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HOMELESSNESS IN SPOKANE:
AN INQUIRY INTO THE EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS IN A MID-SIZED CITY

A Thesis
Presented to
Eastern Washington University
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies

By
Jocelyn M. Brown
Spring 2017

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ABSTRACT

HOMELESS IN SPOKANE:

AN INQUIRY INTO HOMELESSNESS IN A MID-SIZED CITY

By

Jocelyn M. Brown

Spring 2017

This study focuses on the condition of homelessness in Spokane, Washington, as compared to the same condition in larger and more frequently studied cities, using San Francisco and Seattle as a collective comparison tool for examples of large cities. By examining the neoliberalization of large American cities in a capitalist society, I draw out the similarities and differences of how homelessness is manifest and managed in these two different urban contexts. Examined are the societal factors that impact homelessness, for both those without housing and those (i.e., business owners, service providers) impacted by homelessness. This study also highlights the criminalization of homelessness as a neoliberal technique of managing the spatial distribution and visibility of the homeless, including Spokane's own Community Court. The study reveals that while there are myriad similarities between cities large and small, there are also differences which directly impact the experience of homelessness for those within Spokane.

Keywords: homelessness, neoliberalism, humanist, mid-sized city, criminalization, community court

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Neoliberalism and Homelessness.....	9
Homelessness in Large Cities.....	14
Figure 1: Chart of City Data.....	14
Business Improvement Districts.....	17
Spokane BID.....	23
Criminalization.....	24
Spokane History and Background.....	26
Skid Road.....	27
Shanty Town.....	28
Figure 2: Spokane Shanty Town.....	29
Hobo Encampment.....	29
Spokane Urban Renewal.....	29
Methods.....	33
Homeless in Spokane.....	39
Seattle.....	41
Spokane.....	42
A Humanist Shift?.....	43
Business and Service Providers.....	47
Spokane’s Unhoused.....	49

TABLE OF CONTENTS CONT'D

Homeless Services.....	51
Policy Modeling.....	52
Conclusion.....	53
References.....	56
Interviews.....	65
Additional Resources.....	66
Appendix.....	67
Location Map of Spokane in Washington State.....	67
Criminal Ordinance Charts.....	68-69
Vita.....	70

Introduction

Homelessness continues to plague cities across the world today, and has spiked to alarming levels in both global north and south contexts since the post-2007 global recession. Yet this is not a new phenomenon: homelessness has consistently mired the lowest segments of urban populations since the onset of industrial capitalism. As Engels famously chronicled in the context of 19th century Manchester:

“...there is an average number of 50 human beings of all ages, who huddle together in the parks every night, having no other shelter than what is supplied by the trees and a few hollows on the embankment” (Engels, 1999 p.31 [1844]).

This passage, while written over 150 years ago, could have just as easily been written today about any number of metropolitan regions in the United States and beyond, only with the number of people increased exponentially. And while homelessness has manifested in myriad ways, and has ebbed and flowed as a “visible” and politicized issue in mainstream public consciousness, it has never ceased to mire varying proportions of the most marginalized and lowest income groups (Mitchell, 2011), from Europe to North America, and increasingly in the most rapidly urbanizing metropolitan regions in the global south.

In short, the ranks of the homeless, the most disenfranchised of Marx’s “industrial reserve army” (Marx, 1987 [1867]), continue to grow in accordance with the expansionary dynamics of capital accumulation. It is in this context that Mitchell (2011) identifies homelessness as a permanent social condition within capitalist societies. Specifically, it can be thought of as both an inevitable outcome of an inherently exploitative mode of production geared toward the maximization of profits, and as a pre-condition in the form of a redundant labor force

whose very existence contributes to the power enjoyed by employers (and backed by the state) to suppress wages and, thus, maintain acceptable profit margins.

Conceptualized in this way, periods of economic crisis can be interpreted as establishing the conditions for the survival of this very economic system. For instance, after the stock market crash of 1929, over one million people had become homeless in the United States by 1933. The Dust Bowl contributed to this homelessness during the Great Depression, with many farmers unable to work their land, thus packing up and heading to cities in search of work. This only contributed to the rising numbers of jobless people concentrated in cities, of which some inevitably found themselves living without shelter (see Mitchell, 2011). At the time, however, there were simply too many unemployed and homeless, and with a resurgent leftist politics in the USA, this served to threaten the stability of the system altogether (Wolff, 2012).

President Franklin D. Roosevelt responded to these conditions with the systemic measures that came to underpin The New Deal, i.e., the funding of job programs, Social Security, and affordable housing production. This was, ultimately, a compromise between the capitalist elite and an increasingly recalcitrant working class politics enlivened by the destructive consequences of the depression (Wolff, 2012). For the next 40 years, many governmental programs were put in place to assist those experiencing poverty and homelessness, part of what became known as the “welfare state.” The first public housing program was established in 1937, followed by subsequent programs which provided government assistance to those not served by the private housing market, i.e., programs initiating urban renewal and affordable housing (Goetz, 2003; Western Regional Advocacy Project [WRAP], 2010). While often portrayed as progressive politics, Roosevelt’s New Deal ultimately functioned to preserve the capitalist

system; social welfare programs were now deemed a necessity to protect capitalism from its own crisis-induced tendencies (Wolff, 2012).

By the early 1970's the world had entered another period of economic recession. In the United States (and beyond), this recession was effectively represented as the failure of the very welfare state that formed in response to the depression four decades earlier. This time, it was modified laissez-faire principles that gained momentum as the proposed solution to the recession, what many now refer to as neoliberalism (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Harvey, 2005). Developed by (and infecting) those in power, the past four decades have experienced the progressive dismantling of previous welfare-state institutions, programs, and policies (including the defunding of mental health institutions) as a means of resuscitating acceptable profit margins and conditions for capital accumulation. In short, private enterprise had become too regulated and burdened by taxation, and too much power was given to labor in the form of unions, and neoliberalism served to legitimate policies and practices that aimed to “roll-back” welfare-state institutions followed by the “roll out” of new policies and practices guided by neoliberal principles (Peck and Tickell, 2002).

As a consequence, mental health patients – recipients of welfare state funding – were turned to the street almost overnight across urban America, effectively increasing the visibility of homeless people. City governments, also defunded of federal subsidies by the Reagan Administration, responded by seeking “social order” through ordinances and policies that effectively criminalized the homeless (Mitchell, 1997). In short, it was now increasingly illegal to engage in the very activities homeless people must do to survive (panhandling, public urination, sleeping in parks, etc.). Justifying these policies and practices were explanations of homelessness that featured the blaming of the homeless themselves. Echoing Margaret

Thatcher's now infamous declaration that "there is no such thing as society, only individuals (and their families)," the role of broader, structural socio-economic factors (i.e., deindustrialization) were routinely ignored in favor of explanations that entirely emphasized individual culpability (Harvey, 2005). In short, people were homeless because they had made bad choices and conducted their lives in irresponsible ways. This has been reinforced in popular political rhetoric and routinely articulated on the nightly news across urban America ever since (see Dreier, 2005; Wilson, 2005).

Compounding the situation further was the return of capital to the city in the form of gentrification (Smith, 1996). Following decades of capital flight from central city areas, from mass suburbanization to routine out-sourcing of jobs to foreign countries, central city areas had become increasingly plagued with conditions of chronic unemployment and concentrated poverty (W. Wilson, 1987, 1996). In addition, the defunding of city governments during the Regan Administration meant that public funds now needed to be channeled more toward the kinds of things that generated tax revenue, rather than supporting those in most need. Gentrification, thus, became standard urban policy through the 1980s and 1990s, as resuscitating the city as a site for capital accumulation translated into increased revenue streams for city governments (Smith, 2002).

To make this gentrification possible, however, has consequently meant the mass displacement of low income populations across large American cities (Smith 1996, 2002; Hackworth, 2007; Wilson, 2007). A central aspect driving this gentrification and corresponding displacement was the demolition of cheap housing stock (WRAP, 2010) and, ironically, the very public housing erected during the urban renewal of the 1950s and 1960s (Hyra, 2008). By the 1990's, programs like HOPE VI, intended to revitalize low-income housing units, had essentially

eliminated units available to those living in extreme poverty (Goetz, 2003), thereby exacerbating one of the biggest conditions that underpins homelessness: lack of affordable housing.

In 1996, President Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act into law, effectively ending welfare as an entitlement program, and forcing unemployed people into dead-end low-wage jobs without benefits or childcare (Peck, 2001; Goetz, 2003). This plunged many working families under the poverty line, and did little to improve conditions that lead to homelessness, such as insufficient child care, low wages, and lack of affordable housing. And since the onset of the post-2007 global economic recession, the numbers of people living without shelter have only continued to rise, in some cases to quite extreme levels. This has transpired in conjunction with rising costs of living and a resurgence of vagrancy laws targeting people living on city streets.

These events occurred at a national scale and their impact has been felt in cities across the United States. Tent-cities and homeless shelters began popping up in large cities like San Francisco, Portland, and Seattle. Here, we see the punishing results of a neoliberal mode of governance that has championed and mobilized the gentrification of central city areas (Wilson, 2007), underpinned by public housing demolition (Hackworth, 2007), business improvement districts (England, 2008), and a re-awakening and strengthening of social order laws (Mitchell, 2003). But how is this situation unfolding in smaller to medium-sized cities?

The majority of academic and popular literature on homelessness focuses on large American cities. Studies pertaining to the condition of homelessness in smaller urban centers, what Robinson (2005) terms “ordinary cities,” are comparatively minimal. For Robinson (2005), this is reflected in a much broader imbalance in prevailing urban theory, which is heavily biased to the experience of a handful of major western urban centers, such as Chicago, New York, and

London. Following Leitner and Sheppard (2015), it is time to “provincialize” urban theory, to nuance our understanding about the city to better account for the innumerable urban experiences, patterns, and logics that might lie beyond the few western, global cities that have long dominated scholarly attention in critical urban studies in general and urban political economy in particular (also see Roy, 2015; Zeiderman, 2016).

This study, in part, responds to recent calls for more empirical research conducted in the long-neglected urban centers of the global south as well as the “ordinary” cities of the global north. In short, to what extent are large American cities truly exceptional, or different from what can be considered the normal or “ordinary” urban experience? And, conversely, to what extent is there a notably different logic, or pattern, to the development and experience of such “ordinary” cities? Following Peck (2012), I suggest that no city is necessarily exceptional or ordinary, and that there are likely characteristics of any city – large, medium, and small – that are both unique and reflective of broader patterns, and that it is up to empirical research to uncover what is, if anything, truly exceptional about San Francisco, New York, or Seattle, and what might be “ordinary” about everywhere else.

By examining a variety of social, economic, and political factors and their relationship to the condition of homelessness in Spokane, WA, a smaller, mid-sized city, I seek to contribute to this gap in the literature and shed light on both the similarities and differences found within this particular urban context. There are more mid-sized cities in the United States than the largest and most studied cities. As such, evaluation from this viewpoint holds the potential for deepening our knowledge on the (re)production of homelessness as a societal condition that moves beyond the arguably more limited or potentially exceptional experience of large American cities (Robinson, 2005). Following Matraux, et al. (2001), while homelessness impacts many

cities, its impact is seen with wide variation based on many factors, so much so that the quantitative and qualitative experience of homelessness may be just as severe (if not worse) in smaller cities that typically do not receive the lion's share of attention and resources, identifying Columbus, OH and Spokane, WA in particular (according to the Matraux study). It is in this context that this study explores whether (or not) the experience of being without housing is substantially better, worse, or the same in smaller, mid-sized cities (and in what ways). To this end, the following research questions are posed and examined through a mix of mostly qualitative methods:

1. In what ways has the condition of homelessness presented itself within large urban centers like Seattle or San Francisco, and how might this compare to mid-sized urban centers like Spokane?
 - a. Are there more or less services available?
 - b. How is access to services impacted by a smaller population of people without housing?
 - c. What is the experience of being without housing like for people in Spokane?
2. How are people without housing impacted by laws criminalizing the very things necessary for survival?
 - a. What are the discriminatory qualities of these laws in Spokane?
 - b. What role does the Community Court play (if any) in offsetting the impacts of these laws?

