

The Unhoused: Homelessness in Early-Twentieth Century British Columbia

by

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Honours Bachelor of Arts, University of Toronto, 2016

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Abstract

North American histories of homelessness have focused upon the specific image of the “tramp.” Exemplified by Charlie Chaplin, Jack London, and various other popular representations in a variety of media formats, the tramp, hobo or bindlestiff is a classic North American symbol. This “tramp” is often represented as a young, white, heteronormative man, and many histories of homelessness focus upon subjects like him. However, newly accessible police, charity and census materials suggest the early-twentieth century homeless population in the Pacific Northwest was more racially and sexually diverse than previously thought. Using a Gramscian liberal order framework theory, I argue that the tramp became a North American liberal ideological icon in response to a growing tension between the needs of capital for a free moving body of labourers and the growing panoptic state. By breaking down the tramp mythos and offering a more accurate image of turn of the century homeless people, we can see the ways liberal ideology has been twisted to justify incarceration, harassment, and exclusion.

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Introduction – Writing Homeless History

Despite the Pacific Northwest's reputation as a haven for the homeless today, we know little about the history of the region's homeless. Across North America, there has been a growing trend in the social sciences to investigate homelessness, historically and contemporarily. Many academic inquiries focus upon a specific subject – the tramp or hobo. A semi-mythical figure in North American history, the wandering labourer has been the subject of a wide literary corpus. Movies, television shows, songs, and novels all revolve around the mythical tramp. These works tell us that homelessness has changed since the early-twentieth century – the tramp was a white man and the face of homelessness before the Second World War. However, the importance of the tramp mythos has been overstated. While many homeless persons in the early-twentieth century were white men, homeless women and racialized persons made up significant proportions of the overall population of itinerants.¹ Despite their presence among the homeless, fictional hoboes are almost entirely white men – the concept of a Black tramp or a woman hobo is fundamentally abnormal. At the core of my thesis is an attempt to understand why.

Histories of homelessness are a recent historiographical phenomenon and there is a paucity of literature, especially among pre-1930s works.² The Great Depression understandably takes up significant historiographical space. Although capitalism is a crisis-ridden system, the Depression of the 1930s was

¹ I have used “women and racialized persons” as an expression to denote a broad category of analysis that is both amorphous and difficult to describe succinctly. It should be stated definitively that there is no distinction made between women's experiences of homelessness and their (potential) status as racialized persons in my thesis. Rather, the expression is best read as “women (racialized or white) and racialized persons (men or women).”

² For examples of Canadian works on homelessness before the 2000s, see James Pitsula, “The Treatment of Tramps in Late Nineteenth-Century Toronto,” *Historical Papers* (1980): 116-133, John C. Bacher and J. David Hulchanski, “Keeping Warm and Dry: The Policy Response to the Struggle for Shelter among Canada's Homeless, 1900-1960,” *Urban History Review*, 16, 1987: 147-163 and Jill Wade, “Home or Homelessness? Marginal Housing in Vancouver, 1886-1950,” *Urban History Review*, 25 (2), 1997: 19-29. For American scholars, Paul T. Ringenbach, *Tramps and Reformers, 1873-1916: The Discovery of Unemployment in New York* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973), Sidney L. Harring, “Class Conflict and the Suppression of Tramps in Buffalo, 1892-1894,” *Law and Society Review* 11 (1976-1977): 874-911 and John Schneider, “Homeless Men and Housing Policy in Urban America, 1850-1920,” *Urban Studies* 26 (February 1989): 90-99 are but three examples. Finally, Rachel Vorspan, “Vagrancy and the New Poor Law in Late-Victorian and Edwardian England,” *The English Historical Review* 92.362 (January 1977): 59-81, Lionel Rose, *Rogues and Vagabonds: Vagrant Underworld in Britain, 1815-1985* (New York: Routledge, 1988) and Carl Chinn, *Poverty Amidst Prosperity: The Urban Poor in England, 1834-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995) represent some English works. Canadian histories of homelessness focusing on the era preceding the Great Depression include David Hood, *Down but Not Out: Community and the Upper Streets in Halifax, 1890-1914* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2010) and Lisa Helps, “Bodies Public, City Spaces: Becoming Modern Victoria, British Columbia, 1871-1901,” MA Thesis. University of Victoria, 2002.

by far its greatest crisis.³ A historical analysis of homelessness before the 1930s is not only possible but essential. While the Great Depression represents capitalism's nadir, the late-nineteenth century was the height of classical liberal capitalism as a coherent ideological formation. At the same time, the economic depressions of the 1870s, 1890s and 1910s were precursors to the crisis of the 1930s. The construction of a liberal ideological formation illustrates not only the conditions leading to the 1930s crisis but also the continued moments of crisis that plague capitalism today.

Several frameworks are useful when engaging with homelessness – specifically Marxism, Foucauldian post-modernism and Gramscian neo-Marxism. Scholars have used Marx's writings on the reserve army of labour as an example of his engagement with homelessness.⁴ Although Marxist discourse remains a valuable analytic lens, classical Marxism alone is not an ideal framework for a history of homelessness. First, the unemployed or rarely employed do not easily fit into a single class position. They may be workers during periods of employment but their inability and/or unwillingness to work regularly places them at odds with the waged worker – especially in the early-twentieth century when it was a point of pride among some labourers to maintain stable and fixed waged work whenever possible. Even if we accept that the unwaged are working class, Marxism does not help us to predict who among the working class are likely to become homeless. Marxist theories can help explain working class immiseration and relate fluctuations in homelessness to periodic crises in capitalism, but the theories allow little room for nuance. Although there is a certain truth behind the simplicity of the Marxist argument, it does not help us in a focused study. Finally, Marxism and its focus upon class can be useful in a discussion of the popular

³ See James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), Joan Crouse, *The Homeless Transient in the Great Depression: New York State, 1929-1941* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986) and Ella Howard, *Homeless: Poverty and Place in Urban America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

⁴ See R. Jamil Jonna and John Bellamy Foster, "Marx's Theory of Working-Class Precariousness – And Its Relevance Today," *Monthly Review*, April 1, 2016, Don Mitchell, "The Annihilation of Space by Law: The Roots and Implications of Anti-Homeless Laws in the United States," *Antipode* 29, 3 (1997), 303-335 and Gaétan Héroux and Bryan Palmer, *Toronto's Poor: A Rebellious History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2016) for some examples.

images which sustain stereotypes serving ruling class interests but, again, classical Marxist theory is too simplistic. We need to engage with other theoretical frameworks if we are to properly understand the creation of “homelessness” as a specific category. Foucauldian post-modernist theories offer some useful insights into the creation of the homeless.

