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Locating the "unthinkable" in Canadian poverty coverage : a discourse and content analysis of two mainstream dailies

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LOCATING THE "UNTHINKABLE" IN CANADIAN POVERTY
COVERAGE: A DISCOURSE AND CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TWO
MAINSTREAM DAILIES

by

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M.A., Dalhousie University, 2000
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A thesis presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Masters in Communication and Culture
in the Joint Programme of Communication
and Culture, a Partnership of
Ryerson University and York University.

(M.A.)

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Abstract

Locating the “Unthinkable” in Canadian Poverty Coverage: A Discourse and Content Analysis of Two Mainstream Dailies

Masters in Communication and Culture, Fall 2007

Joint Programme in Communication and Culture

A Partnership of Ryerson and York University

In this thesis I argue that poverty is a keyword and that the meaning / meanings attached to it affect how we see the issue and what we choose to do or not do about it. I investigate how poverty coverage may be limiting popular discussion and action through a content analysis and discourse analysis of coverage in the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail*. I conclude that as citizens we are not getting the information we need to consider how we as a society should go about eliminating poverty. I also conclude that the meaning of poverty is at present undergoing a transformation, and that contestations over the meaning of poverty are being played out in the news. I argue that we must be conscious of this shift in meaning and its implications, as it will significantly effect future policy and the structure of our society.

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Introduction

In this thesis I argue that poverty is a key word, and that the meaning attached to this key word effects how we see the issue and what we choose to do or not do about it.¹ To varying degrees, over the last 100 years, poverty has been viewed as either the result of individual failing or as the result of an unjust economic system.² The dominant view of poverty within any given period effects what courses of action to deal with poverty are deemed necessary and appropriate. In the late 19th century the view that poverty was the result of individual failing and therefore the responsibility of the individual enabled a practice of incarcerating the poor in workhouses / poorhouses in Canada. This view persisted into the twentieth century, but was interrupted by the experience of the Great Depression. The experience of the Depression led to widespread recognition that poverty was the result of economic and social circumstances.³ The widespread experience of poverty facilitated a growing welfare state and the development of social security legislation. Poverty and economic inequality remain among the most pressing issues facing Canada today.⁴ My objective in this project was to analyze how poverty is portrayed in the news today, to gain a better understanding of contemporary poverty discourse and how such discourse might be limiting public and political responses to poverty. There are many different fields of poverty discourse, but I chose to analyze the news as the news is relied upon as a key information source in democratic societies, and the news also both reflects and reinforces dominant discourses. In my analysis I set out to

¹ My project was inspired by Raymond Williams's seminal text *Keywords*. The text is discussed in more detail in Chapter One.

² This scale is drawn from the work Murray Edelman and is discussed in more detail in Chapter One.

³ Keshen and Blake, p.3.

⁴ Several recently published reports quantify the extent of poverty and economic inequality in Canada; National Council of Welfare, *Welfare Incomes 2005*. Vol. 125. Canada: Summer 2006. Picot, Garnett and John Myles, *Income Inequality and Low Income in Canada, an International Perspective*. Catalogue no. 11F0019MIE — No. 240. Statistics Canada: 2005. Yalnizyan, Armine, *Divided and Distracted: Regionalism as an Obstacle to Reducing Poverty and Inequality*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2005. Unicef, *Child Poverty in Rich Countries, 2005*. <http://www.unicef.org/brazil/repcard6e.pdf>.

investigate the assertions made by social theorists Herbert J. Gans, Zygmunt Bauman, and Michael B. Katz who have each argued, with some variation, that we are not doing anything about poverty because poverty is not presented as a social problem with social solutions in the mainstream media. Rather, they argue poverty is regularly mystified and that “the poor” are most often stereotypically portrayed and often blamed for their poverty.⁵ To my knowledge, this project provides the first empirical testing of these assertions in relation to Canadian news coverage.

To analyze the news quantitatively and qualitatively I conducted both a content analysis and a discourse analysis. Two of Canada’s most popular dailies were selected for analysis; the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*.⁶ I decided to investigate how poverty coverage has changed over time to gain a better appreciation of contemporary taken for granted understandings about poverty, and so that I might also consider how social and political contexts both shapes, and is shaped by, news coverage.⁷ The results presented here discuss a comparison of 1971 coverage to coverage in 2005 and 2006. The year 1971 was chosen as this period marks the final welfare expansionist period in Canada. The years 2005 and 2006 provide an indication of contemporary discourse and follow more than a decade of neoliberal discursive and political influence. Comparatively, these dates mark two very different periods in Canada in terms of policy development and public discourse. A content analysis was conducted to quantify significant patterns in framing and in the presentation of stereotypes. A discourse analysis was conducted to

⁵ Katz, Michael B. *The Undeserving Poor*. Herbert J. Gans, *The War Against the Poor* and Zygmunt Bauman, *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*.

⁶ My reasons for selecting these two newspapers in particular are discussed in greater detail in Chapter One.

⁷ This conclusion is pointed to by Norman Fairclough in *Media Discourse*.

investigate how poverty was being invested with meaning through language, and also which political orders of discourse were most influential.

In brief, my analysis demonstrates there has been a shift in how poverty is covered in the news. One of my most significant findings was that in 1971 poverty was most often discussed as a social and political issue, however in 2005 and in 2006 poverty was increasingly discussed in reference to a particular group of people. The implication of this is that the issue of poverty becomes less a matter of social policy discussion, and increasingly an issue of concern in relation to a particular group of people. The danger in such coverage is that poverty becomes less an issue affecting an “us” and is more often presented as an issue affecting a “them.” My analysis also suggests that in contemporary coverage there is little discussion of the role of social organization and politics in generating and eliminating poverty, which naturalizes poverty. However my results also indicate there is an ongoing discursive struggle to invest poverty with meaning, which serves as an important reminder that meaning cannot be fixed. While poverty coverage in 1971 and 2005 in the *Globe* and the *Star* is quite similar, the differences in coverage between these two newspapers are more pronounced in 2006 coverage as the *Star* increasingly took on an advocacy role while the *Globe* tended to be more in line with government discourse. This split in news discourse, I argue, is an indication that the meaning of poverty is again opening up and undergoing a transformation. It is my assertion that the new shift in poverty discourse is due in part to Canada’s increasingly destabilized political environment. These results and their implications are discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

This research project is comprised of five sections. In Chapter One I present my rationale for arguing that poverty is a key word. In this chapter I trace significant events and usages affecting the key word poverty to draw out how the past influences contemporary meanings of poverty. In this chapter I also detail my methodology and outline how the discourse and content analysis were conducted. Chapter Two presents the results of my content analysis and discusses shifts in poverty framing and in the labeling of “the poor” from 1971, 2005, and 2006. In Chapter Three I present the results of my discourse analysis which consists of a comparison of poverty coverage in 1971 versus 2006, and of the *Star* versus the *Globe* throughout these periods. In this analysis I evaluate which political orders of discourse are most influential including the discourses of government, the discourse associated with those advocating a residual state model, and the discourse of those advocating a redistributive state model. In Chapter Four I present my conclusion and a discussion of my most significant, and lesser findings. In this section I discuss the implications of my findings in reference to hegemony, agenda-setting, and the democratic process. Further I discuss the need for an expanded study that would also investigate the role of new media in poverty coverage. In the final section, Chapter Five, I reflect upon the limitations and challenges of this project. Among the most notable limitations is my recognition that in focusing solely on news articles my analysis is narrow in scope as it does not discuss the role of news production, or of how readers may be constructing their own meaning in decoding the texts.

There are two founding premises informing this project. The first is that language has a significant impact on how we come to know the world and therefore on our actions. Louise Phillips and Marianne Jorgenson, effectively note that “our ways of talking do not

neutrally reflect our world, identities and social relations but, rather, play an active role in creating and changing them.”⁸ The point here is not that reality does not exist, but that physical objects and social relations gain meaning through language.⁹ Moreover, as this study attempts to uncover, our ways of presenting the world are historically and culturally contingent.¹⁰ As Phillips and Jorgenson argue, within a particular worldview some types of action become natural and others unthinkable.¹¹ “Different social understandings of the world lead to different social actions, and therefore the social construction of knowledge and truth has social consequences.”¹² Phillips and Jorgenson add that changes in discourses are a means by which the social world is changed. My objective in stressing the important role of discourse in shaping how people see and understand the world, is not to go as far as to state that our social world is entirely discursively constituted, rather I am arguing that how we speak and write about poverty does have an impact on what we choose to do or not do about it.¹³

I share with Norman Fairclough, the position that language “is a socially and historically situated mode of action, in a dialectical relationship with other facets of the social.”¹⁴ In this sense language is socially shaped and socially shaping. Therefore, “texts constitute a major source of evidence for grounding claims about social structures, relations, and processes.”¹⁵ A key component of this project is its attempt to link news texts to social and political orders of discourse and practice, as prescribed by Critical

⁸ Phillips and Jorgenson, p. 1.

⁹ Phillips and Jorgenson, p. 9.

¹⁰ Phillips and Jorgenson, p. 9.

¹¹ These previous two points summarized from Phillips and Jorgenson’s overview of social constructivism, p. 5-6.

¹² Phillips and Jorgenson, p. 6.

¹³ This perspective is represented in Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis approach as outlined in *Media Discourse*, and also by Phillips and Jorgenson p. 7.

¹⁴ Fairclough, 309.

¹⁵ Fairclough, 1995: 209.

Discourse Analysis. Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of language provide a useful way to theorize the dialectical relationship between language and society prescribed by critical discourse analysis. For Bakhtin, language must be considered as living, and not a system of absolute norms. However, within language he notes that there is a centripetal push toward a unitary language and away from heteroglossia. This unitary language he argues, "gives expression to forces working toward concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization, which develop in vital connection with the processes of sociopolitical and cultural centralization."¹⁶ The centripetal push is the attempt to centralize verbal and idea systems to linguistic norms that present a particular world view. However, as Bakhtin notes a unitary language in fact is never achieved, as the world is continually dominated by heteroglossia and a constant interaction between meanings. As Michael Holquist summarizes, one may seek a unitary language, but the unitariness is relative to the overpowering force of heteroglossia, and thus dialogism.¹⁷ The seeming contradiction here provides the complex and necessary view of language essential to this study. Within language use there is a push to centralize and fix meaning, but such a fixation does not occur due to the dialogic nature of language. My results support this view, as a push toward a unitary discourse surrounding poverty can be identified for each year of analysis, but such a discourse is constantly changing and challenged by competing discourses. As Bakhtin notes: "Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions. Contextual overtones (generic, tendentious, individualistic) are inevitable in the word."¹⁸ A word such as poverty then is shaped by the past contexts in which it was used, but is also

¹⁶ Bakhtin, p. 270.

¹⁷ Holquist, p. 426.

¹⁸ Bakhtin, p. 293.

continually being shaped by the new contexts in which it is used. Meaning is tied to the past, but shifts over time.

The second premise informing this project is that the mainstream media play an essential role in the functioning of Western democratic societies, and comprise a master arena where the meaning of key social issues are defined and contested.¹⁹ As Bill Daskoch writes, “[I]nformation is the lifeblood of a democratic society, and the news media are a very major part of the circulatory system.... To be an effective citizen, you must be informed about the issues and events of the day.”²⁰ The news presents citizens with an ideational map, effecting what issues are deemed important, as Mike Gasher notes: “[Journalists] define the ways in which events are newsworthy - i.e., as things that matter to ‘us’ - and thereby create categories of inclusion and exclusion, relevant and irrelevant, we and they. Journalists, in other words, produce a news geography, a representational space in which they situate their community and its people.” By focusing attention on some people, events and issues and away from others the mainstream media help to set the agenda for public discussion and policy decisions.²¹ I am not arguing that audiences are passive in this process. As Robert Hackett notes, the media are often unsuccessful in telling people what to think, but they are often successful in telling people what to think about.²²

The media does hold a definite position of power in terms of its ability to construct the stories people use to interpret and build their knowledge of the world. In this way the mainstream media can affect what people think and do, and are particularly

¹⁹ Gamson.

²⁰ *Missing News*, p.10.

²¹ Hackett, p. 220.

²² Hackett, p. 220.

influential when people have little direct experience with an issue.²³ A study of poverty discourse then is not merely a study of language, but of how the meaning of poverty and “the poor” are socially constructed into a dominant discourse that influences which courses of action are deemed possible and appropriate.

In this project I am focusing on two mainstream dailies. Given the increased reliance of Canadians on Internet based news sources, and the dominance of television news, an obvious question is why study poverty coverage in newspapers. There are several reasons for this, one being that in Canada the continued popularity of newspapers make it a particularly significant site of influence in regard to contemporary social issues. The Newspaper Audience Databank recently reported that on average 51 percent of adults read a newspaper daily, while more than 75 percent read a newspaper weekly.²⁴ Newspaper databases such as *Pages from the Past* and *Canada Heritage*, make a comparative analysis of how poverty discourse has changed over time possible to conduct efficiently. Such a comparative analysis is necessary when attempting to uncover taken for granted assumptions and determine not only how the news may be effecting action, but also how social practices may effect news discourse.

To date little research has investigated poverty coverage in Canada, and this project helps fill in that research gap. A fair amount of work in the United States has empirically investigated poverty coverage and discussed the implications. In terms of Canadian work, Robert A. Hackett et al’s *The Missing News: Filters and Blindspots in Canada’s Media* provides a valuable point of reference. While poverty is not the focus of this study, the researchers do identify poverty as a media blindspot. However, the study

²³ See John Hartley, 1982; William A Gamson, 2004, and Maxwell McCombs, 2004.

²⁴ Results from the 2006 survey can be found here <<http://www.nadbank.com/English/index.html>>.

does not provide a detailed examination of poverty discourse and the analysis is limited to the *Vancouver Sun*'s coverage in the 80s. Another valuable Canadian source is Jean Swanson's *Poor-Bashing, the Politics of Exclusion*. While she does not undertake a systematic study of poverty coverage in the media, her emphasis on Canadian poverty discourse, policy, and legislation are very useful.²⁵ Measuring audience reception will not be a focal point of this study, but it should be noted that two related Canadian studies by Linda I. Reutter et al. discuss public perceptions of poverty and briefly mention the role of the media in shaping these perceptions. These studies, while limited in scope to Toronto and Edmonton, provide an important analysis because they demonstrate the complex range of public attitudes toward poverty, and indicate the complexity revealed by a systematic analysis of Canadian poverty discourse.²⁶ Of interest is that all of the respondents who agreed to take part in the survey indicated that they had learned about poverty from the media. A fair amount of work in the United States has examined the media's coverage of poverty and discussed the potential implications. In her study of American newspaper coverage of poverty, Linda Jean Kensicki determined that poverty is regularly mystified and concludes that this likely leads to reader apathy.²⁷ In her 2001 study Mira Sotirovic concluded that welfare perceptions can be connected to the type of media an individual engages.²⁸ Martin Gilens's exhaustive study of media portrayals of poverty in the U.S., found that the American media stereotypically over-represent poor Americans as unemployed African-American males, and under-represent the number of

²⁵ Swanson, Jean; 2001.

²⁶ Reutter et al., 2005 and 2006.

²⁷ Kensicki, Linda Jean; 2004.

²⁸ Sotirovic, Mira; 2001.

elderly and children living in poverty.²⁹ He argues that these stereotypical portrayals have lead to increased attacks on social assistance programs, and reinforced racist stereotypes. This research is informed by these earlier projects.

Ultimately, this project is rooted in a critical social science perspective and the goal is to render explicit problematic representations of poverty that may be limiting public and political action. As David A. Snow has noted, the value in contesting dominant and oppressive representations has been proven by various social movements throughout history; the abolition of slavery, women's suffrage, and the termination of child labour were "unthinkable" for a large number of people until the altering of people's views of reality had been accomplished.³⁰

²⁹ Gilens, Martin; 1996 and 1999.

³⁰ Snow, David A. "Framing Processes, Ideology and Discursive Fields." In *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*.

Chapter One: Methodology Outline

In his 1976 work *Keywords* Raymond Williams draws attention to a number of words he identifies as key words, and discusses how the meanings of these words change over time, and how this shifting meaning is connected to our way of seeing and understanding the world. Williams notes that depending on how key words are used, they can either bound together certain ways of seeing culture and society, or open up issues and problems.³¹ He argues that when attempting to ascertain the meaning attached to words that involve ideas and values, one cannot be satisfied by simply turning to a dictionary.³² Any attempt to map out the meaning of key words, which are themselves invested with meaning through the web of ideas and values to which they relate, is a difficult process. In his work, Williams notes that one of the significant characteristics of key words is that they are often tied to important issues of the day. While the issues of the day persist within and beyond any linguistic analysis, Williams argues that the issues themselves cannot be adequately thought through without a consciousness of how the words themselves influence how the issue is understood.³³ The word “poverty” was not included as a keyword in this original work; however, in their 2005 revision of his text Tony Bennett et al. add poverty to Williams’s list of keywords. Bennett et al. note that the word poverty comprises a significantly contested terrain and that how its meaning is understood effects how we see the issue. In this project I argue that poverty is a keyword, and also suggest that the word itself is a site of contestation; that various players are now actively working to negotiate and contest its meaning.

Important to this argument is the notion that words can do ideological work and that some words, in this case poverty, contain sedimented traces of past usages which

³¹ Williams, p. 15.

³² Williams, p.15.

³³ Williams, p. 16.

influence and affect a given term's current and future usages.³⁴ In this way, the past influences the present, and so on. Significantly, as Linda Gordon and Nancy Fraser effectively argue, the meanings of keywords are not closed and studies of their shifting usages in the past can illuminate social conflict in the present. "Poverty" continues to carry traces of past usages that influence how the issue is understood today. One of the most enduring constructions of poverty is the separation of the poor into two types of people: the deserving and the undeserving poor. This constructed binary opposition continues to dominate both conscious and unconscious responses to the issue. Any attempt to consider how poverty is being invested with meaning, particularly symbolic meaning, in contemporary discourse must consider the historical context in which the meaning of this word was shaped. The brief survey below is the result of a limited genealogy that was conducted to better understand constructions of the deserving and undeserving poor in a Canadian context. This survey was then used to inform my research questions, methodological approach, and analysis. My approach will be discussed in more detail following this survey.

In terms of etymology, the *Oxford English Dictionary* dates the first use of the word poverty to early in the thirteenth century. However, as Herbert J. Gans, Michael B. Katz, Francis Fox Piven, Zygmunt Bauman and others have argued, contemporary Western understandings of poverty have been shaped by the rise of industrial capitalism and the British Poor Laws of the nineteenth century. It should also be noted that Western understandings have also been shaped by the collectivistic discourse which accompanied the emergence of the welfare state and by social justice advocates. At one end of the scale,

³⁴ I am taking the language Fraser and Gordon use in their genealogy of the term dependency, and, here, applying it to the word poverty.

poverty has been and continues to be characterized as a natural condition, perhaps best demonstrated in the ubiquitous phrase “the poor will always be with us.” For example, in the eighteenth century Thomas Malthus argued that assistance to the poor should be strongly discouraged, and even abdicated, because it encouraged the poor.³⁵ At the other end of the scale are those who see poverty as the result of an unjust economic and social system.³⁶ Murray Edelman argues that the first view, indicated above, casts the poor as responsible for their own plight and in need of external control to compensate for their own inadequacies.³⁷ The second view sees the poor as victims of exploitative economic, social, and political institutions.³⁸ On this account, people are deprived by circumstance, and not by their own defects.³⁹ Edelman argues that both perspectives are part of the culture and are drawn upon, sometimes within the same body of discourse.

The labels attached to the “deserving” and “undeserving” poor play a significant symbolic role, as argued by Gans who notes that perhaps unsurprisingly there are few labels for the deserving poor. Although Gans is primarily writing about the American situation, the labels he identifies are also used in Canada both past and present.

Economic and Social Conditions

Deserving

Old
Sick
Working Poor
Children
Dependent

Natural Condition/ Individual Failing

Undeserving

Indigent, Idle, Dissolute
Able bodied / Not working
Defective, Delinquent
Pauper, Shiftless, Debauched,
Feebleminded, Homeless, Underclass

³⁵ Summarized by Bennett et al, pg. 272.

³⁶ The description of the scale provided here is taken from Murray Edelman's work.

³⁷ Edelman, pg. 6.

³⁸ Edelman, pg. 6.

³⁹ Edelman, pg. 6.

It is significant that the labels often simultaneously describe exterior and interior characteristics. Gans writes that the classificatory labels for the undeserving poor of the nineteenth-century included “defective,” “dependent,” and “delinquent.” The defective would include paupers considered to be shiftless, debauched, hopeless, culturally deprived or disadvantaged, and feebleminded. The defective poor were also viewed as dangers to public health due to their ragged or dirty state, and/or their living situations.⁴⁰ The dependent category would also include paupers and those dependent on charity. Those defined as delinquent were considered politically threatening and dangerous. This group included street people, substance abusers, gang members, muggers, beggars, and panhandlers. As Gans argues, “labels may be only words, but they are judgmental or normative words, which can stir institutions and individuals to punitive actions.”⁴¹ In terms of the Canadian context, the roots of such labels can be traced back to more than a hundred years of discursive and social practice which has shaped what “poverty” means. Below I provide a focused discussion of early practices and discursive constructions of poverty. The discussion focuses on Upper Canada in the 19th Century and the Houses of Industry Act to demonstrate how the poor were separated into deserving and undeserving categories that still resonate in poverty discussions today.

Historians Raymond B. Blake and Jeff Keshen have described pre-confederation British North America as a largely agrarian society with a strong belief in individualism and private charity. They argue that as the nineteenth-century progressed the assistance

⁴⁰ Gans, pg. 16.

⁴¹ Gans, pg. 59.

that governments or private charity rendered was demeaning, insufficient, and paternalistic.⁴² In the early 18th Century there appears to have been competing notions and practices in dealing with poverty. One view, particularly in relation to the able-bodied poor held that the poor demonstrated a willful refusal to work and to save, and needed correction and discipline.⁴³ This view led to the incarceration of many poor people in gaols, as the gaols were one of the few public institutions in the early colony. However Rainer Baehre provides an historical account that indicates there was a different view of poverty in this period, that linked the issue to economic circumstance more than to individual failing. Baehre documents an ideological shift in attitude toward the poor by detailing the changes in poor relief practices from 1817 to 1837 in Upper Canada. He notes that moral and value laden conceptions of the poor existed alongside the practice in some cases of providing relief without negative judgment. For example, Baehre notes that before 1828 one had only to be a stranger in distress to qualify for poor relief in Upper Canada.⁴⁴ He also notes that the poor were often given money and supplies based on need, with the view being that an individual or family in need of help was simply down on their luck and would get back on their feet. Support was provided by decree from local magistrates, church groups, and private charity. This lack of a moral register in terms of poverty may also be connected to the view of early colonists at least until 1790 that assistance should come from the British government.⁴⁵ Upper Canada, as with the other colonies, began as a refugee project for the resettlement of dispossessed and

⁴² Keshen and Blake, pg. 3.