The city of Spokane was chosen to stand in as a proxy for other mid-sized cities due to its population size and economic characteristics. With a population of 210,000 (and nearly 500,000 in the greater metropolitan region), Spokane is neither a large American city like Seattle or San

Francisco, nor is it a small town – it is, in short, seemingly ordinary, and resembles the kind of urban context that has been comparatively and historically neglected in critical urban scholarship (Robinson, 2005). However, as this is a single case study, I do not intend on the results yielded in this study to be *necessarily* indicative of what is happening in the many other comparable mid-sized cities in the United States, such as Reno, NV; Boise, ID; Dayton and Toledo, OH; Providence, RI; Syracuse, NY, among the numerous others. Again, this is a question for further empirical research which is beyond the scope of this inquiry. Rather, the study can be used to represent a baseline upon which further comparisons can be made in relation to other so-called ordinary cities.

There is a notable body of research on homelessness in smaller cities, including rural areas (see Matraux, et al., 2001; Hilton and DeJong, 2010; Vissing, 2015; Bemis, 2015; Mooney and Ousley, 2000). However, these studies are situated primarily within social work and public administration, and remain somewhat disconnected from broader trends in critical urban theory. Conversely, this literature has yet to be substantively engaged within critical urban studies (particularly in geography). In this context, the study initiates bringing these bodies of literature into closer dialogue.

Spokane, for instance, has many characteristics of a large city without such population levels. While large events, such as the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup, have historically displaced poor people, Spokane had The World's Fair, Expo '74. However, like many other mid-sized cities, Spokane is not home to a critical mass of large corporations, such as Boeing, Microsoft, and Amazon, etc. In short, its bases for economic growth are more limited, and while the tendrils of capital accumulation can and certainly do unfold in similar, structural ways across socio-spatial contexts, they are also likely manifest in myriad place-specific ways as well (Peck,

2012). This study seeks to disentangle both the structurally-imposed and distinct attributes of Spokane's historical-geographical development in the context of homelessness.

Neoliberalism and Homelessness

When we think of homelessness, we often picture the bum sleeping on the sidewalk, or the park bench. We may picture the dirty couple with the mangy dog begging for money on the street-corner, waving their "Anything Helps" sign day after day. The dominant narrative about this phenomenon is that these people did this to themselves, and thus, only they can "pull themselves up by the bootstraps." This is a fairly shallow interpretation that only makes sense when accepting the neoliberal premise that "there is no such thing as society," thereby diverting attention away from the impact of broader structural forces, that these are people that are, in reality, stuck in a system that creates the existence of homelessness.

In this section, I briefly review the literature in critical urban studies on contemporary homelessness in the United States and the structural and systemic underlying causes of this phenomenon. Homelessness results, in part, from broad processes of capitalistic reconfiguration, deindustrialization, and urban transformation (Bluestone and Harrison, 1982). Following Marcuse (1988, cited in Mitchell 2011 p. 933), "Homelessness is a permanent and necessary part of the U.S. political economy." To understand this statement is to understand that homelessness is no accident; it is not *caused* by poor choices, refusal to work, or addiction and mental health issues, although these factors certainly generate barriers to gaining and maintaining the kind of stability that one needs to re-enter the part of the population that is "housed." In general, substance abuse and mental illness, for instance, afflicts people across the socio-class spectrum. And when these factors do contribute to homelessness, it is usually people that are already socio-economically marginalized that are most vulnerable, people with typically less social-familial

networks, economic resources, etc., and, thus, people less capable of resisting moments of being forced to live without shelter (Mitchell, 1997).

The primary political-economic context for the observed rise in homelessness through the 1980s and 1990s was the revival of free-market rhetoric, supply side economics, and anti-welfare ideology initiated under President Ronald Reagan, of which has only continued to the present (Lyoncallo 2004; WRAP, 2010). Through the systematic defunding of social programs, such as public housing construction and maintenance and other subsidy programs, homelessness became a normal backdrop of large American cities. For Mitchell (2011), homelessness does not refer merely to the experience of being homeless, nor is it a word that specifically refers to the qualities of people who are un-housed. Rather, it names a *social condition* that marks the normal functioning of capitalist societies, and indeed has been observed in myriad socio-spatial contexts since the industrial revolution (see Engels, 1999 [1844]).

Neoliberalism has, in part, functioned to divert attention and blame for the existence of homelessness onto the homeless themselves, thereby allowing for the return of capital to central cities to be discursively positioned as the savior of urban economies. In reality, this has been a central of homelessness (rather than the solution), a consequence of a gentrification process that has been able to unfold under the ideological cover of neoliberal rationality. Neoliberalism emerged as a response to what was choreographed as the crisis of the Keynesian “welfare state” during the 1970s. While it has multiple points of origin, i.e.: Milton Friedman and the Chicago School of Economics and Friedrich von Hayek in Austria (Peck, 2001), it has since proliferated and ascended to hegemonic status (Harvey, 2005).

Neoliberalism can best be thought of as a political-economic philosophy that de-emphasizes or rejects government interventions in the economy, focusing instead on achieving

economic prosperity by encouraging the free functioning of markets via less regulated operations of business. It has also been discursively mobilized as inevitable and almost natural. TINA, Margaret Thatcher's oft-cited notion that "there is no alternative" effectively discouraged any social welfare kind of thinking. And worse, people's fate in life was directly linked to their own decisions and life paths – in short, we only have ourselves to blame for our misfortunes, as well as our success. This notion of a "meritocracy" has come to serve as one of the core underpinning features of the neoliberal world-view, where individual culpability is strongly promoted.

In terms of policy, the results have been the drastic defunding of social programs, first in the United States and United Kingdom, and now increasingly throughout the rest of the developed world. Welfare was now perceived as beyond the domain of government, and could only be realized as a by-product of the free-market. It was now substantially harder for people to get welfare, as entitlement programs were systematically phased out, and eligibility requirements became increasingly stringent. Funding to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has also slowly declined, leaving public and low-income housing in poor and horrific conditions (WRAP, 2006). In the context of gentrification, cities began to view these areas as threats to attracting capital, and were routinely targeted for urban renewal.

Funding city governments, which was standard through the Keynesian period, was now treated as a kind of welfare: cities supposedly needed to find their own sources of tax revenue rather than rely on the government dole to balance their budgets. This would supposedly discipline city governments in transforming their cities (and their liberal ways) into social and physical spaces that could be attractive to capital investment (i.e., fortune 500 corporations, tourism, developers, realtors, and affluent workers), the purportedly one and only route to city salvation from an otherwise seemingly certain future of further urban decay (Brenner and

Theodore, 2002; Wilson, 2007). Thus, with the influx of more affluent populations relocating to central city areas there has been a corresponding increase in the cost of living (rents, housing prices), thereby rendering life in the city less and less affordable to less affluent populations, particularly those living on fixed-incomes and with less than stable employment opportunities. This also meant that, for urban living to be perceived as attractive and safe (for both potential gentrifiers and downtown businesses that rely on middle-upper class consumers), central city areas targeted for gentrification had to be “cleansed” of at least the visible presence of homeless people (Mitchell, 2003).

In short, the very image of homeless people became a barrier to the effective resuscitation of the city as a site for capital accumulation (Mitchell, 1997, 2011; Beckett and Herbert, 2010), a particular manifestation of Harvey’s “spatial-fix” (1975) whereby capital overcomes its own spatial barriers to expansion and, thus, survival. “Out of sight, out of mind” has since become standard operating procedure in urban development policy, with the swaths of “anti-homeless” laws that have since proliferated across urban America. As cities were struggling to remake themselves as more “competitive” in attracting footloose capital, tourists, suburban visitors, gentrifiers, and the like (Hackworth, 2007; Wilson, 2007), homeless people and the facilities that served them (shelters, drop-in centers, halfway houses, etc.) were increasingly seen more as liabilities (Hackworth, 2007; Mitchell, 2011). With the homeless needing to go (especially from spaces targeted for gentrification), the “blame the victim” mentality effectively laid the foundation for criminalizing the sorts of things that must be done by homeless people for daily survival: “So long as the appearance of unusual numbers of homeless men (in addition to the accepted residuum of ‘unemployables’) can be framed as an aberration, the fiction can be

maintained that homelessness signifies nothing other than deranged mentalities, bad habits, or faulty coping skills of those whom it affects” (Hopper, 2003 p. 46).

With this emergent popular discourse on homelessness, a divide between the “deserving” and the “undeserving” poor also emerged, and functioned to neatly package homelessness into a neoliberal rationality in which opportunities for success are always available for the taking. Thus, if one does not take these opportunities, they must be personally blamed for not doing so (Mitchell, 2011). Conceived in this way, homelessness is a character defect, a deficiency of sorts, as though something were inherently wrong with people without housing, or that they had simply made poor choices, which had led them to become and remain homeless. As such, homelessness is often understood as a problem of impaired capacity, as people are routinely conditioned to look at *who* the homeless are, and what personal characteristics they have that made them homeless. They are seen not as symptoms, but causes, of “structural problems in the economy” (Hopper et al., 1985).

In this context, homelessness has traditionally been viewed as a problem of troubled – and troublesome – individuals, dating back to the 18th century. The terms of accusation may change, but the logic does not (Hopper et al., 1985), and the logic is an ideological one that hides an economic motive. The process of what Marx calls “primitive” or “original” accumulation in England, involving the engrossment of land, enclosure of commons, together with the breaking down of feudal and guild bonds, violently uprooted whole armies of “masterless men”: beggars, robbers, vagabonds” (Marx, 1987 [1867]). Laws were put into place to control the new classes of dispossessed and then the problem and the solution were imported to America with the colonies. Poor laws that prescribed pillorying, branding, flogging, or ear cropping . . . those migrants who could not give a good accounting of their wanderings up and down (DePastino,

2003). Those who showed up without visible means of supporting themselves were simply moved along (Rothman, 1987). Vagrancy laws were a key means of controlling both the “wandering poor” and they reinforced a sharp divide between insiders in society and outcasts who threatened the stability of society (Monkkonen, 1984, Cresswell, 2001, Schweick, 2009), a division that continues to mark contemporary discourses on the very same phenomenon as it exists today.

Homelessness in Large Cities

It should be noted that larger populations of homeless people live in larger, more densely populated cities, which is to be expected, but this does not necessarily mean the experience of living without shelter is qualitatively the same from city to city (Matraux, et al., 2001). This being said, the population totals for homeless individuals in Seattle, WA, San Francisco, CA, and Spokane, WA are provided in Figure 1. These figures represent the most current and available data, stemming from 2016 Point in Time Counts (2015 for San Francisco) and the 2010 Census (US Census Bureau, 2010).

Figure 1. Chart of City Data

City	2010 Census Population	PIT Count	Percentage	Shelter Beds	Area mi squared
Seattle, WA	608,660	4505	0.74%	1600	83.78
San Francisco, CA	805,235	6500	0.81%	1139	46.87
Spokane, WA	208,916	981	0.47%	676	60.02

Based solely on the numbers it is not difficult to imagine how this experience would be felt differently in such disparate urban contexts. As a matter of scale, the visibility of those without housing in the larger cities is beyond that of what is seen in Spokane, especially in Seattle and San

Francisco which exhibit densely populated cores. At the time of writing (during the end of the winter season), the numbers of people in shelters are usually pushed to their maximum capacity.

