The following year, it features again, this time in a story discussing literacy classes designed by the Methodist Mission to help illiterate homeless individuals learn how to read and write (07.09.2004). And again a year later (15.06.2005), the orange bus stop features in an Auckland-based story about service workers, who are asking for Government legislation and funding to help them look after Auckland's rough sleepers. In 2007, the orange bus stop is again blended in, this time in a story about a planned \$70 million development project in the centre of Auckland. The project, designed by the Auckland City Mission, will help homeless people with wrap-around services and accommodation to assist them whenever possible (21.05.2007).

It is important to point out that each time the image is repeated, there is no mention about who the two men are, or if they are in fact homeless. It is simply assumed that they are homeless, simply because they are exhibiting behaviour that might otherwise not be appropriate from a housed individual. Perhaps the two gentlemen had a rough day, are hung-over from the night

before, are feeling sick or are sick of waiting for the bus. None of these possibilities are explored, as it is just assumed that they are homeless individuals who have claimed a bus shelter as their temporary shelter. None of the clips are marked as 'archival' footage, and therefore appear as a 'new' item every time the shot features. The image, it seems, is used purely to reinforce stereotypical ideas about homeless individuals, or perhaps to indicate who is meant when reports discuss 'the homeless'.

AN ELDERLY MAN, A BLANKET AND A BRIDGE UNDERPASS

The second example features an elderly man, struggling with an oversized backpack to a bridge underpass. There he sits down his backpack and spreads out his blankets on the concrete floor. Graffiti is visible in the background, and the area appears cold and damp.

This scene first features in an Auckland-based story about the increasing demand of food parcels from the Auckland City Mission. Demand has reportedly doubled this summer (19.10.2000), and they report that during the past 12 months, they gave out nearly \$1 million worth of food in the Auckland and Northland region alone. As the report discusses the additional 1,000 expected requests for food parcels during the festive season, the image of the elderly man making his way into the underpass and spreading out his blankets is blended in. The image seems totally unrelated to the issue being discussed, and although homeless people are mentioned in passing, as some of the recipients of the food parcels, there is no direct link to the image of the elderly man. A couple of years later, a report discusses the lack of services for elderly people aged 65 and over, who are struggling and many who are living below the poverty line (02.04.2002). The same image of the elderly man is blended in, this time, however, the shot is cut short and he is not shown spreading out his blankets. In 2006, the elderly man appears in a Wellington-based news report about the cost of ignoring the struggles of single men (27.08.2006), among others, a brief shot of the elderly man making his way under the bridge, is blended in.

Similar to the argument proposed in the first example, the way in which this image is used implies that the elderly man is a rough sleeper. Through his actions and his appearance, rather than discussions within the footage, he reinforces the typecast perception of a typical rough sleeper. None of the reports give him an identity, explain who he is or how old, nor do they state that he is a homeless individual. The assumption is made simply based of his appearance and actions. This reinforces the idea that New Zealand's rough sleepers are anonymous strangers, which widens the gap between housed and homeless individuals, as they are represented as 'the other' through their anonymity.

THE FOOTPATH, NEWSPAPERS AND THE RED LIGHT

The third example features no clear images of homeless individuals; instead, the late night scene features a dark street corner with faint red street lighting. On the footpath, newspapers cover what could be interpreted as a person bedded down for the night. There are no distinguishing features, no faces shown, no feet or clothes. The implication that this is a homeless person sleeping through the night on a sidewalk is, however, clearly made.

The image first appears on Christmas Eve in 2003, in an Auckland-based story about a group of housed individuals who will attempt to sleep rough until the New Year, in order to highlight the growing number of homeless individuals in Auckland. The group believes that "having a safe place to live is a basic human right, but it's not always an easy one to claim" (24.12.2003). Almost two years later, the same image features again, this time in a story about service workers asking government for funding and assistance in helping them look after, and support, Auckland's homeless population (15.06.2005). In 2007, the image features again, this time in a story about the proposed \$70 million development in the heart of Auckland, to help Auckland's rough sleepers, as previously mentioned.

This example, perhaps more so than the previous, seems to support the marginality and dichotomy between housed and homeless individuals. The extreme poverty of sleeping on footpaths with little more than newspapers as protection and shelter, seems to visually divide the homeless from domiciled individuals. In addition, by not revealing the identity of the person sleeping rough, the anonymous figure will struggle to support a sympathetic storyline, as the image supports long-held stereotypes about rough sleepers as the anonymous 'other'. Similarly, but this time with the use of terms like 'vagrant' and 'transient types', Marsh (2006) also acknowledges the anonymity of homeless individuals. She believes that these terms, like the pictures discussed here, "indicate that homeless people are not worth acknowledging and are essentially worthless and unacceptable; they are non-people or non-citizens" (Marsh, 2006, p.35).

ONGOING STORYLINE: WELLINGTON'S TROUBLESOME HOMELESS

This example is slightly different from the previous three, as reports about Wellington's rough sleepers first feature in 2003 and are still ongoing. The proposed by-law to rid the Wellington CBD of its homeless population, which the Wellington City Council later backs down from, provides a lengthy storyline in the news media.

Coverage starts in July 2003, when the Wellington City Council proposes to make it illegal to sleep in public, and police were to have the power to arrest anyone found sleeping in public locations (11.07.2003). This, however, would have included tourists sleeping in campervans and tents, and the by-law was bypassed. This news report briefly features an image of Blanket Man, an icon for homelessness in New Zealand. He is shown sitting on a street corner, with his loin cloth and his blanket, singing to himself. In addition, the report also features a random shot of outdoor sleeping areas in a park and under a bridge underpass, both filled with mattresses, rubbish, shopping trolleys and blankets.

The following week (18.07.2003), the news item reports that the Wellington City Council is meeting today to discuss the issue of homeless people in the CBD. Images that appear during the news item include two sleeping elderly men sitting on a park bench, both with bottles in brown paper bags beside them. In addition, we are shown a man staggering through the park with a plastic bag, a repeat image of Blanket Man and the makeshift sleeping quarters shown the previous week. A follow-up story which airs the very same day (18.07.2003) features Blanket Man again, as well as the two men on the park bench, and a group of socialising and drinking homeless individuals in what appears to be a local park. Between late December 2003 and late April 2004, related and comparable news reports screen an additional four times, each time featuring a combination of these images. late November 2005, the death of a homeless man while in police custody gets a brief mention in a news item before coverage blend in images of drinking, loud, obnoxious and rowdy rough sleepers in the CBD. Blanket Man features briefly, as does an intoxicated man, passed out in the central CBD.

The images are shown in conjunction with reports that are discussing how to deal with, or control Wellington's homeless population, and how to best rid the CBD of them. The images shown appear biased toward supporting the proposed legislation from the City Council, rather than offer a comprehensive and balanced report about the issue. One report, however, does acknowledge that the Council has yet to reveal "where they [the homeless] will go if they can't call the street home" (18.07.2003). While this report seems to imply a more sympathetic stance to their situation, others comment that "most of them have homes but chose the street" (11.11.2005). Commentary from homeless individuals themselves suggests that lack of housing is the root cause for their rooflessness, stating that their life has no quality, but it is a mere existence (27.08.2006). Others argue that "we're [the homeless] not vagrants; we just got no choice", while others want to know why the council won't just give them "a place...somewhere dry and safe, simple as that" (18.07.2003).

The images featured in the ongoing debate about how best to 'deal' with Wellington's rough sleepers, perpetuate the long-held, negative stereotypes about the behaviours of homeless individuals (see Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002; Etling, 2008). The images are similar to those noted by Marsh (2006), whose research indicated that homeless men were often portrayed as "socially dysfunctional through the attention given to physical appearance, health and behaviour" (p.36). Similarly, these images support the misconception that homeless individuals are rowdy, obnoxious and drunk, and the commentary suggests that they have chosen this 'lifestyle'. All in all, the images, as well as some of the commentary, support the 'othering' of homeless individuals as they are presented in contrast to housed individuals. Sympathy is minimised as they are presented as rowdy and uncontrollable individuals who exhibit unacceptable behaviour in public places.

SECTION SUMMARY

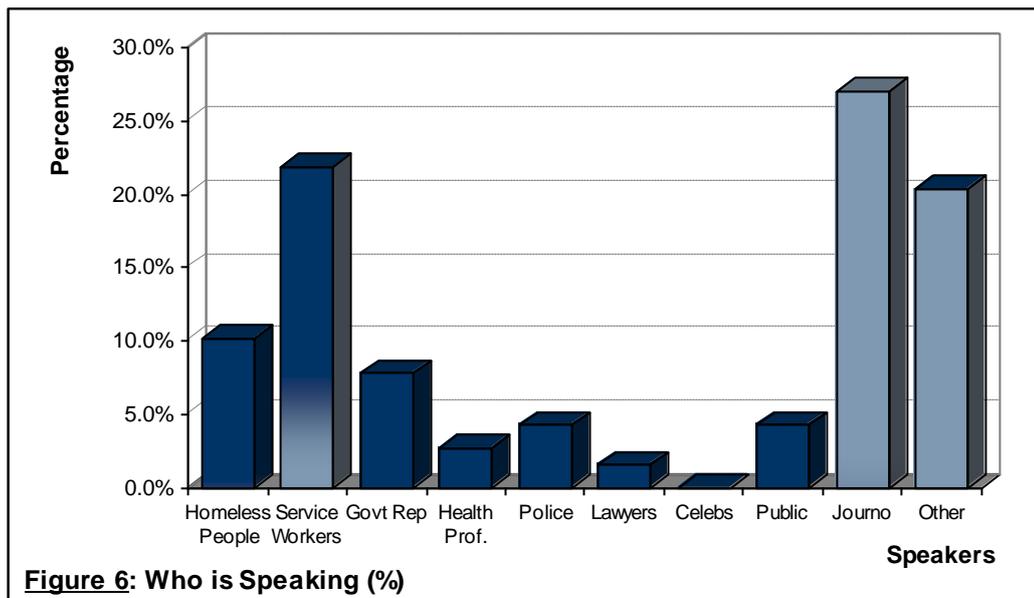
Images are very important in shaping our understanding about homeless individuals. They can easily either increase, or challenge understanding and sympathy for homeless people. This section sets out to demonstrate how three key images, and images featured across one particular storyline, can minimise potential sympathy through the 'othering' of homeless individuals. Whang and Min (1999) believe that the key function of visual representations of homeless individuals is "to dramatically portray the homeless as different from us" (p.131). The images discussed here uphold this dichotomy, and imply that homelessness is a narrow concept, easily defined to specific individuals (Whang and Min, 2002). Ultimately, this can lead to the generalisation of homeless individuals to represent 'the homeless', which, according to Widdowfield (2001), "demonstrates a lack of appreciation of the basic human character of individuals and is both dehumanising and homogenising" (p.52). This distinction is very important in this thesis, which proposes that media coverage supports and reinforces the dichotomous relationship between 'the housed' and 'the

homeless', which minimises understanding and sympathy for homeless individuals.

3.5. THE RIGHT TO ADDRESS THE AUDIENCE

In addition to representations, characterisations and images used, who is granted the right to address audiences is equally important as it is a right not granted equally to all individuals. Taylor (2000) argues that individuals "in positions of power are given the added advantage of speaking as an authority on a topic and asserting the primary definition of an issue" (p.303). This is especially true for media coverage about homeless individuals, who despite their ever increasing presence in society and media coverage, are rarely granted the opportunity to discuss their own issues, experiences and thoughts on the issue (Hodgetts, Hodgetts, Radley, 2006). Although the privilege could allow stereotypes about 'the homeless' to be challenged and provide more accurate depictions of characters and related issues, Hodgetts, Hodgetts, Radley (2006) believe that it is a noble sentiment, but a misguided one, as "groups who are marginalised cannot simply locate themselves within their own discourses" (p.499). This is a particularly contentious issue for homeless individuals, who are frequently ignored or marginalised within their own news coverage. When allowed to address audiences, they are often left discussing personal accounts of daily struggles or their life stories (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005), rather than more problematic issues like causes and solutions. This section will discuss who is granted the right to address New Zealand audiences, and explain how these findings can maintain typecast characterisations of homeless individuals.

In total, 256 characters addressed the audience, a figure that was dominated with input and discussions by journalists and reporters, who accounted for nearly a quarter of all obtained sources (n=69, 27.0%, see Figure 6).



Commentary by reporters was followed by comments from ‘service workers’ who spoke second most often (n=56, 21.9%), and ‘others’ (n=52, 20.3%), a category that included family and friends, emergency service workers, business owners, as well as church and charity representatives. As was predicted in the introduction to this section, homeless people featured only marginally, accounted for only 10.2% (n=26) of recorded sources. But, as stated by Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley (2005), “the simple prevalence of these characters does not necessarily capture their influence within the story” (p.38). When homeless individuals do speak, they are often relegated to discussing nothing more complex than personal accounts of daily life and their experience (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005), as their chief function is to “grant a credible quality to the textual reality constructed by the reporter’s direct address” (Whang & Min, 1999, p.127). More often than not, they are simply “carefully selected individuals who are semiotically exploited only to tell the immediate effects of the issues” (Whang and Min, 1999, p.127). Similar results were also noted in the New Zealand coverage, as homeless people rarely discussed anything more complex than lifestyle difficulties, the reasons for their homelessness and additional difficulties which arise from being homeless. Wider, more complex issues were reserved for government official, journalists and service providers. As a result, the potential for homeless individuals to challenge, explain or exert agency over their

representations, was subsequently very minimal (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005). Reports that do not feature homeless individuals as reputable sources of information, often describe or discuss homelessness and homeless individuals as objects, as the following debate about begging in an up and coming Auckland suburb, demonstrates.

A studio-based interview which screened on 'Breakfast' on February 2nd, 2007, talked about, but not to, homeless individuals. The debate features a spokesperson from the Newmarket Business Association (NBA) and a service provider from the Auckland City Mission (ACM), who are discussing the issue of begging in Broadway, an area of Auckland, which business owners are seeking to promote as New Zealand's premier shopping experience. The NBA is concerned that the area was "littered with beggars", with pavements filled with one drunk and obnoxious homeless person after another, harassing shoppers and being a nuisance.

The Auckland City Mission attempts to explain that 'getting rid' of homeless people is not that simple, as there is no legal basis by which one can simply go out and chase homeless people off the streets (unless they are breaking the law). While the ACM frequently respond to calls about homeless people, unless homeless people themselves want their help, ACM staff could very little.

During the interview, however, the ACM establishes that the actual number of homeless individuals being discussed is three or four people, as opposed to images of streets lined with homeless people the NBA was trying to portray. The Newmarket Business Association believes that that's "as bad as anyone's seen it".

The report seems to totally ignore the human aspect involved, and frames homeless people as a public nuisance and burden to housed society.

As implied in the previous example, housed individuals are often portrayed as key determinants in the establishment and implementation of new rules and regulations that attempt to control homeless individuals. Throughout the media coverage, however, members of the public only played a very minor role, addressing audiences even less than homeless individuals did

(n=11, 4.3%). These were comparable to results from Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley's (2005) research, as they found that, as mentioned earlier, "members of the public were cast as 'extras' who simply occupied public spaces, typically passing homeless people on the street" (p.39). Since housed individuals often appear as driving forces behind the establishment of new regulations and by-laws to control homeless individuals, their limited input in related news items was surprising.

SECTION SUMMARY

This section looked at who is granted speaking rights in the New Zealand news media, to publicly address audiences about issues related to homelessness and homeless individuals. The findings indicate that news media is dominated by voice-overs, and reports and commentary from service providers, journalists and 'other' individuals. Homeless people rarely feature, rendering them voiceless in media coverage about them (Whang and Min, 1999), and as a result, "homeless people are recipients of, rather than participants in, the planning and provision of interventions" (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005, p.40). Furthermore, their marginal role allows stereotypes to be perpetuated as 'they' are discussed and 'their' issues are talked about, which helps to maintain the secondary role homeless people hold in society. Overall, it seems that just as homeless individuals are marginalised and excluded from prime public spaces, they are equally excluded from actively participating in related news coverage.

3.6. CAUSES, SOLUTIONS AND THE FRAMING OF STORIES

By definition, homeless people lack suitable accommodation, or sometimes even basic shelter (Wright & Rubin, 1991). What leads people to this, to be without one of our basic human rights (Human Rights Commission New Zealand, 2008) can be seen as "an individual failure, a market failure and a public policy failure. Homelessness is rarely due to a

single, accidental event but rather a gradual accumulation of factors that in some cases becomes a repetitive cycle” (Koebel & Abdelfattah, 2004, p.17). How causes of and possible solutions for homelessness are discussed in related news media will be discussed in this section, as it goes to the heart of the argument of how sympathy for homeless people is either constructed or minimised in news media. In addition, this section will also discuss how featured causes and solutions, and the framing of stories may contribute to the understanding and perception of the issue and affected individuals.

POSSIBLE CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

Discussions about the roads that lead into, and may lead out of homelessness are fraught with emotional connotations, which can support or minimise public understanding and sympathy for homeless people. For example, structural causes like redundancies, inadequate service provision or lack of affordable accommodation often produce sympathetic storylines. On the contrary though, when cause is attributed to individuals, such as addiction, family conflict or health problems, storylines often offer little to no sympathy for homeless individuals. What perspective the New Zealand coverage took is discussed next.