⁴³ Splane, p.69.

⁴⁴ Baehre, p. 59.

⁴⁵ Splane, p. 67.

impoverished loyalists who were provided with food, shelter, land, and supplies.⁴⁶ While this refugee phase of development was over by 1792, relief continued to be provided to meet extreme hardship for a number of years.⁴⁷ However, by the early 1830s things were quickly changing as one had to be unable to support oneself to be deemed deserving of need.⁴⁸ This shift has been explained as a response to the high rates of poor immigrants moving and being shipped to the colony from Great Britain and Ireland. These immigrants relied on seasonal work and low wages which made them particularly vulnerable given the seasonal fluctuations in labour.

The principle of less eligibility came into play in the 1820s as the deserving poor, those eligible for relief, became those unable to work. Those included in this category were the old, the sick, the infirm, widows, and deserted mothers with young children. Able-bodied, unemployed persons then became less eligible for relief. Some impoverished individuals received aid, but only for a limited period.⁴⁹ Relief was provided by a mixture of private charities and by the Upper Canadian government. The poor became increasingly viewed as needing to be instilled with moral guidance and as Baehre writes, “the industry necessary to the free market of a capitalist economy.”⁵⁰ The attitudes toward the poor of this period were embodied in the Houses of Industry which were legislated through the Houses of Industry Act in 1837.⁵¹ The idea behind this Act, the Houses of Industry, and the very influential English poor law passed in 1834, was that

⁴⁶ Splane, p. 67.

⁴⁷ Splane, p. 67.

⁴⁸ Baehre, p. 67.

⁴⁹ Baehre, p. 69.

⁵⁰ Baehre, p. 70.

⁵¹ Statutes of His Majesty's province of Upper Canada, passed in the first session of the thirteenth provincial Parliament of Upper Canada. National Library of Canada Collections: Government Publications CIHM no.:9_10042_44_1. pg. 80-83.

the poor could be made to support themselves.⁵² It should be noted that while the Act quoted here was passed, it was never enacted due to political fighting about spending. However, the Act still provides an important vehicle for analysis as it opened the door to voluntary groups, cities, and municipalities starting their own Houses of Industry. Further, the language of the Act is particularly significant as it presented one of the first declarations of public responsibility for the poor in Upper Canada and as such set the tone for how the poor were to be viewed and treated by the public at large. The Act also influenced the development of subsequent legislation. In 1866 it became mandatory for all counties in Upper Canada with a population of over 20,000 to establish a house of industry.⁵³

I have quoted the Act at length below as particular attention must be paid to the language of the Act. The words used to name and/or label the poor provide an indication of how poverty was invested with meaning. In the Act's preamble it is stated that it has been deemed "expedient and necessary" to establish a House of Industry in several districts to provide employment for the "Indigent and Idle." As Splane writes, the purpose of the House of Industry outlined in this Act and in similar legislation to follow, was to control, correct, restrain, and punish.⁵⁴ Referring to the poor as Indigent and Idle reveals a great deal. These words are capital nouns and used to describe groups of people; the poor in this case are discursively constructed into a homogenous group that is either Indigent or Idle. The word indigent has a long history as an adjective, and from the 1400s on has been used to mean falling short of the proper measure or standard; wanting, deficient,

⁵² Splane, p.70.

⁵³ Splane, p. 75.

⁵⁴ Splane, p. 73.

lacking, one who is poor and needy.⁵⁵ The word idle, when used as a noun as here, had a range of associated meanings circulating at the time the Act was written. The word was used to refer to a persons' actions, thoughts, words, feelings etc that were void of any real worth, usefulness or significance. It was also used to refer to persons not engaged in work, doing nothing, unemployed; addicted to doing no work, lazy, indolent.⁵⁶ Further in the Act "the poor" are separated into two categories: "[I]t shall be the duty of the Justices of the said District, to procure Plans and Estimates for the erection of suitable Buildings for the reception and employment of the Poor and Indigent, and of the Idle and Dissolute...."⁵⁷ We see the initial binary of the Indigent and Idle here now broken down further into two separate categories; the Poor and Indigent, and the Idle and Dissolute. The poor and indigent here then represent the more deserving group as they represent by definition a group that is lacking, deficient, and needy who have fallen short. The use of the term dissolute in the second grouping, clearly marks this group as undeserving. This group is labeled as idle; unemployed and lazy, and also through the use of the term dissolute as unrestrained, wanton, lawless, debauched, careless, and having "thrown off the restraints of morality and virtue."⁵⁸

The Act empowered officials to commit to these houses people who met the following descriptions:

... all Poor and Indigent Persons, who are incapable of supporting themselves; all persons able of body to work and without any means of maintaining themselves, who refuse or neglect so to do; all persons living a lewd dissolute vagrant life, or exercising no ordinary calling, or lawful business sufficient to gain or procure an honest living; all such as spend their time and property

⁵⁵ Oxford English Dictionary, "Indigent" <<<http://dictionary.oed.com/>>>

⁵⁶ OED "Idle" <<<http://dictionary.oed.com/>>>

⁵⁷ Statutes, p.80.

⁵⁸ OED "Dissolute" <<<http://dictionary.oed.com/>>>

in Public Houses, to the neglect of their lawful calling.⁵⁹

Those refusing to look after themselves were committed to the House, as were those without "lawful business sufficient to gain or procure an honest living." In language these groups were separated into different categories, but there was little distinction in practice as both were deemed needing institutionalization.

The treatment of the poor in the Houses of Industry embodied and reinforced these discursive constructions of poverty. The poor were blamed and punished for their poverty. Upper Canada's governor at the time, Sir Francis Bond Head, said that the "workhouses should be made repulsive" so people would do whatever necessary to avoid them.⁶⁰ The practice of incarcerating the poor in separate institutions was also done in the Atlantic Provinces in places named Poor Houses or County Homes. Work in the Poor Houses or Houses of Industry could consist of breaking stones for men or knitting and sewing for women and girls, as a requirement for food and shelter. The living standards were maintained at the bare minimum. While some of those deemed deserving such as widows were fortunate enough to receive support to remain in the community, Blake and Keshen write that the poorhouses functioned like prisons and housed the physically and mentally challenged, the sick, the elderly, orphans, and other charity cases.⁶¹ For example, it has been noted that low firewood rations and inadequate clothing led to frequent deaths by freezing in some houses.⁶² As Finkel notes, these houses were an enduring institution particularly in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, where they

⁵⁹ Statutes, p.81.

⁶⁰ As summarized by Finkel, p. 49.

⁶¹ Keshen and Blake, pg. 3.

⁶² Finkel, p. 51.

remained the major source of state relief until the 1950s.⁶³ Finkel argues that the houses provided growing communities with a steady supply of cheap labour for public projects, and also encouraged people to take whatever jobs available to remain outside the Houses of Industry.⁶⁴ The institutionalization of the poor also directed attention away from social and economic factors contributing to poverty.

Blake and Keshen argue that the punitive treatment of the poor persisted into the twentieth century, but was disrupted by the widespread incidence of poverty during the depression: “After the catharsis of the Great Depression, the country finally realized that the economic and social systems had indeed collapsed and that the thousands of destitute Canadians could not be individually accountable for their plight. This period marked an important shift in thinking about both economics and social welfare. No longer did most Canadians believe that all types of social welfare were demeaning.”⁶⁵ The social welfare rhetoric dominating from 1930 to the mid 1970s challenged longstanding conceptions of poverty. Within this period a collectivistic discourse surrounding poverty emerges, one which collides with individualistic notions of poverty as caused by a fundamental deficiency that rests with the poor. From 1945 to 1971, we see the expansion of social security legislation in Canada.⁶⁶ A number of key social policies are introduced in this period including a universal system of family allowances (1945), a federal universal old

⁶³ Finkel, p. 49.

⁶⁴ Finkel, p. 39-61.

⁶⁵ Keshen and Blake, pg. 3.

⁶⁶ It is important to note that others, such as Elizabeth Wallace, have argued that there was widespread support for social legislation within thirty years of the British North American Act and this led to the introduction of public schools, the admission of women to universities, and the creation of free public libraries, trade union legislation and the emergence of discussions of the need for a minimum wage. She also argues that there was increasing belief after the 1880s that the government ought to take some responsibility for the provision of the poor. This perspective presents the possibility that the colliding of individualistic and collectivistic discourses in relation to poverty may have a longer history in Canada than is commonly thought.

age pension plan (1951), a Medical Care Act and the Canada Assistance Plan (1966), and a new Family Allowance Act (1970). However, by the mid-70s social security policies begin a long period of decline. A discourse of poverty that focuses on individual failings persists throughout this period and continues to challenge welfare state policies, but for the most part collectivistic discourse dominates. By the 1980s neoliberal rhetoric and policies begin to dominate and poverty, again, becomes a far more contested terrain. There is a strong re-emergence of a discourse stressing the need for individual responsibility and reduced dependency.

Canada's embracement of neoliberalism was not accompanied by the heavy-handed rhetorical attacks on the poor as was evident in the US under Ronald Reagan, or in Britain under Margaret Thatcher. Instead, as Finkel has argued, in Canada the war on the poor was facilitated through an effective attack on Keynesianism conducted by business lobbyists.⁶⁷ The crisis in capitalism of the late 70s and into the 80s was attributed to years of government overspending on social programs, and it was suggested that the solution would be an increased reliance on *laissez faire* capitalism.⁶⁸ "While few called for a full return to the Poor Law, the underlying argument for neo-liberalism was that Canadians had become too reliant on state handouts for their well-being and required the discipline of market forces to smarten them up. Social activists were placed on the defensive as the well-funded business rhetorical onslaught influenced government policies in all areas."⁶⁹ By 1990, Brian Mulroney had signed a free trade deal with the US, cut universal child and senior social benefits, made cuts to unemployment insurance and put in place stricter access rules, de-indexed transfers to provinces to pay for health and

⁶⁷ This paragraph slightly modified from a paper submitted for course work in the Fall of 2006.

⁶⁸ Finkel, p. 281.

⁶⁹ Finkel, p. 281.

education, encouraged a decentralist domestic agenda, opened the door to workfare, introduced tax changes which benefited upper-income groups, and placed a cap on federal subsidies for social programs to wealthier provinces such as Ontario, thus effectively limiting their ability to fund social services.⁷⁰ After 1985, various provinces such as Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and British Columbia introduced punitive strategies to tighten welfare eligibility rules and penalize recipients who were not working but could somehow be deemed able to work.⁷¹ The underlying argument and implicit/explicit message in Canada, the United States, and Britain was that the welfare state was failing and that the poor had to be helped to help themselves. Simultaneously, through punitive strategies such as workfare or increased emphasis on finding and prosecuting “welfare fraud” a resurgent discourse, embodied in social practice, of the undeserving poor emerged.⁷²

The term poverty continues to be a contested terrain and an examination of contemporary coverage reveals a continued collision of collectivistic and individualistic discourse. Both discourses contain traces of nineteenth-century conceptions of the deserving and undeserving poor, and such conceptions have been reinforced and in fact reified by social policies and legislation. The danger, as Gans points out, when labels become reified is that the definition is turned into an actual set of people; and this hides the reality that “the poor” as a homogenous group is an imagined group, constructed in the minds of its definers.⁷³ Such reification is achieved largely through the chains of equivalence which invest poverty and labels the poor with meaning in common discourse.

⁷⁰ Bashevkin, p. 31.

⁷¹ Bashevkin, p. 32.

⁷² The majority of this paragraph taken from paper submitted as part of course work in the Fall of 2007.

⁷³ Gans, pg. 60.

As Edelman notes, public acceptance of poverty as a fact of social life depends far more on how it is defined than on its material severity. He argues that public policies are contingent to the beliefs of those who help make them, whether or not these policy makers' understandings of the conditions and causes of poverty are accurate.⁷⁴ An investigation of poverty discourse must consider the implicit and explicit role of these labels, and of collectivistic and individualistic discourse, in any attempt to uncover common taken for granted understandings of poverty and what actions are being rendered thinkable and unthinkable.

Method

As outlined in the introduction, for the purpose of this study the media analyzed were the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*. The *Globe and Mail* was selected because it is Canada's most popular national daily. The *Globe* is also said to be more influential than any other Canadian newspaper, in terms of influencing what is deemed newsworthy and deserving of attention by smaller newspapers and by political elites.⁷⁵ Further the *Globe* has the second highest average daily circulation in Canada (Monday to Friday). The *Toronto Star* was selected because it is the daily with the largest average circulation in Canada.⁷⁶ Further, unlike the *Globe and Mail* which markets itself as presenting "the most authoritative news in Canada,"⁷⁷ the *Star* markets itself as "the paper for the

⁷⁴ Edelman, pg. 13.

⁷⁵ This point has been made by Stuart N. Soroka in his *Agenda-Setting Dynamics in Canada* (pg. 106), and by Robert Hackett in *News and Dissent: The Press and the Politics of Peace in Canada* (pg. 95).

⁷⁶ The circulation statistics for the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* were gathered from the Audit Bureau of Circulations website July 15/2006; <http://abcas3.accessabc.com/ecirc/newsform.asp>.

⁷⁷ As stated in the article "History of the *Globe and Mail*," posted on the newspaper's website. Article accessed July 2006; <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/services/site/history.html>.

people.”⁷⁸ An analysis of both papers is useful to determine whether or not there were similarities or differences in coverage and therefore to what extent poverty discourse has been dominant. Texts were selected for analysis for three full year periods. The year 1971 was selected as it marks the final social welfare expansionist period in Canada. The years 2005 and 2006 were selected to provide an extended sample of contemporary discourse, and to determine if the shift in the federal political landscape and the coordinated anti-poverty campaigns of social justice groups effected poverty coverage. Articles were identified by using the keyword “poverty” to search the Factiva database. For the content analysis, as the goal was to get full year samples, once the articles were retrieved a random sample was collected for each full-year period, by using a rolling date selection method of every ninth day. The rolling date method was selected to ensure that a range of days were used in the analysis, and to ensure that texts were selected throughout the full year period to avoid biases that may be created through a reliance on particular months. Articles not related to poverty in Canada were then eliminated. For the discourse analysis it was decided to compare poverty related discourse in relation to a particular event. The release of the federal budget was chosen as the event, as it is one of the most significant policy events of the year, and occurs on an annual basis. In the budget speech the government outlines its priorities, and these priorities are debated in the public arena. An analysis of how poverty is covered in this context indicates how poverty is being invested with meaning, and what view of poverty is dominant in the news. For the purpose of the discourse analysis, articles containing the key word poverty for the seven day period before and after the budget release were analyzed.

⁷⁸ As stated in “The History of the *Toronto Star*” article on the *Star*’s website accessed July 2006 <http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Render&c=Page&cid=972403844690>.

Content Analysis

At the outset of this research project it was decided that a content analysis was the best method to quantify patterns in framing and in labeling. The identification of such patterns enabled me to come to conclusions about how poverty coverage was both similar and different for each given time period, and for both papers. The systematic and transparent nature of this methodological approach of analysis helps to prevent the researcher from being misguided by pre-existing assumptions.⁷⁹ However, as Robert Hackett et al. note a content analysis is not without its biases and therefore must be used reflexively; the findings generated by content analysis are dependent upon the categories employed, and the derivation of these categories are “unavoidably acts of interpretation.”⁸⁰

The content analysis is based on William A. Gamson’s method to measure symbolic framing. Robert Entman’s definition of framing informs this approach. Entman argues that: “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.”⁸¹ The content analysis attempted to quantify how poverty is being framed by measuring if poverty is being problematized and how, if there are solutions (individual and/or social) being presented, if the poor are being portrayed as deserving and/or undeserving, who is being portrayed as “the poor,” and who speaks in the articles. As Gamson notes, media discourse can be thought of as a set of interpretive packages that give meaning to an

⁷⁹ Deacon et al. pg. 133.

⁸⁰ Hackett et al (1992).

⁸¹ Entman, Robert. “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractional Paradigm.” Journal of Communication. 43.4 (1993), pg. 52.

issue.⁸² He argues that: “A package has an internal structure. At its core is a central organizing idea, or frame, for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue.”⁸³ Given the expected continuing contestation of the meaning of poverty, coding for this project was not exclusive. It was expected at the outset that in one article I would often find descriptions of both the deserving and undeserving poor. For example, one article in the sample depicted a hardworking single mother living in poverty surrounded by community members who were poor, dangerous, and criminal.

The coding sheet was constructed with several research questions in mind. The first was: is poverty being naturalized. The articles were viewed to see if, when the word poverty was used, the issue was the main focus of the article, a secondary focus, mentioned in passing, or if the word was used descriptively, or in some other way. To further identify patterns in how the word was used, the articles were coded to determine if the word was used to refer to an individual, a community, families, a social or political issue, an unclear referent, or if there was no referent at all.

The articles were also coded to determine if social and economic factors were referenced as causal factors or solutions in relation to poverty. In particular, the articles were coded to determine if the main factors as identified by anti-poverty groups were present. These factors included affordable housing, low income, childcare, low benefits or income support, training / education, others, or none mentioned. More generally, the articles were viewed to determine whether or not the need for a collective and/or individual response to poverty was implicitly or explicitly indicated.

⁸² Gamson outlines this approach in great detail in “Media Discourse and Public Opinion” (1989), and in “Media Discourse as a Symbolic Contest” (1992).

⁸³ Gamson (1989), p.3.

To identify trends in precisely who was being most often invoked as “the poor” a list was compiled and then the articles were coded according to what individuals or groups of people were identified in the article. The list included:

African Canadian
Children
Disabled
Families
Fathers
First Nations
Homeless
Immigrant(s) / Refugees
Injured Workers
Mentally Ill
Seniors
Single Mother
Unemployed
Working Poor
Not Indicated
Others

As one of the research goals of this project was to identify the presence or absence of stereotypes as identified by Gans, Bauman, and Katz, the articles were coded to determine how “the poor” were being portrayed when invoked in an article. The attributes in the following list were used to code the articles and the coding question was: When the poor are being portrayed are they portrayed as:

Dangerous
Dependent
Deserving of government or policy related action
In need of charity
Lack of self-sufficiency
Lazy
Linked to Crime
Self-sufficient
Substance Abuser
Unemployed

No portrayal of the poor in this article
None of the above

The articles were also coded to determine whether or not a need for collective and/or individual action was invoked. Also, the articles were coded to quantify who was quoted. Examples are drawn from the sample throughout the analysis to illustrate how the texts frame poverty.

Discourse Analysis

The discourse analysis approach employed here combined the Discourse Theory of Laclau and Mouffe and the critical discourse analysis method of Norman Fairclough. My approach draws upon Laclau and Mouffe's emphasis on hegemony, discursive struggle, and articulation. The starting point of this theory, as explained by Phillips and Jorgenson, is that meaning can never be permanently fixed, but is constantly being transformed through contact with other discourses. "Different discourses, each of them representing particular ways of talking about and understanding the social world, are engaged in a constant struggle with one another to achieve hegemony, that is, to fix the meanings of language in their own way."⁸⁴ As Phillips and Jorgenson state, hegemony can be understood as the dominance of one particular perspective. An attempt was made here to uncover patterns in the way poverty is invested with meaning to determine which perspective is dominant for each time period.

Fairclough's CDA method was determined to be most useful for this study as it necessitates focusing on communicative events (the actual text under consideration) and the wider orders of discourse influencing what is deemed possible and appropriate to say. Using this more inclusive approach is particularly useful when studying how poverty is

⁸⁴ Phillips and Jorgenson, p. 7.

talked about as the prevailing ideology of any given time period influences how “the poor” are viewed, and shapes whether or not critiques of capitalism are spoken or silenced. Fairclough argues that orders of discourse can be seen as one domain of potential cultural hegemony, as dominant groups struggle to assert and maintain particular ways of seeing the world.⁸⁵ Accepting this point, the discourse analysis sought to identify the order of discourse most influential in terms of poverty coverage and how this changed over time.

As indicated above, the discourse analysis conducted here was an event based analysis that considered how poverty was discussed in the week before and after the release of the federal budget. The release of the budget is a time when various groups with different perspectives on poverty both challenge and reinforce policy decisions articulated in the budget. The resonance of particular views in the news, and the way that poverty is discussed or absent from coverage, provides an indication of the discourse dominating the news. Basing the collection of the sample on a pre-determined event does limit the range that would be found in a full-year sample, but my position is that the benefit of this sampling method makes up for this shortcoming. Basing the sample around an annual event such as the budget release provides an opportunity to compare how poverty is talked about in both time periods, in a similar context. Unlike the content analysis, the discourse analysis did not compare coverage from 1971, 2005 and 2006, but rather focused on comparing coverage from 1971 to 2006.

A goal of this discourse analysis was to investigate which order of discourse from the political field most influenced news coverage. I chose to focus my investigation on the three orders of discourse that have most dominated poverty policy debates since

⁸⁵ Fairclough, p. 310.

WWII. The first order of discourse is bound to arguments for a residual state model. Although the complete argument for a residual state model may not always be present, aspects of the ideological position guiding this view are easily identifiable. According to this perspective poverty is the result of individual failing or lacking, and only by ensuring a free unhindered marketplace will society prosper and will individuals be motivated to reach their full potential. According to this view, government support of those able to work breeds dependency. The second order of discourse is bound to arguments for a redistributive state model. Those advocating this perspective argue that the market alone cannot meet an individual's needs and that government must intervene to help individuals achieve self-fulfillment. The government of the day presents the third order of discourse analyzed. This discourse will change depending on the party in power. Throughout the time periods analyzed, each order of discourse is present in the news.

To identify which order of discourse was most influential I developed dictionaries for the three streams, government, residual, and redistributive.⁸⁶ The dictionaries represent idea and language packages for each order of discourse in relation to poverty. To construct these dictionaries I turned to key documents from groups representing each of these perspectives, and identified significant patterns in language use. For example, I identified how poverty was framed, the priorities stressed in regard to how society should be structured, and significant absences. Each dictionary summarized the role of government and the view of poverty articulated, and was then compared to the news articles. Different texts were used to construct the dictionaries in each period. The budget speech was used to construct dictionaries for the government of each time period. The speech provides an opportunity to consider government discourse by examining rhetoric

⁸⁶ These models are discussed in more detail in Chapters Two and Three.

and also social practice by considering funding decisions. In terms of 1971 coverage, the dictionary for the redistributive model was created by analyzing the presentation of the Ontario Welfare Council to the Senate Committee on poverty in 1970. The presentation of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce was used to construct the residual model discourse. More recently, social policy think tanks have dominated public discussions concerning the role of the state in regard to poverty and other important social issues. Taking this into consideration, poverty reports by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Fraser Institute for the year 2006 were used to construct the dictionaries for this later period.