In cities like Seattle, WA, the issue is particularly visible and volatile, where the sheer numbers of people living without housing and on the city streets in public spaces is testing the limits of this historically progressive city (Sanburn, 2016). According to the 2016 King County Point in Time Count, over 4,000 people were homeless. Elizabeth Smith, legislative director of the ACLU has stated that “We have 3000 people outside, and we have no place to put them inside” (Sanburn, 2016). Emblematic of the neoliberal city, homelessness is both a product of and barrier to Seattle’s rapid economic success, which has largely outpaced the rest of the nation since the Great Depression (Sanburn, 2016). With large companies such as Boeing, Microsoft, and Amazon contributing to income disparities, rents throughout the city have soared (Morrill, 2013), and increased to nearly four times the national average (WLIHA). In short, Seattle has become unaffordable for, increasingly, all but the most affluent. While others go into debt, or simply relocate, others have ended up homeless.

Beckett and Herbert (2010) chronicle the rise in, and experience of, homelessness in Seattle during the 2000s. The portrayal is stark, as the draconian enforcement of anti-homeless laws by police forces in targeted locations (i.e., downtown squares, parks) amounts to nothing short of a complete “banishment” of the homeless from the city, displaced to either the prison-industrial complex (Gilmore, 2007; Wacquant, 2009) or the limited stock of poorly funded shelters, service providers, and halfway houses (also see Hackworth, 2007) located in peripheral zones far removed from the revalorizing central city. Increasingly, this population is forced into the most precarious situations of “malign neglect” (Wolch and Dear, 1993) – living under freeway overpasses, gutters, and alleys. They are, in short, living moment to moment, and

adopting some of the most, ironically, creative means of existing in the increasingly harsh and punitive neoliberal city (Wilson and Keil, 2008). The experience in Seattle is brutal, though not too dissimilar from other large American cities, such as in Los Angeles (Wolch and Dear, 1993), San Francisco (Gowan, 2010), and Chicago (Wacquant, 2009).

Lack of affordable housing is widely accepted as one of the main causes of homelessness across urban contexts, fueled by a private housing market that incentivizes the construction of higher-income housing segments (of which promise higher profit margins). Due to this and Seattle's largely inflated rental market, officials have recently resorted to government-sponsored tent cities. In October of 2015, Mayor Ed Murray announced his plans for four authorized camps in an attempt to rid the city of one of the more infamous tent-cities, aptly named The Jungle. These areas are often unsanitary, littered with garbage and used drug paraphernalia, and can be areas of high crime. The Jungle was the location of 2 homicides in 2016, driving city officials to confiscate people's belongings and bulldoze the area in an attempt to disperse the homeless population by physically (and forcefully) clearing it away. This is rarely effective, as it merely relocates the problems for a day or two, reflecting a dynamic that Engels (1970 [1872]: 172) so pertinently observed: "The breeding places of disease, the infamous holes and cellars in which the capitalist mode of production confines our workers night after night, are not abolished; they are merely *shifted elsewhere!*" The increase in homeless people living on the street or in cars or RVs leads to predictable tensions with neighborhood residents, who simply call the police, relying on the criminalization component to deal with the issue of homeless visibility.

San Francisco is much like Seattle in many ways. For decades, it has had a high number of homeless people, with nearly 7,000 people without housing at the 2015 Point in Time Count. The city's increasing unaffordability (and the increasing unaffordability of surrounding areas)

has exacerbated the homelessness problem in a number of ways (Gowan, 2010; Ganeva, 2015). The housing crisis, driven by a two-decade long tech boom fueled development, effectively flooded the city with high paid professionals in exchange for displaced residents who could no longer afford the increasing rents. In the past, people who were experiencing homelessness could get temporary shelter in SROs (single room occupancy), or by sharing rooms. However, those spaces have been converted to expensive apartments and/or condominium complexes that poor people cannot afford (Ganeva, 2015). As mentioned above, the homeless population is highly visible in San Francisco, which has led to the deployment of a wide array of social order tactics. As chronicled by Gowan (2010), San Francisco leads the state of California in anti-homeless laws, contradicting its image as a liberal bastion by similarly banishing this population segment to the shadowy spaces of malign neglect. Unlike Seattle and Portland, OR, San Francisco does not have authorized homeless encampments, although this city is also increasingly experiencing an ever-expanding homeless population despite efforts to (visually) rid the city of this element.

Business Improvement Districts

To reiterate, this study is not focused on homelessness itself per se, but rather is an examination of how this phenomenon presents itself in Spokane, and how this compares to that of larger American cities. In order to examine this, factors that impact the homeless population and their existence were explored, such as Business Improvement Districts. This section briefly documents the Union Square BID in San Francisco and Seattle's MID (Metropolitan Improvement District), and the impacts of these entities on the homeless populations within each respective city.

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are a marriage of two redevelopment approaches – the financing authority of a redevelopment agency and the targeted efforts of an enterprise zone. The rise and spread of BIDs was a response that coalesced in the 1980s to declining city center prospects, federal fiscal austerity, and the increased pressures for privatization and urban competitiveness brought on by the neoliberal turn. BIDs represent a market-oriented solution to the challenge of providing quality urban services under fiscal austerity. As such, they can be considered a neoliberal, entrepreneurial urban strategy based on the belief that the private sector should take a leading role in urban revitalization and economic development (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Peyrouz, Putz, and Glasze, 2012; England, 2008).

A consensus (among academics, planners, and business people) has yet to form on an authoritative definition of BIDs. Generally, however, a BID is a legally-recognized territorial subdivision within a city in which all property owners or businesses are subject to an additional tax assessment that is collected by the city and reallocated to the BID operating agency. These funds are used to provide services and capital improvements within the district (Garodnick, 2000). BIDs often represent a city's downtown region and vary greatly in size. A 1995 survey of 23 BIDs found the size of a BID to be approximately 20 square blocks on average and range from 1 square block to 300 square blocks (Partnership, 1995).

In the United States, one estimate indicates that 60% of BIDs were created between 1990 and 1999 (Mitchell, 2000). Created by state legislatures, BIDs claim to solve problems of urban blight and safety and to promote business in downtown cores in ways that local government cannot (Leigh, 2003). As such, they are classic neo-liberal public-private partnerships (Goode 2006), and are usually run by a community board representing the area. Power within BIDs is generally tilted towards corporate interests as most BID governance structures weight the votes

of business and property owners more heavily than those of residential tenants. District decisions are therefore generally skewed in favor of business and property owners even when outnumbered by residential tenants.

Many states, such as California, allow municipalities to give greater weight to large business and property owners by weighting percent of assessment paid rather than giving each owner an equal vote (Beach, 2007). Seattle's model provides another example; if ten businesses sign the petition and their cumulative assessment would account for at least 60% of the total Business Improvement Association assessment, the Council review process may continue (Business Improvement Areas, n.d.; WRAP, 2006).

One function of BIDs is to provide certain services which complement those already provided by the municipal government. Services vary from a range of capital improvements including beautification and maintenance of downtown areas to economic development such as tax incentives for new businesses (WRAP, 2008). BIDs are also responsible for advocacy campaigns through which public policy is communicated and promoted to the community. Most important to this study, however, is the act of managing public space, including the managing of sidewalks, the discouraging of panhandling, and the controlling of security efforts.

One criticism of BIDs is that they patrol public space on behalf of merchants and wealthy residents, while excluding poor and homeless people from these particular areas (MacDonald, 1996; Ward, 2006). Likewise, a BIDs ability to privately provide select public services affords the BID a great deal of political clout at the municipal bargaining table. In short, BIDs allow for an increased concentration of power within municipal policy fields into the hands of business and corporate interests. This is a direct contradiction with the principles of the Right to the City

movement (Lefebvre, 1996 [1968]), which aims to democratically distribute power to shape the city across all inhabitants and not only the propertied class (WRAP, 2008).

Since a primary function of BIDs is the deterrence of crime to foster public safety, business owners see (and desire) area improvements by BIDs as promoting a specific message to visitors, potential residents, and potential businesses that the area is clean and safe. In this way, BIDs are seen to have reduced crime in accordance with the “Broken Windows” theory (Hoyt, 2007). This theory posits that allowing visual indications of disorder to remain unaddressed, such as a broken window or trash in an alley, demonstrates a loss of social control in a neighborhood (Wilson and Kelling, 1982; Skogan, 1999). This fosters crime, and criminals seek out such neglected areas as a place to engage in deviant activities. Therefore, BIDs ostensibly seek to reduce crime by making improvements to their districts, which ultimately facilitates further capital accumulation, the basis upon which this “social order” is ultimately measured.

In addition to these cosmetic improvements, BIDs also seek to reduce crime by the presence of private security patrols over their areas. Private security guards are under less public regulation and, as such, are less trained. Correspondingly, they also possess less authority. The primary function of private BID security is to uphold the public *perception* of safety in their area by creating a noticeable policing force on the streets. One form of security implemented by BIDs is a team of “ambassadors.” Ambassadors usually roam the area wearing brightly-colored uniforms and are supposed to provide a welcoming smile (Hoyt, 2007). These ambassadors are said to “foster community relationships” (Spokane BID representative).

In terms of public policy advocacy, BIDs play a role in the criminalization of homeless people as proponents of many ordinances that prevent homeless people from engaging in the very activities needed for survival, at least in these particular districts. And since BIDs are

generally a focus of a city's downtown area, their presence has an impact on the homeless population. The strategies employed by BIDs generally focus on consumers and the needs of businesses. Therefore, the needs of the homeless population who accesses services located in the downtown areas are not part of the equation. The homeless population attracts negative attention from the perspective of business owners, and are dealt with by laws that target and criminalize people for their status rather than their behavior, as evidenced by the fact that only people who "appear" homeless are typically subject to enforcement of such supposedly banned activities (loitering, lying, etc.) (Mitchell, 1997).

Union Square is the retail and cultural hub of San Francisco. It boasts the city's largest collection of luxury, department and boutique shopping, and is one of the premier tourist attractions in the Western United States. The Union Square BID is the oldest and largest of 14 business improvement districts located in San Francisco; however, examining all of these is outside the scope of this study. This BID utilizes private security forces (as well as city police) to harass and ultimately banish homeless people from Union Square, all under the pretense of ensuring that Union Square remains a "world-class destination, as well as a clean, safe, attractive, [and] vibrant district for everyone" (Union Square Business Improvement District, 2016). In short, the property and business owners actively work to create a safe and *attractive* consumer environment. The policing is discriminatory and mimics historic Jim Crow and Anti-Okie laws in that the BID promotes practices that act to simply remove people deemed unwanted from certain parts of town, those who represent visual barriers to capital accumulation. According to a WRAP representative, Coral Feigin, the Union Square BID is "...not actually interested in creating a safer San Francisco for everyone, but solely interested in protecting the interests of wealthy San Franciscans and keeping poor and homeless people out of sight" (as

cited in Business Improvement Districts and ‘Broken Windows’, 2015). In a search for information regarding San Francisco’s Union Square BID, the majority of information returned as negative, even when directly linked to its ambassadors and outreach teams working to connect homeless people to services. Connecting this population to services is viewed as “... hopefully moving the homeless population along” (McDermid, 2015).