Throughout the New Zealand coverage, causes of homelessness were discussed in just under half of all clips (n=38, 42.7%). Each of these causes was then categorised further according to whether they were based on ‘individual’ or ‘structural’ reasons, or whether a combination of the two was presented. Individually based causes featured most frequently (n=16, 42.1%), and were homelessness as a lifestyle choice was discussed most often (n=9). Drug abuse and substance addiction also featured (n=3), as did gambling problems and an accidental house fire. Homelessness due to structural causes featured slightly less (n=12, 31.6%), and were almost exclusively attributed to unaffordable housing, with frequent references to changes in welfare payments and an

insufficient Accommodation Supplement as contributing factors. The following example is just one example of how coverage explains some of the complexities that can lead into states of homelessness.

In December 2000, the release of New Zealand's first comprehensive study into homelessness prompted this brief news report (12.12.2000). It reports that there are nearly 200 people that sleep rough or in boarding houses, every night—and that's just in central Auckland.

It further discussed the key findings like demographic trends of Auckland's rough sleepers, and the reporter highlights that homelessness can affect men and women from all walks of life. She stresses that while "...many have never worked, some have University degrees. According to the report, one young woman living on the street was Dux of her school".

The report suggests that most had an abusive or disruptive upbringing and that homelessness was not a choice, but started a life of drug and alcohol abuse, even though most want jobs and family in their life. The news report took a sympathetic approach in that it advocated consideration for each of the individuals' situations, discussing a wide range of causes and solutions.

In addition to the breakdown of individual and structural causes, note was taken when a combination of both featured in the same news item. Only ten of these were recorded in the New Zealand coverage (26.3%), and these often discussed bad lifestyle choices in addition to addiction and personal circumstances that first forced people into states of homelessness, and then highlighted structural issues that were keeping them there. The following example demonstrates this well:

In a report featured on 'Holmes' (19.02.1995), audiences are introduced to a family of seven (mother, father and five children). The family had recently relocated from Wellington to Auckland, after the father received a promising job offer. Subsequent to their arrival however, the job offer fell through, forcing the family of seven into emergency accommodation.

Now, all seven sleep and live in one bedroom. At the time, the shelter housed 8 additional families, "each trying to save enough money to get into a place of their own" (reporter). Their story discusses their financial struggles

just trying to feed the family, as well as saving enough money for rent and bond to get into a state house. Despite working two jobs, the family struggles to save the money. In addition, there is a shortage of large family state houses, and should they be able to save the money, and be lucky enough to receive a state house. If they are then unable to afford the \$230 rent per week, the shelter manager acknowledges that there simply won't be anywhere for them to go.

The following week (26.02.1995) however, 'Holmes' screens an update on the family's current situation. After a large amount of public support, both in cash donations and letters of support, Housing New Zealand has suddenly found them suitable accommodation to move into.

Overall, the possible solutions to, and possible ways for people to get out of varying states of homelessness, featured in only 37.1% (n=33) of the analysed clips. Each of these was similarly broken down as was done for the causes discussed above. This breakdown revealed that nearly half were based on structural improvements (n=15, 45.5%). The proposed structural solutions focused on Housing New Zealand finding suitable accommodation for families (n=4), providing more affordable accommodation, building and improving night shelters and better services provision (n=6). Changing the current support system for homeless individuals and finding a solution to homelessness by local councils and national government working more collectively and collaboratively, were also discussed (n=5). Surprisingly, only 5 clips discussed solutions based on individual changes and initiatives (18.2%), which included family members helping homeless relatives (n=2), people choosing to come home (n=1) and rough sleepers seeking services to get themselves into suitable accommodation (n=2). Almost twice as many clips however, discussed solutions based on a combination of both individual and structural changes (n=12, 36.4%). A variety of solutions were raised here, ranging from increased employment opportunities, improved services for solvent addicts to increased support for mental health patients. Each one was linked to personal commitment however, which was needed by individuals to take advantage of proposed services in order for them to have any effect.

SECTION SUMMARY

Overall, it seems that the New Zealand coverage suggests that while homeless individuals need commitment and to take responsibility for wanting and seeking change, they also need help, support and appropriate services to be able to do so. This could suggest an acknowledgement from the New Zealand media that homelessness is much more complex than a mere housing issue (Koebel & Abdelfattah, 2004; Wright & Rubin, 1991), and that wrap-around services and support are needed. Similar research conducted by Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley (2005) suggests that British coverage promoted a model of deficiency, as coverage implied that there was something wrong with homeless individuals, and they therefore need guidance and assistance to overcome 'their issues'. Whang and Min (1999) also believe that homelessness is not being considered as a serious social issue, but that "the structural, difficult nature of the issue has been altered into a soft matter of humanism" (p. 131). They believe that by attributing fault entirely to the failings of an individual, we are ignoring vital issues, like poverty, inadequate services and lack of affordable housing, which are often the core reason for homelessness. Perhaps individual faults are not the cause of people becoming homeless, but perhaps they are highlighted as systems fail to protect its most vulnerable (Fiske, 1999).

Throughout my research, anecdotal information derived from conversations within my wider social networks, such as with fellow students and researchers, as well as with housed individuals, naïve to homelessness research, revealed some interesting concepts that seem relevant to the argument of sympathy. Many people spoken to believed that families in emergency accommodation or unaffordable housing situations were likely to have been victims of a flawed welfare system and were very sympathetic about their plight. Attitudes changed though, when talking about rough sleepers. Many attributed personal circumstances like alcohol and mental health issues to their homelessness. Sleeping rough as a lifestyle choice was also discussed with conversations often

becoming unsympathetic, even hostile toward them and their plight. Although unable to be substantiated, the distinction is noteworthy nonetheless. It suggests that the type or stage of homelessness, might affect public sympathy and perception of affected homeless individuals, as member of the housed public seem to attribute varying causes and sympathy to varying stages of homelessness.

Overall, the New Zealand coverage attributes causes almost equally to individuals and structural influences, but proposes predominantly structural solutions. These mixed messages, while they may provide some indication of the complexity of the issue, also offer varying degrees of sympathy for homeless individuals, since, as discussed earlier, individuals who are homeless due to structural reasons as opposed to individual faults, are endowed with more sympathy and sympathetic and tragic storylines. Therefore, it is unclear to accurately determine whether New Zealand media coverage offers a sympathetic or predominantly unsympathetic perspective on the causes of homelessness. Perhaps the following section, which discusses the framing of items, will be able to offer a more defined answer.

THE FRAMING OF STORIES: SYMPATHY VS. NEGATIVITY

As media reports feature homelessness, homeless characters, related issues and possible causes and solutions, stories are framed to either offer support and sympathy or undermine it. In order to find out how the New Zealand media frames news items about its homeless population, each clip was coded according to how it was framed. Key to this classification was whether homeless people were portrayed in a sympathetic and understanding, or negative, stereotypical and derogatory manner.

Contrary to expectations in light of findings thus far, over half of all stories were found to support a sympathetic storyline (n=47, 52.8%). Less than a

quarter were coded as being negatively framed toward homeless individuals (n=19, 21.3%), while the remaining 11.2% (n=10) were coded as a combination of both sympathetic and negative. This highlights the complexity of news items, as they can appear sympathetic, yet include negative aspects and commentary. What's more, this could indicate that while statistics might be able to suggest a trend in coverage, the figures often lack the ability to show the personal stories behind them, as is shown in the example below, which supports stereotypes but also presents a sympathetic and tragic story.

The reporter for a local current affairs programme ('Holmes' - 15.06.95) introduces "...a cautionary tale of how not to let your children turn out". The story starts very stereotypically, telling the tale of a homeless man who has been sleeping rough since the age of 9, when he got kicked out of the family home. He is now 24, living on the street, spends his days with fellow 'streeties', and is addicted to alcohol and solvents. He regularly sleeps in a local park, and carries his blanket, neatly folded, and other belongings with him wherever he goes.

While thus far stereotypes are perpetuated through the details we learn about him. Toward the end of the item, we then learn that just recently, he was part of a work initiative programme, something he thoroughly enjoyed, but which was cancelled due to budget cuts. We also learn that he has sought help for his addiction, as he doesn't want to die like his friend did last year—on a park bench, alone, at night. We also learn about his learning difficulties and his ongoing health problems.

The story highlights that at present, there are no available support or rehab programmes available to assist solvent addicts. This leaves him on the streets, without a work programme and without a recovery plan. Despite this, he receives little sympathy from housed individuals, who often consider him to be just another stereotypical rough sleeper.

As is shown here, stories can be framed to both support and challenge sympathy within a single news item. Although stories may at first draw on negative stereotypes, news items may still evolve into tragic tales to conclude with much sympathy. These findings suggest that just like homelessness, coverage is complex and cannot be easily categorised.

Stories are much more complex than for example, a simple distinction between offering a sympathetic or negative story framework.

3.7. DANGERS OF STREET LIFE

Thus far, the analysis has discussed general reporting patterns, the demographics of homeless individuals, the locations and activities identified in the coverage, as well as who is addressing audiences. But since “homelessness is no longer simply an issue of the right to affordable housing, but a matter of life and death” (Stoops, 2005b, para.9), how this vulnerability is discussed in media reports will feature in this section. The lack of private, safe and secure shelter is often cited as a key reason for homeless people falling victim to many assaults, thefts and harassment (Stoops, 2005b). Numerous studies can attest to shocking statistics about the dangers of being without housing (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2008; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006; Nieves, 1999; Newburn & Rock, 2005), but I have been unable to locate any studies that have examined how these attacks and the dangers homeless people face, are reported in media coverage.

The aim of this section is two-fold. First, stereotypes about homeless individuals suggest that they are deviant, and are often linked to criminal activity (Toro, 2007; Marsh, 2006), and this section will explore if the media reports on crimes committed by homeless individuals. Secondly, in light of the dangers homeless people face on a daily basis, this section will also look at the victimisation of homeless people and crimes against a marginal group in society. Questions of newsworthiness arise, as does the question of sympathy—do homeless victims receive much media sympathy?

Of the 89 news items analysed in this study, almost one-quarter of clips featured some sort of violent act (n=22, 24.7%), either towards, or by homeless individuals. The coding frame was extended to distinguish

between physical violence or more overt forms of violence, like harassment or threats. This however, was unnecessary, as each one of the clips identified in the New Zealand media depicted physical violence. Coverage did not provide any clear examples of harassment toward or by homeless people, nor featured any threats. Brief mentions were made in several clips, but fleeting statements were discounted due to their minimal effects on the overall story.

Just over one-third of stories featured violence by homeless individuals toward others (n=7, 33.3%). This included violence towards cameramen, security guards and struggling with police, as they were resisting arrest. One such example is provided here.

"City Beat" (07.11.2002), a programme which follows police and security through the centre of Auckland, featured security guards who are checking steps and hiding places around private buildings for rough sleepers seeking shelter. They find a homeless man, wrapped up in a sleeping bag on newspapers and cardboard, sleeping on stairs leading to a private building, invisible from the curb side. The voice-over states that "the issue of homeless people has a major impact on [Security Company – name withheld], requiring guards to reconcile a social conscious with the problems caused by those that sleep on the street", linking homeless people to issues like "graffiti, urination in public places, and of course, vandalism".

Guards attempt to move him along, asking him repeatedly to get his belongings and "go away and find somewhere else" (guard). After repeated attempts, they issue him with a trespass notice, and the homeless man becomes agitated when the guards attempt to move him along physically. He tries to pick a fight with the guards, but attacks the camera man. The security guards physically restrain him and call for police back up.

Ironically, the guards point out that he doesn't care about the threat of spending the night behind bars, as it would be a better place to sleep than here. Police eventually manage to calm him down, but pick him up anyway, and give him a bed for the night at the Auckland Central Police Station.

A more extreme example of violence by a homeless individual was the murder of TV personality David McNee in 2002 by a rough sleeper from

central Auckland, a story that featured repeatedly. Although only five clips were included in this analysis, it is by no means indicative of the extent of national outrage about Mr McNee's violent death. Coverage repeatedly showed images of a bridge underpass littered with dirty mattresses and covered in graffiti, an area apparently frequented by the accused. Reports suggest that a combination of greed and misinterpretation of sexual advances could have been a possible motive for the murder, and it is fair to say that each of these reports is very negative and derogatory toward the accused, who is later charged and sent to trial.

Despite this, it was much more common for homeless people to be cast as victims of violence (n=12, 54.5%). The following example is one of the only times the immediate effects of violence toward homeless individuals was actually broadcast, as it was usually discussed and not shown.

A current affairs programme, accompanying workers from the Wellington Community Safety Programme, aired on December 7, 2003. As cameras are following the guards walking through the Wellington CBD, they encounter a distraught homeless man.

Being an easy target, he was reportedly beaten by a group of youths without a motive, who left him bleeding from a head wound. The homeless man seemed unsure as to why he was the target of their attack, and refused medical attention. Once he saw the camera crew, he quickly ran away.

Most reports that discussed violence against homeless individuals were actually based on murder cases. In the 13-year sample period (1995-2007), three homeless people were murdered in New Zealand. The first was Betty Marusich, a 69 year old homeless widow, whose badly beaten and decomposed body was found in the Auckland Domain in 1995 (n=3, see Case Study 1, Chapter Four). In 2002, the body of Sheryl Brown was found—the mother of three, and once part-time model had just come to Auckland to seek help for alcohol addiction, and was sleeping rough on Karangahape Road at the time of her death (n=4, see Case Study 2, Chapter Four). The third murder victim was Shannon McComb, a 29-year-

old Christchurch man, who was just starting to get his life straightened out with the support and assistance from his family. Surprisingly though, his murder did not feature in the news media. It was only after two teenage boys were charged with and convicted of his murder, that the story made headlines (n=1). This might suggest a perceived lack of newsworthiness (Jewkes, 2004; Naylor, 2001) when a homeless man is violently beaten to death and then marginalised out of his own murder coverage. He was not an ideal victim (Greer, 2007), which meant that it was only the lengthy jail terms handed down to two 17-year-olds for his murder, that made the story newsworthy.

SECTION SUMMARY

The aim of this section was to explore if, and how New Zealand news media report on the dangers of being homeless. The analysis is relatively short, as there are no comparative studies with which to align these findings. Overall, it appears as if only the most extreme forms of violence are deemed newsworthy enough to make headlines. This rings true, especially as this section is dominated with references to murders and homicides, but no stories discuss the daily dangers homeless people face when sleeping rough, or living in shelters. It raises the question whether these events are simply not newsworthy enough, or perhaps the marginal role homeless individuals hold in society is equally reflected in the amount of coverage dedicated to their issues, which includes the dangers and the violence that are associated with being homeless. On the flipside, since there is no regional information about the prevalence of violence and danger to New Zealand's homeless population, the lack of news coverage may indicate that they face less danger than international studies suggest. Overall, it is impossible to draw a conclusion from the data analysed here, other than to argue that, newsworthiness plays some part in determining the amount and type of media coverage individuals may receive. How sympathy features in news items about murdered homeless women will be explored in more detail in the following chapter.

3.8. CHAPTER DISCUSSION

The news media is a public forum, often used to discuss and inform readers and audiences about social issues like homelessness. Homeless individuals hold a marginal role in society, which is reflected in the type and amount of media coverage they receive (Hodgetts, Hodgetts & Radley, 2006; Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005; Marsh, 2006). The aim of this thesis is to explore how the New Zealand media presents homeless individuals and to question the framing of news items about homelessness. The aim of this particular chapter was to specifically address how New Zealand news media represent and characterise homeless individuals, and how their portrayal and framing of stories may affect sympathy for them. Whether homeless people were presented as individuals deserving of support and care, or whether they were cast as negative typecasts and strangers to be avoided and neglected, was vital to this research, as the former supports inclusion whereas the latter the marginalisation of homeless individuals. This section will review the key findings from the previous sections and provide the rationale for the two case studies featured in the next chapter.

The proposed argument, namely that homeless people's marginality in society is reflected in their media coverage, holds true for the New Zealand context. My findings support this argument as homelessness features only marginally in local news media, often side stepped for new-news (Tompsett, Toro, Guzicki, Manrique and Zatakia, 2006). Homeless individuals are then rediscovered during the festive season (Bunis, Yancik & Snow, 1996; Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley, 2005; Lichter, 1989) or in times of controversy (Ryan, Carragee, & Meinhofer, 2001). The double peak noted in this research, which stems from Christmas and the winter season not coinciding as was the case in the aforementioned studies, was unique, but reporting details were comparable.

Homeless characters identified throughout the coverage were of varying ages, predominantly male, with Maori and Pacific Island ethnicities more

prominent than Pakeha. Although homeless people were frequently characterised as ‘abnormal / inferior’ and as ‘criminals’ (Widdowfield, 2001; Hodgetts Cullen & Radley, 2005), coverage most frequently cast them as ‘poor victims’, a characterisation that implies sympathy, but is linked to deficiency and blame (Hodgetts Cullen & Radley, 2005). Seeing as these characterisations were often linked to support services for homeless individuals, the implication is that any homeless individuals sleeping rough must be there either by choice or personal failings. Either description attributes partial blame on them for their ‘lifestyle’ and subsequently minimises any sympathy media reports may have provided.