Addressing the issue of freedom and society requires delving into post-modern discourse on the disciplining of bodies. Michel Foucault is best known for his engagement with discursive formations and discourse as a system of representation. His work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* provides us with two indispensable concepts – discipline and bodies. Bodily discipline represents a specific manner of control and coercion that defines modern society. Foucault offers historical examples of disciplining such as religious self-control and monasticism. In its modern form, discipline has four spatial requirements: enclosure, partitioning, functional use of space and ranking. There are also temporal markings, such as timetables, the temporal elaboration of an act, correlation between body and gesture, body-object articulation, and exhaustive use. By breaking down bodily functions into mechanical and controllable motions, Foucault sees a new body – one of exercise, governed by authority. Once it was discovered that bodies could be manipulated, disciplinary institutions developed. Foucault cites Jeremy Bentham’s *Panopticon* as an exemplar of bodily regulation. Bentham’s panopticon was a jail with a central observation point that could continuously monitor prisoners while inmates could only see the central guard tower. One guard could do the work of many if the prisoners believed they were under constant surveillance. Guards could also be observed by outsiders in the same fashion. Bentham’s *Panopticon* is representative of institutional power for Foucault; “it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form.”⁵ Panopticism does not only control the imprisoned but also the ill (mentally and physically), the worker or the student. Panoptic power aims to discipline everyone and anyone.⁶

⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Toronto: Random House, 1995), 135-155, 200-205.

⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 204.

The power of institutions and their desire to fashion and control bodies is integral to any study of homelessness. As prospective workers, the homeless represent both cheap and malleable labour but also subversives who resist the desire to impose order on labour and would-be revolutionaries alike. Meanwhile, homelessness often comes hand-in-hand with issues of mental health, whether as a precursor or by-product.⁷ The state has historically isolated these individuals in asylums to monitor and prevent them from engaging in “anti-social” behaviours.⁸ Although lunatic asylums have closed and mental health treatments have improved since the 1970s, some argue that a continued deference to authority and a controlling impulse remains among mental health practitioners.⁹ Carceral and medical institutions continue to detain homeless persons, even if statutes criminalizing homelessness, known as vagrancy laws, and institutionalization policies no longer exist.¹⁰ Conversely, denial of services and access to the fruits of society is also a form of discipline. Lacking a permanent address meant census enumerators and relief officers alike would ignore the homeless and deny them benefits which might break the cycle of poverty. Homeless shelters arose in response to gaps in charity relief, but these were a double-edged sword. Strict rules and religious proselytizing, along with occasional monetary payments, were the cost of staying in shelters that sought to mould homeless persons into “respectable” citizens.

Leonard Feldman’s *Citizens Without Shelter: Homelessness, Democracy and Political Exclusion* offers an example of post-modernist engagement with the concept of homelessness historically. Feldman

⁷ Manfred M. Fichter and Norbert Quadflieg, “Prevalence of mental illness in homeless men in Munich, Germany: results from a representative sample,” *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 103 (February 1, 2001), 98-100, Paul Koegel, M. Audrey Burnam and Rodger K. Far, “The Prevalence of Specific Psychiatric Disorders Among Homeless Individuals in the Inner City of Los Angeles,” *Archives of General Psychiatry* 45 (December 1988), 1086-1087, G. Sullivan, A. Burnam and P. Koegel, “Pathways to homelessness among the mentally ill,” *Social Psychiatry Psychiatric Epidemiology* 35 (2000), 444-445, 446-448.

⁸ See Jennifer Perry and Tom K.J. Craig, “Homelessness and mental health,” *Trends in Urology & Men’s Health* 6, 2 (March 2015), 19-21 for a short example of a broad literature on mental health and the homeless.

⁹ Marina Morrow, “Mental Health Reform, Economic Globalization and the Practice of Citizenship,” *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health* 31, 2 (2012): 103-117.

¹⁰ Two recent works by the BBC on homelessness in England and Wales illustrate the continued prevalence of carceral solutions. See Andy Smythe, “I asked to go to jail, rather than stay homeless,” *BBC News*, November 23, 2017 <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-42057173>, and *Homeless by the Sea*, produced and edited by Paul Kerley (London: BBC Studios, January 24, 2018), http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/homeless_by_sea.

argues that drawing a direct connection between anti-vagrancy laws and current public ordinances that effectively criminalize homelessness is tempting but inadequate. He sees the change from vagrancy laws to anti-homeless ordinances as being rooted in the shift from the obsession with the public sphere as a productive place to a new obsession with public space as consumptive and aesthetically appealing. Anti-vagrant laws and attitudes reflected a conflation of idleness and criminality – one which only became important in an industrial society. Fears of the idle criminal did not end when the United States Supreme Court struck down vagrancy laws in 1972 but a new motive began to drive anti-homeless legislation. Now the homeless were to be excluded from public spaces, because not only did they not constitute “the public” but public space itself became a commodity which the homeless “obstruct” by their presence.

Feldman uses Giorgio Agamben’s concept of “bare life” to explain the exclusion of the homeless from society. Agamben argues that certain aspects of human life – the natural, reproductive, and biological – were excluded from the *polis* by the ancients as part of a dichotomous relationship between the “good life,” exemplified by politics, and “bare life,” which belonged primarily to the household. Because the ancients valorized political participation, it was only natural that the ultimate punishment became the exclusion of the individual and their relegation from the community to an existence of bare life. However, the excluded were marked with a paradoxical freedom – like the *homo sacer* of ancient Rome who could be murdered with impunity and was thus “beyond both penal and sacred laws.”¹¹ The contradiction that arises from the mystique of the “ban,” or outlawing of individuals, is the root of anti-homeless sentiment. The homeless represent a cautionary tale for the conforming member of society but also an opportunity to engage in fantasies of rebellion and adventure. Much like Western, gun-slinging cowboys, the homeless are romanticized as a fundamentally “free” people – from the constraints of work, family, and society.

¹¹ Leonard Feldman, *Citizens Without Shelter: Homelessness, Democracy and Political Exclusion* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2004), 15, 16, 28-39, 31-38.

Post-modern engagement with homelessness is a key part of my work. Discourse analysis allows us to break down concepts such as “homelessness” and get at the underlying impulses behind the creation of the category. Moreover, the homeless as both cautionary tale and vicarious vessel is integral to understanding the mythos of the tramp. Nevertheless, post-modernist theory alone does not give satisfying answers for why ideologies and discourses develop. Post-modern discourse presumes disciplinary power exerts itself on bodies by its nature and not as a specific class and economic structure that aims to discipline some bodies more than others. The lack of an overarching response to social inequality by post-modernists is also problematic. Lack of temporality is another issue that arises with post-modern works. Foucault draws upon a wide range of evidence across multiple eras to demonstrate the development of a disciplinary society. Similarly, Feldman uses examples of the homeless and outcast from as early as the Roman Republic. I am interested in homelessness before World War One and the specific conditions of that era. The *homo sacer* and the early-nineteenth century vagrant are completely different subjects from the tramp and modern homeless persons alike and each should be examined within the confines of their own era.