Much like San Francisco, Seattle has multiple business improvement districts. The city houses nine different improvement districts, sometimes called business improvement areas (BIAs). The Seattle Metropolitan Improvement District (MID), centered within downtown Seattle, covers approximately 62% of the downtown core properties (Metropolitan Improvement District n.d.; Downtown Seattle Association, 2013). Seattle’s downtown retail core is home to the largest retail shopping centers in Seattle, as well as major department stores. A large number of public events happen in this space, including holiday events and outdoor concerts, attracting a large amount of tourists and local consumers. The iconic Pike Place Market is located within the district’s boundaries, along with museums, an aquarium, and the waterfront.

Like many American cities, Seattle’s downtown neighborhoods had experienced disinvestment prior to the time they began gentrifying in the 1990s (Grodach and Ehrenfeucht, 2015). Many people who were homeless spent their time, and accessed social services, in the downtown area. When Seattle began to undergo an urban resurgence, businesses viewed those who appeared homeless as a problem. As with other cities, homeless and low-income residents conflicted with notions of what constituted a “livable” city, and policies were implemented that sought to permanently remove supportive low-income housing from the gentrifying areas (Beckett and Herbert, 2010). Seattle was one of many cities that enacted ordinances prohibiting sleeping in parks and on sidewalks, sitting on sidewalks, loitering, panhandling, and created

ordinances that essentially targeted people who appeared to be homeless (Sparks 2011, Loukaitou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht, 2009). However, Seattle's MID realized that such ordinances were not effective, and took a different approach.

The MID viewed its job as a way to connect homeless people to services rather than to drive them out of the area (Grodach and Ehrenfeucht, 2015). MID Ambassadors provide outreach for those experiencing homelessness, offering assistance in accessing clothing, food, shelter, and mental health care. They wake up people who may be sleeping in public areas, reducing the number of calls to police, and potentially saving the sleeper from arrest. While this is viewed as a welcome change from the tendency of BIDs to drive homeless people from the area, many view this as just a friendlier way of merely "managing" the problem to, ultimately, make the area (perceivably) safer for shoppers (Grodach and Ehrenfeucht, 2015).

However, does this portrayal of activity in Seattle's MID match what the data shows? In 2014, Seattle's MID reported directing 508 homeless people to shelter, food, and other medical services. Yet in just 2 months of the same year (July and August, which are high volume tourism months in Seattle) MID Ambassadors enforced the sit and lie ordinance over 3000 times, which greatly exceeds the number of times that the Ambassadors gave other types of assistance (Metropolitan Improvement District n.d., cited in Grodach and Ehrenfeucht, 2015).

Spokane BID. Congruent with both San Francisco and Seattle, Spokane's BID was implemented because downtown businesses and property owners felt that the downtown core needed enhanced municipal services to improve the central business district (CBD) and make it a clean, safe, and fun destination for workers, shoppers, and visitors (Spokane Business Improvement District). Spokane's BID does not provide nearly the volume of information as is available in San Francisco and Seattle. This is likely a direct result of the population (and

homeless population) difference. However, the Spokane BID does have some aspects to its functionality that do pertain to the impact on the homeless population in Spokane. Real Change Spokane is a program that encourages donating money to charitable organizations rather than panhandlers. The program explains that giving money to panhandlers is only a short-term solution and doesn't create long-term results. They note that panhandlers make good money because of compassionate people, and as long as they do, they'll keep asking for it (Real Change Spokane, n.d.). This is presented to the community as "Fostering a vibrant Downtown Spokane," and protecting the people who would be eager to live, work, and play in an urban environment like downtown Spokane. As in the case of Seattle's MID, this certainly seems like a welcome modification in approach. Yet, to what extent is this another form of social control, as the goal is to reduce the "visible" presence of homeless people on the streets panhandling, one of the biggest perceived barriers to potential consumers?

Criminalization

Throughout the United States, and for years of history dating back to colonial times, there have been laws that punish behaviors necessary for survival, exclude certain groups from "main stream" society, and serve the interests of the capitalist elite. These laws have their roots as far back as the 1860s when municipal laws targeted "unsightly beggars", those with mental health issues, diseases, or other disabilities. These laws essentially criminalized disability and are visceral examples of discrimination, further reinforced by names such as the "Ugly Laws." These laws, along with the Anti-Okie, Jim Crow, and other vagrancy type of laws were all ways of purportedly creating social order. Yet, they have also historically targeted certain groups, mainly those who were considered socially "inferior", such as the indigent, ethnic migrants, the unemployed, blacks, and other socially marginalized groups.

Through the 1970s and the 1980s, these laws were challenged and successfully struck down in a Supreme Court ruling that deemed such “vagrancy laws” as unconstitutional. As such, communities were now left without a legal means of systematically removing individuals experiencing homelessness from public sight. Cities then turned to alternative methods. Through the 1980s-1990s, communities developed practices that included large-scale arrest campaigns and property sweeps. These practices formed the basis of what is now known as the criminalization of poverty (Semi, 2014). Cities are once again criminalizing the “visibly poor,” which refers to the real or perceived state of being poor in public spaces. In this way, the modern anti-homeless laws share much of the same form, phrasing, and function as historical laws that banned African-Americans from attending public school with white Americans; banned Midwesterners from entering Western states during the Great Depression; and that banned people with physical disabilities from residing in certain cities (Ortiz et. al, 2015).

The policies and legal practices of criminalizing homelessness were described by Carla Lee, the Deputy Chief of Staff for King County’s Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, as “a social control mechanism used to make the blighted human circumstance disappear instead of getting at the root of the concern and addressing it in a meaningful way” (Olson, 2015). For those who are homeless, certain behaviors that a housed individual would perform within the confines of their own home must be performed in other places (Mitchell, 1997, 2011). These behaviors range from eating, sleeping, urinating, and even simply sitting down to rest: There is no alternative but to conduct these behaviors in public. Current anti-homeless ordinances seek to criminalize the basic human life-sustaining conduct of homeless people with the intent to limit their accessibility to public spaces.

This conduct, of course, is not inherently criminal as much as it is merely “out of place” in relation to mainstream society (Cresswell, 1996). Yet, many of these targeted acts – sitting, eating, or sleeping in public spaces – are performed by many people in public, but it is often only deemed problematic at certain times of day (i.e., at night after public parks are “closed”) or if the offending individual “appears” homeless, and especially if visible in strategically targeted spaces, such as downtown public parks, retail corridors, and gentrifying neighborhoods (Beckett and Herbert, 2010; Mitchell, 2011). Thus, these laws are thinly veiled as prohibiting *certain behaviors* in public, when they are really targeting a particular segment of the population that must necessarily perform them, the homeless. In this context, as Mitchell (2011) asserts, having a private realm to retreat to also affords one of certain citizenship rights (eating, sitting, or sleeping in public) that are ironically not afforded to those who do not have access to the same private realm. In short, by punishing the homeless for performing these acts (which are quite necessary for them), local authorities are controlling public spaces much like the local authorities that once enforced the myriad historical (and now unconstitutional) exclusion laws (Ortiz et. al, 2015).

Spokane History and Background

The city of Spokane was founded in 1873, and incorporated in 1881. The population was 1,000 at the time. Known for logging, fur-trading, and mining, Spokane grew as people realized the potential the river had for energy and commerce. The railroads also helped Spokane to become the commercial center of the Inland Northwest. Dutch investors helped to rebuild the downtown core after the 1889 fire, and real estate development by European investors was a huge source of capital for the small city. The city’s population continued to grow, reaching 104,000 by 1910. However, the city’s economy was slowing, and growth then came to an abrupt

halt. As a consequence, the downtown area fell into decline. Over the next several decades Spokane entered a period of stagnation and economic depression which brought about communities of people who could not afford to house themselves (Youngs, 1996).

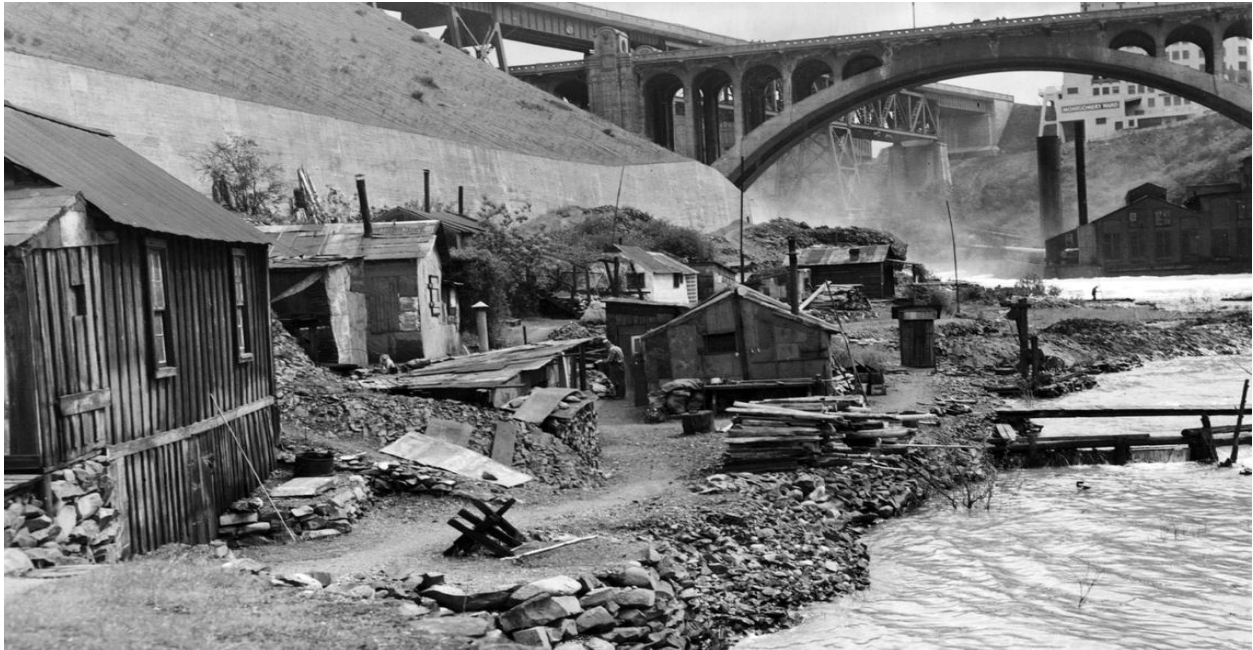
Skid Road

From the 1930s through the 1960s, Skid Road housed transient workers including miners, loggers, farm workers, and railroad men (Youngs, 1996). What was once a vibrant and bustling area of commerce had transformed into a desolate area of blight by the late 1960s. The railroad stations were run-down, and Skid-Road had taken on a much different appearance than what it had once been: an energetic part of the city providing food, entertainment, and catering to the vices of the transient workers. For those who lived on Skid Road, there were definite advantages. It was there that residents could find information about jobs in and around Spokane, secure affordable housing in one of the motels or flop-houses, or partake in drinking at a local bar. Skid Road was also a center of cultural diversity, with businesses owned by Lebanese, Jewish, Chinese, Japanese, and Greek merchants. Skid Road was about “community,” where people helped one another, and everyone looked after everyone else (Youngs, 1996). By the 1960s, however, prostitution was rampant in the area. Spokane police regulated it to some degree, but for the most part allowed the trade to continue in order to keep it contained only to the Skid Road area. Such activities were seen as amoral, and the city did not want it spreading to other areas of consumerism. Businesses were run down, buildings were in poor condition, and the residents of Skid Road were people who lived in poverty; yet, even during its vital years, Skid Road and its residents were alienated from other Spokanites (Youngs, 1996).