Further to the question of who the homeless depicted in the news media are, the locations identified in related news items can also “influence how homelessness is understood by wider society” (Marsh, 2006, p.34). What they are depicted doing and who they were shown with, goes to the heart of the argument that homeless people stereotypically are drinking and substance abusing, male rough sleepers (Klodawsky, Farrell & D’Aubry, 2002). In the New Zealand coverage, typecast locations and behaviours were both perpetuated and challenged. The majority of homeless people were, as expected, depicted in public places. Despite some ambiguity surrounding the inclusive- and exclusiveness of certain public locations, like cafes and libraries, most clips wanted to exclude homeless people from public places like parks, streets and bridge underpasses. Similar findings by Marsh (2006) prompted her to conclude that the location identified implied that homeless people were dangerous, undesirable and hold a marginal role in society, much like the spaces they themselves frequent. Furthermore, she concluded that “homeless people are presented as disorderly and irresponsible people who pollute the landscape and create chaos” (p.40). This however, was not found to be the case in this study as the most common activities homeless people were depicted as doing were categorised as ‘other’, and only then followed by typecast activities like socialising, drinking or being anti-social (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2006). Stereotypes were however supported, as homeless people were most frequently depicted with either with fellow

homeless individuals, or on their own. Rarely did homeless feature with members of the housed public, a distant relationship enhanced further by each group's limited role in the coverage in terms of addressing the audience and discussing related issues.

The lack of space for homeless people to address their own issues within news items was very important as it demonstrated an imbalance of power (Taylor, 2000). Homeless people were rarely granted the right to address audience, to discuss related issues or explain anything more than personal accounts of their life story (Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley, 2005). Surprisingly, the same was true for housed members of the public, who were frequently cast as extras, rather than active participants within news reports, even though they were often implied to be the leading cause for the introduction of new policies and regulations to control the homeless population. The dominance of voice-overs and journalists talking about the issue and about 'the homeless' further adds to their marginalisation, as they're excluded and hold a marginal role even within their own media coverage, essentially rendering them a "voiceless community" (Whang and Min, 1999). Furthermore, this cast homeless people as "recipients of, rather than participants in, the planning and provision of interventions" (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005, p.40), and provided only limited inside information on the roads that lead into, and could lead out of homelessness.

Rarely are people homeless because of a single event, accident of life choice. It is often a "gradual accumulation of factors that in some cases becomes a repetitive cycle" (Koebel & Abdelfattah, 2004, p.17). The causes of, and solutions to homelessness are complex, and can create much sympathy for individuals through tragic tales of circumstance, or can foster animosity for individuals who are portrayed as having 'chosen' a transient lifestyle. Within the New Zealand coverage, less than half of the news items discussed either causes of or solutions for homelessness. When causes were discussed however, they were largely based on individual faults, as opposed to structurally based reasons. This goes back

to the earlier argument, namely that coverage implies that there is something inherently wrong, or deficient with homeless individuals (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005). This perception minimises sympathy for individuals, but strengthens the notions of differences between housed and homeless individuals. The opposite was true for solutions, which were predominantly based on structural improvements like increased support systems and collaborative efforts and service provision between local councils and government. The overall impression this section gave was that while homeless individuals need commitment and to take responsibility toward wanting and seeking change, they also need help, support and appropriate services to be able to do so, which might imply some recognition of the complexities that cause people to become, and stay homeless (Koebel & Abdelfattah, 2004; Wright & Rubin, 1991).

The final section explored if, and how, the media reports about the dangers of being homeless, as discussed in the introduction and indicated to, by numerous studies (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2008; Stoops, 2005b). The results show that minor crimes, like theft and harassment, that homeless people are targets of, did not feature in news items, perhaps because of their perceived lack of newsworthiness (Jewkes, 2004). When violence was extreme, to be deemed newsworthy and make headlines, reports were dominated with stories about homicides, both of, and by, homeless people. The violent death of three homeless people made varying amounts of coverage, with one victim completely marginalised out of his own murder coverage. The other two however, featured frequently, perhaps because victims seemed more ideal (Greer, 2007). Nevertheless, coverage about sad news was expected to provide a very sympathetic storyline, which was one of the main reasons this research paid specific attention to crimes against homeless people and the dangers they faced by living rough. As is demonstrated in the next chapter which analyses the death of two homeless women in more detail, varying reporting techniques, terminology and references to homelessness as a lifestyle choice are among some of the methods used by media to minimise sympathy and characterise each woman as less than ideal.

Overall, the content analysis provides an overview of common characters, issues and reporting trends from New Zealand news media reports, about homelessness. There are aspects of the coverage that promote a sympathetic understanding of the issue and affected individuals, but the majority of the coverage seems to support the typecasting of rough sleepers, the dichotomous, almost voyeuristic relationship between housed and homeless individuals, and notions of blameworthiness for homeless individuals for their situation. Each of these can either promote a sympathetic storyline, or minimises any aspects of sympathy that may have previously been created. All in all, the coverage appears unsympathetic, it typecasts individuals and perpetuates the 'othering' of homeless individuals

CHAPTER FOUR: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

As is evidenced by the quantitative content analysis presented in the previous chapter, the marginal status homeless people hold in society, is reflected in the media coverage of homelessness. The following two case studies will further demonstrate how the media often focuses on narrow and typecast characterisations, feature improper public behaviour and imply that homelessness is a lifestyle choice, which are all aspects that minimise sympathy for homeless individuals. In this chapter, I will explore the level of sympathy two murdered homeless women received following their violent deaths. Both women were beaten to death and such horrific deaths would, in most cases, draw much public sympathy. In these two cases however, sympathy was minimised through challenges to each woman's victim legitimacy, which ultimately leads me question whether they were ever considered victims at all.

This chapter will first review the earlier discussion about the dangers associated with sleeping rough and the prevalence of such attacks (see also Introduction, Section 1.3). This section will also provide an overview of victim legitimacy and the selection criteria used by media outlets to determine story newsworthiness, especially in regard to victim status and

the selection criteria of reporting about homeless victims. These will provide a context for the issues raised and discussed in both case studies. The first case study introduces Betty Marusich, also known as 'The Domain Vagrant', whose media coverage raises issues of objectification and stereotyping. The second case study features Sheryl Brown, whose media coverage questions her victim legitimacy through the suggestion that she was a 'blameworthy' victim as she 'chose' to sleep rough. Both cases perpetuate a variety of stereotypes about homeless individuals, and the analysis will show how the coverage both alienates and maintains the distance between housed and homeless individuals, by framing 'them' as different from 'us'. Each case study will also demonstrate how sympathy for victims is not guaranteed, as it is systematically challenged and minimised throughout each woman's media story.

4.1. FREQUENT ATTACKS BUT NO HEADLINES

Living life without adequate and safe shelter means that many homeless people "live from day to day with the very real fear of theft and robbery, or being attacked or sexually assaulted" (Gaetz, 2004, p.444). Rough sleepers in particular are at an increased risk of falling victim to crimes against them and their belongings and lack of shelter as an adequate safety device, is often cited as the key reason for their heightened vulnerability (The National Coalition for the Homeless, 2008). Despite the dangers of being homeless, news items discussing or featuring crimes against the homeless feature only sporadically in the New Zealand media. Although the exact reasons behind this are unclear, one could assume that perhaps crimes are under-reported by the victims themselves (Clyde, 2008), or perhaps because the media judge news items about homeless individuals as less than newsworthy (Naylor, 2001). Perhaps the victim affects a story's newsworthiness, as crime stories against housed individuals are a frequent feature in media coverage, but the same cannot be said for crimes against homeless individuals.

According to Naylor (2001), the over-reporting of crime stories in news media is not driven by public concern, but by commercial and structural factors which determine each story's newsworthiness. Each story must contain something to make it newsworthy (Jewkes, 2004) and a crime's novelty, the viciousness of the attack and the identity of the victim, determines this worthiness. Despite the large number of homeless individuals who fall victim to attacks, crimes against them rarely feature in local news, perhaps as mentioned above, because victim status affects the newsworthiness of stories. In addition to victim status (Greer, 2007), Nieves (1999) believes that the viciousness of the attack also affects each story's newsworthiness. For example, violent crime makes regular headlines in the New Zealand news media, but actually accounts for less than 10% of recorded offences (Statistics New Zealand, 2000). Homicides, which often produce prominent, lengthy and complex media stories, account for even less, amounting to only 0.4% of all violent crime reported between 1994 and 2000 (Statistics New Zealand, 2000). Similar trends have been noted in the United States and the United Kingdom (Sorenson, Peterson Manz, & Berk, 1998; Williams and Dickinson, 1993; cited in Naylor, 2001), but even within stories deemed newsworthy, victim characteristics and features of the crime can also affect the coverage crimes may receive. A gender and age bias was noted by Sorenson et al (1998), who found that female homicide victims received twice the amount of coverage when compared to male victims. Similarly, these authors also noted that "homicides of the very young and the very old were more likely to be covered" (p.1511), when compared to victims aged 15 to 44.

In addition to affecting the amount of coverage victims may receive, the type of coverage, the framing of their story, and the amount of sympathy they receive can also be influenced by a victim's identity. The 'ideal victim' is defined by Christie (1986) as "a person or category of individuals who, when hit by crime, most readily are given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim" (cited in Greer, 2007, p.22). Ideally, this group would include anyone deemed innocent, vulnerable and defenceless, as well as worthy of sympathy and compassion (Christie, 1986). Furthermore,

research by Sorenson and colleagues (1998) suggests that ‘worthy victims’ should ideally be white, either really young or very old, female and of a high socio-economic background. Ideally, they would also be killed by a stranger (Sorenson et al, 1998). On the contrary, the ‘less dead’ are less than ideal victims (Egger, 2002), defined by Seal (2009) “as homeless people or women who work as prostitutes, whose deaths are perceived to be of little consequence and whose murders may not be investigated” (p.61). Although both case studies analysed in this chapter received lengthy media coverage, it was the circumstances surrounding the deaths, the element of mystery, forensic techniques and a police manhunt, rather than the identity of each victim, that kept each story in the news media. As will be discussed throughout this analysis, the victim legitimacy of each woman is questioned throughout each storyline, resulting in very unsympathetic and often accusatory reports about each woman’s life and death.

4.2. CASE STUDY 1: THE STORY OF THE DEAD VAGRANT

Betty Marusich’s media story is an example of how media coverage can frame the death of an elderly woman in such a way as to minimise public sympathy and promote the marginalisation and typecasting of homeless individuals. Following a brief synopsis of Betty’s media coverage, the analysis will discuss the influence Betty’s character had on determining her victim status, the role her family played throughout the coverage as well as how stereotypes about rough sleepers and other homeless individuals featured. A brief summary will conclude the case study.

SYNOPSIS

The badly beaten body of 69 year-old homeless widow Betty Marusich was found in the Auckland Domain in early October 1995. The “sad story of a missing elderly woman that no one knew was gone” (TVNZ News,

12.10.1995) made the evening news. Described as a loner and as a person that kept to herself, she was meticulous about personal hygiene and appearance and always walked with her head down almost oblivious to others. Nevertheless, she was known in the community, marked by the placement of a death notice in a local newspaper. The advertisement, placed by 'Betty' and 'Diane' (relationship unknown), signifies that Betty was liked by some people. It states: "No more long chats by the heater, now you will be warm and safe forever. God take care of this very special person" (TVNZ News, 12.10.1995). In addition, almost a month after her death, a memorial service was organised for Betty, set in the Domain, where she lived, and later died. Attended by about 100 'well dressed' and sombre people from the community who brought flowers and paid tribute to her, indicates that even though she "lived a lonely life in the Domain, her death has struck a chord in the community" (TVNZ News, 12.10.1995). Although a murder investigation was launched when Betty's body was first discovered, media coverage does not ensue with related reports until after the memorial service.

In late October and early November the case briefly features on 'Crime Watch' (25.10.1995 & 14.11.1995), and graffiti found in the area is briefly mentioned in both 'The Dominion' and 'The Evening Post' (16.11.1995). By December police had interviewed some 2,000 people and had recovered some 2,500 items of interest from the Domain (The Sunday News, 10.12.1995). According to the lead Detective, "they have a shortlist of 12 people they are 'very interested' in talking to again". In January, a \$20,000 reward is posted for any information leading to the apprehension of "the killer of Auckland Domain dweller Betty Marusich" (The Sunday News, 07.01.1995), and police are offering immunity from prosecution to informants who were "not the primary killer" (The Sunday News, 10.12.1995).

It is almost a year later before the ongoing investigation is re-discovered in the news media. Edward Rooney, writer for the 'Sunday Star Times' reviews the investigation (22.09.1996), highlighting that due to the

decomposition of Betty's body, whether she was sexually assaulted prior to her death was not able to be determined. Police acknowledge that the \$20,000 reward is still on offer, and the lead detective seems surprised at the "great deal of sympathy for Betty [in the community], being the type of person she was" (Sunday Star Times, 22.09.1996). The article concludes with character references from staff at the Newmarket McDonald's, a place frequently visited by Betty. Subsequently, coverage again becomes very limited. The 'Timaru Times' publishes a list of some of New Zealand's unsolved murder cases, a list which briefly mentions Betty Marusich (06.10.1996). After another considerable gap in coverage, new forensic investigative techniques that draw on the lifecycle of maggots and blowflies to be used to establish Betty's time of death, make headlines on July 26, 1998. The following month (28.08.1998), the outstanding \$20,000 reward gets a brief mention in the National Business Review.

The chance discovery of some of Betty's missing personal belongings, brings renewed media attention to the case (TVNZ News, 22.12.1998). Roofing contractors working on a local church discovered clothing and other personal items, later identified as Betty's. The "fluke discovery of items belonging to murdered Auckland vagrant Betty Marusich" ('New Zealand Herald, 23.12.1998), makes headlines in multiple regional papers the following day. They report that her family is happy the case hadn't been forgotten, and are hopeful that the discovery will result in a conviction. Forensic scientists who are examining the bags and belongings for clues, are not expected to have results until next year (Waikato Times, 24.12.1998).

Coverage in the early stages of 1999 does not however, pick up with the results of the forensic tests from the belongings. Instead, 'Truth Magazine' publishes a brief review of recent murder mysteries in New Zealand, which briefly describes the life of 'the Auckland Vagrant', and skims over the recent investigation. Although the article stresses that "police are hopeful those bags may hold the answer to who her murderer is" (Truth Magazine, 08.01.1999), no new developments about the case are made public. By

late February, a human interest piece about ‘the life of the slain vagrant’ is published in the ‘Sunday Star Times’ (28.02.1999). The article reviews the items found on the church roof, which prompt some previously unknown personal details about the life of Betty Marusich to be made public. Among other things, the article explains how she came to live in the Domain after the loss of her apartment, and how her fierce independence has kept family at a distance.

The following month, police are stepping up their efforts to find Betty’s murderer, and have re-established a team of 10 officers “to try to solve the murder four years ago of Auckland vagrant Betty Marusich” (The Dominion, 03.03.1999), as the discovery of her bags had re-focused the investigation. In April, the discovery of pencil graffiti in a disused school changing room, makes headlines. Although police admit that they are unsure whether it is linked to the Marusich case at all, the discovery needs to be taken seriously (The Evening Post, 05.04.1999). Police describe the case as a real ‘whodunnit’, reflected also in a book review published in July 1999. The recently published non-fiction book about New Zealand’s unsolved murders described Betty simply as ‘the old vagrant’ and the article implies that her lifestyle made her ‘easy prey’ (Sunday Star Times, 11.07.1999).

By 2000, and without any new leads, the investigation slows and so does related news coverage about the case. In May (15.05.2000), the New Zealand Herald again publishes an article about the work conducted by Dr. Crosby, who used new forensic techniques, to determine Betty’s time of death. The almost identical article to the earlier publication is then re-published the following month (30.06.2000). This marks a shift in the amount, and type of media coverage Betty Marusich and the ongoing investigation receives. By late October, almost five years after her body was first discovered, the investigation has stalled. Coverage no longer features updates about the ongoing police investigation, but rather describes the Betty Marusich murder as “a statistic, an unsolved murder in New Zealand history” (New Zealand Herald, 23.10.2000). This particular

article summarises 14 of New Zealand's most puzzling murder cases, among which, Betty, the "Parnell widow [who] lived as a recluse and was bashed on the back of the head", is mentioned.

The shift from murder victim to statistics continues, as during the subsequent months, headlines about the case decrease, eventually making only brief mentions in articles with similar storylines. For example, in April 2001 in a review of offered rewards, the Marusich case, like many others, is listed as 'unsolved' and reward unpaid (The Press, 28.04.2001). In October, the New Zealand Herald reviews prominent New Zealand murder cases, their status and their reward status, among which the murder of "Auckland transient Betty Marusich" is listed as unsolved (24.10.2001). A similar article published in 'The Dominion' the following day, provides a more comprehensive breakdown of unsolved homicides and their reward status. After a brief mention about the unpaid reward in the Marusich case, the article's main focus is to review the merits of offering rewards. Police acknowledge that "sometimes you can offer \$50,000. You could offer \$100,000 and still that person would not come forward" (The Dominion, 25.10.2001).