The questions guiding the discourse analysis were broken into three groups. At the textual analysis level the questions included: What terms are used to explicitly or implicitly refer to poverty and the poor? Is the text homogenous or heterogeneous in terms of the construction of poverty? How is poverty being invested with meaning here, through what chains of equivalence? What, if any, labels are being attached to “the poor”? In the second interpretive stage the specific questions asked were: What discourses were drawn upon in producing the text, and what traces are there in the text?⁸⁷ What is presented as at stake, in terms of poverty in this issue? In the third stage which considered social and cultural practice and impact, the questions were: Is there likely a political effect of the type of discourse presented? In terms of hegemony, is the text likely to reinforce, or challenge dominant representations of poverty? Could the text be part of a centripetal push toward a unitary discourse, or is it more centrifugal? Does the text increase the multiplicity of meanings when it comes to poverty, or narrow them?

⁸⁷ Question taken from Fairclough, p. 315.

In *Keywords*, Williams argued that language does not simply reflect the processes of society, but some important social and historical processes can occur within language.⁸⁸ In drawing out how crucial meanings have been shaped by precise historical and social conditions and practices, Williams' aim was to contribute an "extra edge of consciousness."⁸⁹ He wanted to create a sense that vocabularies, as a field of meanings, were not just words and meanings to be learned, or a consensus to be accepted, but also necessary to change as we as society see fit.⁹⁰ To be sure, there are a cluster of words that must be analyzed to determine in greater detail how the issue of poverty is viewed in contemporary society. Such a project is beyond the scope of the analysis conducted here. However, while this approach is focused and limited to just one key word, the results reveal much. The following analysis puts poverty's field of meaning as presented in the news, including implicit and explicit evocations, on the table. The triangulated approach outlined here provides an opportunity to consider how meaning is constructed from two different vantage points. In the following section the goal is follow Williams' model and not provide a neutral review of meaning, but discuss how we might need to challenge taken for granted constructions of poverty.

⁸⁸ Williams, p.22.

⁸⁹ Williams, p.24.

⁹⁰ Williams, p. 25.

Chapter Two: Content Analysis

The objective of this content analysis was to investigate how the meaning of the key word poverty changed over time, and to also draw out how shifts in poverty discourse both reflect and reinforce our ways of seeing and understanding the issue. While our discursive environment is made up of various fields such as the political, education, media, health, and social work fields, etc, my goal was to discuss the links between the political field and news coverage. This content analysis quantifies the dominant frames attached to poverty. The idea guiding the analysis was that the attributes/aspects tied to poverty or “the poor” in each news article provide an interpretive package that give meaning to the issue; each article’s news frame indicates how poverty is to be understood.⁹¹ The frame also indicates what is at issue.⁹² My findings suggest that the news frames directing the meaning of poverty have changed over time. While coverage in 1971 framed “poverty” more often within a social or political policy discussion, in 2005 and 2006 poverty was more often portrayed as a matter of individual concern and affecting a “them” instead of an “us.” However my findings also indicate that the meaning attached to poverty appears to be changing. The keyword became a site of contestation in 2006 evidenced by more pronounced differences in *Globe* and *Star* reporting. I suggest here that although poverty discourse is problematic and may be limiting action, this discourse appears to be undergoing a transformation that we as a society must pay attention to and take a more active role in directing if we are to achieve the level of civil debate needed to instigate action.

The chart below demonstrates the degree to which poverty as an issue, was the main focus of news articles, when the key word was used throughout the three time

⁹¹ This discussion derived from Gamson’s conception of symbolic framing (1989, 1992).

⁹² Here I again draw on Gamson’s definition of symbolic framing and use his terminology (1989, 1992).

periods. In 1971 when the keyword poverty was used it was most often the main focus of the article. This was not the case in 2005. But in 2006, poverty was again often a focus when the key word was used. I argue here that the renewed focus on poverty as an issue is due to Canada's increasingly destabilized political environment and can also be credited to organized social movement activity. However, across all three time periods there was a high percentage of stories where poverty is simply mentioned in passing. This type of coverage naturalizes poverty, by repeatedly referring to the issue but not connecting it to any discussion of how it is generated or might be addressed.

Degree of Poverty Focus in the Article

Toronto Star

Globe and Mail

The Canadian anti-poverty movement in the '60s and '70s has been described as mainly being comprised of and organized by poor persons, middle class persons, those from social work professions, and students. As Finkel notes, anti-poverty advocacy of the period owed much to the radical environment of the '60s; he writes: "The civil rights and anti-war movements in the US and the student revolts in the universities in both Canada and the United States created a general atmosphere of contestation. Many poor people who had formerly felt intimidated by the political system, bureaucrats, and landlords,

recognized that they could empower themselves by working collectively with others in similar circumstances.”⁹³ Finkel notes that in the ‘60s and ‘70s about eight hundred organizations representing the low-income demographic emerged across the country. In 1971, during a national conference of “poor people’s” organizations, the National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) was launched, an advocacy and lobbying body that is still active today. Anti-poverty activism played a key role in keeping poverty in the news in 1971.

A climate of contestation, I suggest again put poverty in the news as a focal point in 2006. Anti-poverty advocates were active throughout the 80s and 90s in protesting and raising awareness about the need to prevent further cuts to social services. However a changing federal landscape, I argue, reinvested anti-poverty struggles with “news value” and resulted in greater coverage. The re-emergence of poverty coverage I suggest dates back to 2003 political events which shook the Liberal party’s grip on federal governance. An increasingly competitive political environment emerged as Paul Martin took over as Prime Minister from Jean Chrétien in December 2003; just after Martin’s assuming this position, the Auditor General released a report condemning the government for “scandously” mispending over 100 million dollars. The sponsorship scandal dominated the news throughout 2004 and into 2005, yet Martin was nevertheless elected during the 2004 federal election but placed in a minority government position. The scandal and the minority government put the Martin Liberals on the defensive as they attempted to hold on to support. In the 2004 election the Progressive Conservatives increased their seats in the House of Commons and became the official opposition; the Bloc Québécois also increased their seats, and the New Democratic Party, when combined with the three

⁹³ Finkel, p. 262.

independents, were left holding the balance of power. This enabled the NDP to wrest key concessions from the Liberals and led to what has been called the 2005 NDP/Liberal budget. In exchange for their support and assurance that the Liberal government would survive the budget vote, Liberals agreed to provide an additional 1.6 billion for affordable housing, 1.5 billion toward tuition reduction and better Employment Insurance training, 900 million toward environmental spending and more money for public transit, 500 million in foreign aid, and 100 million toward pension protection. The Liberals in this period also promised to implement a national childcare program and signed the Kelowna Accord with First Nations leaders which outlined a plan for investment to improve the living conditions, employment, and education opportunities of Aboriginal people. In combination, these investments were seen as real gains by social justice advocates who had been lobbying for these measures. However, the minority government fell in November of 2005 and a Conservative minority government was elected in January of 2006. The new Conservative government cancelled the previous national child care strategy and much of the increased social spending in the NDP / Liberal budget. The Conservative government also stepped away from the agreements for reinvestment made in the Kelowna Accord. Given the brief victory for social justice advocates, it is hardly a surprise that in the face of such a brisk turn around of events many groups mobilized in protest. A phenomenon which the news in 2006 reflects as anti-poverty groups, labour, and other social justice groups joined to lobby both the federal and provincial governments to address poverty.

News coverage reflected the shift in climate. The shift is illustrated by the difference between *Globe* and *Star* coverage that became more pronounced in 2006. In

this year the *Toronto Star's* editorial board shifted from its position of advocating moderate incremental change, to one more in line with anti-poverty advocates which recommended immediate change. For example, in January 2006 the *Star* said the Provincial Finance Minister was right to raise the minimum wage incrementally instead of heeding calls from social justice advocates to raise it immediately to ten dollars an hour.⁹⁴ By September 2006 however, the editorial board was advocating an immediate increase to ten dollars an hour.⁹⁵ *The Star* also launched an editorial campaign to “help the working poor,” and in January 2007 would launch a war-on-poverty campaign. Bearing Finkel’s comments in mind—that it was the radical environment of the ‘60s, a time of increased civil rights and anti-war movements that created a climate of contestation and which consequently contributed to the mobilization of anti-poverty groups in the ‘60s and ‘70s—it is also quite possible that growing contemporary movements, such as the Fair Trade movement and those which contest the “war” in Iraq, have created a new climate of contestation that may have fuelled anti-poverty movements.

Although poverty is in the news as a main focus more in 2006, the nature of coverage is very different from 1971. News coverage throughout the three time periods under analysis, both reflect and reinforce the dominant ideas being expressed in the political sphere. At a basic level it has become axiomatic that from 1945 to 1975 the Keynesian welfare state held sway in Canada.⁹⁶ In contrast, it has become commonly understood that the period from 1975 to the twentieth century’s end was a time of

⁹⁴ *Toronto Star* “Editorial.” 13 Jan. 2006: A18.

⁹⁵ *Toronto Star* “Editorial.” 20 Sept. 2006: A20.

⁹⁶ Alvin Finkel notes that although some historians identify the 1945-75 period as the beginning and end dates of Keynesian welfare state influence, in Canada there was a time lag between the cycle of economic growth and the instigation of new social programming legislation. For this reason he argues that in Canada, 1950 to 1980 is the period in which the Keynesian welfare state held sway (p. 149).

retrenchment and cuts to funding and social welfare services in Canada, as neoliberal arguments pervaded public discourse and were embodied in public policy. The need to expand social welfare policies and increase equality that emerged in the post-WWII era discourse is commonly attributed to the experience of the Great Depression.⁹⁷ With such widespread poverty experienced during the 30s no longer was it possible to reduce poverty to individual failing. Instead, the connection between poverty and economic, political, and social factors were learned through experience. After WWII, the public demanded that the government legislate programs to prevent another depression, and this led to thirty years of reformist legislation and the expansion of the welfare state.⁹⁸

The new worldview which followed WWII was articulated through the advancement of a new political model, which challenged old conceptions of poverty. In the 19th Century and into the early 20th Century a residual state model had been the model commonly accepted as the best model of governance. This model, which privileged free market capitalism, largely viewed poverty as the result of individual failing. According to the residual government worldview, the marketplace and the family are the right places to turn to for help in times of need for a loan, credit, etc;⁹⁹ and only after such means are exhausted should one turn to charity or to one's community for assistance. In this view, free unhindered markets will enable a successful prosperous society, and government aid and support to individuals breeds dependency. This worldview reemerged in the neo conservatism/ neoliberalism of the late 1970s.

It was Canada's 1943 Marsh Report that heralded the changing social and political climate. Although not all proposals were accepted, the report reflected the

⁹⁷ Finkel, p. 327; Blake and Keshen, p.11.

⁹⁸ Finkel, p. 327.

⁹⁹ Graham, John et al, p. 21.

public's experiences of the Depression and its proposals were based on a different worldview that recognized the need for a universal welfare state.¹⁰⁰ Welfare services were to be a function of modern society to help individuals achieve self-fulfillment.¹⁰¹ The new worldview was based on the notion that the market alone cannot meet the needs of individuals, and that at times government will have to counter some of the problems embedded in and created by a capitalist system. The values investing this particular view never wholly overcame the residual model.

In Canada, neither state model has ever completely eclipsed the other. Even in the post WWII era when the redistributive model had widespread popular support, Finkel notes that any reformist legislation "was always a compromise between the demands of popular groups for change and the pressure from conservative groups, especially business, for low taxes."¹⁰² The two political models establish different news frames for poverty, and invest the term with contesting definitions. A redistributive order of discourse frames poverty as a matter of public concern, and it is the saliency of this order of discourse that, I suggest, led to my finding that poverty was most often presented as a social or political issue in 1971 as the chart below indicates. My argument is not that a redistributive order of discourse completely dominated poverty coverage in 1971, but that both redistributive and residual orders of discourses were often invoked. These two orders of discourse provided contesting definitions of poverty and how it should be dealt with, which in fact served to open up the meaning of poverty.

By 2006 however, the news frame attached to poverty had changed significantly. Poverty in that year was linked more to a specific group of people than a social or

¹⁰⁰ Finkel, p. 327.

¹⁰¹ Graham, p. 31.

¹⁰² Finkel, p. 327.

political issue. It is my position that this change is tied to the increasing dominance of neoliberal discourse and policy from the 1980s onward in Canada. As Finkel notes the expansion of the welfare state transpired during a time of economic prosperity, but that the gains were temporary compromises made by governments responding to pressure. He notes that when the economy began to perform poorly after the mid-70s cuts began, and neoliberal rhetoric that harkened back to the pre-depression era became common again among politicians.¹⁰³ The neoliberal rhetoric of the later '70s through to the present is invested with traces of 19th-century conceptions of poverty. As stated above this rhetoric is more value-laden and tends to view poverty as the result of individual failing. It should be noted here as a reminder, that the articles for this content analysis were not exclusively coded. For example, it was possible for one article to connect poverty to a social or political issue and to a group of people. The coder in this situation did not have to identify which connection is established more strongly, but rather categorized the article as connecting poverty to both referents.

Is poverty mentioned in relation to:

Toronto Star

¹⁰³ Finkel, p. 329

Similar trends can be seen here for both the *Star* and the *Globe*. In 1971, when the term poverty was used it was most often done so to refer to a social or political policy issue in both papers. This finding reflects the fact that in 1971 poverty was in the news and a subject of debate. The National Council of Welfare has referred to the 1969-71 era as a brief period of heightened attention on poverty.¹⁰⁴ In Canada, several notable events led to an increased focus on poverty. In 1961 the Dominion Bureau of Statistics (predecessor to Statistics Canada) reported that twenty-seven percent of urban Canadians lived below the “low income cut off.” Further, the Royal Commission on taxation reported in 1966 that Canada’s tax system favoured the wealthy over everyone else.¹⁰⁵ In the late ‘60s the federal government appointed a senate committee to study poverty which was headed by Senator David Croll. The committee held countrywide hearings throughout 1969 and reported its findings in 1971. Croll made a number of recommendations but the most notable, and the one that occupied most headlines, was his recommendation that Canada put in place a guaranteed annual income. Indeed controversial, Croll’s recommendation had supporters and detractors on the left and the right of the political spectrum.

¹⁰⁴ National Council of Welfare (1974).

¹⁰⁵ Finkel, p. 251.

Harkening back to the poor law philosophy and its tenet that support must be undesirable, Croll recommended a guaranteed annual income that fell below the poverty line by seventy percent. The debate over the GAI united groups on the left of the political spectrum and groups on the right.¹⁰⁶

A number of articles in the 1971 sample connected poverty to the debate surrounding the GAI. The article quoted below provides an effective example of the debate surrounding the GAI of that period. The article also illustrates how articles in 1971 often combined residual and redistributive orders of discourse. The result was that poverty was not only identified as a problem, but framed in a way that invoked questions about what should or should not be done to deal with the issue. Repeated discussions of a GAI, whether supported or negated in news articles raised the notion that something should or rather could be done.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL, WED., APRIL 28, 1971 11

Redistribution of wealth avoided, group says

Welfare council brief criticizes the white paper on income security, urges annual income

By MURRAY GOLDBLATT
Ottawa and Staff Writers

OTTAWA — The National Council of Welfare yesterday charged the Government with failure to produce long-term plans to ease poverty.

The council recommended introduction of a nationwide guaranteed income scheme and maintained that despite Ottawa's objections such a plan is immediately practicable.

Health and Welfare Minister John Munro said he would study the council's statement and added there are many groups that are quick to tell the Government what it should do in terms of solving social problems.

"But they're not in explicit: they don't have such a view as to how to find the needed funding to do these things on a short-term basis. We could not help in negotiation, as to how to find the funds and the best techniques for achieving these goals."

The Government's programs and policies have come under fire from the council as previous occasions since it was set up in January 1970, as a body to study the welfare of the nation. The council includes welfare recipients and poor people's representatives, social work organizations and professionals in the welfare field.

The council in a 10-page report, a product of six-month study, and the Government's social and monetary policies had resulted in a modest, measure increase in employment, but the jobs were deemed as insufficient to meet the needs of the unemployed.

"These who involuntarily sacrificed their employment

in the interest of the national struggle against inflation should surely have been looked on as heroes and provided with adequate compensation for the valuable services they were rendering the nation by not working, instead they find themselves dismissed as slackers."

Criticism of the Government's white paper, tabled last November, the council said the basic principle underlying it seemed to be an assumption that the Canadian people are unwilling to increase income security allocations to help them in poverty and that, therefore, no new money could be spent for this purpose.

"The white paper avoids any discussion of redistribution of the national wealth and talks only of redistribution of existing income security payments."

"It assumes the virtue of the status quo in all major regards and talks only of minor adjustments where the need is obvious."

The white paper proposals for aiding needy pensioners and low income families with children came down to tacking two and-a-half per cent more security in order to provide an additional 200 million (or two corresponding groups of jobs, the council criticized).

In the case of the proposed family income security plan, there is "a total lack of provision in order to provide an additional 200 million (or two corresponding groups of jobs, the council criticized).

The council declared the Canada Pension Plan to be merely a means of financing highways and other provincial Government activities rather than income security.

Improvements in benefits proposed in the white paper and many bills in the past in Canada and the revised unemployment insurance scheme is almost irrelevant as a means to combat poverty, the council said.

The present patchwork quilt of income support programs, the council said, has produced an intolerable inconsistency. A strong case can be made instead for a consolidation of programs under a single program or an integrated system.

Such an approach should be based on the principle that every member of Canadian society has a right to a share of the national wealth sufficient to enable him to participate fully in that society.

The council suggested that a guaranteed annual income scheme was the starting point in achieving that goal.

The white paper estimated the cost of a guaranteed income plan based on the 1969 poverty line of between \$10 billion and \$12 billion. The council estimated that a guaranteed annual income scheme would cost between \$10 billion and \$12 billion. The council estimated that a guaranteed annual income scheme would cost between \$10 billion and \$12 billion.

The council said welfare payments under current legislation and regulations were modest compared to payments to the real beneficiaries of Government welfare programs—the corporate rich.

"Only those aren't called welfare programs. They are called things that someone gives to the rich."

"These payments—welfare, social security, unemployment insurance, pension—these are the real beneficiaries of Government welfare programs, money taken from the poor and over-paid and given to the rich."

Princess Armand

DEPENDENT, HOLLAND (Reuters) — Princess Armand, 47, mother of Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, died at Thorburn Castle here yesterday, the private secretary of Prince Bernhard announced.

Beat infant, father is held for sentencing

London to The Globe and Mail (UPI) — Martin Brown, 35, of Watford, was remanded yesterday to custody to stand trial for sentencing after being found guilty in Essex Crown Court of a charge of causing bodily harm to his 4-year-old son.

125 violated equal work law

In this article the National Council of Welfare is critical of the government's White Paper *Income Security for Canadians*, and its recommendation for a low GAI funded by cuts to the benefits provided to others such as pensioners. For many groups on the left the fight

¹⁰⁶ Finkel, p.8.

for a guaranteed annual income was taken up as a way to recognize the living income as a right of citizenship.¹⁰⁷ In this article the council argues:

Improvements in benefits proposed in the white paper will mean little to the poor in Canada and the revised unemployment insurance system is almost irrelevant as a measure to combat poverty, the council said. The present patchwork quilt of income support programs, the council said, has produced an indefensible inconsistency. A strong case can be made instead for a consolidation of programs either in a single program or an integrated system. Such an approach should be based on the principle that every member of Canadian society has a right to a share of the national wealth sufficient to enable him to participate in that society.

Advancing a more residual model, Minister Munroe responds to the critique by saying:

[T]here are many groups that are quick to tell the government what it should do in terms of achieving over all social objectives. "But they're not too explicit: they don't have too much advice in how to find the required funding to do those things on a short term basis."

While social policy has since WWII been a negotiation between business and public demands for an expanded welfare state, here we see the beginnings of the retraction and cuts that are to come. Munro frames social services and policies to address poverty as too expensive. By framing anti-poverty measures as simply too expensive, the result is to reduce the debate to a level where action can be immediately and easily dismissed.

The framing of poverty as a social and political issue was enhanced by the fact that in 1971 poverty was rarely attached to a particular group of people. Instead, those who were poor were often implicitly or explicitly identified as Canadians as demonstrated in the examples provided below. By identifying the poor as Canadians poverty becomes an issue that is relevant to Canadians, and thus implicitly calls for a collective response.

¹⁰⁷ Finkel, p. 262.

Croll says he won't argue with PM's view of report

Senator David Croll said last night that he would not get into an argument with Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau over the possible price tag for a guaranteed annual income plan for Canadians.

Croll headed a Senate committee on poverty whose report released Wednesday recommended a guaranteed annual income plan. The committee estimated the plan would cost about \$900 million annually.

Trudeau said yesterday the government would not afford such a plan. Published federal government reports estimate the price at about twice that figure.

"The report is in," Croll told *The Star*. "Now let's see what people have to say about it."

Croll said Trudeau's figure is "his own opinion."

Commerce, the New Democratic Party and the Progressive Conservative Party all made estimates about the cost and they were all different.

The minister added that he had had an overwhelming response to the committee report, most of it favorable.

"You can't get near my telephone," he said, "at home or at the office."

SANYO

\$35-a-week wage earner still will have to pay taxes

They are a small but growing group, the 882,000 Canadian families and another 77,000 individuals living alone — a total of 4,419,000 households — were living below the poverty line in 1969.

Statistics Canada said in a report this year that 882,000 Canadian families and another 77,000 individuals living alone — a total of 4,419,000 households — were living below the poverty line in 1969.

"Senator David Croll said last night that he would not get into an argument with Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau over the possible price tag for a guaranteed annual income plan for Canadians."

"Statistics Canada estimated in a report this year that 882,000 Canadian families and another 77,000 individuals living alone — a total of 4,419,000 households — were living below the poverty line in 1969."

In the first article the poor are invoked as Canadians, and in the second article the poor are invoked as Canadian families and individuals. These descriptions are general, objective, and absent of the moral and value laden attributes often attached to those identified as poor in later news coverage.

The following article illustrates the type of value laden discussion often present when a particular group is invoked as "the poor" in 2005 and 2006. This article is titled "Cold Fails to Drive Homeless from the Streets,"¹⁰⁸ and as the title suggests the focus is on the high number of homeless people who "choose" to avoid shelter beds and sleep in the cold.

Scores of people choose to sleep on the streets, even during a cold-weather alert, in the face of repeated urgings by outreach workers, said activists and city officials. Some fear the shelter system; with others, alcohol abuse or mental illness may mean they aren't even aware how cold it is. According to Elaine Smyer, the manager of emergency planning for the city's shelter system, just 21 of the 97 extra spaces set up at various shelters during the cold-weather alert were used Monday night, despite temperatures that dipped to -32C with the wind chill.

¹⁰⁸ *The Globe and Mail* "Cold Fails to Drive Homeless from the Streets." 19 Jan. 2005: A11.