Shanty Town

The river that flows through the center of Spokane has played a constitutive role in the city's civic identity, history, and perceptions of success. As early as the 1900s, people who were too poor to live elsewhere made their homes along the banks of the Spokane River. A shanty town was on the north bank of the river, opposite Peaceful Valley, one of the poorest areas of Spokane. In this shanty town, people used cardboard and driftwood to build shelters. At various times, the City of Spokane would allow the squatters, and at other times the police would come in and clear everyone out. What became known simply as "Shanty Town" was known as the place where "all the derelicts lived" (Youngs, 1996). However, the residents of Shanty Town were not all derelicts: some were transient workers, some were unemployed, some were seasonally employed, and others were retired. In 1946, the city declared Shanty Town an eyesore, and the Health Department condemned the shacks. As a result, the entire encampment was set on fire, effectively removing the squatters from the banks of the river, a practice not too dissimilar from modern day homeless camp sweeps. It is important to note that Shanty Town could be "seen" from other parts of town, including the Monroe Street Bridge, which may have played a role in the extreme action of burning it down. This is a historic example of those unable to afford housing being forcibly removed from view, particularly from that of the more elite.

Figure 2. Spokane Shanty Town (Photo courtesy of The Spokesman 1947)



Hobo Encampments

The most transient of these types of makeshift housing communities were the hobo encampments. These sprung up near the river opposite Skid Road. As with modern day encampments, these are often constructed in areas of opportunity, and the Spokane hobo encampments were no different. Trains carrying transients riding the rails stopped near the river. This offered the hobos access to cheap hotels, restaurants, and bars on Skid Road. If they were unable to afford lodging, they could easily camp along the river banks. These hobos were often people who were just down on their luck, yet they were always willing to split wood, or perform other tasks in exchange for meals (imagine a modern-day panhandler with a “Will work for food” sign).

Spokane Urban Renewal

After the Second World War, the downtown area of Spokane had lost its status as the place where people would come to play and shop. The area was depressed. This was due in part

to Fairchild Air Force Base losing multiple wings (Youngs, 1996). This paralleled a shift in the population, which was coupled with retail trade beginning to move to the suburbs, following middle-income consumers who did the same. Echoing Dick Walker's (1981) notion of the "suburban solution" as the answer to the depression of the 1930s and 1940s, Spokane shared the fate of many American urban regions with mass suburbanization marking the 1950s and 1960s (Jackson, 1985; Beauregard, 2006). Roads and automobiles improved and retail shops further spread out, leaving Spokane's downtown in decay, another familiar chapter in this now well documented history of urban America (W. Wilson, 1987; Beauregard, 2006). With the downtown area already losing much of its appeal, businesses were pulling out and relocating to the newly built shopping center, Northtown Mall (Youngs, 1996).

Facing declining property values, Spokane's business community sought new ways to attract consumers. Competition from suburban malls had emptied out the downtown area shops, and many business owners sprang into action in an attempt to reverse this outflow of capital to the fringes. In 1959, after decades of stagnation, a coalition of business elites in the city formed Spokane Unlimited, an organization whose goal was to revitalize the downtown area of Spokane with the hope of invigorating the core by finding new ways to attract investors and consumers. Fifteen of the area's largest property and business owners comprised the group, and represented the "most prestigious names and vital people in Spokane" (Youngs, 1996).

The group sought the help of a firm known as Electric Bond and Share Company, Ebasco, which had similarly come to the aid of other cities, such as Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and Seattle, among others. Ebasco's help would not come cheap, however, and Spokane was tasked with raising \$150,000, not a small amount of money in 1958. As such, Spokane's city government followed the money. They were able to raise the money with the help of

Washington Water Power, the banks, and the Cowles family (the largest downtown property holder). These institutions were specifically targeted because they were able to provide the funds, and this gave them a vested interest in the outcome of the ensuing renewal.

One of the members of Spokane Unlimited was the number one banker in town, which effectively guaranteed their influence over the outcome with their investment. Ebasco spent 18 months studying Spokane, and designed a plan for urban renewal. The report stated that “Obsolescence, traffic congestion, inadequate parking facilities, *blight*, a drab and sometimes unappealing general appearance have reduced the downtown’s attractiveness” (Ebasco and Spokane Unlimited, cited in Youngs, 1996 p. 116 emphasis added). The report had divided the downtown area into a core, and 4 districts. Each district was ranked by percentage of deteriorating and substandard buildings. Skid Road was ranked the highest, with 80% of its buildings considered as substandard. The Central Business District (CBD) which had once accounted for 55% of the city’s retail sales was steadily declining, and the report warned that it would continue to decline unless aggressive stimulative action was taken. As a result, all areas of the core and the 4 surrounding districts were targeted for renewal.

This project was strongly promoted as necessary for the survival of the city, and Spokane Unlimited reached out to business owners and tax payers to flip the bill. And, in order for the plan for renewal to be implemented, it was also argued by this business coalition that the city government needed to be reorganized (to better represent the interests of business). Although this was marked by tension, the members of Spokane Unlimited promoted their preferred, hand-picked individuals as candidates for elected city positions, which ultimately came to fruition. Thus, Spokane Unlimited was able to shape public policy from behind the scenes within this

revamped city government. With these members in place – the so-called “Citizen Six” – any bureaucratic barriers to urban renewal were swept away.

The business elite were portrayed as the “ideal American type,” as their work in the private sector supposedly made them skillful administrators, and their contributions to a robust economy supposedly proved their dedication to the common good (Youngs, 1996). This vision of private gain fueling the public good provided much of the energy for Spokane’s urban renewal movement, and typified in many ways the kind of “growth machine” politics (Molotch, 1976; Logan and Molotch, 1988) that marked many urban public/private “regimes” during the mid-twentieth century (also see Stone, 1989). It also effectively laid the institutional foundation upon which neoliberal modes of governance would develop and proliferate in the 1980s and 1990s, a foundation centrally marked by this kind of public-private partnership in governing the city (Jonas and Wilson, 1999; Brenner and Theodore, 2002).

According to the 2016 Point-in-Time Count for Spokane County, 981 people were homeless, 82% of which were housed in temporary shelters. As with all Point in Time Counts, only those who can be found can be counted. It is likely there were many more who sought shelter in places that were not explored. For instance, it does not account for those who are staying with friends or relatives, or “couch surfing” (Vacha and Marin, 1993). Point-in-time counts are required for communities that receive federal and state funding for supporting homeless services. These counts are conducted at the end of January, part of the winter season in Spokane. It may be that the hope is that more people will seek shelter during this time of year that can be climatically dangerous for those without housing (and therefore counted), yet, it is likely that there are many more people without housing in Spokane County.

How did all of this come about? Characteristic of capitalist societies, homelessness is no accident, and considering Spokane's history of urban development, it appears no different from urban America in general, and strikes numerous parallels with the more heavily studied large American context. As is the case elsewhere, homelessness has historically manifested in Spokane as a necessary social condition in capitalist society, a consequence of boom and bust economics during the early years of the city's life and, more recently, of limited employment opportunities in conjunction with the endless search for capital gain, to maintain the city's ability to grow via the accumulation of capital (at the expense of social welfare investment). Based on this history and portrayal, then, it would appear that Spokane, as a seemingly ordinary city, still shares much in common with large American cities, an albeit more scaled-down version of the kinds of growth-machine politics and capitalist-induced development patterns (urban renewal, suburbanization) and impacts (socio-economic inequality, deindustrialization, homelessness) and that have been experienced elsewhere.

Methods

To address the research questions presented in the introduction, a single-case study format is adopted to examine Spokane, Washington, a prototypical mid-sized American city. Although all cities – large, medium, and small – exhibit similarities and idiosyncrasies (see Peck and Theodore, 2015), Spokane's population of over 200,000 (within a broader metropolitan region of roughly 500,000) places it squarely within the category of a mid-sized city. As such, Spokane represents a good venue for examining the ways in which homelessness is manifest in this particular context compared to large American cities, where the vast majority of scholarship on homelessness has been conducted. The extent to which the experience of homelessness in Spokane is indicative of the broader mid-sized urban context is an empirical question that is

further discussed in the following sections. And while this is difficult to definitively illuminate in the scope of a Master's thesis, the study can be characterized as representing a necessary initial step in providing insights that can further shed light on this topic and inform future research agendas that incorporate case-studies of other mid-sized cities.

The study uses a mix-method approach, though is based primarily on an ensemble of qualitative methods. These consist of 1) content analysis of policy/planning documents, city press releases, and news media; 2) analysis of statistical data collected from secondary sources on homelessness; and 3) primary ethnographic data. To answer the questions guiding this study, it was necessary to interview human subjects to gain a sense of their personal experience of what it is like to be homeless in the Spokane area. These individuals were accessed through public events offering various services to the homeless population within the Spokane area. These included Blessings Under the Bridge, and regular events hosted by charitable organizations to offer meals. Other individuals who are not part of the homeless population, but are rather impacted by it, also provided invaluable information on how this condition is managed. As such, interviews were the primary method of data collection driving the study.

However, to curtail the scope of the study for a Master's thesis, the interviewing process was limited to Spokane. Luckily there is a wealth of ethnographic material already done in larger urban contexts (e.g., see Wolch and Dear, 1993; Wacquant, 2010; Gowan, 2010; Beckett and Herbert, 2010), and this was systematically mined for purposes of comparative analysis. While much of this work covers a relatively long time horizon, analysis of contemporary policy documents, city press releases, and news media, was also conducted to gain a sense of the contemporary conditions in large cities. This was further supplemented by available statistical

data on homelessness which is also disproportionately skewed to the large urban context (WRAP, 2010; Olson, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with those experiencing this condition currently and/or those that have experienced it in the past, as well as other individuals within local Spokane communities who are impacted by this historically persistent condition, such as representatives from the Spokane community court, the Spokane Homeless Coalition, law enforcement officers, business owners, and service providers. These actors were interviewed for their perspective on the issue of homelessness in Spokane, which was utilized to piece together the overall narrative and general attitude surrounding the condition of homelessness in Spokane, and how this might be different and/or similar to that of larger cities. Semi-structured interviews can create an informal setting which gives participants flexibility in terms of exploring their ideas in response to the questions (see Williams, 2001; Longhurst, 2003; Seidman, 2006). For Seidman (2006, pg. 15), the “goal is to have the participant reconstruct his or her experience within the topic of study.” Moreover, a diverse range of questions can be effective in terms of casting a wide net for capturing potentially valuable information (Longhurst, 2003).

The following three sets of questions were prepared for the interview subjects who were enrolled in the study, and were arranged in advance of each interview for the purpose of guiding and keeping the discussion flowing in a relevant direction (Longhurst, 2003; Seidman, 2006):

The Homeless Population Interview Questions

- How long have you been homeless?
- Are you from Spokane?
- Have you ever been homeless in another city?

- If so, was that experience different, and how so?
- What happened to have you end up without housing?
- What barriers do you experience in everyday life?
- What do you think about the current laws such as the sit and lie ordinance, and the anti-camping law?
- Have you been impacted by these laws?
- What is your age and the gender you identify with?

Service Providers, Community Court, Law Enforcement Interview Questions

- Tell me your background and how long you've worked in the context of issues surrounding homelessness?
- Are you familiar with the institutional context of (police, service provider, and community court) in larger cities regarding homelessness?
- If so, what is your perception of this in how it is in Spokane?
- In what ways might it be more difficult, or easier, for those without housing to manage daily life living in Spokane versus a larger city?
- What is your sense of the effectiveness of the current laws surrounding homelessness?

Business Owner Questions

- How long have you owned a business in Spokane?
- Have you or your business been impacted by the presence of the homeless population, and if so, how?
- How long has it been a problem, and how has it changed over time?
- Do you feel as though the current laws are an appropriate solution?

- Are you familiar with larger cities and do you feel this issue may be more prevalent there, or not, and if so, why?