A proposed change in legislation which would make DNA sampling compulsory for all current and future criminals makes headlines in May 2002, prompted by the belief that through cross comparison of DNA, many currently unsolved crimes may be able to be put to rest. Little opposition to the proposed law change is expected when the Bill gets passed into parliament (One News Website, 27.05.2002). A brief mention is made about the "vicious murder of Parnell recluse Elizabeth Marusich, whose battered body was found in Auckland's Domain seven years ago [and] still has police stumped" (One News Website, 27.05.2002). By late March, the New Zealand Herald reports that Mr Geoff, New Zealand's Minister of Justice, is also expecting little opposition, and after briefly mentioning the Marusich case, a case in which they think that DNA might help the investigation.

In November 2003, and again in October 2004 and 2007, 'The Dominion Post' publishes brief articles about victims of unsolved murder cases. Each article briefly mentions Elizabeth (Betty) Marusich, describing her as a widow who lived as a recluse and a transient, as well as the ongoing investigation.

LATE UPDATE ON THE MARUSICH CASE

As the analysis was being written up, the open case again made national headlines. In early July 2009, the Marusich case featured on the TV One series 'Real Crimes: The Investigator', a programme which reviews, and attempts to solve prominent New Zealand crimes. The following week (Stuff Website, 07.07.2009), Journalist Clio Francis, writer for the 'Stuff Website', reviewed the programme and the ongoing investigation. Much to the surprise of police, after the screening, police received nearly 30 new tips in a "flurry of phone calls", despite "the case is 14 years old and as cold as an ice cube". Ultimately, the calls have resulted in "4 or 5 good leads which definitely warrant further investigation".

After a brief review of the investigation thus far, Francis offers a new and previously unheard of insight into the life of Betty Marusich. He tells of her life as a farmer's wife, as "a productive member of the community", and how "she travelled the world with her husband before he died" (Stuff Website, 07.07.2009). He also explains that "Betty had suffered from a degenerative brain disease, and after being turned out of her flat in Parnell when she ran out of money took to living in the Domain". Although this was never made public in lengthy coverage reviewed thus far, had it been, it might have encouraged a more sympathetic storyline. "Betty was one of those people who just fell through...the cracks of the health system and she was also difficult for her family to help".

The audience learns that the initial investigation resulted in two key suspects, both of whom were homeless men who lived in the Domain at

the time of Betty's death. In addition, we learn that a young relative of Betty's used to frequent the Domain, and spend time with a small gang of spray can taggers, which could explain some of the graffiti found during the investigation.

At present, the case remains open and unsolved.

CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Homeless people receive sporadic attention in media coverage. This reflects the marginal status homeless people hold in society. Nevertheless, I expected the violent death of an elderly homeless woman to produce sympathetic media coverage, perhaps questioning issues of park safety and how to better care for elderly homeless individuals in the community. Betty's death, however, was not depicted as being tragic and was not framed to support a public outcry of sympathy. Instead, the news story promotes the marginalisation of homeless individuals, and stereotypes Betty in a manner typical of many news representations of homeless people.

This analysis is presented in five sections, each discussing a certain aspect of the media coverage that minimise Betty's victim status, and therefore sympathy for her. First, a review of reporting techniques that may have increased the story's newsworthiness, but objectified Betty as a homeless vagrant is presented. Next, how Betty could have been an ideal victim is discussed, followed by how the media systematically challenges this presumption. This section will discuss Betty's lifestyle, character and background in order to explain how she was a less than ideal victim (Greer, 2007). The third section will discuss the role Betty's family played within her life, and within the coverage. Arguments that support the typecast notion that she chose life in the Domain are presented, as these stereotypical assumptions both support arguments from the content analysis, as well as minimise sympathy for her. Section four will briefly

show how Betty is cast as an outsider, both to housed and homeless individuals, with key statements that do however, support stereotypical understandings of homeless individuals. Then finally, a brief summary will conclude and tie together the argument proposed in this case study, namely that even the death of an elderly homeless widow, that could have been highly sympathetic, can be presented in such a way as to minimise victim status and sympathy. The conclusion will also question whether Betty was a victim at all.

NEWSWORTHINESS AND OBJECTIFICATION

Almost instantly, Betty became known as the 'Domain Vagrant' as her murder made national headlines between October 1995 and July 2009. Public assistance was repeatedly sought, as demonstrated by the fact that her case featured on Crime Watch during the initial stages of the investigation (25.10.1995; 14.11.1995), as well as almost 15 years later, when it screened on the TV One series Real Crimes (July 2009). This amount of media attention seems contrary to findings discussed in the Content Analysis (see Chapter Three), which suggested that national coverage about homeless people and homelessness is relatively minimal. The unique storyline of Betty's vicious murder however, increased the story's newsworthiness (Jewkes, 2004; Naylor, 2001), which was often encouraged with gruesome references about her violent death, her decomposed body, maggots and blowflies which kept readers interested and created eye catching headlines. For example, on July 27, 1998, the 'Sunday Star Times' headlines that "Maggots help police with murder cases". Again, on May 15th, 2000 and again on June 30th, 2000, the 'New Zealand Herald' similarly headlines, and reports "How maggots can help catch a murderer". Each article explains how maggots were used during the forensic investigation to determine Betty's time of death. Results indicate that "her body had been there for around 9 days because maggots had reached the stage of pupae but hadn't hatched into adult flies" (Sunday Star Times, 26.07.1998). It is proposed here that repeat

references of a badly decomposed body covered in maggot larvae minimised potential public sympathy for Betty. While arguably, it may have supported the ongoing storyline, which might otherwise have been marginalised and submerged by more pressing national news, the coverage does not support the characterisation of Betty as an 'ideal victim'.

In addition, the mystery surrounding Betty's death and the viciousness of the attack also increased the story's newsworthiness, but also dehumanised Betty, both as a victim and as a person. Throughout the coverage she is repeatedly referred to as a 'badly decomposed body', which removes the human element in the story. As a result, the forensic investigators were not "able to confirm that she had been sexually assaulted" (The Sunday News, 10.12.1995), and maggots and blowflies were used to establish her time of death. Furthermore, subsequent reports repeat de-humanising facts, such as that she had been 'found naked and bashed to death' (Truth, 08.01.1999) and that her 'vicious murder' meant that her body was badly 'battered' (One News Website, 27.05.2002). These gruesome references to specific details of the crime and references about her beaten and decomposed body, present Betty as just another dead body, in this instance, the body of a dead, anonymous, homeless woman. This argument is supported with statements like: "she went missing almost a year ago...police are still receiving information about the unsolved murder of a homeless woman" (Sunday Star Times, 22.09.1996). By referring to her simply as 'a homeless woman', Betty becomes an objectified homeless stereotype, rather than a victim deserving of public sympathy.

IDEAL VICTIM

"Not all crime victims receive equal attention in the news media" (Greer, 2007, p.22), something Greer (2007) attributes to each victim's identity. Demographics and characterisations of victims play vital roles in

determining the level of sympathy, newsworthiness and type of coverage stories may receive. The 'ideal victim', defined by Christie (1986), is "a group or individual, who can easily be given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim" (cited in Greer, 2007, p.22). Based on this argument, the death of an elderly widow, such as Betty Marusich, should produce very newsworthy and highly sympathetic coverage, as they are often considered the "archetypal 'ideal victims' of street crime and may attract considerable attention when they become victims" (Greer, 2007, p.34). Despite these assertions, coverage of Betty's murder is preoccupied with her rough sleeping, eccentric behaviour, and in later stages, the maggots that devoured her corpse. Coverage works effectively to undermine her status as a victim, minimising sympathy for her.

Nicholas Reid, reporter for the Sunday Star Times, reviewed a recently published book about some of New Zealand's most infamous unsolved crimes, and comments that "the old vagrant Betty Marusich and the prostitute (name withheld) [were], both living lives which made them easy prey" (Sunday Star Times, 11.07.1999). The implication that their lifestyle is to blame for their death can potentially serve to minimise public sympathy, and shift partial, if only implied blame, onto each victim. Carrabine, Plummer, Lee, South & Iganski (2004) propose that victim legitimacy, which is being questioned and challenged throughout Betty's media coverage, can be influenced by a distinction between "'innocent' and 'blameworthy' victims" (p.116). This can result in a hierarchy of victims. Walklate (2007), who draws on this research, explains that:

at the bottom of this hierarchy would be the homeless, drug addict, the street prostitute—all those groups of people for whom it is presumed that victimisation is endemic to their lifestyle, thus rendering any claim to victim status a highly problematic one (Walklate, 2007, p.28).

The argument implies that people living rough and without permanent accommodation, or leading lives deemed unacceptable by societal

standards, as is discussed in Case Study 2, are somehow deemed less worthy of public sympathy. On the other hand, the argument declares elderly, female victims at the top of its victim hierarchy, as they are “most readily identified in the media as the victim of violent crime, and often consequently given full and graphic coverage” (Walklate, 2007, p.28). Be that as it may, this victim hierarchy is challenged in this case study. Betty Marusich should have been an ideal victim. She was an elderly female widow, violently beaten to death by an unknown assailant. However, this is all overshadowed, and victim legitimacy minimised with the language used to repeatedly refer to her housing status at the time of her death. Since “language and the way in which words, concepts, values and beliefs [are used] shape people’s behaviour and their view of others” (Olufemi, 2002, p.462), key references used throughout Betty’s media coverage, are important to the argument that coverage minimises her potential victim status.

Throughout Betty’s story, negative and stereotypical terms are used to describe who she was. As mentioned, she is primarily referred to as ‘the Domain Vagrant’, but descriptions of her as the ‘Auckland Transient’, the ‘Parnell Recluse’, or the ‘Auckland Domain Dweller’, also feature frequently. Although primarily used as a reference to housing status, Moriarty (2009) argues that the use of terms like ‘vagrant’ and ‘transient’ actually make judgments about character and appearance, work ethic, health and intellect. Similarly, Olufemi (2002) argues that certain key terms, such as “tramp, vagrant, hobo and deviant” (p.462), have become labels that portray homeless individuals in negative ways, as they connote detachment or dissociation, disaffiliation and disconnectedness from family and society (cf Tipple & Speak, 2004). Furthermore, they also reflect rejection and exclusion (Olufemi, 2002). The stereotyping through the use of language is also discussed by Jon DeCarmine, the executive director of the City of Gainesville and Alachua County Office on Homelessness. He believes that terms like ‘vagrant’ and ‘transient’ encourage prejudices which results in homeless people being seen as less than human, and he argues that you would never “call someone you

know personally a bum or a vagrant” (Dallas Homelessness Network, 2009, para.8). Overall, this section highlights how language can support the dichotomy between housed and homeless individuals, and encourage negative typecasts and assumptions about rough sleepers. In addition, the negative connotations associated with these terms minimise victim legitimacy, in turn minimising potential sympathy for Betty.

In contrast to the terminology used, visual aids such as photographs used in televised and sometimes print media, are often intended to facilitate sympathetic connections between audiences and victims of crime, “instantly and enduringly...in a way that words cannot” (Greer, 2007, p.31). Victim photographs add a sense of reality to the person that was lost, often giving victims a visual identity, and potentially allowing audiences to “latch on to or invest in emotionally” (Greer, 2007, p.31). Throughout Betty’s media coverage however, audiences are only ever shown one photograph of her. It is blurry and old; she looks worn out and tired, and the photo resembles a police ‘mug-shot’ as it appears passport-sized, and features Betty from the neck up, staring straight into the camera¹¹. The photograph does not show her with family or in a community-like setting, which might have allowed audiences to visualise the loss experienced by the community (Greer, 2007). The photograph does not offer audiences any insight into the person Betty was, the life she lived or who she loved, and while it might give her a visual identity, the photo marginalises her further by drawing on the stereotypical link between homeless individuals as criminals (Widdowfield, 2001). Perhaps a picture of Betty with friends and family, perhaps in a housed setting, or even a photo of her prior to becoming homeless, might have promoted a more sympathetic storyline.

Overall, Betty matched some of the criteria of ‘the ideal victim’. She was elderly, a widow and vulnerable. Her housing status however, and the stereotypes, both with the terminology used and photographs shown, result in Betty not being afforded much public sympathy. Lack of

11 Photographs not included, due to copyright laws.

permanent accommodation overshadowed much of Betty's victim status, resulting in unsympathetic media coverage.

BETTY AND HER FAMILY

Public displays of emotion by friends and family are often seen as a key indication of the loss they feel. A family press conference is often held to allow the public expression of their grief to audiences who are "at once horrified and fascinated by the spectacle unfolding before them" (Greer, 2007, p.30). In addition, the press conference is seen as a vital link in establishing a sense of loss to audiences, as it allows grieving friends and family to present a more complete picture about the person who has been lost.

Nevertheless, despite the memorial service held for Betty, the death notice in the local paper and interviews with park staff, local business owners and a fellow 'streetie', there is no input from Betty's family in the early stages of coverage following her death. In fact, it is not until her belongings are discovered on the church roof in late 1998, three years after her death, that audiences learn about, and are introduced to her family. It is unclear why her family does not speak up sooner, and only makes public comments late into the case (no family members ever appeared on camera). It perhaps raises the question whether her family would have ever spoken up had her belongings not been found. It is possible that reporters did not seek her family out, perhaps because they did not expect the ongoing storyline; or, Betty's family tried to distance themselves from her, and therefore tried to avoid reporters. Whatever the reason, the lack of grieving family members publicly expressing their emotions about their loss, minimises the potential for public sympathy. Once family members finally make public comments, their attitudes however, reflect distance rather than compassion.

Betty Marusich's nephew (name withheld) describes the surprise discovery of her personal belongings, as 'enlightening', and comments that he is "happy the case hadn't been forgotten" (Waikato Times, 23.12.1998). Despite police lacking any firm suspects, "he suspected a 'vagabond' from the Domain was responsible" (The Evening Post, 23.12.1998). This typecasting is somewhat surprising, given that Betty, a member of his family, was a 'vagabond'. This might provide some indication of just how entrenched homeless stereotypes actually are, when family members of a murdered homeless woman can also make judgements about the identity, behaviour and character of homeless individuals. It supports the argument raised earlier, namely that the terminology used in media reports supports stereotypes, as seen by his comment that implies that homeless people living in the Domain are different compared to him, perhaps even dangerous or violent, a common finding also noted in Content Analysis (see pages 70 to 72). Following the discovery of Betty's personal belongings, a human interest piece attempts to explain who Betty Marusich was. This could have been an ideal opportunity for media reports and family comments to highlight the tragedy that Betty's death was. Instead, even her life is used to challenge her victim legitimacy.

Among the recovered items, police found dozens "of newspaper clippings about people who had lost their homes". It is believed that Betty collected these as she believed "they mirrored her life" (Sunday Star Times, 28.02.1999), as she often told people about the 'taking' of her Parnell apartment, sold without her knowledge in 1982, as she "did not pay fees to the body corporate" (Sunday Star Times, 28.02.1999). The \$80,000 proceeds from this sale were, according to media reports, spent on motel rooms. "After a few years [she] was destitute... [and] lived for several years on park benches in St Heliers before moving to the Domain about three years before she was killed" (Sunday Star Times, 28.02.1999). These reports imply that she was unable to manage her finances, unable to sustain accommodation, or manage her life; a framework that does not put forward a sympathetic storyline. The implication that she was homeless by choice also does not support the notion that she was a legitimate victim,

but instead links back to the earlier argument that she was portrayed as a blameworthy victim.

Her sanity is also briefly discussed, as “her mental condition was said to have deteriorated after her husband died in 1982” (Sunday Star Times, 28.02.1999) and she was admitted to mental institutions “a number of times”. What media stories neglect to discuss is that Betty actually suffered from a “degenerative brain disease” (Stuff Website, 07.07.09), something audiences only learn in a late update on the case, almost 14 years after her death. Had media reported on this, perhaps the story about how Betty ended up living a lonely life in the Domain may have taken a more sympathetic perspective. Francis, writer for Stuff Website also adds that she was just “one of those people who just fell through...the cracks of the health system and she was also difficult for her family to help” (Stuff Website, 07.07.09). This certainly played an important role in the framing of Betty as not being an ideal victim, as coverage implies she chose the Domain over her family. Betty’s sister-in-law (name withheld) however, explains that although “family tried to help... she would not let them” (Sunday Star Times, 28.02.1999). Seal (2004) suggests that rather than being an issue of independence, statements like these are a defence mechanism by affected families. He argues that many will attempt to defend their moral reputation through statements that shift the ‘blame’ onto the victim. For example, coverage implies that family members knew about Betty sleeping rough in the Domain, a lifestyle they considered unacceptable, but something they were unable to change. The coverage implies that they effectively did nothing, which leaves them open for public criticism for not helping a family member in need. It is suggested here, that by implying that family attempted to help Betty, but since she refused their assistance, the family are cast as partial victims to her murder, as they have lost a family member. Victim legitimacy and public sympathy for Betty are therefore minimised, as she is seen to have chosen the homeless lifestyle.