Gramscian neo-Marxism offers a novel, alternative framework – one that allows us to draw equally from elements of post-modernism and classical Marxism. Antonio Gramsci, the namesake of Gramscian theory, was a prominent Italian communist and Marxist scholar imprisoned by Benito Mussolini’s fascist regime. His *Prison Notebooks* have become an important theoretical tool for examining liberal order and society. Gramsci’s theories sought to prepare society for the coming socialist dawn, but academics have instead used theories of hegemony to explain the persistence of liberal order. Gramsci argues that the ruling ideology determines social conditions. Alternatives to the culture of the elite are rejected as unrealistic, heterodox, and anti-social. Refusal to adhere to the *status quo* outs one as a radical and Other, while conformity ensures continued access to the benefits of the ruling mode of production. A variety of actors support the hegemonic structure of the ruling elite, with police, popular media, academics, and

politicians playing various roles in eliciting (or enforcing) consent. Media, in its broadest definition, is essential to this project, directing popular discourse and dictating “acceptable” topics of political and social debate.¹²

Ian McKay’s article, “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,” is fundamental to my thesis. McKay offers a third-way for writing Canadian history – a Gramscian “liberal order framework” where Canada is neither an essential notion nor, “an empty homogenous space we must possess,” but rather a specific project of liberal hegemony.¹³ McKay defines liberalism as, “... [beginning] when one accords a prior ontological and epistemological status to ‘the individual’ – the human being who is the ‘proprietor’ of him- or herself, and whose freedom should be limited only by voluntary obligations to others or to God, and by the rules necessary to obtain the equal freedom of other individuals,” and hegemony as a theory detailing how a dominant class, “... must secure its position of cultural leadership through a combination of coercion and consent, in a day-by-day process that is never finally completed, ‘total,’ or secure... [and which] must also defend its claim to sovereignty against rival state projects.”¹⁴ I have drawn upon two elements of McKay’s theories. First is his argument that we can discuss the “bridges” between various histories of marginalized, oppressed peoples. His theory does not ask us to ignore class conflict but neither does it ask us to make class the central point of examination. McKay does not decontextualize the experiences of women, racialized persons, or Indigenous peoples in their encounters with the liberal state, nor suggests their politics are outside the realm of study. A study of the homeless is an ideal lens through which to draw these disparate histories together in a coherent narrative. More importantly, McKay argues that liberal ideology is a constructed

¹² Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), 9-13. 192-196, 238-239.

¹³ Ian McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,” *Canadian Historical Review* 81, 4 (December 2000), 620-621.

¹⁴ McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework,” 624, 630.

and perpetually unstable system. Liberalism is never secure – even in moments when resistance seems futile and alterity is silenced or marginalized. The late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries were a moment when liberal order seemed stable, but a contradictory impulse afflicted this ideological formation. How could a disciplinary and coercive state claim to represent unadulterated individual freedom? The homeless individual ostensibly represents an ideal liberal individual, traveling where and when they please, without any concern for work, property, or family. Yet the homeless were one of the principal objects of state discipline and coercion, embodying a glaring example of this ideological contradiction.

Gramscian theories of hegemony, especially in a Canadian context, can answer the concerns of both Marxists and post-modernists. It is a theory open to discussions of politics and state formation, but also one that can discuss disciplining institutions. Like any theoretical framework, McKay's is imperfect. Gramscian neo-Marxism, while combining the best attributes of Marxist and post-modernist discourse, also carries some of their problematic aspects. A key issue is that of scope. Theories of hegemony explain why homelessness exists and why responses to it manifest in certain ways, but it does not allow us to find who the homeless were. Hegemony is examined across the breadth of a society and at a broad scope by necessity. How the individual fits into a hegemonic framework is difficult, if almost impossible, to discern. Nevertheless, Gramscian theory provides a useful synthesis of both theoretical traditions.

A historiography of homeless works is difficult, particularly in a Canadian context. A variety of historical approaches and styles have been applied in this pursuit. Early examples derive from the history of sociology and “criminal” groups that were the focus of reforming impulses. Works such as James Pitsula’s “The Treatment of Tramps in Late Nineteenth-Century Toronto,” and Judith Fingard’s *The Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax* have been criticized for their insensitive portrayal of homeless persons,

as well as their uncritical echoing of “dangerous underclass” discourses.¹⁵ Another area of investigation has been that of the moral reform movement itself. Most works have focused upon the battles fought against intemperance and prostitution, but some have also touched upon attempts to solve the so-called “problem” of vagrancy.¹⁶ The history of homelessness is also a concern for legal historians, who attempt to understand the ramifications of statutes such as the 1892 Criminal Code and its proscription on vagrancy. A monograph-level discussion of vagrancy in Canada has not been written, but some authors have touched upon the subject.¹⁷ A new historiography surrounding LGBTQ+ persons has grown to encompass works on sexuality among homeless individuals.¹⁸ The focus is primarily upon homosexual relations between homeless men but growing access to archival materials, and police court records in particular, as well as a general explosion of interest in LGBTQ+ history means we can expect many more works on the subject of homeless persons’ sexuality in the coming years. Finally, historians of the working class have written on the unemployed and, by extension, the homeless.¹⁹ These works reflect both the precarity of work in the early-twentieth century but also the prevalence of “tramping,” a mix of seasonal employment patterns and wanderlust that saw labourers travel in search of work.²⁰

¹⁵ Pitsula, “The Treatment of Tramps in Late Nineteenth-Century Toronto,” Judith Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life in Victoria Halifax* (Halifax: Pottersfield Press, 1989). For critiques of these authors, see Helps, “Bodies Public, City Spaces,” 6-7, and Hood, *Down but Not Out* 9-10.

¹⁶ See Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), Carolyn Strange, *Toronto’s Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) and Carolyn Strange and Tina Loo, *Making Good: Law and Moral Regulation in Canada, 1867-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

¹⁷ For example, see Graham Parker, “The Origins of the Canadian Criminal Code,” in *Essays in the History of Canadian Law*, ed. David H. Flaherty (Toronto: Osgoode Society, 1981) and D. Owen Carrigan, *Crime and Punishment in Canada, A History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991).

¹⁸ See George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), Peter Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs: Constructing and Controlling Homosexuality in the Pacific Northwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) and Marin Elizabeth Aurand, “The Floating Men: Portland and the Hobo Menace, 1890-1915,” MA Thesis, Portland State University, 2015 for some examples of this growing literature.

¹⁹ See Struthers, *No Fault of their Own* and Peter Baskerville and Eric Sager, *Unwilling Idlers: The Urban Unemployed and their Families in Late Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) for two examples.

²⁰ Todd DePastino, *Citizen Hobo: How a Century of Homelessness Shaped America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 60-71, 118-121, Baskerville and Sager, *Unwilling Idlers*, 79-82.

Bryan Palmer and Gaétan Héroux's *Toronto's Poor: A Rebellious History* represents a recent contribution by working class historians to the history of homelessness. The authors argue that wagelessness is not only a threat to workers within the confines of the capitalist mode of production but also an opportunity to resist the very pressures that the liberal state applies to enforce the wage-labour system. Wagelessness oppresses but it also draws together disparate groups in the same struggle for sustenance. Palmer and Héroux see the possibility for revolutionary action in this shared struggle.²¹ Although an intriguing theory, I believe the two also downplay the desire of workers to become wage-labourers, as well as the power poverty and institutions play in controlling workers. Furthermore, like many of Palmer's works, they exaggerate the importance of class struggle and poorly engage with the experiences of racialized workers and women, with statements suggesting that the revolutionary left is at its weakest today because its voice has been usurped by "...identity-driven social movements that reproduce the fragmentations inherent in capitalism's tendency to divide the better to conquer."²² While I sympathize with Héroux and Palmer's disappointment over the lack of a broad, class conscious movement, Palmer's poor engagement with racialized persons and women is a persistent and unacceptable issue.²³

Finally, some works place homelessness as the key point of study, rather than as a subset of a broader subject. These works are rarer, reflecting a perceived lack of source material. American and British histories of homelessness and vagrancy are more common.²⁴ Todd DePastino's *Citizen Hobo: How*

²¹ Héroux and Palmer, *Toronto's Poor*, 18.