Although this kind of data is more readily available in the context of larger cities, there is very little available for smaller cities, and for Spokane specifically. The study's hypothesis is that those who experience homelessness in mid-sized cities are not necessarily better off than those in larger cities, and in some ways, might even be worse, yet the bulk of mainstream media and scholarly attention and resources devoted to this condition remains fixed on larger urban centers. It is in this context that the study aims to shift meaningful attention to smaller cities.

Interviews hold the potential for yielding rich data sets and valuable insights into the experience of those without housing. The data collected from other community members sheds further light on the "other side" of homelessness, and how this social issue impacts not only those without housing, but a broader spectrum of the community as a whole. This data is then compared to previously published studies on larger cities, such as Seattle, WA and San Francisco, CA, among others. Lastly, supplementary archival work was also done to develop a broader historical-geography of Spokane to situate and contextualize the contemporary issue of homelessness (and its management) in this city. All of this data sheds light on what kind of services are available for homeless people in Spokane, how access to such services impacts the population, what kind of anti-homeless laws and regulations are in place to limit their presence and mobility (as well as the discriminatory dimension to these laws), and how this compares with larger American cities.

The following empirical sections are presented in the form of a constructive narrative based on a systematic content analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Lindlof and Taylor, 2010) of this compiled textual and ethnographic data. More specifically, the analysis follows the method

of “critical discourse analysis” (CDA). Following Fairclough (1995, 2000; also see Jones, 2004), CDA emphasizes the rhetorical underpinnings that mobilize the production of particular social policies and practices (i.e., the implementation of anti-homeless laws), and the systems of meanings, values, and intentions that guide their deployment. In this context, for example, interview responses should be interpreted as deeply embedded within existing political, economic, and social structures and relations. In short, such responses – and the ideas, values, and world views that they communicate – are never de-rooted from the societal settings from which they are anchored, and are mobilized in ways that typically reflect society’s core (and hegemonic) conditions, ideals, and fears.

CDA also seeks to identify the links between, for instance, the emotive content articulated through interview responses and wider rhetorical formations (and their ideological underpinnings). Such rhetorical formations (i.e., the neoliberal discourse on homelessness), to Fairclough (1995, 2000), also tend to impose “strategic silences” in the process of illuminating their carefully crafted content, “grounding” them as coherent and rational. And such omissions, what a rhetorical formation does not say, are interpreted as just as important as what it does say. In these ways, CDA is expressly geared toward teasing out these kinds of rhetorical mechanisms and, in particular, disentangling the links between the empirical and the conceptual, the particular and the structural, and the concrete and the abstract.

Rhetorical formations are also understood as heterogeneous in that they often draw on ideological content from other rhetorical formations, constituting a “discursive web” of rhetorical and ideological resources. In this context, CDA is also valuable in its capacity to identify potentially overlooked and seemingly antiquated ideological systems (i.e., social welfarism) and related social practices (i.e., ignoring anti-homeless laws) that might remain quite prevalent, even

where seemingly incompatible principles and modes of thought (i.e., neoliberal austerity) continue to enjoy hegemonic dominance. This has important implications for how the policies and practices of a neoliberal-capitalist society that perpetually reproduce homelessness might be better contested and resisted. The study proceeds with these insights in mind.

Homeless in Spokane

On a warm April afternoon in 2016, a fellow student and I stepped into a Starbucks in downtown San Francisco. We had spent the day exploring the city. This was my first visit to San Francisco, and I was exhausted from the walking, the chaos of the city, and the over-stimulation large cities can bring to those of us from smaller cities. Immediately upon entering the coffee shop, I noticed that the restroom had a hand-written “CLOSED” sign taped to it. I asked the barista why the restroom was closed, and she responded with a roll of the eyes, irritated sigh, and these words: “We can’t keep the homeless people out of here if we don’t close it, so now nobody gets to use it.” I was taken aback by this statement, but only with its honesty and bluntness. From the moment I had arrived in San Francisco, I had become hyperaware of the homeless population, for they seemed to be visibly everywhere. I had yet to encounter a street corner void of a panhandler, or a homeless person selling the newspaper given to them to distribute in order to raise funds for themselves to meet the needs of daily survival.

Sitting in the Starbucks, enjoying my coffee, I got to watch the scene I had only previously read about unfold before my eyes. The police arrived, and placed into handcuffs the homeless man who had been attempting to utilize the restroom. The barista chatted freely with the incoming patrons about the man in handcuffs, sharing nonchalantly that he had come in at least five times trying to use the restroom. I continued watching the police officer, who

remained outside talking with the homeless man. Ultimately the man was not arrested, the officer removed the cuffs and let him go free. The man moved on, clearly heeding whatever warning the officer had delivered. In a city like San Francisco, with a homeless population of nearly 7,000 (2015 San Francisco PIT Count), and notably smaller in area than Spokane, scenes like this are commonplace. The patrons (consumers) of Starbucks did not seem surprised, or phased at all by the presence of the police with a homeless person in cuffs, nor did they seem bothered they could not use the restroom. The barista spoke about this as if she was giving me the time of day, or speaking about the weather.

Living in Spokane, WA and conducting this study has also made me hyperaware of the homeless population in this setting. On any given day, the homeless population can be seen on street corners, walking in the parks, and roaming the downtown area. They have their signs, their packs, and their carts holding all of their possessions. So what, if anything, makes the mid-sized city different from the large city? Spokane grew up in relation to western resource-based development and has since evolved through urban renewal, suburbanization, deindustrialization, and now is a neoliberal city, just like many other cities in America; but I posit that although there are many similarities, there are also many differences. In what follows I present the data I have collected from Spokane, and situate this in comparison to the larger city experience, parsing out the details in order to answer the research questions posed in the introduction.

For the purposes of this study, a report titled *Washington's War on the Visibly Poor: A Survey of Criminalizing Ordinances & Their Enforcement* (produced in 2015 by Olson at Seattle University), was used to pull data for Seattle and Spokane (hereafter referred to as WWVP). All of the following data is derived from that report.

In Washington State, the most commonly criminalized behaviors are such seemingly benign activities as sitting, standing, or sleeping in public spaces (Olson, 2015). Another behavior often criminalized is urination or defecation in public, although public agencies often fail to provide sufficient access to 24-hour restrooms and hygiene centers (NLCHP, n.d.). Anti-homeless laws are not specifically titled “anti-homeless,” yet due to how these laws so transparently and disproportionately impact and target the homeless population, this moniker is often deemed fitting among critical commentators. Although some ordinances may appear neutral, it is unlikely that people who are housed would become offenders. Ordinances such as rummaging or scavenging through trash receptacles, storage of personal property in public spaces, and access to public facilities for those who create body odor are not likely to be conducted by those who can readily bathe and have a home for their belongings. Homeless people often have no reasonable alternatives but to violate such ordinances. These laws may have legitimate health and sanitation purposes, yet there is a disparate impact on homeless individuals that result from these purportedly politically neutral laws.

Seattle University examined 7 cities in the state of Washington, including Seattle and Spokane. The Washington report uses 2010 census data, and crime data from 2009 through 2013. The following sub-sections provides information on the actual number of ordinances in the large city of Seattle, and then the mid-sized city of Spokane, including the enforcement practices of those ordinances. Minimal data was collected for San Francisco, although this large city has a rich history of punitive actions towards its homeless population (Gowan, 2010).

Seattle

With a population of over 600,000, and thought to be one of the forerunners in the criminalization of its homeless population (see Beckett and Herbert, 2010), Seattle has

surprisingly few ordinances that criminalize its homeless (six). Seattle has the highest concentration of homeless citizens out of any city in Washington State, yet only an average number of ordinances. However, Seattle issues more citations than any other city in Washington State (based on the 7 cities polled in WWVP), a reflection of Seattle's larger population size. Over the 5-year period of 2009-2013, a total of 5,814 citations were issued, an average of three per day. Of those, the most often cited behavior was for sleeping/camping in public spaces (4,117 or 71%). After that, other behaviors cited were urinating or defecating in public (1,004 or 17%), aggressive panhandling (349 or 6%), sitting or lying in particular public places (250 or 4%), and camping in particular public places (94 or 2%) (Olson, 2015).

Spokane

The mid-sized city of Spokane has roughly one third the population of Seattle, however it has 12 criminal ordinances which directly and negatively impact its homeless population, including an abundance of compound ordinances – single laws prohibiting multiple types of conduct. Over the same 5-year period, 2009-2013, Spokane issued a total of 1,105 citations, averaging less than one per day. Of those, the most often cited was the Sit and Lie Ordinance (462 or 46%). Other behaviors cited were camping in particular public places, combined with begging in particular places (291 or 29%) (Olson, 2015). In general, Spokane's ordinances are punishable as misdemeanors resulting in fines up to \$5,000 and jail time of no more than one year.

Important to this study is that the Washington report states “Whether you live in a small town or a large metropolis, municipalities are likely to aggressively criminalize homelessness” (Olson, 2015). Based on the data collected up until 2013, this is seemingly an accurate statement. Both the large city of Seattle and the mid-sized city of Spokane issued a large number

of citations over a five-year period. This would suggest, regardless of the size of the city, that hegemonic neoliberal ideology is indeed rampant across urban contexts in terms of dealing with urban homeless populations. Furthermore, with its high number of ordinances which target the homeless population, the data leans towards Spokane as having qualities of a much worse area for those without housing. However, something changed for Spokane in 2013, which brought about a major decrease in the amount of citations issued.

A Humanist-Shift?

In 2013, Spokane saw the inception of its own Community Court. Since then, the number of citations issued has dramatically decreased. A group of committed public servants who work closely with the criminal justice system in Spokane realized that the old way of doing things “was just simply not working anymore” (Interview 11). For one public servant, “People were being arrested and then booked and released and recommitting the same crime [usually something as harmless as sitting somewhere they weren’t supposed to] within moments of release, and we realized this was not the type of behavior modification that was going to work” (Interview 11). In short, the Spokane homeless population were finding themselves caught in a revolving door of arrest and release, with no real connection to services, no real way to fulfill what the courts were requiring of them, and no real way out of the cycle.

Community courts are present in cities across the country, including Seattle and San Francisco. Seattle’s community court was started in 2005 (as cited in About Seattle Community Court n.d.), however Seattle has continued to issue a large amount of citations. To put the impact of Spokane’s Community Court into perspective, one needs only review the Sit and Lie ordinance data since 2013 as published in a Spokane local newspaper, *The Inlander*. In 2014, police cited or booked 59 people, and in 2015 that number dropped to 15 (Thomas, 2016).

According to the article, Brad Arleth, the downtown precinct police captain, says that “the decrease in citations is proof that the ordinance is working” (The city released data in its sit-lie ordinance, 2016). This, however, is not necessarily the case. The ordinance was in place for years prior, and although the ordinance was officially rewritten in 2013, it is a leap to assume a simple rewrite is responsible for such an extreme decrease in citations. Rather, this decrease has been much more attributable to the Community Court than the verbiage of the laws. In Spokane, the Community Court is making a sizeable and positive impact in terms of improving the immediate experience of the homeless population, of which the city has benefited from as well. It is clear that the amount of homeless people who are visible to the public eye (and therefore threatening capital accumulation) has decreased (at least in the downtown core, the only area where the ordinances apply).