The media also simultaneously sensationalises Betty’s life as well as minimising public sympathy for her with catchy phrases and key terms. For

example, the lead Detective of 'Operation Wanderer', describes Betty as "an eccentric who took a vagrant lifestyle" (The Evening Post, 05.04.1999), and as someone who:

spent her savings on living in motels, and being driven around in taxis and limousines and when the money ran out began living in the domain. She was fastidious about her personal hygiene and fiercely independent. When she borrowed money she always paid it back. (The Evening Post, 05.04.1999)

Betty's need for independence is again framed as a character flaw; a downfall that might have, as mentioned before, supported the framing of her as a blameworthy victim. Perhaps, the implication is even made that had she followed the rules and kept her apartment and been a 'normal' housed citizen, police would not be investigating the murder of the 'slain vagrant' (Sunday Star Times, 28.02.1999).

The overall suggestion that rough sleepers choose this 'lifestyle', as is implied throughout this particular case study, is often a common misconception about homeless people within our society (see Content Analysis, pages 63 and 65). The implication allows homeless individuals who become victims of a violent crime, such as murder, to be easily typecast as 'blameworthy victims', as their chosen lifestyle is perceived as an implied cause of their death. This minimises understanding of wider issues, as well as implying that homeless individuals are somehow less worthy of public sympathy.

CONSTRUCTING BETTY AS A 'TYPICAL VAGRANT'

Throughout the news coverage, Betty is represented as different to housed individuals, which includes her own family, but she is also cast as different to other homeless individuals. While coverage drew attention to, and encouraged long-standing stereotypes about homeless individuals as

were discussed in previous chapters, Betty is often framed as the exception to these. Nevertheless, Betty's coverage encourages stereotypes and homogenising the homeless community with sweeping statements about 'the homeless'.

One article in particular suggests that homeless people are scavengers, hunters of free food and handouts, and as a group, pay little attention to their personal care. While the article does not state these outright, the implication is made when Betty's lifestyle is presented in contrast to these characteristics. 'The Evening Post' states that "despite living in the Domain, she [Betty Marusich] did not fit the popular image of a transient" (14.11.1995). Furthermore, Betty supported:

herself with her pension, Betty refused charity and paid for everything. Rather than scavenging, she ate in cafes and fast food restaurants. She took pride in her appearance, shopping regularly for clothes in second hand shops (The Evening Post, 14.11.1995).

Although brief, this statement presents Betty as fundamentally different to other homeless individuals who are frequently portrayed "as socially dysfunctional through the attention given to physical appearance, health and behaviour" (Marsh, 2006, p.36). Betty seems to adhere to societal norms and behaves in an acceptable manner as she is clean, presentable, civil and tidy; she is isolated from 'the homeless', whose behaviour is often described as "uncontrollable, volatile and anti-social" (Marsh, 2006, p.37). Furthermore, the term 'rather' as used within the article, reinforces the difference between Betty and other homeless individuals, as the term itself implies that something is in contrast to something else (Rather, 2009). This also reinforces stereotypical assumptions about typical behaviours of homeless people, as Betty is portrayed as merely an exception to more typecast and expected behaviours.

The difference between Betty and other homeless individuals was further supported by statements from the franchisee owner of the Newmarket McDonald's. Betty, who was a frequent customer, is described as "an exception" as their "restaurant did not encourage people who lived on the street" (Sunday Star Times, 22.09.1996). The owner further explains that "she didn't talk to people much...she was never a problem, she always paid her way". These comments imply that homeless people are usually bothersome to his business, and to his 'real' customers. It also implies that for rough sleepers, stealing food is almost inevitable.

Overall, although brief, this section highlights that stereotypes about homeless individuals can be enforced and encouraged by framing individuals like Betty, in contrast to what would be typical behaviour expected from rough sleepers. These comments ostracise Betty from both housed and homeless communities, as she is depicted in contrast to individuals from both groups. This marginalises Betty, which, in addition to other factors discussed throughout the analysis, minimise sympathy for her.

CASE STUDY 1: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This case study set out to map the ongoing media coverage surrounding the Betty Marusich murder inquiry. Initially, the violent death of an elderly widow was expected to produce highly sympathetic coverage, an assumption that was supported by the memorial service organised for her, as well as the death notice that appeared in a local paper. The subsequent analysis however, revealed that media coverage was less than sympathetic, often dehumanising Betty and denying her full, and ideal, victim status (Greer 2007).

The case featured repeatedly in nationally televised, online and print news media between 1995 and 2009. Although homeless individuals traditionally hold a marginal role in national news media (see Chapter

Three), newsworthiness (Jewkes, 2004; Nieves, 1999) for this story was increased by the mystery surrounding Betty's death. The lack of motive and lack of suspects meant her case featured on 'Crime Watch', which in turn prompted print articles to be published. The case also featured on 'Real Crimes' in 2009, as it remained open and the reward unclaimed. In addition, repeated references about her decomposing body, links to maggots and blowflies and an eccentric lifestyle created interesting headlines, but the tragedy surrounding Betty's death seemed to be lost.

Betty could have been an ideal victim (Christie, 1986; Greer, 2007), but her victim status was systematically diminished as the story evolved. First, news items attribute partial blame for her death to Betty herself, as she had 'chosen' to sleep rough. Secondly, in the hierarchy of victims (Carrabine, Plummer, Lee, South & Iganski, 2004; Walklate, 2007) she is placed at the bottom, based solely on her housing status. Furthermore, the terminology used to refer to Betty, for example as 'the Domain Vagrant', implies an 'otherness', that marginalises her from housed audiences and reinforces a dichotomous relationship of difference often seen in news items about homeless individuals (Olufemi, 2002; see also Chapter Three). Visually, audiences only get to see a blurry, mug-shot-like photo of Betty, not with family; not in a community setting, which could have provided a more sympathetic storylines of the person that was lost (Greer, 2007). This could also have been enhanced with mourning family members expressing their grief about the loss of one of their own. In Betty's case however, family members only featured three years after her death and only after the discovery of her belongings results in renewed media attention. Even then, they seem to criticise her lifestyle, further reinforcing notions of difference and blameworthiness (Carrabine, Plummer, Lee, South & Iganski, 2004). Although her life story provided by her family allows audiences to see her as more than just the 'Domain Vagrant', how her life is portrayed and framed in the media does little to increase sympathy for her.

Overall, this case study demonstrates that “defining the term ‘victim’ is a task fraught with difficulty” (McDowell, 2007, p.1), and although Betty was the victim of a violent crime, whether she ever fully received the status of victim, is questionable. McDowell (2007), who draws on the literal definition of a victim from the Collins English Dictionary, believes that a victim is anyone who suffers from harm, and is a term “synonyms with notions of vulnerability and passivity, the victim is free from culpability and blame. The victim is seen as deserving of sympathy, attention, validation, support and assistance” (McDowell, 2007, p.1), and in light of the analysis presented here, one can hardly agree that Betty received much, if any, of the aforementioned characteristics. This ultimately leads me to conclude that although Betty was violently beaten to death, she was never really considered a real victim. Perhaps her story simply made headlines through the mystery surrounding the case, the novelty of the crime, and the gruesome crime details that created eye-catching headlines, rather than because it is a tragic tale about the violent death of an elderly, widow victim.

4.3. CASE STUDY 2: THE STORY OF THE NON-PROSTITUTE

Media coverage about the murder of an individual would be expected to yield much media attention, as well as plenty of sympathy. Depending on victims though, sympathy can easily be minimised when they are presented as less than ideal. As demonstrated in the previous case study, the status as a legitimate victim warranting sympathy can easily be undermined through repeat references to character flaws, housing status and irresponsible ‘lifestyle choices’, which can even attribute partial blame for murder to victims themselves. Similarly to Case Study 1, this case study discusses news coverage following the murder of a homeless woman, Sheryl Brown. This case is used to support the argument that public sympathy for victims can be challenged through the media coverage they receive. In addition, I will argue that even during sad news,

coverage both draws on, and promotes the marginalisation, stigmatisation and stereotyping of homeless individuals.

Sheryl Brown could have been an ideal victim and the media coverage could have reflected that. Different aspects of her life and character were however, presented in such a manner that her victim status was challenged (Greer, 2007). Although attempts were made to present this case study in a similar structure as the previous one, the coverage surrounding the murder of Sheryl Brown proved slightly more complex and therefore a slightly different approach was taken. Following a brief synopsis of Sheryl's media coverage, the analysis will be presented in three sections. First, I will explain how Sheryl's life and death could have been presented as a real tragedy—certain details about her mental wellbeing and struggle with addiction could have supported a very sympathetic storyline, and she could have, despite her housing status, been an ideal victim. The second section will discuss how media coverage minimises the tragedy of her death, presenting her as a drunk, homeless woman who chose the street and alcohol over her family. Furthermore, this section will also discuss how the location where she lived and died linked her to prostitution; a connection that minimised any remaining victim legitimacy. The chapter will conclude with a brief summary, which will outline the key argument proposed here, namely that media coverage about the violent death of a mother of three could have been very sympathetic and dramatic, but actually supported stereotypes and the 'othering' of homeless individuals. As with Case Study 1, the conclusion will also question whether Sheryl was ever really considered a true victim, or just another dead homeless woman.

SYNOPSIS

A passer-by first reported the discovery of a body, "in an alley near Karangahape Road" in December 2002 (TVNZ news, 12.12.2002). The body, later identified as Sheryl Brown, a 45 year old mother of three who

had “lived on the streets on and off for years” (TVNZ news, 12.12.2002), was found “behind a toilet block, just meters from one of Auckland’s busiest inner city streets”. A follow-up story that screened later the same day explains that “while Sheryl Brown was not a prostitute, her death has caused unease among local sex-workers and the K-road business community” (TVNZ, 12.12.2002). Police are awaiting forensic tests before discussing any further details of the case. A couple of days later, the New Zealand Herald reports that the

woman fatally bashed in central Auckland lay in the rain for up to a day with possible salvation just meters away. Sheryl Brown, 45, died beside the walls of a manned ambulance building after being bashed repeatedly in the head with a blunt instrument (New Zealand Herald, 14.12.2002).

First described as a ‘vagrant’ and then as a ‘sweetheart’, the Auckland City Mission who knew her describes her as “a very friendly woman who would come in for a piece of bread and the odd bit of clothing” (New Zealand Herald, 14.12.2002). Without a motive, police need the public’s assistance to solve this case and request anyone who saw “Sheryl Brown in the week before her death to contact police” (New Zealand Herald, 14.12.2002). Police are confronted with the massive task of “trying to track down hundreds of people caught on video in the area” (One News Website , 15.12.2002).

Sheryl’s ‘tragic lifestyle’ (New Zealand Herald, 16.12.2002), her background, as well as the ongoing police investigation are a frequent feature in news items over the next couple of days. A fellow ‘streetie’ describes Sheryl Brown as a lovely lady, but as someone who had a hard life. “Her three adult children live elsewhere [and] hadn’t seen their mother in some time, and it seems she didn’t speak about her family” (TVNZ News, 16.12.2002). In the meantime, Police admit that they have no idea why she was killed, and acknowledge that they are “only going to solve this homicide with the help of the public” (New Zealand Herald,

16.12.2002). Police make repeat calls for public assistance, asking anyone in the area at the time of her murder to come forward. They do however, realise that “thousands of people pass through the busy streets each day” (New Zealand Herald, 16.12.2002), many of whom would be “men cruising the notorious red-light area for prostitutes” (New Zealand Herald, 16.12.2002). Therefore, police assure anonymity to anyone who approaches them to get eliminated from their inquiry. After reviewing surveillance tapes, police have narrowed their search and “are now searching for an olive-skinned man” (New Zealand Herald, 18.12.2002) last seen with Sheryl the night she died.

A human interest piece published just before Christmas (21.12.2002) briefly maps out how Sheryl spent her last months, and highlights the efforts made by police, members of the public and friends, to get Sheryl the help she needed. Each attempt, however, failed. Over the coming days, police again seek the public’s assistance, and reassure them that they are “not interested in petty crimes, drugs or giving information back to wives or girlfriends” (New Zealand Herald, 23.12.2002). They repeat their interest in wanting to speak to a “dark or olive-skinned man last seen with her about 12.30am on December 12” (New Zealand Herald, 23.12.2002). He subsequently becomes a major focus point for numerous articles.

An anonymous letter sent to the ‘New Zealand Herald’ makes headlines on Boxing Day 2002, as the letter “names an Auckland brothel-keeper as the killer of Sheryl Brown” (Waikato Times, 26.12.2002). Police are eager to establish renewed contact with the author, but admit that it may be a prank (Waikato Times, 26.12.2002). According to the ‘Dominion Post’, the competitive nature of massage parlours increases the likelihood that the letter was written as a sabotage attempt (Dominion Post, 26.12.2002). After a brief review of the current investigation, they report that the inquiry team will “soon be using Eftpos records of businesses in the Karangahape Rd area to track down some of the thousands of people” police want to identify and talk to (Waikato Times, 26.12.2002).

Over the next couple of days, numerous regional papers discuss the ongoing investigation. On December 27, 2002, the 'Stuff' website, 'Truth' magazine, 'The Press' and 'The New Zealand Herald' all report that the Auckland brothel keeper named in the letter has denied all allegations made against him. The following day, forensic tests confirm that there was no evidence of a sexual attack, and police point out that "she had little money, so robbery was also unlikely" (New Zealand Herald, 28.12.2002). Following these reports, police state that although they have spoken to over 500 people, they are still seeking the olive-skinned man, who police "now believed almost certainly to be the killer" (New Zealand Herald, 30.12.2002).

The discovery of a blood-stained shirt found a few days after the discovery of Sheryl's body is considered a potentially vital clue, as it was "hidden near to the Auckland central city car park where Ms Brown was found" (Stuff Website, 16.01.2003). Forensic tests later establish that the blood does not match Sheryl's and police subsequently dismiss the shirt from their inquiry (New Zealand Herald, 17.01.2003). Although new leads are established after the case features on 'Crime Watch' (Stuff website, 28.02.2003), concerns about the type of questions police are asking people of interest are being raised by Tim McBride, president of the Auckland branch of the Council for Civil Liberties. He admits that while Sheryl's death "was awful and there is immense pressure on police to solve the crime" (Stuff Website, 28.02.2003). He believes that some of the questions police are asking of persons of interest are beyond their civil rights. Police however, reassure him and the public, that information gathered will only be used in this investigation.

By early March, police have spoken to over 1,000 people, posted a \$20,000 reward and dismissed both the blood-stained shirt and the anonymous letter from their investigation (New Zealand Herald, 07.03.2003). Later the same day, we learn that "a man appeared in the Auckland District Court today charged with assaulting, not murdering, Sheryl Brown" (New Zealand Herald, 07.03.2003). No plea was entered,

and the 27-year old man was released on bail. Subsequently, the New Zealand Herald reports that “despite the arrest of a man for assaulting her on the night of her death” (New Zealand Herald, 14.03.2003), police had not identified her killer, and the reward was still unclaimed.

The investigation is scaled down in April (New Zealand Herald, 09.04.2003), and by May the \$20,000 reward has not brought any firm leads (New Zealand Herald, 09.05.2003). The hopes of finding the “dark skinned man believed to be the brutal killer of an Auckland street vagrant” are fading, and by August 2003, police admit that “there was little else police could do and after a final review of the inquiry in the next few weeks, it would probably be put on the backburner, although it would never be closed” (New Zealand Herald, 08.08.2003). Furthermore, they state that “unless there was a startling development in the case, we may never who killed Sheryl” (New Zealand Herald, 16.09.2003). In an unexpected move, the very same day, the New Zealand Herald publishes another article, revealing that police “have charged a 31-year old sickness beneficiary of no fixed abode with manslaughter” (New Zealand Herald, 16.09.2003). The accused is expected to appear in court the same day, a welcomed result “after extensive investigative work, with excellent assistance from the general public and media” (New Zealand Herald, 16.09.2003).

News media does not pick up the story again until almost a year later, when a human interest article summarises the life, and death, of Sheryl Brown (Sunday Star Times, 22.08.2004), just as the case was coming to trial. The article tells Sheryl’s ‘tragic story’ for the first time. The body, which was initially thought to be a training dummy or just another drunk, was an ex-model, the ex-wife of a respected teacher, and mother of three adult children, but her promising life:

had slowly been eaten away by depression and alcoholism, to the point where she was not really living at all, but existing day-

to-day in a boozy haze on the streets around Auckland's red light district (Sunday Star Times, 22.08.2004).