²² Héroux and Palmer, *Toronto's Poor*, 21.

²³ Joan W. Scott, "A Reply to Criticism," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 32 (Fall, 1987), 39-45, Lynne Marks, "Heroes and Hallelujahs – Labour History and the Social History of Religion in English Canada: A Response to Bryan Palmer," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 34, 67 (2001), 169-186 and David Mayfield, "Language and social history," *Social History* 16, 3 (1991), 353-358.

²⁴ See DePastino, *Citizen Hobo*, Feldman, *Citizens Without Shelter*, Kenneth Kusmer, *Down & Out, On the Road: The Homeless in American History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), and Tim Cresswell, *The Tramp in America* (London: Reaktion, 2001) for American examples. British examples include Chinn, *Poverty amidst Prosperity* and Elizabeth T. Hurren, *Protesting About Pauperism: Poverty, Politics and Poor Relief in Late-Victorian England, 1870-1900* (London: Boydell Press, 2007), as well as A.L. Beier and Paul Ocozbek, eds., *Cast Out: Vagrancy and Homelessness in Global and Historical Perspective* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008) which takes an international perspective.

a Century of Homelessness Shaped America is a particularly admirable effort to tell the history of the homeless in America over more than a century. DePastino uses a neo-Marxist approach, identifying what can only be described as an industrial reserve army when discussing the masses of homeless men in the late-nineteenth century but also identifying the racialized, gendered and political meanings of being homeless and excluded from "social citizenship."²⁵ I believe this is one of DePastino's greatest strengths, as he does not fall back on the trope of the white homeless tramp as overtly as others.²⁶ DePastino's work should not be seen as ending the need to write the history of women's homelessness or homelessness among racialized people, but it does show the possibility of writing an intersectional history of homelessness, despite implications to the contrary by some historians.²⁷

Although DePastino's work is encouraging, his attempts to cover events over 120 years across the United States is problematic. His approach is useful when he writes on tramping and hobo cultures from the Civil War leading up to the Great Depression, but it comes at the expense of a closer examination of the urban homeless experience. By the time DePastino reaches the 1950s, when homeless patterns shift, and localized skid-rows become emblematic, his broad scope is a hindrance. Furthermore, the aspect of DePastino's work I appreciate most – his engagement with gendered and racialized experiences of homelessness – is neutered by a wide scope. For example, DePastino discusses the experiences of Black men, Asians, Southern and Eastern Europeans in turn of the century Chicago in four paragraphs.²⁸ A local history of Chicago would have allowed DePastino to engage more intimately with these experiences and may have also given him space to discuss each group more closely. However, I believe DePastino offers an ideal way to write a history of homelessness within proper temporal and geographic confines.

²⁵ DePastino, *Citizen Hobo*, xix.

²⁶ DePastino, *Citizen Hobo*, 13-14, 35-36, 202-204, 14-15, 64-65, 76-77.

²⁷ For example, Ella Howard notes in her book, *Homeless: Poverty and Place in Urban America*, that there are records on Black homelessness in Harlem during the period she surveyed. However, she argues that Harlem is outside her geographic focus on the Bowery and that her engagement with Black homelessness can only be marginal. This is a poor argument and only reifies images of pre-World War One homelessness as a white, male phenomenon. Howard, *Poverty and Place*, 9-10.

²⁸ DePastino, *Citizen Hobo*, 76-78.

Within a Canadian context, David Hood's recent work on homelessness in pre-1914 Halifax is another notable example of homeless history. First, he brings together histories of social welfare, the working class and middle-class reformism to show the local effects of welfare reforms and the utility of a broader conception of the working class. Hood also critiques the uncritical usage of Malthusian conceptions of the urban poor as a "dangerous underclass," separated from the working and middle classes by their supposed criminality and deviancy. Hood argues the urban poor held similar values to the working and middle classes and largely aspired to be among them.²⁹ Hood's work consists of several individual examples, as well as generalized accounts, of life on the "Upper Streets slum," and in Halifax overall.

I find Hood's *Down but Not Out* another ideal homeless history. He draws upon labour and social welfare histories, reflecting the importance of class and state formation analyses. Hood does not make distinctions between homeless white men, women, or African Canadians in the Upper Streets, identifying the particularities of gendered or racial experiences of homelessness within a shared history of poverty. My only minor complaint with Hood's work is his relative lack of engagement with liberal ideology and political movements opposed to the liberal state. He makes note of liberal activism in the guise of the social gospel movement, as well as the relationship between Protestantism and liberal individuality, but there is virtually no discussion of radical alternatives to capitalism.³⁰ Although this is a tall demand, I think a note on the existence, or non-existence, of revolutionaries in Halifax would have added greatly to Hood's work. Still, *Down but Not Out* is an excellent example of homeless history in Canada.

The 2005 MA thesis of Lisa Helps is a prelude of sorts to my work. Her focus is upon the construction of bodies and public spaces in Victoria between 1871 to 1901. Helps also focuses heavily upon police court records and the regulation of "vagrants" within public spaces. She discusses the

²⁹ Hood, *Down but Not Out*, 4-11.

³⁰ Hood, *Down but Not Out*, 52-54, 132.

homeless but also individuals engaged in various “anti-social” activities.³¹ Taking a broadly anti-poverty, anti-colonial and anti-racist stance, Helps’ work offers interesting insights into the development of early industrial Victoria, as well as the creation of class segregated public spaces. The scope of her inquiry in relation to the homeless is excessive, however. I use an expansive definition of homelessness and vagrancy, but Helps’ scope is broader still. She records all cases brought before the magistrate over a thirty-year period and then examines the race and gender of those charged to find the homeless and others on the receiving end of efforts to police public space.³² In the contexts of the exceedingly wide definition of vagrancy laid out in the 1892 Criminal Code, a more selective approach is best. It is already difficult to parse who was homeless and who was merely a public nuisance from vagrancy records. Adding more generic charges simply muddies the waters and needlessly detracts from opportunities to understand the lives of those who were more likely among the homeless in the early-twentieth century.