In this article “the homeless” are invoked as those who are poor. Over the period of analysis there is increasing representation of “the homeless” in both papers. Individual responsibility is emphasized in this article as “the homeless” are refusing help offered, and are therefore choosing to sleep in the cold. While we are told that some might fear the shelter system, what they might fear is not made clear and therefore any problems with the system are invisible in this article. However, we are also told that alcohol or mental illness might be keeping people on the street and these descriptions very clearly link poverty to individual inadequacy or failing. Also absent is a discussion of the need for affordable housing or any other social or causal factors which would expand how poverty is discussed.

As stated previously, the neglect of focus on poverty as a social and political issue and the increased reference to specific groups of people is arguably connected to a neoliberalist turn in Canada. In 1975 the federal government began running deficits, which put pressure on the government’s commitment to Keynesian economics. As Finkel argues, in Keynesian economics deficits are viewed as necessary to kick start the economy, but by the late ‘70s there was a well-organized business lobby arguing that deficits would lead to national bankruptcy.¹⁰⁹ He notes that by the late ’70s:

[T]he business attack on Keynesianism became more sophisticated and more effective. Conservatives attributed the latest crisis in capitalism to alleged years of government overspending on social programs. The solution, they argued, was a return to “liberal,” that is marketplace, economics that required a dramatic reduction in government regulation of the economy and provision for the unfortunate. While few called for a full return to the Poor Law, the underlying argument of neoliberalism was that Canadians had become too reliant on state handouts for their well being and required the discipline of market forces to smarten them up. Social activists were placed on the defensive as the well-funded business rhetorical onslaught influenced government policies in all areas.

¹⁰⁹ Finkel, p. 269

That a return to laissez-faire capitalism in which the market was to be the source of all solutions served to silence critiques of capitalism is unsurprising. By the late '70s, Finkel argues that many provincial governments replaced their war on poverty with a war on the poor.¹¹⁰ For example, B.C. and Alberta instituted practices that embodied their "attitudes" toward the poor. The Social Credit B.C. government in 1976 set up a Ministry Inspection program (fraud squad) to find welfare cheaters, while Alberta required mothers of children over four months of age to seek work or training.¹¹¹ Revealed here is a return to 19th-century ideas characterizing the poor as "indigent," "dissolute," and "idle." However, Sylvia Bashevkin argues that Canada remained free of the heavy-handed poor bashing practiced by Ronald Reagan's and Margaret Thatcher's respective governments and, moreover, that the anti-poor rhetoric in Canada was more subtle.¹¹² In order to investigate how poverty was invested with meaning the articles were coded to identify who was being identified as poor, and how they were being portrayed. The results of who is most often being portrayed as poor is illustrated in the following charts.

I. Who are the poor being portrayed:

Toronto Star

¹¹⁰ Finkel, p. 269.

¹¹¹ Finkel, p. 269.

¹¹² Bashevkin, p. 21.

As mentioned earlier, there were more stories in 1971 that did not link poverty to a specific group of people. In the *Star* poverty was not connected to a specific group in 52 percent of news articles in 1971. This dropped to 21 percent in 2006. In the *Star* the groups most often identified as “the poor” were the working poor (23%), families (14%), children (14%), and Aboriginals (10%). In the *Globe* poverty was mentioned without invoking a “the poor” in 32 percent of news articles in 1971 and 25 percent of articles in 2006. The groups most often invoked in the *Globe* in 2006 were the working poor (22%), immigrants (9%), Aboriginals (9%), and homeless (9%). Complex are the increased representations of “the poor” in the sample as being immigrants, members of First Nations communities, and African Canadians. While some of this is tied to negative stereotyping, as illustrated in the examples provided further below, attention must be paid to the growing recognition that members of First Nations communities and visible minorities are disproportionately represented among those living in poverty.¹¹³ In 2006 York University’s Institute for Social Research reported that “the economic gap between members of European and non-European ethno-racial groups has been increasing over

¹¹³ Poverty in Canada is also highly gendered.

the last 30 years.”¹¹⁴ The problem is that while coverage is increasingly “racialized”, the social and economic factors involved in poverty are rarely discussed. The connection between poverty and systemic barriers such as racism were rarely discussed in news coverage.

The working poor are one of the groups most often invoked. When there are calls for action, such calls often relate to the working poor. This tendency appears to have decreased in the *Globe*’s coverage; however, the working poor were still the most represented group in 2006. I have provided some examples to illustrate how the working poor have been portrayed and invoked as deserving. In the 1971 *Globe* article, “New Baby Bonus Sets Stage for Tie-in with Provinces,” Health and Welfare Minister John Munro highlights that the working poor would be beneficiaries of a new government baby bonus program:

Outside the House, Mr. Munro said the revised plan would be of definite benefit to the working poor who unlike those in receipt of welfare could not get free hospital or medical care. The plan’s provisions would supplement the income of the working poor and bring many of them above the poverty line.¹¹⁵

Similarly, in the 2006 *Toronto Star* editorial, “Affordable Help for Working Poor,” the writer criticizes the 2006 federal budget for providing tax cuts to the wealthy but not to the working poor:

Surely, if Ottawa has money for tax cuts for Canadians who are far better off, it can afford to help the nearly one-third of Canadian low-wage workers who are unable to make ends meet. These are people who work

¹¹⁴ Ornstein, Michael. *Ethno-Racial Groups in Toronto, 1971-2001: A Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile*. 2006: <http://www.isr.yorku.ca/download/Ornstein--Ethno-Racial_Groups_in_Toronto_1971-2001.pdf>

¹¹⁵ *The Globe and Mail*, “New Baby Bonus Sets Stage for Tie-in with Provinces.” 30 June 1971 [section?].

hard but simply don't earn enough to cover the costs of living and working in Canada, especially in the big cities.¹¹⁶

Throughout the three time periods the working poor are consistently presented as deserving. This description does in part problematize the economic structure by suggesting that there are people who are not paid high enough wages to lift them out of poverty. However, the term also simultaneously conjures images of an “undeserving poor” those who don’t work, because of the long-standing and prevalent negative depictions of those identified as poor.

The great number of stories linking poverty to children in the *Star* is tied to the decision of social justice advocates in the ‘80s to respond to the anti-poor backlash by deliberately invoking a deserving poor discourse by focusing on child poverty.¹¹⁷ This practice seemed successful when the House of Commons voted unanimously to eliminate child poverty by the end of the century; but although this promise is often raised by anti-poverty advocates, high child poverty rates persist.¹¹⁸ Given that poverty is highly gendered in Canada, an interesting finding of this study is the relatively low representation of “the poor” as being women. Further, the lack of discussion of First Nation’s poverty is equally troubling.¹¹⁹ In 2003 the poverty rate for senior women was 19.1 percent, while it was 10.2 percent for men. The poverty rate for single parent

¹¹⁶ *The Toronto Star*, “Affordable Help for Working Poor.” 16 May 2006: A20.

¹¹⁷ For a detailed discussion of the rationale behind this shift and an analysis of the strength and weaknesses of this approach by anti-poverty advocates see Wendy McKeen’s “The Shifting Discourses of the Progressive Social Policy / Child Poverty Advocacy Community: Wither Social Justice?” *Canadian Review of Social Policy*. Spring 2004: 53, pp. 88-107.

¹¹⁸ This point is made by Alvin Finkel, p. 305.

¹¹⁹ The portrayal of First Nations communities and of First Nations issues has long been criticized, and a detailed study of such portrayals warrants its own separate study. Robert Harding’s “Historical Representations of Aboriginal People in the Canadian News Media” (2006) provides a thorough analysis.

mothers was 48.9 percent.¹²⁰ In my analysis women and single mothers were linked to poverty in less than five percent of stories for any given year, with the exception of the *Star* coverage in 2006, at which time women and single mothers were portrayed in seven percent of stories. The absence of such portrayals raises more questions than answers. Is the lack of poverty coverage in relation to women tied to the '80s and '90s backlash against single mothers? Are, for example, poor women deemed to be not as “deserving” as the working poor, and are therefore invoked less often in poverty coverage? Or, is the lack of coverage of women in relation to poverty connected to the trend of glossing poverty without any discussion of causal factors, as the charts below indicate? A study of how women are portrayed in relation to poverty coverage is worthy of its own analysis and requires, I would argue, a keyword search that involves more than just the word poverty.

To investigate how the labels attached to those identified as poor, the articles were coded to identify the presence or absence of negative stereotypes. The articles were also coded to identify where those identified as poor were being described as self-sufficient and/or deserving of government action. The following charts detail these findings.

¹²⁰ National Council of Welfare, *Poverty Profile, 2002 and 2003*.
http://www.ncwcnbes.net/documents/researchpublications/ResearchProjects/PovertyProfile/2002-03Report_Summer2006/ReportENG.pdf>

If the poor are being portrayed, is the individual or group being depicted as:
Toronto Star

Globe and Mail

Key differences and similarities in coverage between the two papers are apparent here.

Both papers have a high percentage of stories in which there is no portrayal of the poor, and both show little change when comparing 1971 to 2006. This finding I suggest is due to the high number of stories in which poverty is mentioned in passing. When poverty is discussed in more detail it is clear that in the *Star* the poor are most often portrayed as deserving of government or social action. In the *Star* this percentage increased from thirty-five percent in 1971 to fifty-two percent in 2006. The jump is linked to the increased advocacy role taken on by the *Star* in 2006, as the paper's editorial board began advocating for provincial and federal governments to address poverty. In the *Globe* the percentage of stories presenting the poor as deserving of government or social action

decreased from thirty-nine percent in 1971 to twenty-one percent in 2006. The percentage of articles portraying the poor as dependent doubled from 1971 to 2006 in both papers, reinforcing a more value laden discourse in 2006.

The above charts provide a useful breakdown of how poverty and the poor were framed. To get a better idea of overall trends the articles were analyzed to determine the combined total of negative stereotypes listed above and the framing of the poor in a more positive light. All articles in which the poor were linked to danger, crime, substance abuse, lacking self-sufficiency, or laziness were counted as showing the presence of negative portrayals. All articles in which the poor were portrayed as deserving of government action, being self-sufficient, unemployed, or in need of charity were counted as showing the presence of more positive attributes. As stated previously, the coding here was not mutually exclusive. For example, one article might contain a depiction of a neighborhood in which some residents are portrayed as dangerous and criminal while other families are portrayed as hardworking and struggling to get ahead. Such was the case with “Better, But Not by Much.”¹²¹

My decision to include coverage which depicts the poor as in need of charity, as a more positive frame is indeed problematic; victim blaming throughout the last century, according to James J. Rice and Michael J. Prince, is often disguised as kindness and concern. So in charity discourse, for example, while welfare recipients are not blamed outright for perceived “inferior” qualities, charity interests are nonetheless focused on

¹²¹ Globe and Mail, “Better, but not by much; The Loganathans' new home is another a crumbling unit in a roach-infested building.” 5 July 2005: M3. In this article the Loganathan family is portrayed as a hardworking family, down on their luck after the father loses his job; however, the Regent Park community is described as “a failed social experiment, with high rates of poverty and crime.” While there is crime in the community, this description linguistically connects “poverty and crime” and casts a wide net that links poor residents in the community to crime.

perceived defects while they ignore social stratification, political struggle, inequalities of power and distribution of income, and racism.¹²² With this critique in mind, it was determined that charity in the sampled articles was most often discussed in relation to need versus defect. Therefore, as these articles focused on the need for social action in response to poverty, they were coded as being more positive than negative. It was decided to include articles portraying the poor as the unemployed as positive, as this depiction absent of other moralizing or value driven language connects the issue to lack of employment.

Toronto Star

Globe and Mail

These charts demonstrate the conflicting representations of “the poor” throughout the years under analysis. The results indicate that in combination, in the *Star* there is an increasing representation of the poor in both a positive and negative light, while there remains a consistent presence of articles with no portrayal at all. Although there are far more negative portrayals in more recent coverage than there were in 1971. In the *Globe*, there is a fairly consistent representation of the poor in a negative light, yet there appears a resurgence of positive representations in 2006. The *Star* results indicate an increase in

¹²² Rice and Prince, p. 86.

value laden discourse, while the *Globe* results indicate that a value laden discourse has been present fairly consistently throughout the three time periods.

The mystification of poverty is facilitated through the high percentage of stories which fail to connect the issue to social and/or political causes or solutions. For the last thirty years anti-poverty advocates have been emphasizing that a lack of affordable housing, decent jobs, accessible childcare, low wages, and income support are key factors contributing to poverty. As well, those on both the political left and right have indicated that a need for training and education are causal factors as well. The presence or absence of these factors in the context of poverty discussions helps to indicate the type of poverty discourse in the news. Again it is important to note that coding was not exclusive, and often an article would either have no reference to social solutions, or several would be listed within one article. The first *Globe* and *Star* charts below measure the presence or absence of causal factors detailed above. The second *Globe* and *Star* charts presents charts which quantify the presence or absence of social or political solutions.

Presence of Causal Factors in Relation to Poverty

Toronto Star

Globe and Mail

Of note here is the high percentage of stories in both papers in which social and/or economic causal factors in relation to poverty are not mentioned. The significance of this is that while the poor may not be outright blamed for their poverty, or portrayed overall as undeserving, as the charts above indicate, by not including a discussion of causal factors poverty in effect becomes naturalized.

Presence / Absence of “Solutions” in Poverty Articles

Toronto Star

Social and political solutions, as anti-poverty advocates identify them, are rarely discussed in articles where the word poverty is used. This was the case in fifty percent of 2006 articles in both the *Globe* and the *Star*. Neglecting or opting not to raise these factors, and moreover any options as concerns the issue, serves to make them invisible. The high percentage of stories devoid of any solutions or causes raised in discussions of poverty has to do with the number of stories in which poverty is mentioned in passing. Two examples are provided to illustrate this point:

Globe and Mail 2006

Editorial

Terror in Canada: Perspective Please.

Though it would be foolish to deny there are problems — high crime levels among black youth, persistent pockets of poverty in some immigrant communities, an unwieldy, often unfair immigration and refugee system — by and large Canada is doing a magnificent job at integrating newcomers.¹²³

Written in response to arrests made in Ontario in 2006, and advising Canadians not to panic about terrorism, this editorial glosses poverty in its final paragraph. As such, it

¹²³ *The Globe and Mail*, "Terror in Canada: Perspective, Please." 5 June 2006: A14.

presents poverty as a problem; however, at this point poverty is linked to a specific group of people, while causal factors or solutions are not presented.

In the context of the next article, which also focuses on terrorism, the poor are implicitly characterized as dangerous; and while poverty is presented as being a persistent problem, it is not problematized by any discussion:

Globe and Mail 2005
“Handguns, Sops and Photo-ops”

Economic-class immigrants from countries that are particularly violent and impoverished, such as Jamaica, should be carefully screened, to ensure that they have the education, the means and the motivation to integrate successfully into Canadian society. Family-class immigrants and refugees from those societies should be restricted to those who are unlikely to arrive in, or fall into, poverty.¹²⁴

This article, written by a regular *Globe* columnist, exemplifies definitions of poverty that draw on conceptions of the undeserving poor. In it, the poor—who are explicitly characterized as Jamaican immigrants—are linked to crime, while, more generally, immigrants from “violent and impoverished” countries should be carefully screened. Moreover, the description and suggestion that “immigrants and refugees from those societies should be restricted to those who are unlikely to arrive in, or fall into, poverty” effectively normalizes poverty; doing so it does not discuss any potential social factors involved, such as discrimination and underemployment.

The charts below demonstrate differences, indicative of each newspaper’s overall tone and approach.

¹²⁴ *The Globe and Mail*, “Handguns, Sops and Photo-ops.” 9 Dec. 2005: A6.

Who Speaks:

Toronto Star

Although there was an increasing percentage of stories in which someone identified as poor or an average person spoke, most quoted in the *Star* are government representatives, anti-poverty advocates, and authority figures. In comparison, the *Globe* reveals a similar tendency to rely on government sources, and with the exception of 2005 anti-poverty advocates are also quoted in a high percentage of its stories. However, the *Globe's* greater tendency is to rely on authority figures as sources.

Globe and Mail

The increasingly high percentage of stories in which the writer is a voice expressing a personal opinion, reflects the increased presence of editorials and opinion pieces. The charts below demonstrate a connection between authorial voice and poverty-related

articles; more specifically, the writer's voice, and thus opinion, tends to become more salient as the number of poverty related columns, editorials, and opinion pieces increases.

Toronto Star

Globe and Mail

These charts indicate that in the *Star* the percentage of poverty related news articles has declined over the last thirty years, whereas in the *Globe* this percentage has stayed relatively consistent. In the *Star* the percentage of poverty related columns/editorials/opinion pieces have been steadily increasing. There was a thirty percent increase from 1971 to 2006. This trend shows the *Star's* increased focus on poverty, which culminated in the paper's launching a "War on Poverty" in January 2007. The *Globe* showed an increase in editorial/opinion pieces from 1971 to 2005, and the slightest decline in 2006 from 2005. The *Globe* also showed a higher percentage of poverty related stories in Business, Lifestyle, and Focus sections. Both papers showed a decline in the overall percentage of poverty related news stories; the *Star* went from eighty-seven to fifty-six percent, while the *Globe* went from sixty-one to fifty-three percent.

The following chart demonstrates the mixed representation of who bears the responsibility to address poverty.

L. Responsibility:

Toronto Star

Globe and Mail

At a consistent level throughout the three time periods, the *Star* articles depict poverty as a collective responsibility and as requiring collective action. In contrast, the *Globe* showed a marked decrease in the percentage of articles that portrayed poverty as a collective responsibility, from sixty-eight percent in 1971 to thirty-four percent in 2006. The high percentage of articles portraying poverty as an individual responsibility has remained fairly consistent in the *Globe*. It must also be noted that often an article was found to portray poverty as both a collective and an individual responsibility. The differences between the two papers is noteworthy here. According to this chart the *Star* was more likely to portray poverty as a collective responsibility in 2006, while the *Globe* presented poverty as both a collective and an individual responsibility. Such findings

indicate that a redistributive order of discourse is more present in poverty discussions in the *Star*, while a residual order of discourse is more influential in the *Globe* than the *Star*. This conclusion is investigated further in Chapter Three's discussion of the discourse analysis. The number of articles in which poverty is portrayed as neither an individual nor a collective responsibility is on the rise in the *Globe* while it remained high in the *Star*. This finding serves as an important reminder, although poverty was often raised as a social or political issue in 1971, throughout all three time periods there were a high percentage of stories that mentioned poverty in passing. In these articles in particular, poverty was often mentioned without discussion of solutions or of responsible agents.

In conclusion, the content analysis revealed unique aspects of poverty coverage for each period under analysis. In 1971 poverty was often framed as a social or political issue, and the poor were often portrayed as deserving of government or social action to address poverty. The 1971 tendency to frame poverty within a social policy discussion I argue here was the result of the strong presence of a redistributive discourse in the post WWII era. In 2005, poverty discourse was more value laden and there was little discussion of potential solutions. In 2006 poverty was again in the news, but most often linked to a specific group of people. The more recent tendency to link poverty to specific groups of people demonstrates the influence of more than three decades of neoliberal discursive and political dominance. My results do not indicate, as suggested by Bauman, Katz, and Gans, that negative stereotypes dominate news coverage. While negative portrayals have been consistently present, there are also a significant number of articles in which positive attributes are attached to those invoked as "the poor." In combination, these findings support my view that a value laden discourse which draws on 19th century

conceptions of the deserving and undeserving poor and presents poverty as a problem affecting a “them” instead of an “us” is more present in contemporary coverage than in 1971. The danger in value laden contemporary coverage is that it shifts the meaning of poverty from a social and political issue frame where often poverty is at least raised as a civil rights issue of equality, to pre-19th century merit based discourse where some people are presented as more deserving than others. The outcome is that discussion focuses more on increased benefits, than on structural changes that would have a lasting impact.

My findings do support the conclusion of Gans, Bauman, and Katz, that poverty is most often mystified in contemporary news coverage. Although poverty does appear to be a news focus again in 2006, the keyword is mentioned in passing in over 40 percent of articles in both papers. Further, in 50 percent of articles there is no mention of any solutions to address poverty. The failure to problematize poverty, renders it natural. Additionally, a recurring practice of mystifying the issue by not connecting it to the social and political factors involved in generating poverty makes it more difficult for citizens to debate what actions should be taken to eliminate poverty.

However, a number of the results presented here indicate that the meaning of poverty is undergoing a transformation. There was a resurgence in the percentage of articles that covered poverty as a main focus in 2006. There was also a resurgence, even if it was slight, in the percentage of stories that connected poverty to economic and social solutions such as a need for increased benefits, better wages, and decent work in 2006. Further, differences in *Globe* and *Star* coverage became more pronounced in 2006 suggesting the newspapers themselves to a certain extent reflect competing orders of discourse. The *Star* presented poverty more often as a collective responsibility indicating

the strong presence of a redistributive order of discourse, while the *Globe* most often portrayed poverty as an individual responsibility. In addition, the *Star* editorial board took on an advocacy role which is reflected in coverage. Moreover, in 2005 and 2006 poverty became discussed more on editorial and opinion pages than it had been in 1971. This shift suggests that even though there is not an event such as the Senate Poverty hearings of 71 to keep poverty in the news, the issue has become one of political significance and is provoking debate. The discourse analysis in the next chapter provides an opportunity to investigate in detail the orders of discourse influencing coverage throughout the three time periods, and to also investigate precisely how the key word poverty is being invested with meaning.

Chapter Three: Discourse Analysis

The discourse analysis discussed in this chapter was conducted on three levels. At one level I considered how the same event, the release of the federal budget in 1971 and 2006, did or did not effect poverty coverage. In this event-based discourse analysis, I focused on analyzing poverty coverage in the week before and after the release of the federal budget in 1971 and 2006. The budget was chosen as the event on which to focus because it is arguably the most significant federal announcement of the year. The federal government outlines its priorities in the budget through policy decisions and rhetoric. The budget also provokes significant response from social groups. Using the keyword “poverty,” the following databases were searched for the seven days before and after the release of the federal budget: Pages From the Past (*Toronto Star* 1971), Canadian Heritage (*Globe and Mail* 1971), and Factiva (*Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Star* 2006). Each article was examined as a communicative event, and specific questions relating to textual analysis, discursive practice, and social cultural practice were asked. The analysis’s objective was to unravel how these texts are both socially shaped and socially shaping, to consider how language usage can help to reproduce and maintain existing social identities, relations and systems of knowledge and belief, and how it can help to transform them.¹²⁵

A second level of analysis was a focus on language use, and an evaluation of how the key word poverty was invested with meaning. On its own, the word poverty might not say much, so to speak, but the word indeed gains meaning as it gets positioned in relation to other signs.¹²⁶ To draw on Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory, the word poverty can be conceived of as a nodal point—a privileged sign around which other signs acquire

¹²⁵ Fairclough, p. 309.