Her recent move from Nelson to Auckland was prompted by her desire to seek help for her alcohol addiction and she vowed to "her adult daughter the day before she flew out that, this time, she would get cleaned up" (Sunday Star Times, 22.08.2004). Shortly after her arrival however, she checked out of rehab, disappeared into central Auckland and never contacted her family again. The autopsy revealed that she had "brain, heart and liver damage caused by her chronic alcohol abuse" (Sunday Star Times, 22.08.2004), which could go some way to explaining her erratic behaviour prior to her death. Described as a 'mess', she was often "screaming at the top of her voice", losing control of her bladder, and in general bad health. Her struggle with post natal depression after having three children and the refuge she sought in alcohol is discussed in length in this article. The story seems particularly sad as Sheryl's daughter reports that "she was shocked to learn what had become of her mother" (Sunday Star Times, 22.08.2004), as the family had not realised she was sleeping rough. The last time she saw her mother, Sheryl promised to get better, as she was wanting to spend time with her kids. She explains that "her mother had struggled all her life with alcohol, but there was another, loving side to her" (Sunday Star Times, 22.08.2004).

The article also explains how Sheryl met the accused (name withheld) for the first time on December 11, the day she died. He was Samoan, had lived in New Zealand since 1990 and was a diagnosed schizophrenic. He spent time in a variety of psychiatric wards and was scheduled to receive anti-psychotic drugs every three weeks by the Auckland District Health Board's "homeless team". Due to poor accessibility, he had not received his medication at the time of Sheryl's death. His confusing account of what happened that day and night is made even harder as he refers to himself in the third person.

Almost a year later, in June 2005, despite confessing to the crime, the accused walks free from court. The defence council successfully challenged the initial police interview on grounds of mental illness, resulting in the dismissal of all charges. The High Court Judge believes that police were aware of his mental health and should have known better than to interview him without counsel present. Police maintain that the accused “followed Ms Brown into the alley and attempted to sexually assault her. When she resisted, he assaulted her with his fists and struck her in the face with a bottle, causing fatal injuries” (New Zealand Herald, 30.06.2002). The remaining evidence is deemed insufficient for the case to be sent to trial. The accused was now residing at a psychiatric facility (name withheld), and making positive progress.

ANALYSIS

The reporting of crime news is shaped by the media’s “mission to entertain” (Jewkes, 2004, pg.36), and crimes, current affairs or human interest stories only become news once they are deemed newsworthy. They must “contain an element of “‘newness’ or novelty” (Jewkes, 2004, pg.40), which Sheryl Brown’s media coverage certainly contains. She could have been an ideal victim (Greer, 2007). The mother of three struggled with severe post-natal depression and fought against her battle with alcohol addiction. She left her children behind in Nelson to attend rehab in Auckland, “vowing to her adult daughter the day before she flew out that, this time, she would get cleaned up” (Sunday Star Times, 22.08.2004). The storyline could have been very dramatic, her death even tragic. Instead, the analysis will show how related news coverage is negative and blameworthy, minimising victim status and sympathy for Sheryl. In addition, the analysis demonstrates how stereotypes about homeless people are perpetuated, and any sympathy which may have featured in the news media, is minimised.

It is perhaps imperative to highlight some of the story's key features that contributed to its lengthy coverage, since homelessness as discussed throughout this research, typically features only marginally in daily news and current affairs coverage. The Sheryl Brown case however, made numerous headlines between December 2002 and June 2005 (n=42), and it is argued here, that several aspects of her story kept the story newsworthy. Most notably, the impending threat to the safety of others is an important feature, and is often linked to the active man hunt for the olive-skinned man, identified just a week after Sheryl's body was discovered (18.12.2002). He features throughout the media coverage, as police want "to apprehend him [the offender] as soon as possible to minimise the chance of re-offending" (27.12.2002). Supported with headlines like the "K-rd killer may strike again" (Truth, 27.12.2002), the coverage confirms the proposed argument by Greer (2003), namely that narratives about offenders 'at large' are often "imbued with a sense of urgency and drama" (cited in Jewkes, 2004, pg.47). Although he is merely a person of interest during the initial stages of the investigation, he quickly becomes a suspect, and toward the end, police state that "a dark or olive skinned man was last seen with Ms Brown and is probably her killer" (New Zealand Herald, 16.09.2003). These highlights demonstrate how the story's newsworthiness is upheld with the impending threat of danger to individuals, as well as the active police hunt for the offender.

In addition to the man-hunt, the setting, namely one of Auckland's most prominent red-light districts, certainly also increased the case's media appeal. Golden (1990) believes that "members of the settled society" often derive feelings ranging from fear, loathing, and moral disapproval through to envy and attraction toward "beggars, vagabonds, and prostitutes" (pg.1). This might have helped to increase the case's novelty and therefore its newsworthiness. Reports almost always referred to the location, or businesses in the area, with headlines like "Police quiz red-light clients" (New Zealand Herald, 16.12.2002) and "Brothel keeper denies murder allegations" (The Press, 27.12.2002), which heightens the suspense and interest in the case, due to its location. While this may have

increased the uniqueness of the case and helped to propel it into the spotlight, it may have also hindered the investigation.

The man-hunt for the olive-skinned man, as well as the task of identifying anyone in the area at the time of Sheryl's death, is an incessant feature in almost all related news reports. Despite constant reassurance of complete anonymity to anyone who approached police, the possibility of public and personal humiliation to anyone publicly admitting to frequenting the area, may have contributed to the public's reluctance to be of assistance. Complete anonymity was repeatedly assured, and reinforced with headlines like "Red-light visits will stay secret in murder probe, police say" (New Zealand Herald, 23.12.2002), and articles stressing that the only way "to avoid an embarrassing explanation to their partners about why they were visiting the city's red-light district" (New Zealand Herald, 31.12.2002) was to contact police. Despite these calls, it can be assumed from the frequency at which these were broadcast, that many visitors to the area were reluctant to step forward. These did however, help keep the case in local news media.

Overall, the location of the crime, the possibility that the public was still in danger and the police's use of the news media as a key investigative tool to hunt the olive-skinned man and anyone who was in the area the night Sheryl Brown was murdered, meant that the case received plenty of on-going media attention. In addition, and similarly to the Betty Marusich case discussed earlier, the novelty of the crime in terms of victim and location certainly helped to propel, and then maintain the case's media attention. Furthermore, as was also discussed in the previous case study, despite the flurry of attention, few news reports cast Sheryl as a legitimate victim, and most offer little or no sympathy as the investigation, rather than Sheryl's life and death, become the focus of news reports.

SHERYL: THE POOR VICTIM

Conflicting reports about who Sheryl was, her lifestyle and housing status, at times support a sympathetic storyline, while at other times, challenge and minimise any potential for public sympathy. First, I will discuss Sheryl's transformation from a "provincial housewife to vagrant" (22.08.04, para.11), which will reveal her hard life and the struggles she faced, which could have provided a tragic, and very sympathetic storyline. This section will then discuss how Sheryl was actually represented, and what aspects of the coverage, her life and her death minimise her victim status, and therefore also minimised any potential sympathy for her.

Remembered as a quiet but friendly woman (New Zealand Herald, 16.12.2002), described by the Auckland City Mission as a 'sweetheart' when she came in "for a piece of bread and the odd bit of clothing" (New Zealand Herald, 14.12.2002). People that knew her toward the end, describe her as "a lovely lady", but as someone who struggled through a hard life (New Zealand Herald, 16.12.2002). This is reflected in the lengthy human interest piece, published as her accused stands trial, almost two years after her death. The article tells of the events that led to her transformation, and reveals how her ongoing struggle with alcohol subsequently led to her sleeping rough in central Auckland, rather than having chosen the lifestyle, as is implied in the coverage, and discussed later in this section.

Sheryl gave birth to her first child in 1980, a year after she married a local school teacher, and moved to Nelson with him. She suffered severe post-natal depression and sought refuge in alcohol. Her husband remembers that she "would have whole days of being in a trance-like state" (Sunday Star Times, 22.08.2004), but tried to seek help from "different doctors and mental health specialists" (Sunday Star Times, 22.08.2004). Repeated bouts of post-natal depression after her second and third child saw Sheryl leave her husband on their third wedding anniversary and subsequently move in with another gentleman. Sheryl eventually lost custody of her

children, and her struggle with alcohol addiction continued, despite attempts by family and friends to be supportive. Sheryl eventually realised she needed help, and thus left Nelson to attend rehab in Auckland, which seems to be the beginning of the end for her.

A friend of Sheryl's who knew her shortly before her death comments that "she was deeply saddened by the death, and life, of Sheryl Brown" (Sunday Star Times, 22.08.2004). She strongly believes that Sheryl was in a hole and needed professional help, as she "couldn't lift herself out of it". Despite these concerns and repeated attempts to get a selection of agencies to help her friend, they were unable to do so, as they said that it was up to Sheryl to seek out their help, not hers. These repeated attempts to seek help for Sheryl also featured early in the coverage, headlining that "aid agencies rejected victim" (New Zealand Herald, 21.12.2002). It is in this article that we learn that in November, a month before Sheryl's death, police found her "wet, distressed and disoriented at the Viaduct Harbour" (New Zealand Herald, 21.12.2002). They attempted, unsuccessfully, to find her a shelter for the night, provided her with food, took her dirty washing home to get cleaned and let her sleep in their America's Cup base. The following month, she is again found "wet and distressed in Onehunga Park", where a passer-by took her home, cleaned and fed her and then alerted police. Repeat attempts to find her shelter are fruitless, and she is eventually dropped at a friend's house, where police are called back to later that night as her behaviour turned 'drunk and rowdy'. She spent the night in local police cells, and is released the next morning, "on the streets near where she was killed" (New Zealand Herald, 21.12.2002), and in the clothes she was wearing when her body was found.

Sheryl's struggle to overcome both post-natal depression and her addiction to alcohol could have supported a sympathetic storyline of a struggling mother and her desperate family. Coverage could have focused on the inadequate provision of services, or perhaps discussed the symptoms and the effects post-natal depression can have on new mothers and their families. In addition, she was a woman, a mother and family

member, who clearly needed help, but was unable to access the right services. Despite her life-long struggle with addiction, her daughter remembers that “there was another, loving side to her” (Sunday Star Times, 22.08.04), a side rarely discussed throughout her media coverage. The only hint of loss is indicated in a New Zealand Herald report that describes the scene where she was found, which was now “marked by a near empty rubbish bin and a single bunch of flowers” (New Zealand Herald, 21.12.2002). Despite the mention of the rubbish bin, the flowers indicate that she was cared for, loved and missed. It could perhaps be argued that the mention of the rubbish bin is not needed here as the main purpose of the statement is to highlight the loss of a person and to increase sympathy for the victim and family. The rubbish however, does not add to the argument. In fact, I believe that it implies her expendability as just another homeless person, as her death is portrayed in much of the media coverage. Rather than discuss the tragic death of a struggling mother of three, the media presents her death much like it was discussed in the previous case study; with little sympathy. The story could have been presented in a sympathetic storyline about the tragic death of a desperate mother, and she could have been an ideal victim, instead she receives little sympathy or understanding and is cast as blameworthy and irresponsible.

SHERYL: THE ILLEGITIMATE VICTIM

Ideal victims, as defined by Christie (1986), and discussed earlier in Case Study 1 (see pages 119 to 123), are perceived as legitimate victims and therefore deserving of sympathy. Victim legitimacy is however, easily compromised. Key characteristics that challenge Sheryl Brown’s victim legitimacy were that she was homeless and addicted to alcohol. In addition, the location her body was found at, the terminology used to describe her and the only picture audiences get to see of Sheryl, all minimise her status as a ‘legitimate victim’. This section will discuss these issues in more detail.

In the months leading up to her death, Sheryl would alternate between staying in boarding houses and hostels or “she would just rough it and spend the night out in parks like this” (TVNZ News, 16.12.2002). As discussed in the first case study, the dangers homeless individuals face by sleeping rough are plentiful, and individuals are at a much higher risk of attack and violence toward them (Gaetz, 2004; The National Coalition for the Homeless, 2008). Since police and members of the public tried to assist Sheryl on a number of occasions to get her into a shelter (see previous section), but she was still sleeping rough at the time of her death, coverage implies that she chose to be homeless, a common misconception about homeless people in society. Having ‘chosen’ the lifestyle, Sheryl is presented as a blameworthy victim (Carrabine, Lee, Iganski, Plummer and South, 2004; Walklate, 2007), as at least partial blame for her death is attributed to her ‘choice’ of sleeping rough.

Her relationship with alcohol features frequently throughout the coverage and increases her ‘blameworthiness’ as it is often framed as a lifestyle choice. Despite her move to Auckland to seek help and repeated attempts at sobriety, it is implied that she chose alcohol over friends and family, who tried to “be supportive of Sheryl but, every time, we were let down by her alcohol-related problems and at times bizarre behaviour” (Sunday Star Times, 22.08.2004). In addition, negative references about her drinking which are repeated throughout the coverage, minimise her victim status. She is often described as the “hard drinking Ms Brown” (New Zealand Herald, 08.01.2003) or as a “vagrant with a drinking problem” (New Zealand Herald, 09.05.2003; 08.08.2003), and these articles offer little sympathy for her as a victim. Coverage suggests that toward the end, she existed “day to day in a boozy haze on the streets around Auckland’s red-light district” (Sunday Star Times, 22.-08.2004), and friends report that she drank up to a “1,125ml bottle of vodka a day, but when her money ran out, ethanol would do” (Sunday Star Times, 22.08.2004). Video surveillance depicts her last movements showing that she “was drunk when captured on a security video sitting in the gutter outside a takeaway bar in Karangahape Road” (23.12.2002, para.10). It is there that she met the

'olive-skinned man', believed to her murderer. She is even "thought to have been killed...with one of her own vodka bottles and left to die from brain injuries" (22.08.03, para.9). The coverage implies that she chose to drink excessive amounts of alcohol—a lifestyle choice, and one she chose over her friends and family. These suggestions fuel typecasts about homeless individuals (National Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2002), and serve to maintain the dichotomy between housed and homeless people, as homeless individuals are suggestively portrayed as inept and incapable of making adequate or sensible lifestyle choices.

Negative stereotypes about homeless individuals are further reinforced, and sympathy for them subsequently challenged, with the terms used to describe Sheryl. Despite vastly different circumstances surrounding both Betty and Sheryl, both women received very similar character references, as they were often described as 'transients', 'vagrants' and 'street vagrants' throughout related news items. In addition to these terms featuring within news reports, headlines also featured these derogatory terms, perhaps in an attempt to increase the story's newsworthiness by highlighting their novel victim. For example, soon after Sheryl's body was found, the One News Website headline read "Hunt for transient's killer difficult" (15.12.2002) and later the New Zealand Herald reports that they have a "Suspect in transient murder inquiry" (31.12.2002). Although there are headlines just describing her as a woman, like "Bloodied shirt found near scene of woman's murder" (New Zealand Herald), headlines such as "Bloody could be clue to vagrant murder" (Stuff Website, 16.0.2003), "Hopes of tracking down killer of street vagrant fade" (New Zealand Herald, 08.08.2003) and "Man charged over vagrant's death" (New Zealand Herald, 16.09.2003) are much more common. As proposed in the previous case study, the use of these terms embodies the negativity surrounding homeless individuals. They imply a detachment and dissociation from family and society (Olufemi, 2002), and support the 'othering' of homeless people from housed individuals and society (Tipple & Speak, 2004). Through these negative connotations, sympathy for

victims is hardly ever achieved as they help paint Sheryl as a negative stereotype rather than a legitimate victim deserving of sympathy.

As was the case in the previous case study, the only image audiences are shown of Sheryl reinforces the stereotypical assumption made by terms like 'vagrant' and 'transient'. Pictures are vital in the establishment of public sympathy, as they allow audiences another avenue to connect with victims, identify with a family's loss and create a distinct sense of loss and sympathy (Greer, 2007). Furthermore, pictures also "add a sense of reality to the person that was lost" and give an identity to victims, allowing audiences to "latch on to or invest in emotionally" (Greer, 2007, p.31). As mentioned, the coverage analysed here, again only showed one image of Sheryl, which, similarly to the Marusich case, was a photograph that resembled a mug-shot. The image is of poor quality—it is blurry and only shows Sheryl from the neck up, depicting her as a woman with dirty unkempt blonde hair in front of a blue background, avoiding eye contact with the camera and looking worn, possibly drunk. The image does little of what an endearing photograph of a victim is supposed to do. It alludes to the characterisation of homeless people as the criminals (Widdowfield, 2001), as discussed in the Content Analysis, a feature that minimises sympathy for her. Furthermore, no press conference was held following Sheryl's death—an important aspect in establishing a public sense of loss, often seen as an opportunity for the victim's friends and family to publicly show their grief (Greer, 2007). Neither Betty's, nor Sheryl's families made any public appearances, and Sheryl's daughter even requested her name be withheld in media reports (Sunday Star Times, 22.08.2004). Overall, both case studies reflect similar reporting techniques with negative terminology used, mug-shot like photographs and a non-existent press conference, each of which minimises the potential for sympathy for each victim.