Moreover, in Spokane, the Community Court and the Spokane Downtown Partnership (the organization that oversees Spokane’s Business Improvement District) work closely together. One benefit of the smaller mid-sized city is the ability of social workers, programs, law enforcement, coalitions, and outreach programs to work more closely together. Collaboration is a much smaller bridge to cross when crossing it in a mid-sized city. Contrary to what I had expected to find in Spokane, based on its typical path of neoliberal development, Spokane has, *potentially*, cultivated a degree of collective resistance on the ground to the neoliberal status-quo, at least more recently. On the surface, the same neoliberal policies and practices, i.e., anti-homeless laws and BIDs, are present. In this context, Spokane presents just like many other cities, large or small. In fact, in an interview with a Spokane business owner, it was stated “Spokane is just like every other city on the planet” (Interview 12). Yet, Spokane’s Community Court has made a seemingly sizeable and positive impact very quickly, such as decreasing the

amount of citations issued, connecting the homeless population to services, and helping to stop the cycle of arrest, release, and re-arrest.

It should also be noted that the city's downtown area has been served by this emergent humanist treatment of the homeless as well. In one sense, this apparent humanist-shift could represent, or at least signal the possibility of, a growing retreat from the neoliberal program of homeless management. But, there are signs that this humanism might only represent surface-dressing over a neoliberal rationality that remains persistent, but just less explicit or overt. The following testimony was given by a representative from Spokane's Community Court:

“It is a problem solving court, so what is the problem we are trying to solve? The Downtown Business Partnership said ‘Well, we’ll tell you what the problem is, it’s that there is an enormous population downtown that are really affecting business by their hanging around in the doorways’, ...there was this out of control behavior, and our folks didn’t have any place else to go” (Interview 11).

The reality that homeless people were simply returning to the very same places, and their visible presence had not been removed from the targeted spaces downtown, essentially rendered the criminalization approach counter-productive. This is also the same individual that noted above that “this was not the type of behavior modification that was going to work” (Interview 11), implying that the primary source of the problem can be found in the behavior of the homeless themselves. These quotes only reinforce what one would expect to find in the large city, as well as the qualities of Spokane as a neoliberal city functioning in a capitalist society.

Moreover, offering community service in exchange for exemption from criminalization from laws that unfairly target the homeless population, while indeed a more positive and less punitive treatment, can also be interpreted as simply another form of exploitation of an already

vulnerable population. Community service as such (meant to connect the individual to the areas they frequent hoping to foster a respect for the area and its appearance) serves whom? While it certainly conjures up a neo-Keynesian spirit, replete with a kind of pro-welfare rhetoric, it still ultimately serves the business owners, and their quest to safeguard acceptable profit margins, as well as the City's quest to preserve revenue streams. The City of Spokane also benefits by decreasing the cost of incarceration: "It was costing the city \$130 per day to house these individuals in the jail. If someone sat [in jail] for 10 days and then was given credit for time served, that was a \$1,300 bill for the city" (Interview 11). In community service, certain tasks could be done (such as garbage removal) that help keep the city clean, thereby conserving the amount of paid-labor that previously performed these same tasks.

It is understandable that the City of Spokane would want to decrease this bill, particularly if jail time is not proving an effective tool for "behavior modification" (Interview 11). But this raises, again, the question of what has led to the kinds of behavior exhibited by homeless individuals, implying that homelessness is indeed an outcome of individual behavior and choices. This is not to suggest that *solving the problem* in a more humanized, socially sensitive way is a negative thing, nor is it to suggest that Spokane's Community Court does not truly want to help people. Indeed, many interview respondents reflected this more caring and compassionate rhetorical flavor.

In an interview given on a radio show about homelessness (The Science of Poverty, 5/14/17), the Chair of the Spokane Homeless Coalition, Ryan Oelrich, noted that despite the recent sharp spike in homelessness, attempts are being made to not only assist the homeless but also "address the root causes" as well, i.e., to "stabilize families, helping parents maintain jobs, job training, additional education, providing stable housing..." – and while these sorts of

objectives should be applauded, they also remain fixed first and foremost on what the individual can do. Moreover, when asked how or if this issue can be solved, the following answer was given:

“Solved – that’s a really tough question, what do you mean by solved? I think it can be addressed ... I’ve seen firsthand lives turned around, folks who have found purpose, and have been able to get housed, to become productive members of society again; so I think yes, we can turn this around, now are we going to get to 100%? ... probably not...”

Oelrich further discussed the importance of working with youths who experienced homelessness as children, that being homeless has a deep impact on youths and that this population needs extra-special attention in terms of preventing homelessness.

Despite the expected neo-Keynesian contours to this kind of response, linking the supposedly “root” causes with job training, education, and the like, suggests such root causes lie with the individual. This is even further implied with the notion that homelessness can never be completely solved (because there will presumably always be people who are mired in the culture of poverty), not to mention the asserted goal of service providers being to transform the homeless into “productive members of society.” Even among service providers, those most likely to adopt a humanist attitude to this set of concerns, this still suggests the likelihood of a persistent neoliberal explanation of homelessness as rooted in individual behavior.

Businesses and Service Providers

Spokane has a homeless population that continues to grow. And yes, Spokane has ordinances that have strategically targeted homeless and poor individuals in occupying certain areas of the city. And yes, Spokane is a city in which the downtown core attracts homeless

individuals and there are businesses there who fear and feel threatened by the presence of these individuals. One business owner stated, “I feel afraid to take the trash to the dumpster at night, and my patrons have said they don’t want to bring their children to my store” (Interview 19). But on the ground, right in the very heart of Spokane, there are people who seemingly put up a visible resistance, and often from the very people charged with implementing and enforcing these otherwise draconian and punitive anti-homeless policies. A Spokane service provider shared that “The police will stop in and let us know they will be going to clean up a camp before they do it, allowing us [the outreach team] time to go in and warn people about what is coming” (Interview 13). The same interviewee also shared that his program “...often goes out to the homeless camp under the freeway bridge to provide the residents with garbage bags, helping them to keep the area clean which in turn helps to keep the negative attention from the city and business owners minimal” (Interview 13). These types of actions appear far removed from the more punitive actions taken in cities like San Francisco and Seattle. This is not to say that there are not service providers, law enforcement, or others who set out to help the homeless population in large cities; but this seems particularly palpable in Spokane.

In an interview with a Spokane Police officer, the officer stated “We really do not want to arrest people. Arresting people and taking them to jail is only making the problem worse” (Interview 17). And to an official with the Community Court, the newly rewritten sit and lie ordinance allows police officers to connect people to services, which is now pragmatically consolidated into one place thanks to the Community Court (Interview 11). While the media leads viewers and readers down a path that places Spokane in line with that of a larger city (see Alexander, 2015), this data presented here suggests the possibility of a different story.

Spokane's Unhoused

In multiple interviews with those without housing, a much different picture emerged. Many of the people interviewed stated that they had not had any interaction at all with police, and had not been impacted by any of the laws that purportedly target the homeless, a major departure from the stories told in other larger cities (e.g., see Gowan, 2010; Beckett and Herbert, 2010; Wolch and Dear, 1993). At least six of ten people interviewed stated that they had not been impacted, and those who had been impacted spoke of the police as “nice” and “helpful” (Interviews 1-10). The extent of the impact had been a ride to a shelter for one homeless woman (Interview 8). One male who has been homeless for 2 years reported, “The police have asked me to move along, and I’ve seen other people arrested, but they were dealing drugs” (Interview 1). Throughout the interview process, common themes emerged with the homeless population, directly related to the types of barriers they experience, simple things that a housed person would take for granted. The most common barriers were:

- How and where to wash their clothing.
- Showering regularly.
 - This included other hygiene issues, such as feminine hygiene (Interview 5).
- Money for medication.
 - The Community Court service provider room allows people who have not committed any crime to utilize the services, which offers help with signing up for state medical insurance. However, this service had not been used by the people interviewed.

- Transportation.
 - Interviewees described difficulty obtaining bus passes, and expressed that taking the bus often takes hours and multiple buses to get from one place to the next (Interview 1).
- Loneliness.
 - Multiple people spoke of missing their family, having lost their children, and having no one to talk to. One homeless veteran described himself as “invisible” (Interviews 2 and 8).
- Employment.
 - Barriers to employment included criminal background (Interview 3), and not being able to work when there was no place to regroup each day, shower, eat, and wash clothes (Interview 5).
- Storage of belongings.

Surprisingly, not one person identified a lack of affordable housing as a direct barrier. It is noteworthy that six of the ten people interviewed currently experiencing homelessness had drug addiction or mental health issues. However, there was no evidence that this was the direct cause of their current condition, but rather that these conditions were either exacerbated by their already-existing homelessness or developed afterwards. And again, even in situations where drug abuse or mental illness directly contribute to one’s state of homelessness, this does not necessarily imply a direct causal relationship, as there are myriad variables at work simultaneously (i.e., capitalist-induced poverty, lack of resources and social-familial support networks), not to mention the broader social forces that lead to drug abuse to begin with. While

these factors may have some correlation to the condition of homelessness, and certainly work to hinder people's ability to become stable, they are not the *cause* of homelessness.

The most common reason for the homelessness within the group that was interviewed was the inability to plan for and effectively manage contingencies. These ranged from the death of a family member (Interview 5), a car breaking down and having no means to fix it (Interview 1), leaving an abusive relationship (Interview 6), and unaffordable child care (Interview 8). This is evidence of the systemic factors of a capitalist society at work. Low-paying jobs do not allow for people to plan for such things, and many of those who are housed are often one lost paycheck away from becoming homeless. And when subjected to a capitalist housing market, low-income, affordable housing simply does not promise the degree of profit margins as higher-income housing construction, absent public intervention, as has been the case in the neoliberal era.

Homeless Services

Government funding is placed where the need is, which means that cities with larger populations and higher numbers of homeless people get the lion's share of funding. This does not, however, necessarily equate to more or better services. Seattle boasts nearly 50 shelters of different kinds, while Spokane has merely 6 (Homeless Shelter Directory/Seattle; Homeless Shelter Directory/Spokane). Privately funded services, such as churches and charities are more abundant in larger cities, however based on scale, it does not appear that there are any more or less services available for the population. One issue however that Spokane is facing is lack of funding for an ever-growing homeless population. House of Charity (one of the few day shelters) is currently undergoing a typical dose of neoliberal-austerity driven budget cuts, which has forced them to limit the services they can offer. Yet, in Spokane, many of these services are often inter-connected. When one suffers, the overflow must be funneled to the other available

service providers who are already running at max capacity. Consequently, this loss of funding and limited available shelter hours will inevitably force people back into the downtown area, rendering such budget cuts counter-productive.

Policy Modeling

As with many cities on the western side of the United States, Spokane is not an old city. As such, younger cities have often looked to older, more developed cities for ideas and information about how to move forward, develop successfully, and curtail issues as they come about (Brenner and Theodore, 2010). It is much like the relationship of an older sibling to a younger sibling. The younger watches and learns, and from time to time seeks out the older for instruction and guidance. This process has developed into what can be called “policy modeling,” and Spokane has done this with larger cities for a variety of circumstances. Initially, we saw evidence of Spokane looking to the bigger city with help to save the downtown area, with its hiring of Ebasco, the same company that had helped larger cities restructure their downtown areas, hoping to save them from purported doom. This process was then again followed with the implementation and enforcement of vagrancy laws (Prager, 2013), as well as the for the community court: “Ideas and models from the first community court in Red Hook were followed in Spokane” (Interview 11). Spokane’s business district also looks to other cities to see what they are doing and to bring back ideas about how to do things in Spokane: “We visited multiple cities, and brought back the best of the best ideas” (Interview 12). This crosses into the services provided to the homeless population as well. One service provider who identified that he was familiar with the context of homelessness in larger cities shared “When I first started [35 years ago] my goal was to go to the big cities and look [at] what they’re doing, St. Louis, The Twin Cities, Portland, and of course Seattle” (Interview 13).