¹²⁶ This method of describing poverty as both a nodal point and floating signifier is drawn from Phillips and Jorgenson’s explanation using the word “body.”

their meaning—and also as a floating signifier in that the *sign* “poverty” is open to different ascriptions of meaning depending on how it is used in relation to other signs.¹²⁷ However poverty is used, then, the word will have no permanent and thus stable meaning. As Phillips and Jorgenson note, there are always other meaning potentials which can challenge and transform how poverty is talked about.¹²⁸ In this analysis I discuss how the word poverty is invested with meaning in each article through its connection to other signifiers / signs. For example, an article containing the word poverty and signs such as drug addict as well as additional descriptive terms such as lazy, unemployed, and gang member, will temporarily fix what poverty means in that context. When a number of articles are investigated to determine such temporary fixations of meaning, as done here, it is possible to identify significant patterns.

A third level of analysis consisted of an investigation into which order of discourse was most prominent in the news of each period. While there are many orders of discourse and worldviews informing how people talk about and understand poverty, I have here chosen to examine the influence of just three. In the political sphere, ideas about the role of the state, the individual, and of how poverty should be addressed vary according to social circles and positions.¹²⁹ As stated in the previous section, in the Canadian context, since WWII debates between those advocating a redistributive state model and those advocating a residual state model have pervaded both public policy and social and political discourse. Arguably, one of the most influential orders of discourse is the Canadian government’s, which according to Finkel balances the interests of those

¹²⁷ This description of nodal point and floating signifier is drawn from Phillips and Jorgenson, p. 29.

¹²⁸ Phillips and Jorgenson, p. 29.

¹²⁹ This conception is drawn from Phillips and Jorgenson’s summary of Bordieu, p.73.

advocating both views. All three of these perspectives invest poverty with different and particular meanings.

Dictionaries - 1971

In the contemporary environment, the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives and the Fraser Institute are the obvious choice when attempting to construct dictionaries for the redistributive and residual state models, respectively, given their influence, reach, and position as “think tanks” which advocate and respond to various government initiatives including the budget. However, neither body existed in 1971.¹³⁰ Instead, the Ontario Welfare Council and the Canadian Chamber of commerce were both used to create dictionaries for those advocating a redistributive or a residual state model; and the submissions for both to the Senate Committee on Poverty were used to construct the dictionaries. Furthermore, by conducting a close analysis of the 1971 budget speech a dictionary was created for the Canadian government. Dictionaries were created for each order of discourse by identifying key patterns of emphasis, arguments regarding the role of the state, and the view of poverty and the poor being expressed. The points of emphasis, discursive themes, and poverty constructions of each then present an idea package that was compared to the news articles to check for correspondences. The purpose for comparing these dictionaries is an analytical one. The goal is not to locate causes-and- effects but, rather, to consider what discourse dominates and how this might be limiting how poverty is discussed.

¹³⁰ The Fraser Institute was founded in 1974, and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives was founded in 1980.

Federal Government Dictionary 1971

When the federal government released their budget speech in 1971, mounting unemployment rates, income security, and inflation were all in the news; and the budget must be considered a response to these issues. This 1971 budget's emphasis is tax reform. The Minister of Finance notes at the outset that "we are now entering the final phase of the most comprehensive tax reform undertaken since the income tax system was begun in 1917."¹³¹ The priorities for the tax system are mentioned on page four of the speech: the first listed states that "[a] tax system must be sensitive to the economic and social needs of this country. It must not stand in the way of steady and continuous growth and economic prosperity"; the second states that the "tax system must distribute the tax burden in an equitable manner, based upon ability to pay." In outlining the thrust of the changes, the minister notes that too heavy a load has been placed on those with the "least ability to pay" (load here is defined strictly as income taxes, sales taxes, and property taxes), and for this reason the government says it is "significantly" reducing the tax burden "borne by lower-income Canadians." In the third paragraph, the minister says specifically that the government will "reform the tax treatment of wage earners – the vast majority of our taxpaying population."

Referring to the poor as lower income Canadians and wage earners makes it clear that reform is focused on the working poor; and mentioning this group first presents them as most deserving. Changes to the tax structure are presented as an effective way to deal with "low income," which is used here as a synonym for poverty. Addressing poverty through tax measures in terms of rhetoric and policy emphasizes individualism and the

¹³¹ Canada. Dept. of Finance, Budget speech delivered by the Honourable E.J. Benson, Minister of Finance and Member of Parliament for Kingston and the Islands, in the House of Commons, Friday, June 18, 1971.

necessity of work. Unaddressed here are inequities within the market, low wages, etc. Second, the minister stresses that there will be tax reductions for corporations and investors. Here we see the balancing act between welfare policies and business which Finkel highlights. The groups of people which the Finance Minister identifies as poised to benefit from the new tax measures and whom he invokes in the process as deserving are “low-income groups,” “wage and salary earners,” “elderly Canadians,” “blind persons and disabled persons,” families and children, women, employers, and “mentally or physically handicapped persons or disabled persons.” The groups invoked here have a long history of being portrayed as “deserving” when featured in political discourse.

Redistributive Model - Dictionary 1971

The Ontario Welfare Council’s 1969 submission to the Senate Committee on poverty contains a discursive order that promotes the redistributive model of the welfare state, and as such advances a perspective on poverty that problematizes the economic structure. The Council was a voluntary organization that represented the views of public assistance recipients, “consumers of social services”, the working poor, voluntary organizations, and representatives of municipal and provincial governments.¹³² The Council argues that poverty is connected to unemployment and job insecurity and, furthermore, that the poverty resulting from this insecurity leads to an instability in housing, family life, and children’s performance. The market and the economy are problematized, and job insecurity and income are identified as agents of poverty. The Council recommends a guaranteed annual income plan that is universal, an adequate minimum wage, the setting of public social security to the rising cost of living to be

¹³² In their presentation, the Council noted that during their annual meeting and conference they had sought the opinion of this varied demographic of people, and had used the comments registered at the meetings to develop their proposals.

reviewed regularly, a universal health and dental program, and an increase in old-age security and family allowances. In addition, the Council also recommends enhanced home supports for single mothers, increased training opportunities, improved welfare staff policies and practices, and the establishment of procedures to ensure that the civil rights of welfare recipients are protected. Also suggested is that “those affected by services” should “have some control of their own destiny, some part in the making of decisions carried out on their behalf.”¹³³ In the recommendations there is no invocation of the binary opposition of deserving versus undeserving; invoked instead is a discourse of human rights. The order of discourse presented here emphasizes increased state involvement in income and service distribution; and the state is characterized as an agent capable of and required for the creation of greater equality in terms of income and quality of life.

Residual Model – Dictionary 1971

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce made their submission to the Poverty Committee on 18 June 1970. In the submission, it identified itself as a national voluntary federation of over 800 autonomous Boards of Trade and Chambers of Commerce. The Chamber argued that government must consider the impact of policy changes, first, on the growth and development of the Canadian economy, second, in its effectiveness at alleviating poverty and ultimately removing causes and, third, any area of overlap with other programs. The Chamber’s order of emphasis places the economy and business first, alleviating poverty second, and government efficiency third. Constructions of the deserving and undeserving poor are invoked as the Chamber recommends that services should be targeted, and only for those who cannot support themselves:

¹³³ 25:25.

Canada's security philosophy, policies and programmes should recognize that most Canadians can, and wish to, provide for their own security. Those who cannot, through no fault of their own, should be treated with compassion and provided with selective and restorative remedies.

It is also noted that “[t]hose who plan and develop social welfare programs should guard against short-term palliatory measures at the expense of long-term growth in the living standards of the entire population.”¹³⁴ Guiding this argument is a utilitarian principle: the view that it may be necessary to tolerate some poverty for the “greater” good, the benefit of the larger population. Further in their submission, the Chamber draws on the discourse of less eligibility when it argues that substantial welfare assistance will discourage the many taxpayers who “support those on welfare” from working themselves. The Council also argues that targeted programs are more efficient and affordable than universal programs. The economic system and the market are not problematized here; in fact, each is viewed as the solution. In its emphasis on the market and on the individual, this order of discourse can be connected to a larger order that promotes a residual state. Welfare supports are not a right, they are a last resort; and the individual is thought to be inherently lazy and likely to take advantage of income supports instead of working if supports are too generous. At base, this argument views welfare recipients with suspicion. Each of the articles in the *Globe* and the *Star* 1971 sample were evaluated to determine which order of discourse could be identified in the texts.

Analysis - *Globe and Mail* 1971

There were ten *Globe and Mail* articles identified containing the keyword poverty in the week preceding and following the release of the June 1971 federal budget. Of these,

¹³⁴ 51:36.

only one article mentioned the budget. Most of the articles were the result of coverage of political events and discussed poverty in relation to social policy.

Two articles were in relation to a federal provincial constitutional conference and proposals from Quebec to gain increased jurisdictional powers over social security legislation¹³⁵

One article discussed raising the minimum wage¹³⁶

Four articles discussed a “rebel” poverty report by a group of staffers who had quit the Senate Committee on Poverty in protest¹³⁷

In two articles poverty was mentioned in passing and used more as a descriptive¹³⁸

In “Bourassa to pursue provincial control of family allowances”¹³⁹ and “Quebec will not sacrifice aims to gain agreement: Bourassa,”¹⁴⁰ the subject is Quebec’s decision to seek constitutional amendments during the federal provincial constitutional conference, to give the province increased jurisdictional rights concerning social security legislation. Both texts are the result of coverage of a political event, in this case a constitutional conference. Quebec wanted to enhance family allowances and eventually move toward a guaranteed annual income. In the first story Welfare Minister Claude Castonoguy is described as “anxious” to introduce Quebec’s own family allowance system in the fall, which would annually pay between 150 to 200 dollars per child. The next paragraph reads: “This alone, he believes, would be enough to boost many of Quebec’s working poor above the poverty line.” This is the sole use of the word poverty. Although the agent of poverty is not discussed in the article, it is nevertheless invoked. In focusing on policy

¹³⁵ *Globe and Mail*, “Bourassa to Pursue Provincial Control of Family Allowances.” 12 June 1971:4; “Quebec will not sacrifice aims to gain agreement: Bourassa.” 15 June 1971: 8.

¹³⁶ *Globe and Mail*, “House Approves Boost of 10 Cents an Hour to Increase Federal Minimum Wage to \$1.75.” 18 June 1971: 4.

¹³⁷ *Globe and Mail*, “Half Income of Poor Disappears in Taxes.” 21 June 1971: 1; “Croll Charges Ex-Staffers Violated Oath.” 22 June 1971: 12; “The Revolution has Been Postponed.” 24 June 1971: 6; “Rebel Report Decision Postponed by Senate.” 23 June 1971: 12.

¹³⁸ *Globe and Mail*, “The Changing CMA ...” 14 June 1971: 7; “Shortages All Over.” 12 June 1971: 6.

¹³⁹ *Globe and Mail*, 12 June 1971: 4.

¹⁴⁰ *Globe and Mail* 15 June 1971: 8.

as a means to raise people's income, a low income is presented as the cause of poverty. And in their advocating for poverty-related policy changes, the Premier of Quebec and the Welfare Minister are presented as responsible. In terms of transitivity, there is no discussion of the process or of events that lead to poverty in Quebec. It might be said that the article's overall effect is to distance the reader from the issue. Politicians are the only voices quoted here, and political and legal discourses dominate as the article largely focuses on the constitutional proposal and disagreements between Quebec and the Federal government.

In "Quebec will not sacrifice aims to gain agreement," the second article on this topic, published three days later, a citizen rights discourse intermingles with a political and legal one. The Premier is quoted as saying that the province decided to tackle the constitutional aspects of social welfare "because it believes that the present situation is the cause of the relative ineffectiveness of the war on poverty." Robert Bourassa is also quoted as saying that "[w]e need this agreement to establish an integrated policy of income security, the only kind that can satisfy adequately the needs of the citizen." While in the first article the working poor were invoked as the deserving poor so as to justify the social policy changes, in this article poverty-related action is justified as necessary to "satisfy adequately the needs of the citizen." The poor are constructed here as citizens, and therefore as existing within the "us" instead of the "them" category. Thus, constructed as such, the poor are not located within the deserving/undeserving discursive binary. Since the language used frames poverty as a citizen's rights issue, a discourse of democracy and rights is drawn upon. Furthermore, poverty in both articles is problematized, and presented as an issue warranting social policy changes such as the

need for improved family allowances, unemployment insurance, and a guaranteed annual income. The first article is more normative as the minister justifies the proposed policy changes by claiming that they will benefit the working poor, a claim which invokes conceptions of the deserving poor. The second article fairly challenges dominant constructions of poverty as it ties the word and the issue to a democratic rights discourse that effectively shifts the discussion from being about “them” to a discussion about “us.” As such, the virtual relationship established between the reader and those invoked as “poor” becomes less impersonal. Also in the second article, the provincial government is depicted as holding responsibility for the issue, while the federal government is depicted as hesitant to relinquish responsibility. The model of the state presented here, whether provincial or federal, is one of bearing responsibility for the distribution of income. In this article, however, the processes that more or less engender poverty are again absent. In this way, any agent involved in creating poverty, such as an unstable labour market, is indirectly absolved of responsibility. Although in these articles the government order of discourse predominates, it is bound up with redistributive discourse. And the lack of discussion of causes or agents of poverty does indicate the presence of a residual discourse.

Four of the articles in the sample covered the release, or at least some aspect thereof, of the poverty report rendered by four former staff members of the Senate Committee on Poverty. The report gained as much news attention in the *Globe* for its status as a “rebel report” as for its content. The report’s four authors quit the Senate Committee because they thought it was uninterested in investigating the causes of

poverty. They released their own report as part of a special edition of the *Last Post*¹⁴¹ before the official Senate Committee report was released.¹⁴² The Senator heading the committee, David Croll, threatened to take legal action against the authors for using confidential information; and his position was the focus in two of the four articles. The most detailed discussion of the report's content was in "Half Income of Poor Disappears in Taxes."¹⁴³ Both this article's structure and the content lend greatly to investing poverty with meaning. The *Globe* chooses to emphasize in its lead sentence those of the report's findings which relate to the working poor:

Wage earners among the more than 4,500,000 Canadians who live in poverty pay a larger percentage of their income on tax than people who make more than \$10,000 a year, says a report to be released today by four former staff members of the Senate Poverty Committee.

"Wage earners" is the nominalization used to describe people who are poor, and that the sentence foregrounds this term suggests that we should be especially concerned about this very group. Poverty also gets attached to the unfairness of the tax structure in the lead sentence. At issue here is the fact that some people are working and paying more than their share in taxes.

Information gained from official sites of authority appears in brackets and is used to offer "facts" as counter claims to those made in the report. For example, The Economic Council's poverty line is provided as context. Also, details from the report, such as "54 per cent of the income of poor people goes in payment of taxes," are countered by three paragraphs worth of budget details, as in this extract:

¹⁴¹ "Special Report" *Last Post*. Vol.8 No.8, Summer 1971.

¹⁴² The authors would go on to publish a monograph called *The Real Poverty* report later in 1971.

¹⁴³ *Globe and Mail*, 21 June 1971: p.1.

(Changes in the federal tax system proposed in last Friday's budget will eliminate personal income taxes in 1972 for about a million low income and elderly taxpayers and reduce annual tax bills for up to 5,000,000 more people.)

The brackets were in the original text, and are intended to signify that the information is factual. As such the budget is used as an official voice. This article is the only in the sample to contain a reference to the budget and to poverty. The "budget voice" intends to provide an update and assurance that the concerns raised by this group are in fact being addressed and that things are not as bad as the report would have us believe. The use of the budget to update the report's numbers, and thus refine if not counter the report's truth claims, distances the reader from the report as truth. The residual model's political and the economic discourse(s) are most evident in the first half of this article.

In the article's latter half, the discourse changes as the article quotes liberally from the poverty report. As welfare and civil rights discourses emerge they increase the multiplicity of meaning potential in relation to poverty. The report's authors are quoted blaming welfare policies for reinforcing poverty rather than alleviating it and they call for extensive economic reforms:

The report says that social reforms have been largely a matter of political concession by governments in power rather than a pre-occupation with furthering equality and democracy. "Behind the concessions there has always been hidden a delicate political balance – the balance between giving just enough to take the steam out of social unrest and leaving the power in the hands of the few largely undisturbed.

Here the need to address poverty is connected to "furthering equality and democracy."

The article also presents a critique of the welfare system and problematizes it. The article's latter half presents addressing poverty as a matter of civic duty, but also

problematizes the government's handling of the issue; in this way, the article challenges authority and the status quo. The report's authors are also quoted as dismissing "the concept of a guaranteed annual income without extensive economic reforms." Although these reforms are not discussed, the word sequence here effectively suggests that the economic system is an agent of poverty and, moreover, that without addressing causal factors the GAI will be forever addressing only symptoms, i.e., low incomes.

In its entirety, this article presents a contestation of competing discourses concerning the proper role of the state in terms of poverty and in constructions of the poor. Poverty is presented in the first half of the article as an economic and political issue which is being dealt with, while the poor are constructed as the working poor. Its second half challenges conventional approaches of dealing with poverty and their discourses, while emphasis is laid on the poor as the unemployed. The interdiscursivity presented in this article is indicative of a centrifugal push away from a more unitary discourse. It is also indicative of a period of social change, as Fairclough notes, and reflects the wider social and political environment. While its interdiscursivity renders this article's meaning potential somewhat open, the others from the sample that concern the report present more of a closed fixation of meaning. The editorial response to the report in "The Revolution has been postponed"¹⁴⁴ reinforces the government's order of discourse, as well as the Senate's authority. The *Globe*'s editorial board argues that there is nothing new in the report and dismisses its authors as freshmen writing at a grade one level. The editorial writer argues that the report will reveal nothing new to Senator Croll and that in it there are no recommendations worthy of attention. The editorial presents no alternative recommendations.

¹⁴⁴ *Globe and Mail*, 24 June 1971: p.6.

In combination, the orders of discourse most present in this sample are a political/authoritative discourse, and to some extent a redistributive state model discourse. In terms of effect, what results is a poverty discourse in the news where most often causes of poverty are not identified, but the need for improved policies and for increased government action are often referenced. Poverty is invested with meaning through its relationship to other signifiers including the working poor, income, the unemployed, the welfare system, income security, and various social policies. Of particular note are the strong presence of a citizens' rights discourse and the signifiers equality and democracy.

Analysis - *Toronto Star* 1971

There were nine articles in the 1971 sample for the *Toronto Star*. As with the *Globe*, most of the articles were related to coverage of a political event and were dominated by political discourse.

One article focused on the Quebec issue highlighted above¹⁴⁵

Four articles were related to the poverty report by former Senate staffers¹⁴⁶ referred to above

One article discussed the annual report of the Saskatoon police chief¹⁴⁷

One article covered a public talk given by David Suzuki¹⁴⁸

One article discussed the provincial election in Saskatchewan¹⁴⁹

One article discussed the *Star*'s charity summer camp fund¹⁵⁰

As the *Star* also covered Quebec's proposed constitutional amendment changes and the poverty report, an opportunity was provided to consider how the structure and content of these events are covered differently by each paper, and how the events

¹⁴⁵ *Toronto Star*, "Quebec spells out its price for staying in Canada." 17 June 1971: p.8.

¹⁴⁶ *Toronto Star*, "Guaranteed Income Urged by 4 Who Quit Senate Poverty Probe." 21 June 1971: p.1; "Woodcutters living deplorably found on land Senator leased.": 21 June 1971: 4; "Workmen's Compensation accused of forcing injured into poverty." 21 June 1971: 4; "Senate my probe breach of faith by 4 ex-staffers." 22 June 1971: 53.

¹⁴⁷ *Toronto Star*, "Little 'love' in hippies: Chief." 16 June 1971: 42.

¹⁴⁸ *Toronto Star*, "Scientist: You'll be able to grow a new heart." 17 June 1971: 1.

¹⁴⁹ *Toronto Star*, "Saskatchewan / It's the family farm vs. 'development.'" 18 June 1971: 6.

¹⁵⁰ *Toronto Star*, "*Star* Fresh Air Fund, Richard's camp story has a happy ending." 12 June 1971: 5.

themselves are turned into discourse. The *Star's* coverage of Quebec's proposals is quite different from the *Globe's*. While the *Globe* had two articles that used the word poverty and also focused on this event, the *Star* had one. The *Star* had managed to get a copy of the confidential document outlining Quebec's proposals, which the province presented at the meeting, and its article was actually an abridged version of that document. The text published is homogenous and is dominated by political and legal discourse. While the *Globe* article quoted the Minister of Welfare as justifying his government's proposed policy changes via an admission that they would help the working poor, in this policy document the Quebec provincial government states that it wants to move to a unified income security concept because that would be "a more effective weapon against poverty." Poverty is problematized, and the Quebec government constructs itself as a sufficiently responsible agent to address poverty. Poverty solutions are presented here as income security measures. As with the *Globe*, this document contains no discussion of poverty's causes, and so in this sense an agent is omitted. Overall, there is little discussion of poverty, where most of the text discusses Quebec's proposed amendments.

Coverage of the "rebel report" was also quite different in the *Star*. While the *Globe* focused on the working poor and the unfair tax burden they bear, the *Star* focused on the issue of a guaranteed annual income. The *Globe* scarcely mentioned the GAI in relation to the report, and when doing so it noted that the authors dismissed "the concept of a guaranteed annual income without extensive economic reforms." In contrast, the *Star* article's headline was: "Guaranteed Annual Income Urged by 4 Who Quit Senate Poverty Probe." It seems in reference to the GAI the *Globe* most accurately reflects the report's content, although their interpretation is not completely accurate. The report's authors do

not actually dismiss the need for a GAI. Rather, they argue that without extensive economic reforms a GAI would not provide any solution to poverty. The difference in coverage here suggests a glimpse of either paper's politics. Later in the year the authors of the "Rebel Report" released a more extensive monograph called *The Real Poverty Report* where they recommend that Canada establish a GAI; in light of this it seems possible that the *Star's* coverage reflects a comment made during the release of this antecedent special report, or perhaps was expressed by one of the authors during an interview.

Differences in coverage are also reflected in the lead paragraphs of both papers. In the *Star* the lead is as follows:

Four former staff members of the Senate committee on poverty today released their own "renegade report" and proposed a guaranteed annual income plan coupled with a massive assault on economic and social injustices to eliminate poverty.

The lead problematizes poverty and unequivocally connects it to economic and social factors. The discourse dominating this article is one of political and social justice. In its second paragraph, the *Star* article notes that "the *Star* learned that the group's guaranteed income proposal is almost identical to the one to be revealed by the poverty committee in its final report" This assertion reinforces the group's and the report's legitimacy, while at the same time it mutes all notion that the report is radical. The facts and numbers in this article are not challenged to the extent that they are in the *Globe*; however it is noted that the report urges that poverty levels be set to increases in the national standard of living, in contrast to the Economic Council of Canada's recommendations that the levels be set to increases in the cost of living.