TOILET BLOCK VS. AMBULANCE BAY

Potential media and public sympathy for Sheryl was further compromised by the location her body was found at. Both the immediate vicinity and the general neighbourhood, are used to minimise her status as a legitimate victim. Interestingly, there seems to be some confusion about the final resting place of Sheryl's body. Some reports suggest that she was found "behind a toilet block, just meters from one of Auckland's busiest inner city streets" (TVNZ News, 12.12.2002), repeated days later by a report in the New Zealand Herald, which states that her body was found next to a portable toilet near Karangahape Road (New Zealand Herald, 16.12.2002), other suggestions are that she was found next to a manned St John's Ambulance Station (New Zealand Herald, 14.12.2002), where she lay for "up to 16 hours before she was found" (New Zealand Herald, 21.12.2002). News reports suggest that perhaps because of the rainy weather, foot traffic was light and no-one took much notice of her. Passers-by thought "she was just resting, or had been drinking" (TVNZ News, 12.12.2002), while others commented that they thought she was a "training dummy from the adjacent ambulance station", or just "another homeless person sleeping off a big night" (Sunday Star Times, 22.08.2004). Rather unsympathetically, the same article goes on to state that:

they [passers-by] could not have known that the anonymous shape was a once stunning part-time fashion model, the former wife of a respected Nelson schoolteacher, and a mother of three (Sunday Star Times, 22.08.2004).

The otherwise sympathetic article almost seems to suggest that had the passers-by known of her identity, they may have paid more attention. It perhaps raises the question, or subtly implies that homeless people are possibly more expendable and less worthy of attention and effort, than more upstanding, housed individuals. Admittedly, I was unable to find any academic research that discussed how different homicide locations may

influence the framing of a murder case in news coverage, but it still seems important. It is suggested here, that sympathy for Sheryl increased when her body was reportedly found next to an ambulance station and decreases when reports suggest she died beside a toilet block. There is no explanation as to why media reports offer two different locations for her death, and their motives for doing so also seem unclear. What is clear however, is that more sympathy is evident in stories that report about the ambulance bay, as opposed to the toilet block.

RED-LIGHT DISTRICT

The wider neighbourhood, namely the Karangahape Road area, is widely known as “one of Auckland’s red-light districts” (New Zealand Herald, 14.12.2002), a location that questions Sheryl’s victim status. News reports link this location and her homeless lifestyle to prostitution, prominent in the area. The connection between sex workers and homeless women has much historical significance, as homeless women were typically thought to be prostitutes. Golden (1990), who dates this link back to the eighteenth and nineteenth century, argues that throughout history, women were defined in reference to whom or to what they belonged to. Since a woman’s “proper place was exclusively in the home” (Golden, 1990, p.2), by implication it meant that women without suitable housing, were not considered real women (Golden, 1990). Moreover, homeless women were then “immediately suspected of promiscuity” and became “virtually indistinguishable from a prostitute” (p.2). Furthermore, this category of women described as the ‘antithesis’ of ‘true women’, are seen not only as less than women, but are also considered to be less than human (Golden, 1990). Homeless women lived a marginal existence on the fringes of society and were “therefore automatically regarded as dangerous and unreliable” (Golden, 1990, pg.1). This assumption allowed society to ascribe numerous anti-social behaviours and qualities to homeless women who were seen and represented as fundamentally different to housed individuals, a dichotomy not too different from today’s representations.

Although Sheryl was not a prostitute, the location of her body and the historical link between prostitution and homelessness, meant that coverage had to repeatedly explain that there “was no evidence she was a sex worker” (New Zealand Herald, 14.12.2002). Throughout much of the coverage this is a continuing theme as articles stress that “although Ms Brown had a problem with alcohol...she was not a prostitute or sex worker” (New Zealand Herald, 27.12.2002), and that “there was no evidence that Ms Brown had been working as a prostitute” (New Zealand Herald, 07.03.2003). Despite statements disputing that Sheryl was a sex worker, newspaper headlines imply a connection. For example, very early in the coverage, the New Zealand Herald headline states that “Police quiz red-light clients” (16.12.2002), implying that perhaps a customer may have killed her. The ‘Stuff’ website headlines that “I didn’t murder Sheryl Brown—Brothel Keeper” (27.12.2002), also link her, indirectly, to sex work. Furthermore, due to the notoriety of the area, the headline “Hunt for K-Rd killer is scaled down” (New Zealand Herald, 09.04.2003) implies a connection to the area’s prominent sex industry. Admittedly, these do not directly link Sheryl Brown to prostitution. They do however, draw on the preconceived connection between the location and associated activities, thereby implying that Sheryl Brown was part of it.

The value of this implied connection between Sheryl’s housing status and her implied role as a sex worker, lies in its ability to challenge her victim legitimacy, and support long-standing stereotypes. Media coverage about the death of a prostitute varies greatly when compared with ‘real victims’. Research conducted by Walter (2003) demonstrates that being a sex worker dominates news coverage, overshadowing any other characteristics of victims. To illustrate his point, he provides an example. The discovery of a woman’s body made headlines in the United States, and when the body was identified as a local sex worker, the headlines read: “Body in bag was hooker”. Coverage completely ignored that the victim was a “mother, daughter, or a 29 year old single woman. Being a hooker, or a vice girl, or a high class tart, as other versions put it on the same day, was ... [her] defining feature” (Walter, 2003, para.4). Just as

media neglect the humanising details of Walter's (2003) victim, a similar trend is evident in Sheryl Brown's media coverage.

The location of her death and the possible link to prostitution are her defining features, which means the media are faced with a contentious issue, as victims who were either homeless, or prostitutes at the time of their death, force the media to confront "deep seated prejudices" (Smith, 2006, para.5). The media "can never quite decide whether murdered sex workers are tragic victims, like any woman targeted by [for example] a serial killer, or have chosen a lifestyle that means they are partly responsible for their deaths" (Smith, 2006, para.5), reverting back to the earlier proposed notion of blameworthy victims (Carrabine et al, 2004). Furthermore, if victims are not considered wholly innocent, the question arises whether they can ever be seen as true victims (Walter, 2003), and without a true victim these stories can never be considered a real tragedy and "will never become a focus for grief or anger" (Walter, 2003, para.7-8). Perhaps this is the key to understanding the minimal amount of sympathy Sheryl received. The location of her death and the possible link to prostitution, her drinking and housing status are her defining features, and it is these that dominate the majority of related news items. Although it is impossible to say whether the death of a housed individual in similar circumstances and location would have produced similar media coverage, what we can say is that Sheryl's victim status is systematically challenged and diminished throughout her ongoing media coverage. If the focus of media attention had been her life story and struggles, perhaps the coverage might have provided a more holistic and sympathetic angle.

CASE STUDY SUMMARY

This case study set out to analyse the media coverage which commenced after the death of Sheryl Brown. As with the first case study, much sympathy for Sheryl and empathy for her family was expected in related

news items. The violent death of a mother of three was expected to yield a tragic public storyline, and although aspects of her life could have made her an ideal victim, the media's focus on her alcohol addiction, bizarre behaviour, homelessness and where she was found, challenged her victim status (Greer, 2007), minimising much of her potential media sympathy.

The discovery of Sheryl Brown's body and the subsequent police investigation made national headlines from December 2002 to June 2005. Her case, in contrast to the general amount of media coverage dedicated to homeless individuals, remained a frequent feature in the New Zealand news media. The implied threat of a possible repeat attack and the police's use of the news media to generate interest in the case and seek the public's assistance helped support the ongoing coverage. The novel storyline of a homeless mother beaten to death in one of Auckland's red-light districts, surely also added to the story's novelty and increased its newsworthiness (Greer, 2003; Jewkes, 2004; Nieves, 1999).

As with Betty Marusich, Sheryl Brown could have been an ideal victim (Christie, 1986; Greer, 2007), and the media could have supported a sympathetic and tragic storyline. According to family, friends and people that knew her, she regularly sought help and wanted to get better for her children but was unable to access the right services. This fact seems sidelined in the coverage though, overshadowed by references to her excessive drinking, her out of control behaviour and housing status when she died. In addition, each of these support the characterisation of Sheryl as a blameworthy victim (Carrabine et al, 2004; Walklate, 2007). Similarly to the first case study, audiences never really get to see the real Sheryl, as only one blurry, mug-shot-like photo of her is ever shown, despite being an important aspect in the establishment of public sympathy for victims (Greer, 2007). Furthermore, a defining feature for Sheryl was the repeated link to prostitution and sex work (Walter, 2003), through headlines and news item references. Despite repeated statements to deny that Sheryl was involved in the area's sex industry, the historical link between homeless women and prostitution makes this an easy connection (Golden,

1990). This however, created a challenging situation for news reporters, as they often struggle to decide whether murdered sex workers are tragic victims like any woman targeted by [for example] a serial killer, or “have chosen a lifestyle that means they are partly responsible for their deaths” (Smith, 2006, para.5). Overall, the coverage implies Sheryl is blameworthy, or at least partly responsible for her own death. She drank too much, was without suitable shelter and spent time and even lived in unsafe public places. It is argued here, that this meant she is never really considered as true and legitimate victim worthy of sympathy (Walter, 2003).

Overall, the life and death of Sheryl Brown is presented negatively, without much sympathy and with little regard for who she was. Instead, the news media discuss her lifestyle, behaviour before death and location she was murdered at, sidelining the fact that she was a mother struggling with addiction and unable to access adequate services. All in all, this case study reflects similar reporting patterns to those discussed in the previous case study—neither Betty nor Sheryl were presented as real victims in their media coverage.

4.4. CHAPTER SUMMARY

“Defining the term ‘victim’ is a task fraught with difficulty” (McDowell, 2007, p.1), and although the literal definition suggests that it is anyone who suffers from harm, this is not completely true for all victims, as this chapter has shown. As previously discussed, the word ‘victim’ implies a vulnerability and passivity from individuals that leaves them free of culpability and blame. It also implies that individuals are deserving of sympathy and validation (McDowell, 2007), none of which was evident in the case studies discussed in this chapter. This summary is presented in three sections, first providing a brief overview of how terminology and key reporting techniques were used within each woman’s news coverage to

minimise their victim status and perpetuate negative stereotypes. Second, characterisations of each woman are discussed in order to demonstrate how these portray each woman as a less than an ideal victim. Finally, a brief discussion about how each woman is cast as blameworthy in their own deaths, an implied link that surely eradicates any notion of sympathy for them, will feature. In conclusion, I review again refer back to the definition of victim proposed by McDowell (2007) and question how this relates to both Betty and Sheryl.

Framing, and the use of key terms can be very influential in setting the scene and perspective, as well as in the shaping of understanding and perception of issues and individuals at hand (Moriarty, 2009; Olufemi, 2002). This is particularly true in reference to homeless individuals, who already hold a marginal role in society, as well as in media coverage. Terms like 'vagrant' and 'transient', which were used throughout each woman's media story, are labels that portray negativity, detachment and "disconnectedness from family and society" (Olufemi, 2002, p.462; Tipple and Speak, 2004). Each of these terms adds distance, not only between the homeless victims and audiences in this case, but also between victims and their family. As argued by Greer (2007), family is a key indicator of loss, as images of grieving family members often lend themselves well to tragic and sympathetic storylines, whereas stories which imply indifference, distance and negativity rarely feature sympathy as a key emotional component. Furthermore, each woman's family featured very late in their respective media coverage, no press conference was ever held, and the only two photos audiences ever got see of each victim, resembled a mug-shot. Each one of these elements could have increased public sympathy, as each of these media conventions is often used to highlight the tragic loss of a family member and friend (Greer, 2007). Without these, the media never provides a framework for a sympathetic storyline.

In addition to these media conventions, how victims were portrayed and characterised was an important determinant in the amount of sympathy victims were endowed with, as “not all crime victims receive equal attention in the news media” (Greer, 2007, p.22). A victim’s identity is an important part in establishing victim legitimacy and status (Christie, 1986; Greer, 2007). Despite meeting some of the criteria to be considered an ‘ideal’ victim, neither Betty nor Sheryl ever truly achieved this status. Through repeated references to their lack of housing at their time of death, character flaws like excessive drinking and eccentric behaviour, each woman was portrayed as less than ideal. In addition, partial blame was also attributed to each woman within their respective media coverage. For example, coverage implied that Betty had chosen life on the street despite being offered help from family members. Sheryl on the other hand had sought help, but reverted back to addiction and sleeping rough at the time of her death. The inadequate service provision for a struggling mother with an alcohol addiction and post-natal depression rarely featured. Moreover, the location Sheryl was found in, one of Auckland’s busiest red-light districts, allowed the news media to link her to prostitution, a link with which many reporters struggle, as they cannot decide if victims are real victims or not (Smith, 2006; Walter, 2003). Nevertheless, the overall perception was that each woman was at least partially responsible for her own death (Carrabine et al, 2004; Walklate, 2007), an implied connotation that shifts blame onto them and subsequently minimises the victim status and sympathy for each of them.

All in all, this chapter set out to explain how news coverage during sad times can be framed in such a way as to not be sad at all. By using negative terminology, specific media reporting techniques, negative and derogatory characterisations and implied blameworthiness, Betty and Sheryl’s victim status was repeatedly challenged. Subsequently, the question must be asked whether both women were not only less than ideal victims, but if they were considered victims at all? McDowell (2007) argues that the term itself implies sympathy, vulnerability and that individuals are

free of culpability and blame. Since each woman's media coverage questions each of these, perhaps they weren't victims at all. Coverage perpetuated stereotypes, minimised sympathy for murder victims and their situation, encouraged narrow understandings about the homelessness and painted victims as responsible. If the media can't offer sympathy for victims during tragic times, when can we expect the media to show sympathy toward homeless individuals?

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Media influences on the “social construction of minority groups is the subject of considerable academic attention” (Loto, 2007, p.71). There are numerous studies analysing media representations of homeless people in varying contexts (see Buck, Toro & Ramos, 2004; Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005; Klodawsky, Farrell & D’Aubry, 2002), but there is a distinct lack of comparable New Zealand-based research, which is the reason for this research. Despite the current lack of local research, the study of media representations of homeless individuals is important to investigate, as the media provides information to the public (Marcos, 1989) that can inform understandings of homelessness as a social issue (cf., Marsh, 2006). This thesis sets out to explore how the New Zealand news media cast, portrayed and discussed homeless individuals in news coverage which aired between 1995 and 2007. Particular attention was paid to how stereotypes were either supported or challenged within news items, and how this related to the amount of sympathy bestowed upon homeless individuals. Furthermore, the research presented two similar, but yet unique case studies about two murdered homeless women. These were analysed, initially to better understand media sympathy during sad times, but subsequently resulted

in an analysis of how negative stereotypes and characterisations of individuals can reduce the amount of sympathy individuals may receive.

My findings support those of previous researchers who have examined media representations of homeless individuals (Bunis, Yancik & Snow, 1996; Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005; Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002; Marsh, 2006). Although the New Zealand coverage provided some scope for mixed representations, the overall results highlight themes of marginality, negative and stereotypical representations, as well as a seasonally orientated attention span, as was found in the aforementioned studies. Most housed individuals rarely interact with homeless individuals (Lee, Link & Toro, 1991), and as such, the media's role in contributing to the understanding of who is homeless and associated issues, is very important. Furthermore, it is argued that these representations and reporting patterns are likely to contribute to, and help maintain, homeless people's marginal standing in society, as the media is a central part of society (Beg, 2006). The media has the potential to engage domiciled audiences with insights from the perspective of people experiencing homelessness, as well as explain who homeless individuals are, the issues and dangers associated with being without permanent housing, who the experts are as well as discuss possible causes and solutions. On the flipside, the media also has a part to play in offering judgements about which events in society are worthy of public scrutiny and how these might be presented to increasingly disinterested audiences (cf., Marcos, 1989; Lull, 2000; McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

A worrying trend evident in the New Zealand news coverage was the displacement of homeless individuals as credible sources within their own stories. Rarely were homeless individuals afforded the opportunity to address their own issues, and when granted the right, were restricted to discussing nothing more complex than personal reports about their own experiences (see also Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005). This limited their ability to address and challenge stereotypical assumptions about them (Loto, 2007), a trend that will encourage the perpetuation of typecast

representations about homeless individuals. Although news items featured some sympathetic stories about struggling families in emergency shelters and temporary accommodation, stereotypical representations of homeless individuals were more prominent. Images and references about middle-aged, rough sleeping men often shown drinking and socialising featured frequently in public locations like parks and streets (see also Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005; Klodawsky, Farrell & D'Aubry, 2002; Marsh, 2006). More complex issues like causes and solutions were presented as side issues, and the images shown and characterisations presented, presented homeless individuals as deviant, different to housed individuals and as somehow deficient, often implied as the leading cause of their homelessness (Hodgetts, Cullen & Radley, 2005; Widdowfield, 2001). As discussed by Loto (2007), these narrow and stereotypical representations of marginal individuals have a role to play in relationships between social groups as they portray marginal individuals, in this case homeless people as one-dimensional individuals. It is likely that these stereotypical representations may support existing negative perceptions of homeless individuals among domiciled citizens and thus support the marginalisation of homeless people within society. The news media rarely offers opportunities for sympathetic storylines and often represent homeless individuals as inherently different to housed individuals (Widdowfield, 2001).