Conclusion

To compare the condition of homelessness in large and mid-sized cities is a bit like comparing apples to oranges. From a geographical stand-point there are many factors to consider. One could simply argue that climate alone would make a city like San Francisco so broadly different from a city like Spokane that they are beyond compare. Even a large city within the same geographical region as Spokane, such as Seattle, has so many differences it makes it difficult to really pinpoint which factors are related to city size per se. Spokane's homelessness is similar in many ways to that of the larger city. The numbers of homeless people are in line, or proportional, with the population size when compared to other cities. The experience of those who are homeless is often congruent with those in a larger city in terms of the conditions that lead to homelessness, and the barriers faced while trying to manage daily survival.

However, the homeless population of Spokane is assisted by key individuals in the City teaming together to fight homelessness, and to extend the necessary help in order to provide at least more humanist-driven services. Spokane's homeless are not forgotten, and they are not invisible. The City previously managed the issue of homelessness, particularly the visibility of homeless individuals, in similar ways as the larger city, often finding its proposed solutions by following the larger city policy (Interview 11 and Interview 12). Prior to 2013, before Spokane's Community Court was established, being homeless in Spokane was notably worse, as indicated in the Washington's War on the Visibly Poor report, and would've likely been just as difficult, if not more so, than in a larger city. This is not the case today, which raises the following question: What exactly does this humanist-shift represent, as reflected in the attitudes of those directly engaged in managing this issue? Is this indicative of an emergent trend in smaller cities? This is likely not the case based on similar phenomena unfolding in nearby Portland, Oregon, where

camping on sidewalks in public spaces has now been made entirely legal. This, though, has not been without resistance from the city councilmen and business owners, who sued the mayor of Portland, Charlie Hales, over this action (the lawsuit was later dropped, see Smith, 2016).

Also, Seattle has been referred to as “Freeattle, the city of hand-outs,” boasting of its generosity to people experiencing homelessness (Westneat, 2008). In this context, the study prompts the question of the extent to which this more humanist shift in attitude toward the homeless reflects a more regional or even national-trend away from the neoliberal program of homelessness management? Indeed, a similar discursive-shift has been identified in other cities in terms of how the urban and racialized poor are discursively portrayed, as exhibited by President Obama’s discourse on urban poverty (Wilson and Anderson, 2011) and in the context of Chicago’s gentrifying neighborhoods (Wilson and Sternberg, 2012; Anderson and Sternberg, 2013). It is to be expected that social workers and homeless advocates and outreach would articulate this humanist ethos. Yet it is moderately surprising coming from others who are bound up within the confines of the capitalist society they must function in, those who are required to protect and advance the financial well-being of the City, and those expected to implement and enforce the laws of the city. I suggest that this humanism, or even neo-Keynesian rhetoric, represents a new twist, or hybridization consisting of a potential new discursive shift melded with pre-existing neoliberal sentiments; while not necessarily a wide-ranging departure from neoliberalism, it can be thought of as a complicating of established neoliberal rationality.

Despite this the return of this humanist ethos, neoliberal rationality persists in terms of the emphasis on “changing the individual,” that fixing the problem can be tackled by fixing the person. To the extent to which this humanism is melded with such established neoliberal assumptions suggests a return to idea that the problem can still be addressed by simply more

substantively and compassionately healing these people's inner and moral characters by providing them with an abundance of services, rather than housing. However, Spokane has adopted the increasingly popular "housing first" model, and has opened up multiple permanent housing units, which may represent a huge step towards solving, at least, the housing-dimension to this persistent issue, assuming adequate funding can be procured. Tenants are offered access to services, but participating is not required as a condition of tenancy, and there is no time limit to how long a person may reside there (Hope Housing).

Could it also be that a mid-sized city is less prone or subject to the mass infusion of capital investment that typically marks major metropolitan regions, such as San Francisco, Seattle, Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago? Perhaps the neoliberal stranglehold over business conduct typical of large capital earning businesses is less tight in smaller cities? At the very least, it would appear that the smaller size of the city allows for some inter-connectedness between agencies and law enforcement that might be lost in the larger cities, which only strengthens the capacity of service providers from making some degree of difference, even if only nominal. In these ways, the study ultimately raises more questions than answers, but opens doors for further comparative analysis, contributing to establishing the empirical foundation for further inquiry into the question of the ordinary city and the seemingly uneven and differential manifestation of neoliberal institutional formations and their impacts on the social fabric (including homelessness) of the city.

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Interviews

Interview 1: January 6th, 2017

Interview 2: January 25th, 2017

Interview 3: February 8th, 2017

Interview 4: February 20th, 2017

Interview 5: February 22nd, 2017

Interview 6: March 7th, 2017

Interview 7: March 7th, 2017

Interview 8: March 13th, 2017

Interview 9: March 20th, 2017

Interview 10: April 10th, 2017

Interview 11: January 5th, 2017

Interview 12: April 11th, 2017

Interview 13: October 26th, 2016

Interview 14: March 30th, 2017

Interview 15: May 12th, 2016

Interview 16: May 12th, 2015

Interview 17: April 6th, 2017

Interview 18: April 8th, 2017

Interview 19: January 12th, 2017

Interview 20: January 12th, 2017

Additional Resources:

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Appendix

Figure 3. Map of Washington State, showing location of Spokane and Seattle



Figure 4. Number of Ordinances per Washington City (WWVP, 2015).

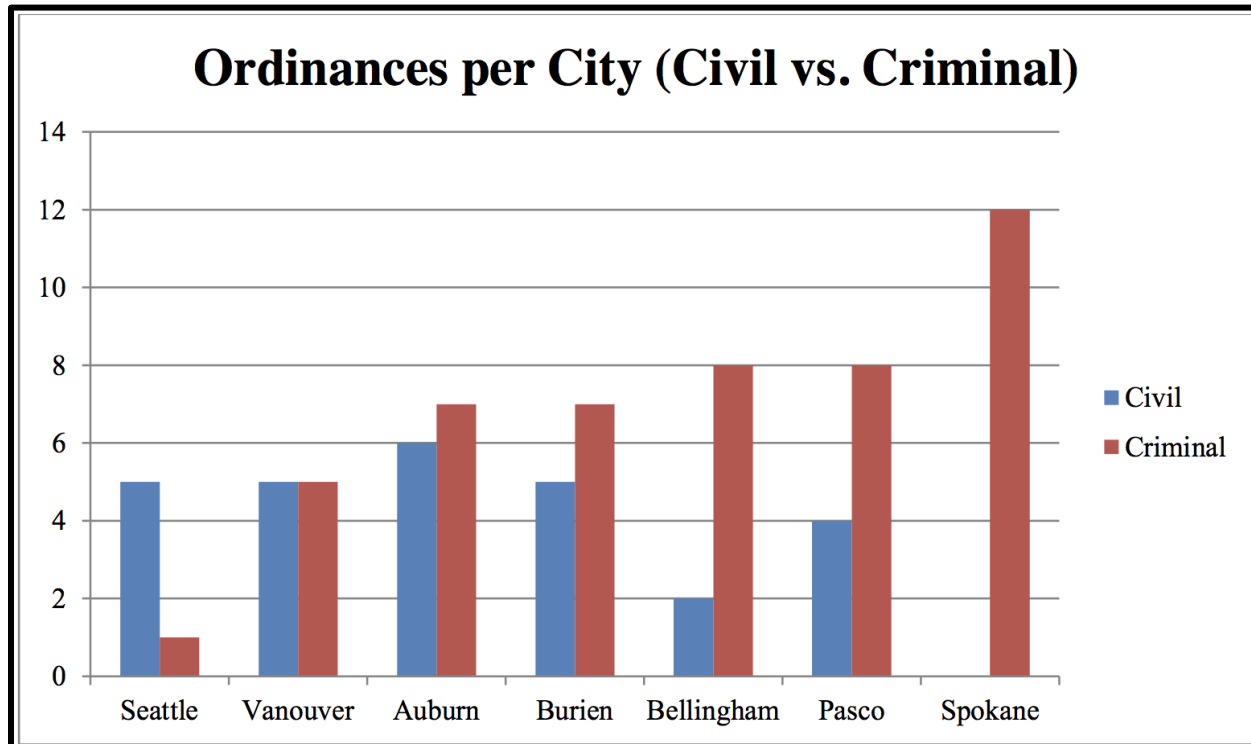


Figure 5. Total Citations Issued from 2009-2013 in Washington cities (WWVP, 2015).

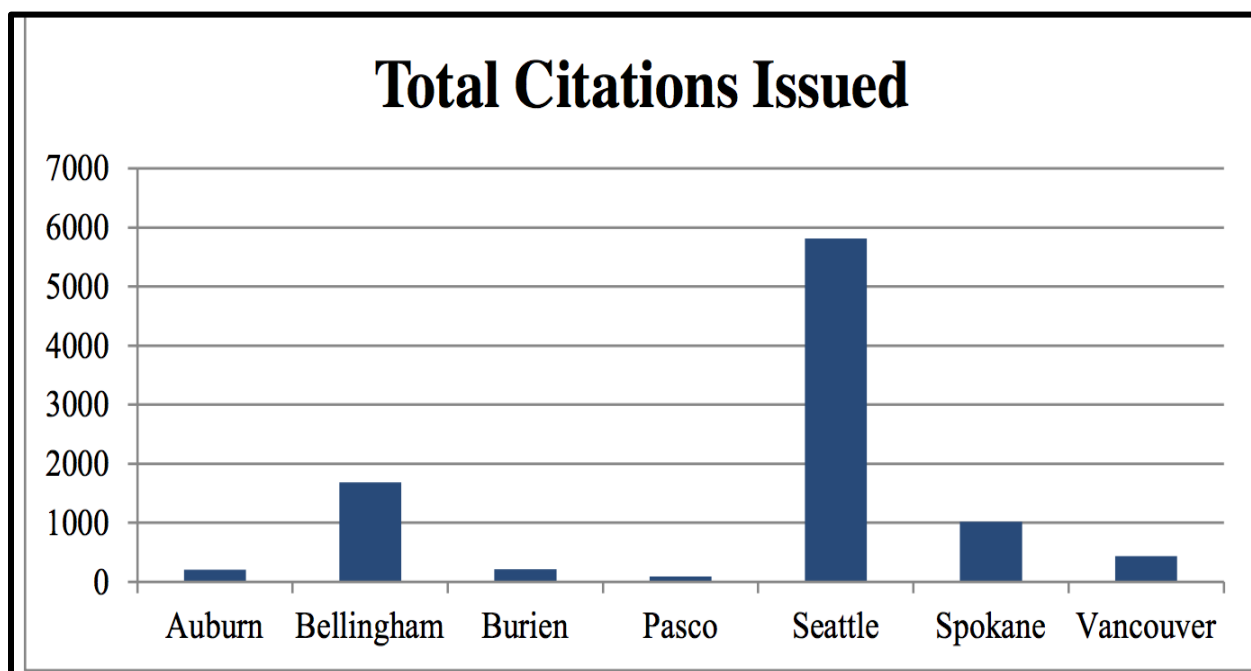


Figure 6. Citations issued in Spokane for ordinances that criminalize homelessness (WWVP, 2015).

CITATIONS	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
10.06.015 - Urinating in Public	0	0	1	29	42
10.08.030 – Nuisance	14	13	2	0	0
10.08B.040 - Occupy/Build Transient	1	4	8	23	64
10.10.025 - Pedestrian	89	83	41	56	193
10.10.026 - Sit/Lie on Sidewalk in Retail Zone	3	1	5	2	10
10.10.040 - Public Park Rules	88	42	75	25	61
10.10.100 - Unlawful Transit Conduct	7	6	10	4	12
10.19.020 – Vagrancy	0	0	0	0	1

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