As in the *Globe*, the *Star* article quotes the report at length, a discursive act which serves to challenge homogenous constructions of poverty and poverty related action in that it presents both critiques of the current system and a discussion of alternatives. The quotes from the report also challenge welfare discourse by indicating that the existing system is not working and points to needed changes. In combination, situating the semiological sign “poverty” within this discursive context designates the word poverty as an unfair condition of living for many caused by economic and social injustices that need to be addressed.

The *Star* diverged more from the *Globe*’s coverage of the report in its decision to personalize poverty and center two articles on human life stories that were raised in the report. “Woodcutters Living Deplorably Found on Senator Land” tells of a group of woodcutters being paid exploitative wages. The article emphasizes that the land on which the men were cutting was leased by a Senator. The men’s low wages and expenses are detailed so as to indicate how difficult it is for them to survive. The low wages are presented as a cause of poverty. However, the article also draws on conceptions of the deserving and the undeserving poor by providing the following words of a Senate committee member who was noted in the report: “[The men] all knew they would be better off on welfare and yet continue to work and live under what I would consider medieval conditions.” In this case the men are presented as more deserving for their choice to work, and in such conditions nonetheless, as opposed to “passively” receiving assistance. The article then both challenges and reinforces conceptions of the undeserving poor. The article’s headline and its content focus on the scandal of the Senator’s involvement in this exploitation as much as on the issue of poverty.

In “Workmen’s Compensation Accused of Forcing the Injured into Poverty,” the stories of family members of an injured worker are told so as to relate how “the workmen’s compensation program is designed in such a way that it violates the rights of injured employees and confines them to an existence of poverty.” Via personalization, the article effectively invites readers to see an affinity between themselves and the issues raised in the report; it also ties poverty to economic and social factors, while detailing the inadequacy of the report’s policies. As the redistributive model of the state is invoked, the report’s quotes and the raising of personal stories combine to construct a justification for increased government action.

A discourse of rights is invoked in both articles; however, in the latter it is significant that the Federal Government is not explicitly identified as a responsible agent in the problem of poverty. Instead the Workmen’s Compensation Program is, to a certain degree, presented as a nominalization for the Government. “The legislation” is also presented as such, as it is duly noted that although it might have been designed to be meaningful, it no longer provides the income needed to keep a worker and his family out of poverty. This nominalization is quoted directly from the poverty report, and was not constructed by the reporter.

It is significant that the injustices which the *Star* article highlighted and personalized were only those against the working poor. The emphasis on the working poor in the *Globe* and in the *Star* is noteworthy as the report also detailed personal accounts of poverty for families who were forced to live in deplorable conditions due to the lack of affordable housing. The report further provided accounts and discussions of racism in the education system, discussed the deplorable conditions in which First

Nations communities were forced to live, and discussed, through the device of personal accounts, the links between poor health and poverty. However these accounts were not included in news coverage.

Poverty is personalized in the *Star's* "Star Fresh Air Fund, Richard's Camp Story Has a Happy Ending." In this article, the reporter begins by telling the story of Richard, a boy who fell in love with nature at a *Star* Fresh Air Camp and vowed to go back. Since Richard's family is poor, in order to attend camp he works to save money and also receives community support. The article quotes a YMCA staff member who says there are a lot of kids who would love to go to camp but can't afford it, and the *Star* provides information about how to donate money that they might have a chance to attend. In this article the *Star* seeks to create a closer relationship with the reader, to convince him or her to donate out of empathy. In this instance, the *Star* morphs from news to charity provider, and constructs itself as a socially responsible community organization. In this article, poverty is not discussed or constructed as a social or economic problem to the degree it is in the others in the sample. Given that in the present context the article's objective of providing a social service arguably outstrips its objective of providing news. This very overlap is present in 2006 coverage, and thus differentiates *Star* from *Globe* coverage in this sample.

Dictionaries - 2006

Through analyzing the Minister of Finance's budget speech of 2006, an editorial written in response to the budget by the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives, and a commentary written in response to the budget by the Fraser Institute, dictionaries were created to identify orders of discourse for government, and for those advocating a

redistributive model versus a residual model. Because the texts for 2006 are available in digital format it was possible to use the HyperPo textual analysis tool to evaluate word frequencies. In addition, the texts were evaluated to determine structural emphasis on priorities.

Federal Government Dictionary 2006

The first paragraph of the budget speech indicates the government's emphasis:

Mr. Speaker, the budget is balanced, our spending is focused, and taxes will go down for all Canadians. Budgets say something about your motivations and your goals. They say something about your priorities. Mr. Speaker, this government is focused. And nowhere are we more focused than in the area of tax relief. For years, Ottawa has been overtaxing Canadians. In this budget, we deliver real tax relief for Canadians. Tax relief people can see. Tax relief that makes a difference. Tax relief they can count on. Mr. Speaker, that's the bottom line of this budget

As with the 1971 budget, there is a reduction of taxes for low-income Canadians.

Although the words poverty or poor are not used in this speech, the mention of reducing taxes for low-income Canadians can be interpreted as a poverty-related policy. In this context, "the poor" are being invoked as low-income Canadians. The Finance Minister states: "As a result of these tax reductions, approximately 655,000 low-income Canadians will be removed from the federal tax rolls altogether." The emphasis in this speech is on hard-working Canadians and small government as the minister says: "This budget delivers more than twice as much tax relief as new spending. For every new tax dollar we spend, this government is returning two tax dollars to hard-working Canadians." The groups identified in the budget are families, apprentices and tradespersons, students, new Canadians, fishing and forestry workers, mature workers, children with disabilities, seniors, Aboriginal Canadians, and soldiers. The most frequently used words are "we"

(109), “our” (73), “Canadians” (69), “tax” (46), “families” (21), and “child” (18). As indicated by both policy and rhetoric, this order of discourse emphasizes tax cuts to deal with social issues, a strong economy and market as the solution through an emphasis on business tax reductions, and individual responsibility. Although some collective measures are put forward, such as affordable housing and services for Aboriginal people, the actual investment is a reduction from what had been planned under the previous Liberal/NDP budget. An income-based child care policy that sees cheques going to families instead of a national child care program also stresses individualism.

Residual Model – Dictionary 2006

In response to the federal budget, the commentary “Business Tax Cuts Weren’t Nearly Enough” was written by the Fraser Institute’s Director of Fiscal Studies, and was published in the *Ottawa Citizen* and posted on the Institute’s website on May 9.¹⁵¹ Approximately 675 words in length, the commentary emphasizes the need for increased business tax reduction and the need for increased investment in business. “Tax” and “taxes” are two of the most frequently occurring words; in combination they appear 17 times. The only reference to any form of social policy is the mention of improving Canadians’ living standard:

On the business side, the budget acknowledged that Canada must reduce corporate taxes to ensure competitiveness and increased productivity: “Lower taxes for business are essential if Canada is to remain competitive. They will encourage the investment necessary to create jobs and ultimately improve the living standard of Canadians

¹⁵¹ The commentary can be accessed here:
<<http://www.fraserinstitute.ca/shared/readmore1.asp?sNav=ed&id=414>>

Persons in the article are directly referred to as Canadians or “workers,” or indirectly via phrases such as “standard of living” and “higher wages.” The overall discourse presented here is based upon a residual state model.

Redistributive Model – Dictionary 2006

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released an editorial on 4 May in response to the federal budget entitled “Federal Budget 2006: Opportunity Lost.”¹⁵² Some of this editorial’s most frequently occurring words are “Harper” (6), “tax” (8), and “cuts”/ “cut” (9). The repeated reference to Stephen Harper is an indication of the extent to which Canada’s Prime Minister had become a target of protest and a polarizing figure in 2006. In contrast to the Fraser Institute, which argued that there were not enough cuts and that in order to improve economic growth more were needed, the CCPA argues that the Harper government inherited a great financial situation, and thus instead of tax cuts more money should be invested in social services and supports. The priorities listed by the CCPA include: early learning and childcare, the need to address the gap between First Nations and other Canadians, and to honour international commitments on climate change. The CCPA argues more generally that there is more than enough room to fund a host of overdue initiatives to improve the security and the quality of Canadian lives. Unlike the budget and the Fraser Institute commentary, this editorial uses the word poverty specifically in reference to First Nations communities. It promotes the alternative federal budget released by the CCPA and emphasizes the need to invest in “services that matter most to people. Reflected in this commentary is a redistributive state model. As

¹⁵² The editorial can be accessed here:

<<http://policyalternatives.ca/Editorials/2006/05/Editorial1349/index.cfm?pa=AE5DAA5F>>

with the 1971 sample, 2006 articles from the *Globe* and *Star* were analyzed to determine which orders of discourse could be identified in the texts.

Analysis - *Globe and Mail* 2006

There were seventeen articles in the *Globe and Mail* 2006 sample. In contrast to the 1971 sample, where most of the articles covered a political event, here only six of the articles covered a political event.

Three were related to the Liberal Party of Canada's leadership race ¹⁵³
Five were part of a special series on the Jane and Finch community ¹⁵⁴
Two were related to the budget ¹⁵⁵
One focused on a specific community identified as a poor community ¹⁵⁶
One discussed a cancelled government talk regarding First Nations Government ¹⁵⁷
In one article poverty is used to describe an architectural structure ¹⁵⁸
One article is a profile of a hockey player who escaped poverty ¹⁵⁹
Two articles use poverty as a descriptor ¹⁶⁰
One article discusses the remaking of a women's college ¹⁶¹

Of the Liberal leadership articles, two are written by politicians and published as comment pieces. Although technically these are more political pieces than news articles, I decided to include them in my analysis as they are given a privileged location in the paper's front section and do form part of the news discourse in that they are published alongside the news.

¹⁵³ *Globe and Mail*, "Coming out of the Liberal Closet," 24 April 2006: A17; "Mr. Rae and the Grits Deserve Each Other," 27 April 2006: A21; "Dryden Joins Grit Race," 29 April 2006: A8.

¹⁵⁴ *Globe and Mail*, "Bringing a Little Heaven to Jane-Finch," 24 April 2006: A11; "Y-Connect Connects Jane-Finch Youth," 27 April 2006: A16; "At the Head of the Class in Jane-Finch," 2 May 2006: A9; "Foul Called Over Soccer Field Damage," 5 May 2006: A17; "Singer Hopes Her Bubble Won't Burst," 8 May 2006: A9.

¹⁵⁵ *Globe and Mail*, "Moves to Help Low-Income Earners Get Mixed Reviews," 3 May 2006: A17; "The Tax Cut that Wasn't" 6 May 2006: B1.

¹⁵⁶ *Globe and Mail*, "Concrete Ideals," 6 May 2006: M6.

¹⁵⁷ *Globe and Mail*, "Minister Cancels Talk on Native Government," 28 April 2006: A6.

¹⁵⁸ *Globe and Mail*, "Tall is Beautiful," 1 May 2006: A13.

¹⁵⁹ *Globe and Mail*, "After Outstanding Season, Metropolit Makes Canadian Roster," 5 May 2006: S2.

¹⁶⁰ *Globe and Mail*, "Whistle-Blower Gets 30 Months," 6 May 2006: A5; "Match: Jullian Wiebe and Todd Ambachtshe," 6 May 2006: M5.

¹⁶¹ *Globe and Mail*, "Remaking a Hospital for Women's Unique Needs" 8 May 2006: A10.

In “Coming out of the Liberal Closet,” Bob Rae outlines why he has become a Liberal, why governing from the middle is best, and why he should lead the Liberal party. The discourse presented here is both political and campaign discourse. In the article’s first half, Rae argues that free trade is best for Canada. Structurally, he emphasizes that increasing trade and strengthening the market are his top priorities by mentioning these issues first. Poverty emerges in the last third of the article when Rae calls for “a steady reduction in poverty”:

The market is not to be despised, either at home or globally, because experience has taught us it is the best mechanism to increase wealth and to encourage innovation and change. But nor is the market to be worshipped, because to do so would diminish our lives as citizens, volunteers, caregivers, community members and the full variety of ways in which we express ourselves as human beings. The purpose is better lives for people: clean air, clean water, good homes, schools, parks, roads, and subways. A steady reduction in poverty.

Rae’s word choice in calling for “a steady reduction of poverty” implies that drastic measures are not needed. There are also no processes discussed in relation to poverty. The language use here legitimizes and reinforces the status quo. The dominant orders of discourse are government and residual. While the community is invoked, there are no specific policies raised, nor are specific points indicated when a government should intervene. We are told that worshipping the market would diminish our lives, but no alternative is put forward. In the second last sentence Rae writes that “[t]he purpose is better lives for people”; however, we are not told what he is referring to; nor who/what the subject is, and his use of the word “purpose” is without grounding.

The other comment piece falling in this category is “Mr. Rae and the Grits Deserve Each Other”; it is written by NDP MP, Ed Broadbent. In this article Broadbent

takes issue with a number of the comments made by Rae, in particular Rae's claim that he has decided it is best to govern from the middle. Broadbent outlines his priorities including the need to address "child poverty amidst affluence." Although poverty is not discussed in detail it is problematized, and presented as unjust by being framed in the following manner.

Jean Chrétien was right in fighting the increasing deficits in the early 1990s. But was it "progressive" to accumulate more than \$70-billion in surpluses in the subsequent years, while child poverty increased, hospitals disintegrated, affordable housing for low-income Canadians disappeared, and our universities were *Starved* for cash? Not according to my social democratic ideology, and that is why I returned briefly to politics in 2004.

The federal government, and in fact the former Prime Minister, are here characterized as irresponsible in the face of child poverty and accrued financial resources, and thus agents of its perpetuation. Addressing child poverty is presented as an issue that people could either choose to or choose not to address. In contrast to the previous article by Rae, this article draws on a redistributive order of discourse by taking the position that increased government involvement is necessary.

The article "Dryden Joins Grit Race" presents coverage of Ken Dryden's announcement that he will run for leader of the Liberal party. The article quotes Dryden as raising the issue of child poverty, as Broadbent had done. In the article Dryden is quoted as saying that his vision of the nation is a Canada

where child poverty has been cut in half in 10 years and where aboriginals are full participants. It is also a Canada that is one of the top five most productive countries on Earth and leads the world in energy efficiency.

As with the comment pieces above, poverty is here presented as a problem requiring action; however, still it remains without detailed discussion. The sentences in Rae's piece

and in the Dryden article present no agent as a cause or as possessing the responsibility to address poverty. Following a list of relatively specific civic items to be addressed, Rae abruptly becomes more general, and quite vague, as he calls for “a steady reduction in poverty.” Dryden is cited as saying he desires a Canada where “child poverty has been cut in half in 10 years”; however, he does not entertain the possibility of eliminating child poverty; he instead puts forth a ten-year goal to cut it in half, which implies, like Rae’s article, that drastic action is not necessary. Moreover, with such a policy program the presence of poverty itself never comes under question—but is presented as a fact that can only be chipped away at, so to speak. Such a discourse legitimizes and reinforces the status quo.

In the first half of the article, Dryden appears as responsible for helping to design the national child care strategy, which the Conservative government cancelled. He is quoted as saying that he is running so as to ensure such a program is implemented. This article does not connect the program to an anti-poverty strategy, but it is noteworthy that such a strategy is often called for by anti-poverty advocates. There are distinctions in the three articles as concerns the conveyance of a certain sense of urgency that is needed to deal with poverty. As with Rae’s comment piece, political and campaign discourse dominate the article on Dryden. The article also draws on residual and redistributive orders of discourse to varying degrees. A government intervention discourse is raised in reference to the need for a national child care program, but is not invoked when discussing poverty.

Only two articles at once contained a discussion of the budget and the word poverty. In “The Tax-Cut That Wasn’t,” the word poverty is used as an adjective, and

without reference to the issue of poverty. While the article argues that the budget contained something for everyone, the word poverty is used to refer to the state of the mining business, which it argues is “starved” of capital. In “Moves to Help Low-Income Earners Get Mixed Reviews,” poverty is discussed in relation to budget measures. This article presents the Finance Minister’s arguments that the budget will help low income earners, which is in turn countered by others who say that it won’t.

Mr. Flaherty's budget document defends the GST reduction as a benefit to the poorest Canadians, those whose earnings are too low to incur income tax. But Greg DeGroot-Maggetti, an official with Citizens for Public Justice, said the cut won't help the poor much.

“GST isn't charged on the basics, which is food and housing, which make up the biggest expenditures for low-income households,” he argued.

The first half of the article emphasizes the merits and demerits of tax cuts, and thus reflects government and residual state orders of discourse. However, in the latter half of the article the need for increased government investment in services is raised through the quoting of a “regular person”:

“I think that's insane,” said Renée Veenkamp of Toronto. “If they had extra money, I would much rather it went into education or health care, particularly health care” [...] “I have no problem if they lower taxes for people who have low incomes,” said Ms. Veenkamp, who is heading to teachers' college in the fall after several years out of the work force raising her three children. “But quite frankly, I think they would have been better off putting more money into daycare spaces for low-income families. Child care is expensive and difficult to find for kids of school age.”

This quote serves as a “voice of the people” and challenges government rhetoric. Also of significance is the fact that the article’s discourse is not, as is common, value-laden, despite the fact that individuals and groups are consistently invoked as “deserving,” such as families and the working poor can often be depicted. The poor in this article are

referred to as “poorest Canadians,” “low-income,” “low-income families”, “lower income Canadians,” and “most vulnerable.” The article is creative in its mixture of discourses, and is therefore heterogeneous.

Five of the articles in this sample are part of a series done in the *Globe* on what is referred to in Toronto as the Jane and Finch community. A summary paragraph of the series is presented at the close of each article and reads as follows:

The intersection of Jane Street and Finch Avenue in northwest Toronto draws reporters all too often for stories of guns and violence, but less is told about ordinary life here. To the dismay of residents, “Jane-Finch” has become a catch-all phrase that suggests poverty, gangs and racial division. But those who live here say the stereotypes obscure a complex, resilient community struggling to emerge from years of neglect. To understand the neighbourhood behind the name, The *Globe and Mail's* Joe Friesen is reporting regularly from Jane and Finch.

The goal articulated by the *Globe* here demonstrates civic responsibility, and an attempt to “understand the neighborhood.” While the paper does not argue that their intent is to challenge negative stereotypes, the series is clearly a response to concerns raised by residents. In three of the five articles the word poverty only comes up in this concluding summary paragraph.

Three articles in this series provide profiles of people who either live or work in the community. “Bringing a Little Heaven to Jane and Finch” profiles a social justice advocate who works but does not live in the community, and who recently won an award for his work. The word poverty is not discussed in the actual body of this article, but is presented in the series summation posted at the end of the article, which is quoted above. Consistent with most of the other articles in the series, in this article poverty is not problematized. Another profile is provided in “Singer Hopes Her Bubble Won’t Burst.”

The profile is of a single mother hoping to become a successful musical artist. As with the former, the word poverty is not mentioned in the actual body of the article but does appear in the concluding series summary. We are told that the mother has difficulty making ends meet, and that she won't discuss how she makes her money. We are also told that if she desired she could be making a "healthy" income as a nurse, however such a life is not her preference. Poverty is presented here as an individual choice. The mother-artist's quotes reinforce an individualistic perspective and present an overall argument that if you want something you have to go after it: "The excuses they make about gender, race, it's not to say [discrimination] doesn't exist, but you cannot blame everything on that. And if you do, you're in denial." Such a quote is most suggestive and can potentially have great impact, particularly in view of the article's literal absencing of discussions of racism and economic barriers as chief agents in the perpetuation of poverty. Both the quote and the characterization of poverty here as being a matter of personal choice reinforce a blame-laden discourse that focuses on the individual, and legitimizes a view of poverty that sunders it from wider social and political factors.

Poverty again goes unproblematicized in the profile of a community teacher in "At the Head of the Class in Jane-Finch." In this article we learn that Jasmin Romero, a teacher and single mother, moved to the Jane and Finch community in the 80s, "when Jane and Finch's reputation for poverty and violence burgeoned," because it was affordable. She is quoted as saying that the challenges she faces in her school are similar to those in other parts of the school system, including "gangs, drugs and teenage pregnancy, to name a few." She is also quoted as saying that "the students have a lot of issues, most of them generated outside of school, and they spill out when they get to

school.” Ms. Romero is presented as making a difference in her community; however, the community itself is described negatively which effectively distances readers. Rather than emphasizing aspects of the community that are positive, hopeful, or desirable, or aspects with which readers might identify, it is guns, gangs, drugs, and teenage pregnancy which centrally defines the community’s residents. Poverty here is presented as an issue related to a specific community and group of people, a “them.”

Residents are also defined exclusively by negative attributes in another article in this series, “Y-Connect Connects Jane-Finch Youth.” The article describes the opening of a community center aimed at providing services for at-risk youth and focusing on issues of mental health and substance abuse. The article provides details of the results of a recent youth survey that found high percentages of persons had recently considered suicide and were living in fear of harassment or violence. Respondents also indicated stress from precarious housing situations. And racism and poverty are mentioned, but are not discussed in any detail. The following is an example of a reference to racism:

“It really plays into these people's heads the way Jane-Finch is portrayed in the media. And racism is coded into that,” Mr. Lovell said. “There's apathy, frustration, anger. They feel there's nothing they can do about their situation.”

And poverty is mentioned as follows: “Martha Ocampo, director of Across Boundaries, said most of the concerns raised in the study can be boiled down to poverty” Without interrogating poverty with a view to potential root causes, the effect is to portray the community as dangerous, and this danger as an effect of poverty.¹⁶² In the final section of the article, the director of the program is noted as saying she wants to tap into the strengths of the community, but the only strengths she is quoted as mentioning are the

¹⁶² A similar portrayal is found in another article in this sample but not discussed here: “Concrete Ideals,” 6 May 2006: M6.

resolve and resourcefulness of residents. These strengths are positive, but given the previous discussion in the article, they also implicitly evoke surviving the community, which reinforces negative stereotypes.¹⁶³

In combination, the series emphasizes negative stereotypes and does not connect poverty to any social or economic agents that might be deemed to be responsible for its creation. It is individual responsibility that is emphasized. Negative images of guns, gangs, violence, and danger were repeatedly referenced in the series.

In this 2006 *Globe* sample, although it was common for poverty to be referenced as a problem, social and economic factors were as commonly not identified. The individual is the agent most often identified as being culpable. In the 2006 sample, children, the working poor, and the residents of Jane and Finch were most often represented as “the poor.” Unlike the 1971 *Globe* sample, the articles in that of 2006 are more personalized in the presentation of several profiles. There is also less focus on political events with more on poverty in relation to specific communities. And notable in the 2006 sample is an absence of a citizens’ rights discourse. In combination, the articles in this sample invest poverty with the following meaning: poverty is a problem affecting particular communities and groups of people, and individuals are often responsible for their own plight. With little discussion of any economic and social factors involved, social or political agents are rendered invisible.