Homeless people, in particular rough sleepers who often live their life in public spaces, are at an increased risk of attack against themselves and their belongings, a fact that has been documented extensively (Association of Gospel Rescue Missions, 2006; Australian Institute of Criminology, 2008; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006; Newburn & Rock, 2005; Nieves, 1999). How these attacks and homeless victims are presented and characterised in subsequent media coverage has thus far not been studied. This thesis examined the media coverage following the violent deaths of two homeless women, and found that through a systematic challenging of their victim status (Greer, 2007), each woman's victim legitimacy was minimised. Accordingly, the amount of sympathy

they received also decreased. Victim legitimacy was challenged by negative terminology used throughout each woman's story (Olufemi, 2002), the mug-shot like photographs that supported negative typecasts (Widdowfield, 2001) and implied links to prostitution (Smith, 2006; Walter, 2003). Each woman was cast as a less than ideal victim (Christie, 1986), and it could be argued that they were cast as blameworthy victims (Carrabine, Plummer, Lee, South & Iganski, 2004; Walklate, 2007). Overall, it is questionable whether either Betty Marusich or Sheryl Brown were ever considered as true victims, as the media coverage seems to question this at every stage, especially since the definition of victim implies notions of vulnerability, passivity and that individuals are deserving of sympathy (McDowell, 2007). As none of these are present in either woman's media story, perhaps they were not victims at all, but were simply two dead homeless women, who made headlines due to newsworthiness of their case (Jewkes, 2004).

All in all, the primary finding from this thesis is that the New Zealand news media tends to perpetuate stereotypes about homeless individuals, which reflects the marginal status of this social group in society. There appears to be little room in coverage for sympathy towards homeless individuals, even in times of sad and tragic death. From these findings, one might question how housed audiences will ever come to understand the complexities surrounding homelessness, if coverage only offers a narrow and stereotypical portrayal of the issue, and typecasts and homogenises homeless individuals. Furthermore, with the limited role homeless individuals play within their own stories, challenging these assumptions and beliefs (which I believe keeps homeless people in the marginal role they hold within our communities), will be very hard indeed. With the media offering little sympathy to individuals in various precarious housing situations, homeless individuals are not only faced with the dangers of being homeless, but also with discrimination and judgement from a housed public. Further research could examine the audience's response to these media images and messages, and their perception and

understanding of homelessness in New Zealand. Moreover, a research study about how homeless individuals themselves react to media coverage about their situation could reveal much needed in-depth understanding about the issues they face, as they would be able to further explain and offer insight into the difficulties of being homeless, a right they are often denied within media coverage.

Overall, homeless individuals hold a marginal role in society, reflected in the amount and type of media coverage they receive. Changing the nature of coverage requires the inclusion of a wider range of sources who are afforded speaking rights. Coverage needs to be more inclusive, to move beyond typical storylines of personal failings and to stop portraying homelessness as a lifestyle choice. In addition, media need to portray victims of crime as legitimate, and not pass judgement about them, their lifestyle or personal circumstance, which affects the amount of sympathy victims may receive. In contrast to the media coverage, homeless people are no different to housed individuals, but are merely without suitable and affordable housing.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CODING FRAME

HOMELESSNESS IN NEW ZEALAND CODING SHEET

ID Number: **Date of Report:**

Type of report: **Title:**

1 – News **Location of Report:**

2 – Current Affairs (.....)

Focus of Story:

.....
.....

1. Is housing issue / homelessness primary topic of coverage?

1 – Yes

If yes, what type of housing issue / homelessness is discussed / shown?

.....
2 – No

It is about...

a – Mental Illness

b – Substance Abuse

c – Crime

d – Other

.....

2. In the coverage, homeless people are...

1 – shown & mentioned

2 – only talked about / mentioned

3 – no homeless people shown or talked about

3. Age of homeless people shown / mentioned

1 – Young (<18)

2 – Adolescent (18-30).....

3 – Young Middle Age (30-45)

4 – Old Middle Age (45-60).....

5 – Young Old (60-75)

6 – Old – Old (75+)

7 – Unclear / Groups

8 – Not Specified.....

4. Sex of homeless people shown / mentioned

- 1 – Male
- 2 – Female
- 3 – Transsexual.....
- 4 – Unclear / Groups.....
- 5 – Not specified

5. Ethnicity of homeless people shown / mentioned

- 1 – Pakeha
- 2 – Maori / Pacific Island
- 3 – Asian
- 4 – Other
- 5 – Unclear / Groups.....
- 6 – Not specified

6. Setting in which homeless people are depicted N/A

- 1 – Public
- (e.g. under a bridge, park, doorway, street... walk in, see them comfortably)
- a Included
- (they belong here, its good to have them here)
- b Excluded
- (lets get rid of them – they need to move on, and police are moving them along)
- c Unclear
- 2 – Private
- (e.g. a home, where you need to be invited in – cant walk in and look at them)
- 3 – Both.....

7. Is the homeless person depicted N/A

- 1 – by themselves
- 2 – with an animal
- 3 – with other homeless people
- 4 – with a celebrity
- 5 – with service and/or community workers
- 6 – with the police and/or security.....
- 7 – with a member/s of the public
- 8 – with family / church members
- 9 – with journalist / researcher
- 10 – other
-

8. What are homeless people shown to be doing? N/A

- 1 – Inactive
(sitting in doorways or wandering the streets)
- 2 – Talking to
- 3 – Working.....
- 4 – Begging.....
- 5 – Abusing substances.....
- 6 – Socialising
(Hanging out, e.g. like in the park drinking)
- 7 – Other
.....

9. Who is speaking in the coverage?

- 1 – Homeless people
- 2 – Service Workers.....
(any service worker in the homeless, NGO sector... people working with the homeless)
- 3 – Government Representatives
(policy wonk, e.g. housing minister or politicians, person from Ministry of health, or MSD)
- 4 – Health professionals
- 5 – Police
- 6 – Lawyers.....
- 7 – Celebrities
- 8 – Members of the public.....
- 9 – Journalist / Voice-over
- 10 – Other:
.....

10. Characterisation of homeless people:

- 1 – Abnormal / Inferior
(different to housed public, e.g. 'look at dirty, decaying creature', not very bright, losers)
- 2 – Criminal.....
(been in jail, focus on criminal record, illegal activities taken part in)
- 3 – Social parasite
(choosing to live on the street – mooching off the system, benefiting from street existence)
- 4 – Traveller
(transient, vagrant, moving from place to place)
- 5 – Neighbour.....
(know homeless person down the road – public know them, where they are, would be missed)
- 6 – Needy Victim
(poor victim of structural circumstances)
- 7 – Recovered Social Actor
(once homeless, now housed & talking about their experience)
- 8 – Other:
.....

11. How does the coverage depict the homeless

- 1 – Positive.....
(sympathetic coverage – poor victim type...- structural reason for homelessness)
- 2 – Negative.....
(blaming homeless person for their plight... individual reasons)
- 3 – Both.....
(combination of structural and individual choices/behaviours as contributors)
- 4 – Unsure / Unclear.....

12. Effects of homelessness on individual

- 1 – Psychological / Emotional Effects.....
(emotional problems, mental health issues)
- 2 – Death.....
- 3 – Health Problems.....
(from being homeless – long term / effects from activities associated with being homeless, e.g. drugs, booze)
- 4 – Weather.....
- 5 – Other.....
.....
- 6 – Not evident / discussed.....

13. Is Violence depicted / mentioned?

- 1 – Yes.....
 - a mentioned.....
 - b shown.....
- 2 – No.....

a) ...Against whom...

- 1 – ...against the housed.....
- 2 – ...against the homeless.....
- 3 – ...other.....

b) ...Type of violence

- 1 – Psychological.....
- 2 – Physical.....
- 3 – Both.....

c) ...Reason for violence? Motive? Consequences

.....

14. Does coverage report on causes for homelessness?

- 1 No
- 2 Yes
 - a – Individual
(e.g. abuse, family conflict, alcohol, mental health)
.....
 - b – Structural
(e.g. employment, bankruptcy)
.....
 - c – Mixed.....
.....

15. Does coverage report on solutions for homelessness?

- 1 No
- 2 Yes
 - a – Individual
(e.g. abuse, family conflict, alcohol, mental health)
.....
 - b – Structural
(e.g. employment, bankruptcy)
.....
 - c – Mixed.....
.....

16. What other / wider issues are linked to homelessness?

- 1 – Drugs.....
- 2 – Alcohol
- 3 – Mental Illness
- 4 – Abuse
- 5 – Crime.....
(e.g., stealing or theft...)
- 6 – Violence
- 7 – Other (specify)
- 8 – None evident.....

APPENDIX B:
CONTENT ANALYSIS DATA: REFERENCED BY YEAR

CONTENT ANALYSIS DATA: REFERENCED BY YEAR

1995

- 'Housing Project'. (01.01.1995): *TVNZ News*
- 'A home for Lavinia'. (02.02.1995): *60 minutes*
- 'A home for Lavinia: Update'. (26.02.1995): *60 minutes*
- 'Tara's Story'. (07.06.1995): *Holmes*
- 'Street Kid'. (15.06.1995): *Holmes*
- 'Boarding House'. (04.08.1995): *TVNZ News*
- 'Domain Lady'. (12.10.1995): *Holmes*
- 'Betty Marusich'. (11.11.1995): *TVNZ News*

1996

- 'Poverty Debate'. (12.04.1996): *Holmes*
- 'The Silent Scream'. (26.04.1996): *TVNZ News*
- 'Food Banks'. (22.09.1996): *TVNZ News*
- 'Sandra Page'. (27.09.1996): *Holmes*
- 'Grafton Body'. (19.10.1996): *TVNZ News*

1997

- 'Housing Protest'. (27.06.1997): *TVNZ News*
- 'Housing'. (06.07.1997): *Tangata Pasifika*
- 'Maori Wardens'. (10.08.1997): *Marae*

1998

- 'Poverty'. (09.12.1998): *Holmes*
- 'Betty Marusich'. (22.12.1998): *TVNZ News*

1999

- 'Mental Health'. (06.01.1999): *TVNZ News*
- 'Vagrants (APEC)'. (07.05.1999): *TVNZ News*
- 'Mayors of Auckland'. (26.08.1999): *TVNZ News*

2000

- 'Homeless in Christchurch'. (08.05.2000): *Tonight*
- 'Homeless'. (08.10.2000): *TVNZ News*
- 'Homelessness'. (12.12.2000): *Tonight*

2001

- 'Homelessness'. (11.07.2001): *Midday*
- 'Housing Complex'. (04.08.2001): *TVNZ News*

2002

- 'Auckland City Mission'. (02.04.2002): *TVNZ News*
- 'Homeless'. (22.08.2002): *TVNZ News*
- 'Episode 10'. (31.10.2002): *City Beat*
- 'Episode 11'. (07.11.2002): *City Beat*
- 'Homicide'. (12.12.2002): *Late Edition*
- 'Sheryl Brown'. (12.12.2002): *TVNZ News*
- 'Sheryl Brown'. (16.12.2002): *TVNZ News*
- 'Christmas Dinner'. (25.12.2002): *TVNZ News*
- 'Poverty'. (29.12.2002): *TVNZ News*

2003

- 'Nelson Couple'. (24.02.2003): *TVNZ News*
- 'Nelson'. (25.02.2003): *TVNZ News*
- 'Backpacker Torture'. (23.06.2003): *TVNZ News*
- 'Backpacker Torture'. (26.06.2003): *Late Edition*
- 'Streetman'. (08.07.2003): *TVNZ News*
- 'Homeless'. (10.07.2003): *Late Edition*
- 'Homeless'. (11.07.2003): *Midday*
- 'Homeless'. (18.07.2003): *Breakfast*
- 'Homeless'. (18.07.2003): *TVNZ News*
- 'Sheryl Brown'. (16.09.2003): *Midday*
- 'Homeless'. (07.12.2003): *Marae*
- 'David McNee'. (08.12.2003): *TVNZ News*
- 'David McNee'. (11.12.2003): *TVNZ News*
- 'Homeless Christmas'. (24.12.2003): *TVNZ News*

2004

- 'Homeless'. (04.02.2004): *Tonight*
- 'Public Places'. (20.04.2004): *Tonight*

'Homeless'. (29.04.2004): *TVNZ News*
'David McNee'. (26.07.2004): *TVNZ News*
'David McNee'. (09.08.2004): *Midday*
'David McNee'. (09.08.2004): *TVNZ News*
'Literacy'. (07.09.2004): *TVNZ News*
'Homeless'. (19.09.2004): *TVNZ News*
'Homeless'. (01.10.2004): *TVNZ News*
'Christmas Day'. (25.12.2004): *TVNZ News*

2005

'Cashel Fire'. (23.01.2005). *TVNZ News*
'Cashel Fire'. (24.01.2005): *TVNZ News*
'Cashel Fire'. (24.01.2005): *Tonight*
'Cashel Fire'. (24.01.2005): *Midday*
'Attic Man'. (26.01.2005): *TVNZ News*
'Homeless'. (15.06.2005): *TVNZ News*
'Pokies'. (15.08.2005): *TVNZ News*
'Homeless'. (11.11.2005): *TVNZ News*
'Homeless'. (01.12.2005): *Breakfast*

2006

'Fires'. (04.01.2006): *Tonight*
'Sister Margaret'. (05.06.2006): *TVNZ News*
'Jail warm'. (29.06.2006): *TVNZ News*
'Books Live'. (24.07.2006): *Tonight*
'Forgotten'. (27.08.2006): *TVNZ News*
'Mission'. (14.12.2006): *Breakfast*
'City Missions'. (20.12.2006): *TVNZ News*
'Charities'. (23.12.2006): *TVNZ News*
'City Missions'. (25.12.2006): *TVNZ News*

2007

'Beggars'. (02.02.2007): *Breakfast*
'Rental'. (01.03.2007): *TVNZ News*

'Fire'. (03.03.2007): TVNZ News
'Homeless'. (21.05.2007). TVNZ News
'Missing'. (26.07.2007): Midday
'Shona'. (17.08.2007): Close Up
'Fire'. (25.08.2007): TVNZ News
'City Mission'. (24.12.2007): TVNZ News
'Needy'. (25.12.2007): TVNZ News

**APPENDIX C:
BETTY MARUSICH (CASE STUDY 1) REFERENCES**

BETTY MARUSICH (CASE STUDY 1) REFERENCES

1995

- 'Domain Lady'. (12.10.1995): *Holmes*
- 'Spotted'. (18.10.1995): *The Evening Post*
- 'TV show prompts calls'. (19.10.1995): *The Dominion*
- 'In memory of Betty of the Domain'. (25.10.1995): *The Dominion*
- 'Betty Marusich'. (11.11.1995): *TVNZ News*
- 'Murder, attack and robbery lined up'. (14.11.1995). *The Evening Post*
- 'Murder inquiry focuses on graffiti'. (16.11.1995): *The Dominion*
- 'Marusich plea brings calls'. (16.11.1995): *The Evening Post*
- 'Widow killer may be on list'. (10.12.1995): Joseph Lose, *The Sunday News*

1996

- 'Police close in on Killer'. (07.01.1996): Joseph Lose, *The Sunday News*
- 'New leads as police try to end year-old death case'. (22.09.1996): Edward Rooney, *Sunday Star Times*
- 'Loneliest place in the world'. (30.10.1996): *The Dominion*

1997

- 'Some New Zealand murders still shrouded in mystery'. (06.11.1997): *The Timaru Herald*

1998

- 'Maggots help police with murder cases'. (26.07.1998): Simon Jones, *Sunday Star Times*
- 'Murderers, Rapists, Sheep stealers and a German Arsonist'. (28.08.1998): *The National Business Review*
- 'Betty Marusich'. (22.12.1998): *TVNZ News*
- 'Discovery puts police back on killer's trail'. (23.12.1998): *Waikato Times*
- 'Find on church roof renews death probe'. (23.12.1998): Tony Wall, *New Zealand Herald*
- 'Bags found on church roof revitalise murder inquiry'. (23.12.1998): *The Evening Post*
- 'Find spurs inquiry'. (23.12.1998): *The Press*
- 'Search for clues from slain woman's bags'. (24.12.1998): *The Press*

'Bags to be examined'. (24.12.1998): *Waikato Times*

1999

'Mystery cases still baffle police'. (08.01.1999): *Truth Magazine*

'Bags cast new light on life of slain vagrant'. (28.02.1999): Rachel Grunwell, *Sunday Star Times*

'Case reopened'. (03.03.1999): *The Dominion*

'Graffiti may be clue in murder'. (05.04.1999): *The Evening Post*

'New Zealand murder mysteries back to haunt us'. (11.07.1999): Nicholas Reid, *Sunday Star Times*

2000

'How maggots can catch a murderer'. (15.03.2000): Anne Beston, *New Zealand Herald*

'How maggots can catch a murderer'. (30.06.2000): Anne Beston, *New Zealand Herald*

'Find on church roof renews death probe'. (30.06.2000): Tony Wall, *New Zealand Herald*

'Sad stories behind the statistics'. (23.10.2000): *New Zealand Herald*

2001

'Putting up the money'. (28.04.2001): *The Press*

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**APPENDIX D:
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