Another recent work on homelessness in the Pacific Northwest is Todd McCallum’s *Hobohemia and the Crucifixion Machine*. McCallum’s work is a history of the Great Depression, but he engages with similar themes to my thesis. *Hobohemia* focuses upon three overarching subjects – the creation of the single, unemployed male as a category of analysis, the establishment of sites of utopian alterity in the hobo jungles and attempts to regulate both the unemployed and public servants catering to them.³³ Using these examples and drawing upon the writings of a variety of Marxist and post-modernist thinkers, McCallum presents a history of poverty, social welfare and Fordism through an alternative lens where utopian and anti-capitalist sites meet Fordist disciplinary impulses. McCallum reimagines the homeless,

³¹ Helps, “Bodies Public, City Spaces.”

³² Helps, “Bodies Public, City Spaces,” 45-46.

³³ Todd McCallum, *Hobohemia and the Crucifixion Machine: Rival Images of a New World in 1930s’ Vancouver* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2014), 7-10.

unemployed worker of the Great Depression as more than just a recipient of state discipline but as an actor mediating their engagement with social scientists, political authorities, and economic interests.³⁴

I find McCallum's work intriguing, if outside the temporal scope of my thesis. I am not completely sold on his decision to focus upon homeless men, and white men in particular. I encountered similar issues as McCallum did with finding sufficient records of women and racialized persons in my work, but I believe there is always room for some discussion of these groups. Nevertheless, *Hoboemia and the Crucifixion Machine* offers a valuable example of radical engagement with the state, disciplinary power, and historical poverty in an engaging format. I especially appreciate his discussion of utopia and the poor engagement many historians have with utopian movements. Although my thesis does not discuss utopian alternatives to homelessness at the turn of the century, it does call upon us to "reason otherwise" and to imagine radical alternatives to both present conditions and current historiographical trends.

Finally, a discussion of the wider cultural and literary phenomenon surrounding the homeless in early-twentieth century America is instructive. John Lennon's *Boxcar Politics: The Hobo in U.S. Culture and Literature, 1869-1956* is not a history of the hobo per se, but a history of hobo literature. Lennon offers a history of homelessness in the first third of his book to contextualize the hobo. To his history, he adds a critical examination of five emblematic novels illustrating changing period representations. Key to Lennon's work is a theory of dual homeless identities. The hobo was often reviled and maligned in the mainstream press – the *Chicago Tribune* once even called for its readers to poison begging hoboes – and were forced to hide away from society at large.³⁵ However, once aboard the train, the hobo encountered a certain freedom from liberal, capitalist society that the average person could only dream of. Lennon goes

³⁴ McCallum, *Hoboemia and the Crucifixion Machine*, 16-22.

³⁵ John Lennon, *Boxcar Politics: The Hobo in U.S. Culture and Literature, 1869-1956* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 18

on to argue that the hobo subverted the strict limits and controls the railways set upon the landscape and free movement and became part of these powerful objects that sped across the continent.³⁶

Another theme throughout *Boxcar Politics* is the construction of multiple versions of “the hobo” – such as Jack London’s competitive “profresh,” John Dos Passos’ travelling revolutionary or Jack Kerouac’s ghostly reminder of a bygone age. The creation of mythical and cartoonish versions of the homeless person is significant. The homeless represent an awkward subject for the liberal state – they embody free movement and are a necessary element of industrial capitalism, but they also present a fundamental threat to liberal order. Although Lennon’s book focuses upon the continental U.S., the works and discourses he discusses were popular across North America and are informative in a Canadian context.

Drawing upon Lennon and Feldman’s theories of multiple homeless identities, as well as Gramscian theories of hegemony and liberal order, I argue that the white homeless man and his presence in early-twentieth century North American history has been greatly exaggerated. A white tramp mythos appeared in response to tensions between an ideology of liberal individuality and the panoptic state. The tramp mythos played an integral role in mediating contradictions in liberal ideology between state power and the cult of the individual. The fictional tramp was crafted with multiple goals in mind. The first was an example of consent-seeking by the ruling elite. The tramp became a vessel through which disaffected middle class men could live vicariously while reaffirming the values and goals of liberal ideology. An expansive literature on the white tramp allowed young white men to be inculcated with liberal values through examples of natural, manly virtue and the rejection of industrial society. Tramp literature also gave an alternative to tramping. Middle and working-class boys did not need to hobo – they had books and films showing them the tramp’s life. Another similar version of the mythical tramp was a comedic character of vaudevillian tradition. These examples are contrasted with negative and dismissive attitudes

³⁶ Lennon, *Boxcar Politics*, 42-45.

toward the actual homeless. These popular examples focused entirely upon one subject – a young, white man. Despite archival records suggesting there were significant numbers of women, racialized persons, and elderly men among the homeless, works on the pre-World War Two homeless focus almost entirely on young, white men. Tramps existed as real people but often we remember the fictional persona. By uncritically focusing upon the symbol, historians have failed to dismantle a key myth of liberal ideology. Instead, academics have reified the privileged place the white tramp had among the actual homeless by writing histories of the tramp, hobo or bindlestiff. In doing so, homeless women and racialized people have been ignored and placed on the margins of academic histories of the homeless.

As a final introductory note, we need to address what homelessness means. This is a deceptively simple subject. There are a variety of popular and academic definitions used. Australian authors Chris Chamberlain and Guy Johnson identify three broad categories of homelessness in their 2001 article, “The Debate About Homelessness”: literal, subjectivist and cultural. The first definition refers to rough sleeping and literal “rooflessness.” They note that this definition is often presented in popular media as the only form of homelessness with two overarching archetypes: elderly men addicted to drugs or with mental illnesses and “street kids” squatting in abandoned buildings. The second definition is rooted in sociological theories on the nature of what being “housed” means. Chamberlain and Johnson refer to several authors, as well as the Australian National Youth Coalition for Housing (NYCH), who define homelessness as “the absence of secure, adequate and satisfactory shelter *as perceived by the young person...*”³⁷ As the quotation suggests, how one perceives their housing should be considered. The act of sleeping indoors does not make one “housed” if the conditions are so poor that rough sleeping remains a tempting and real alternative. Finally, the cultural definition is related to the sociological, arguing that the meaning of homelessness is socially constructed. However, this definition goes further, suggesting that different eras

³⁷ Chris Chamberlain and Guy Johnson, “The Debate About Homelessness,” *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 36, 1 (February 2001), 35-37.

have different meanings of homelessness. By finding popular standards for housing and the minimum believed necessary for a “housed” life, we can understand and define homelessness.³⁸ Meanings of homelessness that go beyond a literalist interpretation are integral to any history on the subject. A broader definition of homelessness allows us to not only examine other experiences of homelessness but to also engage in a critique of the very notion of “housed” living and adequate housing.

My analysis uses a cultural definition of homelessness. Although I use “homeless” throughout, the term had different connotations in the early-twentieth century. “Homeless” people were those who found themselves in a situation that elicited sympathy – victims of a house fire, refugees of war or abandoned children, among others.³⁹ The individuals we would categorize as “homeless” today were liable to be called tramps, hoboes, bums, vagrants etc. I have eschewed the use of those terms for two reasons. First, each has problematic connotations. The term “vagrant” is especially troubling – unlike “tramp,” “hobo” and, to a lesser extent, “bum,” “vagrant” only describes a criminalized homeless person. I cannot avoid these terms in some circumstances, but I will not reify the criminalization of these individuals whenever possible. Second, “tramp” and “hobo” primarily refer to fictitious conceptions of the homeless. While some homeless individuals did indeed fit the tramp or hobo mould, many did not. Using such a precise term to categorize the immense variety of homeless persons can only be exclusionary. “Homeless” is a useful, albeit imperfect, replacement for each of these terms. Each was, by definition, “homeless” in its literalist meaning – tramps, hoboes, vagrants, and bums were all liable to sleep rough or in shelters.