Analysis - *Toronto Star* 2006

There were twenty-two news articles in the *Toronto Star* 2006 sample. This was the largest sample, and the most heterogeneous. This sample in particular reflects a high

¹⁶³ An invocation of negative stereotypes also occurs in the final article, not discussed here in this series: “Foul Called Over Soccer Field Damage.”

level of interdiscursivity within poverty coverage, suggesting that the meaning of poverty is undergoing a transformation. There were a wide range of articles using the word poverty.

Eight articles discussed poverty in relation to the budget (three of these specifically discuss the cancellation of the national child care strategy) ¹⁶⁴
Three articles used the word poverty in their coverage of research projects. ¹⁶⁵
Two editorial/comment pieces pointed to poverty as a pressing domestic issue ¹⁶⁶
Two articles use the word poverty in relation to a particular community. ¹⁶⁷
One article covers the Liberal Party leadership race. ¹⁶⁸
Two articles that uses poverty as an adjective and/or descriptively in general. ¹⁶⁹
Two articles focus on affordable housing ¹⁷⁰
One article that discusses the deportation of Toronto residents, one article Detailing the results of a UN report. ¹⁷¹
Two articles regarding a new social program. ¹⁷²

The three budget articles regarding the cancellation of the national child care program present critiques of the Conservative Government. It is notable that the articles present no government voices defending the policy. In combination, through the three articles, the

¹⁶⁴ *Toronto Star*, "Huge Betrayal of Children; Councillor Blasts Tories' Plans to Terminate Child-Care Deal Davis says 3,621 New Spots in High-Poverty Areas in Danger." 25 April 2006: B01; "National Report, Budget." 29 April 2006: F06; "An Open Letter to Jim Flaherty." 1 May 2006: A17; "Parents Forced to Lower Expectations." 2 May 2006: A18; "A Mixed Bag for Toronto; New Deal for Cities Not Rolled Back but not Advanced Much Either, says David Pcault." 3 May 2006: A17; "Kyoto, Kelowna Ditched too Quickly." 6 May 2006: F06; "Security Traded for \$100 Cheque." 6 May 2006: F07; "Budget Gives Ammo to Liberals; Leadership Rivals Take Turns Taking Shots at Harper Party Spirits High as 11 Candidates Gather in Toronto." 6 May 2006: A08.

¹⁶⁵ *Toronto Star*, "Vital Signs to be Taken in 8 Cities." 25 April 2006: B02; "Building a Natural City." 29 April 2006: M07.

¹⁶⁶ *Toronto Star*. "Protecting Canada's Image." 25 April 2006: A22; "The Colour of Canadian Poverty," 28 April 2006: A18

¹⁶⁷ *Toronto Star*. "Parkdale Characters Find Voice in Novel." 27 April 2006: R09; "The Game." 29 April 2006: A01.

¹⁶⁸ *Toronto Star*. "Dryden has 'Big Ambitions' for Canada and Himself; Hockey Legend." 28 April 2006: A01.

¹⁶⁹ *Toronto Star*. "Deal Ends Myth of Free Trade." 28 April 2006: A06. "Second Gomery Figure Jailed." 6 May 2006: A04.

¹⁷⁰ "Popularity of Areas Can Lead to Unaffordable Prices; Collingwood Site to be Bare Bones More than 400 Homes Planned." 29 April 2006: N13. "Column." 29 April 2006: N13.

¹⁷¹ "News." 30 April 2006: A04. "Canada Criticized by UN." 9 May 2006: A15.

¹⁷² "Reaching Out to the Unreachable." 29 April 2006: E01; "Faith Gets \$3 M Boost to Fight Guns." 1 May 2006: B03.

paper aligns itself to the critiques as discourses or regimes of “truth,” and in doing so effectively takes a political position. In the article “Huge Betrayal of Children; Councillor Blasts Tories’s Plans to Terminate Child-Care Deal, Davis says 3, 621 new spots in high-poverty areas in danger,” the headline casts the overall tone of the article as one of outrage. This article presents the Conservative Government as the agent responsible for contributing to poverty and letting families and children down. The poor invoked first here are children followed by families. Counsellor Davis is quoted as saying: “Maybe for hundreds of families this means a parent won’t be able to go back to work. Mostly it will mean there will be more children in questionable child-care arrangements that are cheap,” she said. The argument that a national child care program is necessary presents an redistributive / interventionist state discourse.

The other two articles discussing child care are “Parents Forced to Lower Expectations” and “An Open Letter to Jim Flaherty.” Both articles focus on how little the Conservative government’s child care strategy will mean to low income parents. In the first article, the policy issue is personalized. Details are presented to demonstrate how little the new policy will help three specific families, two middle-income and one low-income. All three families say they would prefer a national child care program to receiving a tax rebate for private child care. For example, we are told that Chantalle, a single parent and nursing student, is

living on an \$18,000 student loan, could get as little as \$474 per child under age 6, according to the Caledon analysis. Chantelle, who didn’t want her last name published, said she, too, would prefer child-care centres to cash.

In this article an alternative policy is proposed by anti-poverty advocates, who suggest investing in the national child tax benefit instead of the Conservative tax credit. These budget articles link poverty to a responsible agent. Most often the agent identified is the lack or shortcoming of a social policy. In this they demonstrate a greater similarity to coverage in 1971 than to the 2006 *Globe* coverage.

In the opinion piece “Open Letter to Jim Flaherty,” two economists argue that it is low income families which the new Conservative child care policy will help least. The discourse types in this article are political and economic, the argument being that it is cheaper and more efficient to provide a national child care strategy than the Conservative’s strategy. The article also draws on the discourse of less eligibility as the economists argue:

Unfortunately, this Child Care Allowance will deliver more assistance to those collecting welfare than it will to the working poor on low incomes. So, the efforts of the provinces in the last decade or two to encourage low-income families to seek employment are going to be offset by the Child Care Allowance.

The argument conjured here is that benefits should not be too generous for fear that they might discourage recipients from working. This discourse is present throughout the two time periods, 1971 and 2006.

“Kyoto, Kelowna Ditched too Quickly” provides a more measured criticism of the budget. This opinion piece, which is a reprint of an editorial printed in the *Victoria Times-Colonist*, argues that there were “legitimate concerns” with both the Kyoto Agreement and the Kelowna Accord. The problem with the budget, according to the editorial, is that the government abandoned both commitments without offering alternative plans to deal with these “real problems.” The word poverty shows up in the

following sentence: “The living conditions of First Nations - the poverty, sickness, despair - are a national disgrace. Money and effort were needed now to fix the problems.” Poverty is also mentioned in relation to First Nations communities in “Budget Gives Ammo to Liberals; Leadership Rivals Take Turns Taking Shots at Harper Party.” This article covers the liberal leadership race and the budget criticism voiced by leadership contenders. In this article Michael Ignatieff is said to be “impatient with a Canada that accepts aboriginal poverty, a pollution-creating energy sector and isn’t doing enough to ensure prosperity.” Both these articles use the word poverty to describe a pressing social issue and present criticism of the government as a responsible body that is not doing enough. However, what action should be taken is not made clear. In the first article, the writer argues that there were “legitimate concerns” about the Kelowna Accord. Ignatieff is said to be impatient with a Canada that accepts aboriginal poverty. These two articles present a more ‘political’ discourse in relation to poverty.

To more fully discuss the heterogeneity of coverage found in the 2006 *Star* sample I will now focus on a comparison between two different articles in this sample: the editorial “The Colour of Canadian Poverty” and the feature article titled “‘The Game,’ Sell drugs, Make Money, Look Good, Stay Alive.” A comparison of these two articles illustrates the dominance of two competing discourses in poverty coverage. “The Colour of Canadian Poverty” provides a detailed look at the research of Ryerson Professor Grace-Edward Galabuzzi and his new book *Canada’s Economic Apartheid: The Social Exclusion of Racialized Groups in the New Century*. In this article the editorial writer argues that Galabuzzi is not accusing individual Canadians of racism, but asking them

to look at the way their labour markets and power structures systematically relegate people of colour to the lower ranks. He is asking

them to explain why poverty is disproportionately concentrated among blacks and south Asians. He is asking them to face the fact that Toronto is becoming an increasingly segregated city, with non-whites living in its least desirable neighbourhoods.

Galabuzzi is further quoted as problematizing poverty and connecting it to underemployment, and unemployment:

[Galabuzzi] rejects the comforting explanations that Canadians frequently offer for racial polarization. It can no longer be attributed to differences in education, he points out. Visible minorities - thanks to Canada's highly selective immigration system - have a higher rate of post-secondary training than the rest of the population. Nor does the old time-lag argument hold up. It is not just recent immigrants who are struggling to get a foothold on the economic ladder. Non-white citizens who have been in Canada for decades are stuck on the bottom rung. What's worse, their children are dropping out of school in disproportionate numbers, locking in a destructive intergenerational cycle.

As has been shown, and demonstrated in the content analysis, in 2005 and 2006 poverty and crime are often connected to particular communities. However, in this editorial, a particular community is not named, and the word crime is not used, but it is noted that there have been dramatic increases in the incarceration rates of particular communities. Such increases are troubled and connected to racism, as well as to the frustration of those confined to low-wage and precarious jobs.

Of the articles in this sample, this one provides the most detailed discussion of responsible agents and the processes involved in and leading to poverty. The article points to efforts that currently seek to address and treat the issue, but also the need for an employment equity law. The article ends by quoting Galabuzzi's argument that

Canada's political parties and public institutions have to do a better job of turning multiculturalism from a feel-good catchphrase into a visible, measurable reality. Canadians are fair-minded, tolerant people, Galabuzzi says. But the society they've built does not reflect that.

An interventionist model of discourse is most evident here. By connecting poverty to inequities based on superficial attributes such as skin colour the discourse in this article delimits the possibility for any discussion of the market as the appropriate source for solutions. Instead the need for collective action is emphasized in the final line as politicians and all Canadians are identified as needing to address inequality.

By contrast, in “The Game” violence, guns, crime, and gangs are all tied to poverty. The poor in this article are invoked as residents living in poor communities and as “gangsters.” The description of “gangsters” is most general:

All wear the gangster uniform: baggy pants with pockets that bang against the knees, Nike Air Jordans and jackets that are wide enough for three skinny boys to fit inside. It is a popular style among middle-class teenagers who rebel by listening to 50 Cent. But the kids in court have hungrier eyes.

The style described here is highly visible among teenage boys, and in fact describes thousands of Toronto residents. The use of the metaphor “hungrier eyes” indicates to the reader that the author is talking about poor boys. Further in the article, the invocation is more explicit:

These high-risk boys are poor, often from dysfunctional homes or ones where one parent has left, usually a father. Many fail in school, where teachers cannot cope with unruly, unfocused students. At home, there are no rules. Some of their mothers work 14-hour days and when their sons say they are at the Boys and Girls Club playing basketball, they believe them. The neighbourhoods they come from are populated by blacks and other minorities, as are the schools, in pockets of inner city St. Jamestown, Rexdale, North York and Scarborough.

Descriptions such as this are presented as fact—even though not a single statistic is provided. It is, for example, difficult to believe that the writer possesses any knowledge as to whether or not and how often “these high risk boys” come from homes without rules.

The notation of lack of rules, family breakdown, lack of parental presence, and the “unruly” behaviour of the students implicitly places blame with the “the poor.” This view is reinforced by the characterization of poverty as a plight that can be chosen:

Like Steven, the boy in the prisoner's box, none see education as an escape from poverty. Nor would they ever consider working minimum-wage jobs, spitting out the words “eight-dollar-an-hour jobs” with contempt. Most see one option - hanging out with their friends all day in apartments, making money at night by robbing stores or selling drugs, and hanging out again.

A generalization is again restated in the claim that “most” boys choose drugs and crime over work. That the author imagines the youths as contemptuously “spitting” out words, implicitly describes the boys as uncontrolled, brutish, of lower class and with no social mores—less than human.

The article also emphasized the “gangsters” lack of morals and values. An unidentified “gangster” is quoted as saying most guys share a home with a wife or girlfriend, but have others on the side. One quote by an undercover police officer is repeated twice: “They'll be hanging in the lobby, the stairwells. They'll smoke weed or have sex with girls on the rooftops.” The discourse of the undeserving poor explicitly drawn upon in this article is reminiscent of the Houses of Industry Act, in which the poor are invoked as dangerous, indigent, idle and debauched. Poverty is not problematized, but rather delineated as the individual's fault. Given its feature length and a writing style which relies heavily on descriptive passages that are at times suggestive of fiction, the article presents more of an entertainment-driven narrative.

These two articles fill the floating signifier “poverty” with quite different meanings. In “The Colour of Canadian Poverty,” poverty means a state of being extremely poor, and that visible minorities in Toronto are disproportionately living in

poverty due to economic and social policies and practices that are systematically prejudiced and racist. Poverty is also a problem that can be corrected through political and public action. In “The Game,” poverty is the state of being extremely poor that is found in particular communities, those in which the residents are responsible for their poverty through individual and/or family failing or a certain community “culture.” Each article temporarily fixes the meaning of poverty, and both exist in dialogue and compete with the other within the *Star*’s overall news discourse.

Conclusion

The various discourses concerning poverty that are constructed in and by the news provide readers with temporary fixations of meaning that construct who “the poor” are, relationships between “the poor” and poverty, the State, public institutions, and the public at large. The news discourse of any given time period also works to build knowledge about poverty and, moreover, what should or should not be done about it. In 1971, the content analyses suggested that poverty was problematized and linked to a social or political issue in news coverage. This discourse analysis afforded a closer examination of news coverage in 1971 and found that a high level of interdiscursivity, and in particular the strong presence of a redistributive order of discourse, facilitated coverage that problematized poverty. Notable was the presence of a civil rights discourse in relation to poverty which invested the issue with questions of equality in 1971. This civil rights discourse was absent in the 2006 sample. The absence of this discursive thread suggests that while a redistributive order of discourse may still be present in 2006, particularly in the *Star*, the nature of such discourse has changed. Framing poverty as a civil right establishes poverty and inequality as unjustified, and in fact as an assault on citizen rights.

The need for social and political actions, then, are presented as necessary and just. In contrast, the absence of a civil rights discourse enables poverty discussion to focus solely on debates about spending and whether or not such spending is necessary. The lens shifts from questions of how we as a society can address and eliminate social inequality to whether or not those who are poor merit action and in particular public dollars.

The tendency of later coverage to portray poverty as an issue affecting a particular group of people, a “them” instead of an “us,” is revealed by this discourse analysis. One of the most troubling aspects of this tendency is that poverty discussions are often “racialized” and invoke negative stereotypes without providing discussions of the role of social organization and systemic factors in generating poverty. Articles such as the 2006 *Star* article titled “The Game” and the *Globe* series on Jane and Finch present a circular link between specific communities, poverty, people who are poor, gangs, and crime. Stuart Hall et al. discussed the impact of coverage that reduced poverty to specific communities and groups of people without problematizing the issue in *Policing the Crisis*. Hall noted one of the main factors in this process was a tendency to describe the image of the “ghetto” or “slum” and insert a crime/environment relationship. The image serves to connect crime, poverty, race, and housing into a condensed image of a ghetto or in the case of the *Star* and the *Globe* “Jane and Finch” or “Parkdale,” but not any causal association. The effect then is to create a circular definition that prevents any demand or invocation of further information that would problematize poverty. As Hall notes: “The initial ‘problem’ – the crime- [is] thus inserted into a more general ‘social problem’ where the apparent richness of description and evocation stood in place of analytical

connections.”¹⁷³ The connections made are descriptive, as with the article “The Game,” and a generalized analysis replaces concrete analysis. The result of this, argues Hall, is a “powerful and compelling form of rhetorical closure.”¹⁷⁴

Results from the content analysis indicated that differences between the *Globe* and the *Star* became more pronounced in 2006, suggesting that each newspaper was in fact reflecting its own poverty discourse. The results highlighted above confirm this finding. Although there were distinct differences in coverage identified for both papers in 1971, such as the increased tendency for the *Star* to personalize coverage, the differences became more pronounced in 2006. The *Star*’s 2006 coverage takes on an increased tone of advocacy. More than any other sample, the *Star*’s 2006 coverage makes direct links between budget policies and poverty, and calls on the federal government to invest in a national childcare strategy in its coverage. This result suggests that the meaning of poverty is being directed again toward social and political factors. A redistributive order of discourse and a political order of discourse dominate the *Star*’s 2006 coverage. The effect is that within *Star* coverage poverty is more often presented as a problem. The *Star*’s coverage is also more heterogeneous, as contesting constructions of poverty were identified in the 2006 sample. In contrast, the *Globe*’s 2006 coverage is dominated by a political order of discourse and presents a more unitary language surrounding poverty. This *Globe* sample, however, also indicates a persistent discourse that links poverty to established constructions of the poor as undeserving. In contrast, the heterogeneity found in the *Star*’s 2006 coverage provides a clear indication that there is a centrifugal push away from a unitary discourse. The differences in coverage between the two papers, and

¹⁷³ Hall, Stuart, p. 118.

¹⁷⁴ The ideas presented here, and much of the language, drawn from Stuart Hall’s *Policing the Crisis*, p. 118.

the fact that they have become more pronounced in 2006, indicates that the meaning of poverty is at present being heavily contested and undergoing a transformation. As the shift toward a neoliberal discourse in the 90s has often been thought to enable policies that waged war on the poor instead of on the problem of poverty itself, there is no doubt that the outcome of the present contestation will significantly impact social policy in coming years. The following conclusion will consider the implications of such discourse in greater detail.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

In summary, the results from this analysis suggest that contemporary poverty coverage is quite different from coverage in 1971. More recent coverage tends to be more value laden and to discuss poverty in reference to a specific group of people, more than in reference to a social or political issue. Further, the presence of a redistributive order of discourse is less prominent in 2006 than it was in 1971. The dominance of residual and government orders of discourse enables a shift in policy discussion from the need for social and political restructuring to deal with poverty, to the need for individuals to be held responsible. The most significant findings are summarized by decade below.

Significant Findings

1971

In 1971 poverty was a focus of news coverage and when the term was used it was often linked to discussions of a social or political issue. A homogenous group of “the poor” was rarely invoked. Yet when “the poor” were invoked they were most often referred to as the unemployed, working poor, and/or families. Reference to those who are poor as the unemployed or the working poor draws on conceptions of the deserving poor. These group formations also automatically problematize the economic system. The terms unemployed and working poor work simultaneously as labels for a group of people, but also as descriptive terms indicating that poverty is caused by a lack of work and low wages.

This coverage reflects the ongoing debate at the time in public and political arenas as politicians, members of social groups, and individuals debated what to do about poverty. The Senate Committee on Poverty provided a focal point for debate. The National Council of Welfare has noted that from 1969 to 1971 stands out as a period in which there was a heightened news focus on poverty as the issue captivated public and

media attention.¹⁷⁵ In 1971 political, redistributive, and residual orders of discourse intermingled in the news. The strong presence of all three orders of discourse created an expanded field of referents that focused poverty discussion on political activity. In this period, although the *Globe* presented a more authoritarian-driven discourse there were still strong similarities between both papers.

2005

In contrast, poverty is rarely discussed as a social or political issue in 2005, and when used is most often mentioned in passing—this serves to normalize and naturalize the condition of poverty. It should be noted that a high percentage of stories in all three periods mention poverty in passing and so naturalize it in this way. In 2005, poverty is also often linked to a particular group of people, and negative stereotypes are often invoked. That year demonstrates a return to blame-laden discourse.

2006

In 2006, the meaning of poverty opens up, and the mystification of poverty is reduced somewhat as the need for decent wages, increased benefits, and jobs return to discussions of poverty. The change is more pronounced in the *Star* but is apparent in the *Globe*. Further, there are less negative stereotypes in 2006 coverage, countering Gans, Katz, and Bauman's respective claims. The drastic shift in coverage from 2005 to 2006, as reflected in the content analysis, supports my view that the meaning of poverty is undergoing a significant transformation.

In 2005, and particularly in 2006, the differences between the *Star* and the *Globe* are more pronounced. In 2006 the *Globe* more so than the *Star*, presented poverty as warranting individual action. In the *Star*, the need for collective action was often invoked

¹⁷⁵ National Council of Welfare, 1974.

and poverty discussions were more politicized as the *Star* took on an advocacy role. The divergence within this news order of discourse reflects the level of contestation in public and political arenas about how to deal with poverty. It is my position that an increasingly destabilized political environment and the mobilization of social groups are expanding the boundaries of poverty discussions, which the *Star's* coverage evidences. However, it is important to note that in 2006 the *Star's* coverage does resemble *Globe* coverage in one significant way: when the issue is raised, a group of people are often invoked as “the poor.”

Other Findings

Although the following findings have been characterized as less significant than those listed above, they do present some valuable points for discussion. The first is that anti-poverty advocates showed a strong presence (approx. 20 percent) in the news articles for all periods analyzed. As anti-poverty advocates are often the voices expressing a redistributive order of discourse, the presence of such voices and advocacy can be credited with consistently opening up the boundaries of poverty discourse in the news which for the most part relies on government sources and authority figures.

Also of note is that while the number of news stories using the word poverty has decreased from 1971, the number of editorial and opinion pieces has increased. In the *Star* there was a dramatic increase from 1971 to 2006 in the percentage of news stories in which the writer expressed an opinion. This is reflective of the increasing advocacy role taken on by the *Star*. In the *Globe* this percentage was consistently high over the three time periods but in fact showed a slight decrease in 2006 from 1971. A more detailed survey of editorial and opinion pieces and their role in poverty discourse would provide

an interesting subject for future research. Such research would contribute needed information to my argument that 2006 marks a shift in poverty discourse, as the *Globe* and the *Star* present discourses that increasingly contests that of the other.

My conclusion that the two newspapers present distinct poverty discourses is supported by two supplementary findings in addition to those listed above. In 2006, the *Star* was far more likely to portray those described as poor as deserving of government or social action and did so in 52 percent of its articles. While in the *Globe* the poor were portrayed as deserving of government or social action in 21 percent of articles. Further, in 2006 the *Star* portrayed poverty as a collective responsibility in 58 percent of articles. However, while the *Globe* overwhelmingly portrayed poverty as a collective responsibility in 1971 (68 percent), in 2006 the percentage dropped to 34 percent. The *Globe* also had a higher percentage of stories portraying poverty as an individual responsibility in 2006.

Implications

As discussed in the Introduction, Murray Edelman's poverty scale helps place these findings in perspective. According to his scale, popular discussions about poverty exist along a continuum. At one end of the scale are those that characterize poverty as a natural condition and view poverty as the result of some individual failing. According to this view the individual bears responsibility for his or her poverty. The residual order of discourse draws on this conception of poverty, and, as discussed throughout this paper, can to varying degrees be found throughout the three periods under analysis. While it is less dominant in 1971, it does appear to dominate 2005 and particularly 2006 *Globe* coverage. At the other end of scale are those who see poverty as the result of an unjust

social and economic system. According to this view, the poor are victims of exploitative economic, social, and political institutions. People are understood to be deprived by circumstance, and not by their own defects. The latter view is represented most in 1971 poverty coverage. In 2006 *Star* poverty coverage, those who are poor are often presented as deprived and deserving of collective action to address poverty; however, there is little discussion of the circumstances leading to such deprivation. The omission of social, economic, and political factors involved in generating poverty is even more pronounced in 2006 *Globe* coverage. It's my view that a failure to discuss poverty in reference to causal factors and responsible agents limits the actions people see as necessary and appropriate to eliminate poverty. For example, in 1971 unemployment was connected to poverty in almost twenty percent of news articles, and high unemployment rates were a popular subject in the news. This coverage both reflected and reinforced popular demand to make unemployment insurance accessible to more people and the federal government responded by enhancing unemployment benefits in 1971. While a cause and effect relationship between the two cannot be proven, it is reasonable to suggest that press coverage on this issue contributed to mounting pressures on government officials to act.

Implications: Considering Hegemony

In 2006, poverty is again in the news, but a new hybrid discourse surrounding poverty has emerged. In this discourse poverty is presented as a problem, but the economic and social factors involved in generating poverty are rarely discussed. As demonstrated in the discourse analysis, in more recent coverage the market is presented as the source of solutions, and this view appears to have become "common sense" given how little in the news the economic system is problematized and correlated to poverty. By contrast, in

2006, particularly in the *Star*, the need for government intervention through social policies such as a national child care strategy is discussed. However, absent from this order of discourse is a critique of a capitalist system that creates “winners” and “losers” and encourages a drive for profit, often at the expense of wage earners. The absence of such a discussion demonstrates the extent to which the notion that capitalism is a source of solutions for social ills, as advocated by laissez faire capitalism and neoliberalism, has become hegemonic.

Failure to problematize economic and social structures limits how poverty is discussed; it becomes easier to link poverty to constructions of a deserving and undeserving “poor” when economic and social factors are not presented as problems. In 2006, while the poor most often invoked are presented as deserving groups, such as children or families, negative stereotypes persist as they are also consistently invoked as groups linked to crime or who are in some way flawed. Further, as poverty increasingly becomes an economic situation disproportionately affecting visible minorities, the danger in not problematizing economic and social forces is that superficial external characteristics are presented as descriptions which effectively stand in for analytical connections.¹⁷⁶ Stuart Hall argues that the danger in such descriptions is that they become a “powerful and compelling form of rhetorical closure,” which limit discussion of the systemic processes involved in generating poverty and therefore the likelihood that such processes and structures will be addressed. The tendency toward simplified depictions of poverty was detailed in the *Globe*’s series on Jane and Finch and the *Star* article, “The Game.” This coverage either links poverty to individual choice, or descriptively presents a circular relationship between poverty, gangs, ethnicity, and crime. The outcome of such

¹⁷⁶ This point is raised by Stuart Hall in *Policing the Crisis*, p. 118.

coverage is that poverty is portrayed as affecting a “them” and the poor are blamed for their poverty.

Implications: Considering the Agenda-Setting Role of Poverty Coverage

There is considerable debate about when and how the media are able to influence public opinion but there is some consensus that the media can influence what issues people think about and how they think about them.¹⁷⁷ Maxwell McCombs argues that reporters and others in the news production process can effect how people come to talk and think about an object/issue through the choices they make about which attributes to emphasize.¹⁷⁸ This argument becomes most relevant when one considers the recent surveys conducted in Toronto and Edmonton by Linda Reutter et al. in which the majority of respondents indicated that they had learned about poverty from the media.¹⁷⁹ These findings suggest a strong likelihood that poverty coverage is influencing public opinion, and by extension the public pressure placed on various levels of government to present anti-poverty measures. If people have little experience or knowledge of poverty, and without debate in the news arena about the causes and potential solutions for poverty, it is difficult for us as citizens to know what action we should be urging our government to take. Further, the presentation of poverty as an issue affecting a “them” instead of an us, and the result of individual failing, reduces poverty to incidents instead of wider social problems.

However, it is important to note that while agenda-setting research indicates that there is a relationship between media representations and public opinion that relationship is complex and will vary depending on both the issue and the individual. For example,

¹⁷⁷ McCombs, Maxwell (2004 and 2005); Soroka, Stuart Neil (2002).

¹⁷⁸ McCombs, 2005.

¹⁷⁹ Reutter et al., 2005 and 2006.

research has indicated that the degree to which a person turns to the news to orient him or herself in reference to an issue will affect the ability of the media to influence opinion.¹⁸⁰ Further, the degree to which an individual feels that an issue is personally relevant affects how they will decode the news. An individual's personal experience with an issue and their conversations with friends and family will also have bearing on the extent of news influence.¹⁸¹

Implications: Considering the Influence of Poverty Coverage on the Democratic Process

As highlighted in the Introduction, one of this study's founding premises is that the news media comprises a master arena where the meaning of key social issues are defined and contested. In western societies, the media are a crucial element in the functioning of democracies. While the quality of news coverage is often criticized, it is still most often axiomatic that the news media's primary role is to inform citizens about the issues and events of the day so citizens can effectively participate within their civil democracy. The results presented here suggest that the citizenry is not receiving adequate information about poverty, information that would, in theory, promote a thorough consideration of how society might go about eliminating this problem. For example, the content analysis indicates that use of the term poverty in news coverage has dropped in recent years, while it has increased in editorial and opinion pieces. This shifts the discussion from the news pages which ostensibly detail the most significant social and political issues of the day to the commentary-driven pages. Further, fifty percent of articles in the *Globe* and the *Star* failed to connect poverty to social or economic factors. As poverty is presented less as an issue relating to social and political forces and more as

¹⁸⁰ McCombs, 2005.

¹⁸¹ McCombs, 2005.

one relating to particular groups of people fewer options are viewed as possible and/or appropriate. Thus, in a sense, when one considers how poverty coverage establishes an ideational map in terms of poverty, the absence from popular discussion of social and political factors as related to poverty renders such factors unthinkable in terms of identifying how poverty may be related to inadequate policies and/or exploitive conditions. By focusing discussions of poverty on a group of people, and thus not problematizing wider factors, the result is to direct attention away from the significant role market forces play in generating poverty. The focus on a group of people also serves to discursively construct a “them” who are affected by poverty—instead of an “us” who must take action.

Implications: Considering the Role of New Media in Poverty Coverage

The 2006, the *Toronto Star* articles analyzed provided the strongest indication that a struggle is going on over the meaning of poverty. The increasing advocacy role taken on by the *Star* is reflected in articles that argue, for example, for a national child care strategy and a higher minimum wage. The centrifugal push away from a unitary discourse is most apparent in the high number of articles that connect poverty to the budget and call for social policy related action. The *Star* itself also presents clashes in discourses, as has been discussed in reference to the editorial “The Colour of Canadian Poverty,” which problematized poverty, and “The Game,” which simplified poverty and associated it with bad choices, individual failings, gangs, and crime. In combination, the wide variety of discourses that appear in coverage indicates that the meaning of poverty is being negotiated and is indeed undergoing changes. Moreover, that the advocacy role taken on by the *Star* in 2006 extended into 2007 is significant. As noted, in January of 2007 the

Star launched a “War on Poverty” series so as to detail the “plight of Canada’s needy.” As part of this series the paper published regular poverty stories that both personalized the issue and called for specific government action. The paper sided with anti-poverty advocates in calling for the provincial government to raise the minimum wage to ten dollars per hour, end the claw back on the child tax benefit, build more affordable housing, and create more child care spaces. The *Star* also advocated for the federal government to develop a national anti-poverty strategy.

In connection to this series the *Star* created a “War on Poverty” page on their Internet news site. This poverty page demonstrates the role that new media can play in enabling news organizations to present more complex discussions of poverty. The poverty page is an information locale where previously published stories are archived and can be accessed. This feature allows stories to be cross referenced and also allows the reader to select the stories of utmost interest to him or her and choose the reading sequence based on perceived information need. The archival aspect of this site also enables previously published stories to continually circulate in discussion. The site is a location where the layering of text, audio, video, images and graphics expand the conception and meaning of poverty. There is a discussion component to the site, which presents the possibility for increased reader engagement. However, the meaning potential of the site is limited by the fact that all texts and links on it refer only to *Star*-related content, and therefore the *Star*’s own poverty discourse dominates. This also limits the role of the *Star* as an anti-poverty advocate. But, in 2007 the *Star* did attempt to connect directly to individuals and shift from information provider to active participant by hosting three public forums to discuss poverty. The role of this website in expanding poverty

discourse indicates that the meaning of poverty is becoming more hotly contested and that new media will likely play a profound role in influencing future directions of poverty coverage. The brief survey of the *Star's* "War On Poverty" web page illustrates that while the 1971 to 2006 analysis of newspaper coverage in this study provides a useful benchmark to measure how poverty discourse has changed, any attempt to understand future shifts in poverty discourse will have to take into consideration the new meaning potentials made possible through new media.

In conclusion, Canada has moved beyond popular perceptions of poverty that enabled the incarceration and cruel treatment of those who were poor in the 19th century. Undeniably, there have been social improvements. However, given this nation's wealth, particularly in the last decade, there remains a high level of inequality in Canada. While poverty rates for seniors have dropped dramatically over the last quarter-century, thanks to a concerted effort to reduce poverty among seniors through the Canada Pension Plan, overall poverty rates show little change from 1971.¹⁸² According to Statistics Canada's income surveys 16.4 percent of families and 38.3 percent of unattached individuals lived in poverty in 1971.¹⁸³ In 2003, 12 percent of families and 38 percent of unattached individuals were in the low income demographic.¹⁸⁴ Since 1993, the income for the richest ten percent of families has risen dramatically while the income for the lowest ten

¹⁸² This is a very basic comparison, and problematic since Statistics Canada changed the way it defined unattached individuals and families between 1971 and 2003. For the purposes of this paper the comparison does provide a useful point of illustration. Statistics Canada provides one of the only sources available to compare poverty rates for these time periods.

¹⁸³ Statistics Canada stresses that its low income cut-offs are not poverty lines (<http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/13F0027XIE/13F0027XIE.htm>); however, in the absence of other statistical accounts of families and individuals who are the economically worst off in Canada, the low income cut-offs have been taken up by anti-poverty advocates as poverty measures.

¹⁸⁴ Statistics Canada, *Income Distributions by Size in Canada 1971, Preliminary Estimates; Income Distributions by Size in Canada 2003, Preliminary Estimates*. The National Council of Welfare also uses these statistics to compile their annual *Poverty Profile* and note that the surveys under-represent poverty in Canada as they do not include surveys of First Nations communities in their results.

percent of families has stayed relatively the same. Further, according to UNICEF's comparison of child poverty rates among wealthy countries Canada has one of the highest rates in the developed world.¹⁸⁵

These statistics support Edelman's view that public acceptance of poverty as a fact of social life depends far more on how it is defined than on its material severity.¹⁸⁶ In 1971, poverty was in the news and there was much discussion of what to do about the issue. In 2006, poverty was again in the news, and the differences in coverage found in the *Globe* and the *Star* indicate that the issue is being hotly contested. However, in contemporary coverage there is little discussion of economic and social factors involved in generating poverty. If such problems are not identified and debated, they cannot be addressed. It is through discussions about how we must re-organize society to eliminate poverty that we will begin to act.

¹⁸⁵ These tables and statistics in Appendix C.

¹⁸⁶ Edelman, p. 13.

Chapter Five: Reflexive Analysis

In this study, my focus has been threefold; to provide a textual analysis of how poverty is invested with meaning in the *Globe* and the *Star*, to illustrate how poverty discourse has changed over time, and to discuss the implications of the changes noted. Focusing my analysis on news articles has enabled me to conduct a detailed account of how meaning is constructed textually. In the process I have suggested how I think poverty coverage might be inadequate and might not be providing citizens with the information they need to demand political action. I have also noted that it appears the meaning of poverty is presently undergoing a transformation. Two of the shortcomings of this study are that it does not provide a detailed consideration of news production, or of the different ways that the news is being decoded by readers. A consideration of encoding and decoding practices would provide a more comprehensive analysis of how the meaning of poverty is being constructed. Future study would benefit from a survey of journalists and also of readers to consider encoding and decoding practices in more detail. The significance of considering these practices is illustrated through the brief survey provided below.

In their 1974 report on poverty and the press the National Council of Welfare provided lengthy quotations from journalists, concerning the practices and shortcomings they identified in their profession's poverty coverage. Given the inadequacies in poverty coverage identified throughout this analysis, it is useful to consider the role that conventions in news production play in limiting coverage. The news emphasis on timeliness is one of the conventions limiting poverty coverage. As the statistics reveal, there have been a high number of Canadians living in poverty for decades. The enhanced coverage identified in 1971 can be connected to the fact that in the 70s the extent of

poverty in Canada was news. Canadians had been shocked by the Economic Council of Canada's report in 1968 that millions of Canadians were living in poverty, particularly given the expanded social security policies that had been established after WWII. The Senate Committee on Poverty was established and began touring the nation to hear from people on the issue. The Committee and its tour made poverty a timely issue for news coverage. The news value attached to poverty is reflected in the fact that a number of newspapers established poverty beats and in some cases a particular reporter was designated to the beat.¹⁸⁷ For example, the *Toronto Star*'s David Allen was assigned full-time to poverty reporting and was given a budget to enable him to travel across the country and attend the Senate Committee hearings and report on them.¹⁸⁸ Kathy Tait, a reporter for the *Vancouver Province* during this period noted that before the late 60s newspapers in British Columbia reported on poverty rarely and reluctantly. She argues this changed in 1969 when Vancouver dailies started paying more attention to poverty stories, an occurrence she credits to three factors: increasing organizing among the poor, rising unemployment, and the fact that a few reporters were becoming increasingly interested in the issue and fought with editors to cover the stories.¹⁸⁹ This account from Tait is significant as it provides an indication of what was going on in newsrooms in this period.

However according to the National Council of Welfare, by 1971 the news value attached to poverty was declining, as poverty became "old news." The Council suggests two of the factors that might have been involved in this reversal were the public and political silence following the release of the official Senate Committee on Poverty report

¹⁸⁷ National Council of Welfare, p. 13.

¹⁸⁸ National Council of Welfare, p. 13.

¹⁸⁹ Tait is quoted in the National Council of Welfare's report, p. 15.

in October 1971, and the Council also reports that a welfare backlash began sweeping the country. In 1971 several newspapers removed their poverty beats and reassigned reporters.¹⁹⁰ The Council argues that “the 1969-71 era of enhanced poverty reporting was, for many papers, a well-intentioned fad, rather than the beginning of an ongoing effort....”¹⁹¹ The Council concluded in 1974 that the press was not providing the relevant information that people needed to challenge “cherished myths” about poverty.

In his interview with the Council Ron Hoggart an editor at City television details other factors embedded in the news production process limiting the nature of coverage. His comments still resonate today. He suggests that although a specific poverty reporter is a good idea because the complexity of the issue requires that someone be well informed to report adequately, many editors decide not to have a specific poverty reporter so as to not “ghettoize” the poor by assigning a specific reporter to their concerns.¹⁹² Hoggart notes the result is that most reporters and editors live in a world of middle-class social values, and end up reporting on poverty related events and issues of which he/she has no personal experience. The outcome of this he argues is that too often reports dealing with poverty present a point of view that looks from the outside in, and reports are about a “them” instead of an “us.”¹⁹³ It appears that since 1971 the tendency of poverty reports to be about a “them” instead of an “us” has increased, as poverty coverage most often in 2006 related the issue to a group of people instead of a social and political policy as done in 1971. Another factor contributing to inadequate poverty

¹⁹⁰ National Council of Welfare, p. 14.

¹⁹¹ National Council of Welfare, p. 44.

¹⁹² Hoggart as quoted in the National Council of Welfare report, p. 3.

¹⁹³ Hoggart as quoted in the National Council of Welfare report, p. 4.

coverage is the monopoly positions held by the mainstream media, particularly in urban areas where there is a concentration of poverty. Hoggart argued in 1974:

When a newspaper achieves a monopoly or near-monopoly position, it also acquires a broader community base which it is expected to serve and from which it must judge the community consensus.... In a word, monopoly newspapers become more bland. When newspapers become bland, it is the poor who will suffer, because the poor do not fit into the mainstream of a materialistic, middle-class society.¹⁹⁴

More than thirty years later, Hoggart's comments appear particularly prescient given the increasing concentration of ownership and monopoly of news markets in Canada.

Graham Knight also isolates several key factors in the news production process that limit the complexity and range of discussion presented in the news.¹⁹⁵ He notes that journalists tend to personalize news events and individualize subject matter which leads to the abstraction of issues and the tendency to view news events (issues) in isolation from wider social factors. This tendency in part explains one of the shortcomings identified in poverty coverage; the failure to connect the issue to wider social and political practices and policies. Further, another factor noted by Knight is journalism's emphasis on immediacy which leads to the downplaying of the historical connections involved in complex issues such as poverty, and leads to a repeated process of collapsing the past into the present. This latter practice is particularly significant when considering poverty coverage, an issue that is intricately tied to social organization and relations of power over time. Another practice limiting poverty coverage is the media reliance on official sources. As Gaye Tuchman notes, the reliance on official sources establishes official interpretations of issues as dominant news frames. This view is supported by the

¹⁹⁴ Hoggart as quoted in the National Council of Welfare report, p. 5.

¹⁹⁵ For Knight, ideology represents the organization of social consciousness such that the process of inclusion and exclusion comes to seem quite natural.

results of my content analysis which found that government, authority figures, and the writers of editorial and opinion pieces were the voices most dominant in 2006 poverty coverage. The voices of anti-poverty advocates were present in 20 percent of stories.

While my analysis did provide an indication of how poverty is being invested with meaning in news articles, a cause-and-effect connection cannot be established as an analysis of how people read and produce their own meanings from these texts was beyond the scope of this project. My view is that readers are not passive participants, but take an active role in constructing meaning. Stuart Hall's basic outline of three decoding options provides a useful point of reference.¹⁹⁶ He argues that one option is that the reader operates within the dominant code and decodes news articles within the preferred reference code used to encode the message. A second option is that the reader negotiates his or her own meaning and adapts some elements of the dominant code while others are read in opposition. While the larger hegemonic significance is accepted, meaning is created according to the reader's own ground rules and situation. A third option is that the entire text is decoded in opposition, and read in a globally contrary way. When this happens the text is re-totalized through an alternative framework or reference. As Hall notes, one of the most significant political moments is the point when articles/events which are normally read in a negotiated way begin to be given an oppositional reading. The significance of this when considering the impact of media messages is that the "preferred meanings," which convey common sense and taken for granted understandings, can be challenged. As Graham Knight notes, ideological representations are not fixed and closed, in decoding such representations the reader is enlisted as an active subject.¹⁹⁷ An

¹⁹⁶ Hall, "Encoding Decoding." (1993).

¹⁹⁷ Knight, p. 36.

analysis of how Canadians negotiate meaning in terms of poverty would provide more insight into how meaning is being created and the extent of hegemonic influence. The results of recent polling, in which a majority of Canadians indicated that the federal government should act to reduce the income gap between the rich and the poor and create greater equality, suggests it is quite likely that Canadians are either negotiating meaning or reading the news in opposition when it comes to poverty.¹⁹⁸ Further, a survey of how Canadians are reading poverty coverage would provide greater insight into the degree to which the meaning of poverty is undergoing a transformation. The multiplicity of meaning found in 2006 *Star* Coverage illustrates that there were various competing frames from which to view poverty being presented. These contesting portrayals establish different mental frames about poverty, as the editorial and the articles in themselves fuel the ability to read the news in opposition. The *Star* editorial “The Colour of Canadian Poverty” and the feature article “The Game,” as noted, are just two articles within the same time period and newspaper that support oppositional readings.

As much as possible I have sought to conduct my content analysis and discourse analysis reflexively, however I recognize that it is impossible to escape all subjective biases and cannot claim complete objectivity. Particularly, as the goal of this analysis was to render problematic representations of poverty explicit so they might be challenged. In terms of the content analysis, as noted by Robert Hackett et al., the findings generated by such an analysis are dependent on the categories created to code the articles.¹⁹⁹ In the content analysis I was only able to identify trends that I set out to measure. In the process

¹⁹⁸ Results from the Environics poll were reported by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in their “Poverty Primer,” March 2007.

<http://policyalternatives.ca/documents/National_Office_Pubs/2007/AFB2007_Poverty_Primer.pdf>

¹⁹⁹ Hackett et al (1992).

of selecting aspects to code for, I limited how the articles could be read. One of the most surprising findings of this analysis was the high percentage of stories in 2006 that presented the poor as deserving of government or social action. While interesting, this result in itself does not reveal enough detail and it would be useful to return to the sample and consider more precisely how those who are poor are being portrayed as deserving. Further, a second coder would have improved the reliability of the content analysis results and prevented coder bias. In the content analysis a total of 202 articles were selected for analysis through a rolling date sampling method, however for any given year the sample size was small ranging from 22 articles for the *Globe* 2005 sample and 48 articles for the 2006 *Star* sample. An enhanced study with a larger sample would shed more light on the nature of poverty coverage.

I began the analysis with the assumption that a deserving and undeserving poor binary still dominated contemporary discussions of poverty. An investigation of the presence or absence of this binary is useful and helps reveal the extent of sedimented traces of past usages of poverty in news coverage. However, it is important to note that while I have made an effort to view the issue outside of this binary, given the persistence of this categorization in all levels of poverty discussions, it is likely that I am unable to entirely escape the binary myself.

While the goal of the content and discourse analysis was to consider how the keyword poverty was being invested with meaning, in future studies of poverty coverage it may be useful to consider other words in the analysis. For example, a survey of news articles indicates that the term low-income is often used synonymously with poverty and

including this term in the news search might help expand my view of how poverty is being portrayed.

A focused analysis of how poverty is invested with meaning in newspaper articles provides an opportunity to consider in great detail how the term poverty is being invested with meaning. One of the limitations of such a focused study is the inability to consider the role of other media in investing poverty with meaning. As mentioned briefly in my concluding chapter, the *Toronto Star* poverty web site provides an excellent example of the role new media may be playing in the construction of the meaning of poverty. Further, it is noteworthy that individuals do not view media in isolation. Rather, newspapers, television news, Internet news sites, entertainment media, etc, all present textual, visual, and audio representations of poverty creating an intertextual poverty discourse. Recent research questions the viability of analyzing media forms separately, due to the pervasiveness of such multimodal media.²⁰⁰ Further, given the recent trend in the news toward infotainment, a multi-modal approach would be useful for future research as it would enable an analysis of how television, video, and Internet sources may be influencing poverty discourse. An expanded analysis of poverty that considers the role of the Internet in news coverage would be particularly timely and relevant.

²⁰⁰ MacDonald, Myra.

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