But what about the broader meaning of homelessness? I contend we should go one step further from the literalist definition of homelessness because then, as now, the homeless are defined principally

³⁸ Chamberlain and Johnson, “The Debate About Homelessness,” 38-39.

³⁹ Some examples of this include “Death and Fire Render Family Homeless,” *The Greater Vancouver Chinook*, August 24, 1912, 1, “The Artist’s Death,” *The Western Call*, April 26, 1912, 2 or “Homeless Children,” *British Columbia Federationist*, September 19, 1924, 2.

by their unwillingness or inability to live a “housed” lifestyle.⁴⁰ Homelessness, the condition of being unhoused, is a constructed identity, one fashioned by interactions between various actors. These interactions are subjective by nature and prevent us from finding an objective, homeless archetype. We can take period attitudes toward those who were “homeless” and identify what made a person homeless and another “housed.” Records of rooming houses present us with an alternative source of data on the broader urban homeless population. These individuals lived in poorly constructed, barely liveable and, importantly, transient housing. Individuals listed at rooming houses were believed to be among the poorest residents of major North American cities and, effectively, part of the broader urban homeless population.

Chapter 2 will cover the first places we might find homeless persons – police court records and charity records. Homelessness was criminalized until 1972 in both Canada and the United States, meaning the police court records of Victoria and Vancouver are valuable sources of data.⁴¹ Between 1910 to 1915, we see good economic times give way to a severe recession in 1912, as well as the start of the Great War in 1914. Moreover, the 1910s were an era of particularly high immigration to Canada. By examining these five years, we can observe the effects of both war and economic downturn on vagrancy numbers. To focus on police court records alone, however, would reify the criminalization of the homeless. To broaden my scope, I will present another dataset – the Associated Charities of Vancouver’s “Statistics book,” a collection of all charity applications made to the publicly-funded but privately run Associated Charities between January 1912 and December 1914. The document contains 7,200 cases, about 2,000 of which

⁴⁰ This concept seems intuitive at first because it is a condition we presume to be “natural.” However, the very concept of “housed” living is as constructed as homelessness. Rather than engage in an unnecessarily long discussion, I will offer a short definition here. “Housed” living is the act of living indoors in stable and continuing shelter. Owning a single-family house and renting a furnished apartment constitute “housed” living. Boarding houses blur the lines somewhat and are related to rooming houses. However, the expectation that food will be served in a boarding house places it one step above even the rooming house, where the resident can only expect a room. This is a broad and simplistic definition, but it is intended to help briefly clarify an amorphous concept.

⁴¹ Prashan Ranasinhe, “Reconceptualizing Vagrancy and Reconstructing the Vagrant: A Socio-Legal Analysis of Criminal Law Reform in Canada, 1953-1972,” *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 48, 1 (Spring, 2010), 86, Feldman, *Citizens without Shelter*, 34-36.

were homeless persons or people living at one of five shelters in Vancouver before the First World War. These documents will give us a glimpse at the “roofless” homeless in the early-twentieth century.

Chapter 3 begins with a general discussion of rooming houses as sites of poverty in period literature. These examples range from the works of social gospellers like J.S. Woodsworth to newspaper accounts. Christian social workers played an early and significant role providing charity for the homeless in BC but their moralism and zeal to convert workingmen’s souls were also problematic. Popular accounts of rooming houses emphasized the poverty of their residents while also casting allusions to criminality and a racialized Other. The concerns of social gospellers and popular media alike were heightened by the rapid growth of Victoria and Vancouver. Victoria’s population grew by over fifty percent between the 1901 and 1911 censuses, while Vancouver grew an astonishing 284.2 percent over the same period. By 1911, Vancouver was the most significant urban centre west of Winnipeg and north of Seattle. To ease each city’s sudden growth, large numbers of rooming houses were built to house a transient labour force. Following a discussion of the rooming house, I will conclude with a statistical model that will help determine how representative roomers were of the general population. I will demonstrate which attributes, if any, played a role in determining one’s likelihood of being a roomer. These results will help solidify our understanding of just who the homeless were in the early-twentieth century and will lead toward a more in-depth discussion of the construction of the homeless as a subset of the urban population.

Chapter 4 will focus upon experiences of homelessness by women and racialized persons. Homeless women feature in some histories of sex work but seldom in works explicitly on the early-twentieth century homeless, while racialized persons often simply go undiscussed.⁴² Although these groups were not a majority of the homeless, they made up significant proportions of the urban poor despite undercounting in some documents. The undercounting of women and racialized persons is especially

⁴² For example, see Mary Anne Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions: Prostitution in Early Nineteenth-Century Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015).

problematic because nostalgic memories of the past often erase the presence of these groups from significant events and daily life. It is imperative to address all aspects of white nostalgia, because failure to do so empowers present racial and sexual oppression. The propagation of the white tramp trope allows us to disassociate our analysis of the homeless today while waxing nostalgic about the “death of the hobo.”⁴³ By addressing the real presence of women and racialized persons among the early-twentieth century homeless, we can better understand historic patterns of poverty and homelessness that are sometimes ignored or subsumed in narratives which privilege the white male experience of homelessness.

Finally, Chapter 5 will engage with a specific construction of the homeless – the tramp. What made one a tramp and why did this image become so popular? I will discuss examples of the tramp persona as it appeared in books, film, song, and newspapers. Finally, I will address the question of why the tramp has remained key to North American popular memory. This chapter will show that the fictional hobo functioned to address a fundamental contradiction in liberal capitalist ideology – the rights of the free individual to wander versus the growing panoptic state. The fictional hobo became a symbol of respectable resistance to industrial capitalism and urbanity. Conversely, the existing homeless became conflated with the menacing radical or the shiftless workshy. None of these fictional creations served as accurate representations of the homeless, for better or, often, worse. Instead, these examples were part of an unspoken strategy to preserve liberalism’s hegemonic hold on the North American continent by giving would-be travellers literary figures they could live vicariously through but also scapegoats for the failings of liberal capitalism. These stereotypes continue to hold weight as cultural emblems, both in North American popular culture but also as recurring stereotypes that cloud our perceptions today.

⁴³ See Aaron Lake Smith, “Death of the American Hobo,” *Vice News*, October 11, 2012 and Rebecca Nappi, “Modern train cars have made hobo lifestyle a thing of the past,” *The Spokesman-Review*, August 21, 2011 for examples of this literature. A related discourse on the hobo is one which notes that migrant labourers riding freight trains continue to exist, implying readers believed hoboes magically disappeared after 1945. Peter Bowes and Sara Jane Hall, “Train hopping: Why do hobos risk their lives to ride the rails?” *BBC News*, December 19, 2012 and Dave Roos, “Still Riding the Rails: Life as a Modern Hobo” *How Stuff Works*, February 11, 2016 are examples of this literature.

Chapter 2 – Who Were the Homeless?

The homeless tend not to leave detailed records. Pictorial, coded markings can sometimes be found along well-travelled paths, but it is unlikely a message from the 1910s would have survived to today, let alone be of any value in finding historic homeless populations. There are also hobo and tramp autobiographies, but these works focus upon individual experiences and are unreliable. Therefore, the first step in finding the homeless is through bureaucratic records. Because homelessness was criminalized until 1972, vagrancy cases were regularly tried in police courts. To ensure the privacy of defendants, records of these cases only become available after 100 years. Cases from 1910 to 1915 became obtainable between 2010 and 2015 and give unique insights into the early-twentieth century homeless.

Before presenting police court data for Victoria and Vancouver, we must discuss what vagrancy is. The use of the legal system to enforce labour relations in the Commonwealth dates to the 1349 *Ordinance of Labourers*.⁴⁴ Vagrancy as a legally defined term dates to the 1824 *Vagrancy Act*.⁴⁵ The terms of the 1824 Act were partially transplanted in Canada but they also augmented existing legislation to regulate begging in New France.⁴⁶ Vagrancy laws functioned to police urban spaces and force participation in the wage-labour system.⁴⁷ In the period my thesis covers, vagrancy law was an integral aspect of the 1892 Criminal Code. Published under Title IV, Part XV, a vagrant was defined as a “loose, idle or disorderly person,” who committed one of twelve offences. A \$50 fine and/or 6 month’s imprisonments were the legal maximums if convicted. Canada’s vagrancy law functioned to police various social and moral offences other than homelessness. Statute A’s prominence suggests the policing of homelessness remained at the root of the vagrancy law’s intent but Statutes I, J, K and L have also been cited by legal historians as evidence of racial and gender persecution.⁴⁸ Specifically, Statutes I and J were

⁴⁴ “Ordinance of Labourers, 1349,” *Sources of British History*, <http://www.britannia.com/history/docs/laborer1.html>.

⁴⁵ “Vagrancy Act 1824,” *legislation.gov.uk*, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1824/83/pdfs/ukpga_18240083_en.pdf.

⁴⁶ Mary-Anne Poutanen, “Regulating Public Space in Early Nineteenth-Century Montreal: Vagrancy Laws and Gender in a Colonial Context,” *Histoire sociale/Social History* 35, 69 (2002), 36-37, fn 3.

⁴⁷ Poutanen, “Regulating Public Space in Early Nineteenth-Century Montreal,” 38-39.

⁴⁸ See Greg Marquis, “Vancouver Vice: The Police and the Negotiation of Morality, 1904-1935,” in *Essays in the History of Canadian Law, Volume VI*, eds. Hamar Foster and John McLaren, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) 242-273,

used to police women’s activities and autonomous lives in the city, while Statute J was also used to harass and intimidate racialized persons through its anti-drug provisions. This chapter will focus upon vagrancy in general, not the specific subsets of vagrant prostitutes or drug users.

Table 2.1 Vagrancy Law Statutes, Criminal Code of Canada 1892

Statute	1892 Definition	Colloquial meaning
A	“...not having any visible means of maintaining himself lives without employment;”	Unemployment and homelessness
B	“...being able to work and thereby or by other means to maintain himself and family wilfully refuses or neglects to do so;”	Spousal neglect
C	“...openly exposes or exhibits in any street, road, highway or public place, any indecent exhibition;”	Public indecency
D	“...without a certificate signed, within six months, by a priest, clergyman or minister of the Gospel, or two justices of the peace, residing in the municipality where the alms are being asked, that he or she is a deserving object of charity, wanders about and begs, or goes from door to door, or places himself or herself in any street, highway, passage or public place to beg or receive alms;”	Begging
E	“... loiters on any street, road, highway or public place and obstructs passengers by standing across the footpath, or by using insulting language, or in any other way;”	Loitering
F	“...causes a disturbance in or near any street, road, highway or public place, by screaming, swearing or singing, or by being drunk, or by impeding or incommoding peaceable passengers;”	Causing a disturbance
G	“...by discharging firearms, or by riotous or disorderly conduct in any street or highway, wantonly disturbs the peace and quiet of the inmates of any dwelling-house near such street or highway;”	Discharging a firearm
H	“...tears down or defaces signs, breaks windows, or doors or door plates, or the walls of houses, roads or gardens, or destroys fences;”	Destruction of property
	“...being a common prostitute or night walker, wanders in the fields, public streets or highways, lanes or places of public meeting or gather of people, and does not give a satisfactory account of herself;”	Street walking/common prostitution
J	“...is a keeper or inmate of a disorderly house, bawdyhouse or house of ill-fame, or house for the resort of prostitutes;”	Being a keeper or inmate of a brothel, gambling establishment or opium den
K	“...is in the habit of frequenting such houses and does not give a satisfactory account of himself or herself;”	Being a frequenter of one of the above
L	“...having no peaceable profession or calling to maintain himself by, for the most part supports himself by gaming or crime, or by the avails of prostitution.”	Living off the profits of gambling or prostitution

Canada, *The Criminal Code*, 55-56 Victoria, chap. 29: together with *An act to amend the Canada temperance amendment act, 1888, being chapter 26 of the same session* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1892)

Nick E. Larsen, “Canadian Prostitution Control Between 1914 and 1970: An Exercise in Chauvinist Reasoning,” *Canadian Journal of Law & Society/La Revue Canadienne Droit et Société* 7, 2 (1992) 137-156 and John McLaren, “Race and the Criminal Justice System in British Columbia, 1892-1920: Constructing Chinese-Crimes,” in *Essays in the History of Canadian Law, Volume VIII*, eds. G. Blaine Baker and Jim Phillips, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999) 398-442 for examples of this.

I have collected all instances where “vagrancy” appears in police records. In the Victoria records, the magistrate tended to record a colloquial version of the crime committed. Individuals were charged with “vagrancy,” or “street-walking,” rather than Statutes A or I, respectively. The Vancouver magistrates recorded charges more precisely, but they also engaged in some subjective recording of cases. Not every individual who committed a potential offence under the vagrancy act was charged as such and it appears that the choice to label a defendant as a “vagrant” was pointed. Because of this, I may have missed some individuals charged with vagrancy, but my focus is upon those who were homeless or appeared homeless to the magistrates, something the label “vagrant” implied. In a longer work there would be space to discuss other crimes such as theft, drunkenness, loitering etc., but a narrower focus is useful in an MA thesis.

It is also worth noting the quality of record keeping. The Victoria magistrate did not record specific statutes of the vagrancy law broken but usually we can identify which statutes the city’s magistrate refers to. Both documents present issues over a lack of clarity on race and gender. Police court records usually consisted of the name, arrest date, charge laid, plea given, verdict rendered and occasional trial minutiae. Gender and race were sometimes recorded in cases involving sex workers or drunkenness – the latter because of racialized restrictions on Indigenous alcohol consumption. Names can tell us a great deal about some defendants. Men and women usually have gendered names and Asian, Southern and Eastern European names often stand out. Along with this cruder method, I have also used newspaper reports from the *Victoria Daily Colonist* to help confirm some Victoria cases. For Vancouver, I have an additional document containing police court mugshots from October 1912 to December 1915. Neither the *Colonist* nor the mugshot book fills in these racial and gender gaps entirely; thousands of cases do not appear in either collection. Nevertheless, both documents give greater certainty to the police court records, which are some of the only windows we have into early-twentieth century homelessness.

Finally, I should note that my analysis of vagrancy and homelessness is at a general level to begin with. I have done so intentionally. First, there is a wealth of data. Between the police court and charity records alone there are nearly 10,000 cases. An MA thesis is a limited venture and the records I have highlighted are anything but. Second, it is necessary to emphasize the different experiences of women and racialized persons to white men. Being homeless is a struggle, regardless of one's gender or race, but it is also clear that white men who faced life on the streets of early-twentieth century Victoria and Vancouver had more resources at their disposal and more opportunities to break the cycle of poverty. As well, discussions of race and gender quickly become complex. A Black man's encounter with racism differs from that of an Asian or a racialized European man. Similarly, sexism, racism, and misogyny inflect a Black woman's experience of homelessness in ways which will differ from the experiences of a Black man but also an Asian or white woman. Indigenous persons are also missing from my records. I have recorded a total of twelve Aboriginal or Métis individuals arrested for vagrancy. The small number of Indigenous persons could easily be dismissed as a demographic reality, but I believe there is a deeper, racialized reason for their omission from the historical record. Rather than try to distill the various racialized and gendered experiences of racism into a broader discussion of homelessness, I have chosen to keep my initial focus generalized and return to racialized and gendered experiences in chapter four. My first engagement with the police court and Associated Charity records should be viewed through this lens.

I will begin with the Victoria police court records. There were 723 cases involving vagrancy over the period surveyed. Seventy-one names appear more than once in the record, leaving 604 unique names. As noted, the magistrate did not always take precise records, so the number of unique names may not equate to 604 individuals. The following table lists the number of charges laid per year. Vagrancy/Statute A charges are the most common, with significant numbers of begging/Statute D charges in 1910 and 1914 and sex work-related charges in 1912 and 1913. The reason for the increases in begging and sex work

charges in those years is not apparent. Statute D charges might reflect years where beggars were particularly obvious or when the economy was weaker. Sex work charges in 1912 and 1913 may be indicative of police harassment and a crackdown on brothels.⁴⁹ There is also the possibility that changes to the Criminal Code in 1913 saw the Victoria police availing themselves of Statute J charges while they still bore weight.⁵⁰ The onset of war likely explains the decline in sex work charges. Increasing numbers of single men arriving in Victoria would have wanted to avail themselves of sex workers while sex workers themselves would have wanted the opportunity to profit. Although the influence of madams and brothel owners was declining by 1914, these women remained important to local economies.⁵¹ Vagrancy charges rose until 1913-1914 before declining significantly in 1915. The effect war has on unemployment is well-documented, as munitions factories and the army help take homeless men off the streets.⁵²

Table 2.2 Victoria Vagrancy Charges per Year, by Charge Laid

Criminal Charges	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	Total
Vagrancy (Statute A)	63	109	128	137	106	60	603
Begging (Statute D)	11	4	1	7	12	3	38
Causing a disturbance (Statutes E and F)	7	3	4	2	6	1	23
Sex Work (Statutes I, J, K and L)	2	1	21	14	6	5	49
Various charges	1	0	3	0	3	0	7
Unclear	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Total per year	87	117	157	160	133	69	723

City of Victoria Archives (CoV) CR-0116 Magistrate's Record Book

⁴⁹ Notes in the records of the Board of Police Commissioners from 1910 discuss a warning given to brothel keepers on Chatham, Herald and Discovery Streets to vacate town or face arrest. Though most fled, it is likely sex workers returned once they were no longer the centre of police attention. The Victoria police may have decided a further crackdown was needed by 1913. CoV, Board of Police Commissioner's Minutes, CR-0112.

⁵⁰ The Criminal Code was updated significantly in 1913 to increase penalties for pimping, procuring, and living off the avails of prostitution. These changes were intended to address the inequities present in the original legislation that targeted working women while allowing madams, pimps, and johns to avoid prosecution. Larsen, "Canadian Prostitution Control," 139-140.

⁵¹ Works such as Rhonda L. Hinthner, "The Oldest Profession in Winnipeg: The Culture of Prostitution in the Point Douglas Segregated District, 1909-1912," *Manitoba History* 41 (Spring 2001), 2-13, Patrick A. Dunae, "Sex, Charades, and Census Records: Locating Female Sex Trade Workers in a Victorian City," *Historie sociale/Social history* 42, 84 (November, 2009), 267-297 and Katherine Crooks, "'Profits, Savings, Health, Peace, Order': Prostitution, Urban Planning and Imperial Identity in Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1898-1912," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 46, 3 (2018) 446-472 each discuss how the economic role sex work played in the lives of women and pre-World War One Canadian cities.

⁵² James W. St. G. Walker, "Race and Recruitment in World War I: Enlistment of Visible Minorities in the Canadian Expeditionary Force," *Canadian Historical Review* 70, 1 (1989), 3, Bryan Palmer and Gaétan Héroux, "'Cracking the Stone': The Long History of Capitalist Crisis and Toronto's Dispossessed, 1830-1930," *Labour/Le travail* 69 (Spring 2012), 46-47.

The gender of those arrested is an important, if inexact, piece of information. 598 cases involving men and 122 involving women were recorded over the period surveyed. At least three cases were unclear.⁵³ Gender played a key role in how charges were laid. The following table lists charges by gender.

Table 2.3 Victoria Vagrancy Charges by Gender

Criminal Charges	Men	Women	Total per criminal charge
Vagrancy	530	74	604
Begging	38	0	38
Causing a Disturbance	18	5	23
Sex Work	4	44	48
Various Charges	7	0	7
Unclear	3	0	3
Total per year	599	124	723*

CoV CR-0116 Magistrate's Record Book *There are three cases where the gender is not completely certain. I have categorized them in this table for the sake of simplicity

Unsurprisingly, women were most likely to be charged with sex work-related offences. Statute I was a gendered crime and Statute J was often gendered as feminine. Because the Victoria magistrate poorly recorded crimes, we cannot know definitively how many women were living in brothels and how many were “street-walking,” but the magistrate’s language implied these women were homeless. The small number of K and L charges suggests that even when men were caught in brothels, the Victoria police rarely charged them with vagrancy. Charging women with either of these statutes was also rare, as doing so would imply feminine independence. Seventy-four women were charged with “vagrancy” alone, presumably Statute A. The use of vagrancy charges against women was an interesting distinction between the United States and Canada. As John Lennon notes, American “tramp laws” gendered homelessness as a masculine offence. In some states, the gendering of homelessness was so strict it was legally impossible to charge women with vagrancy.⁵⁴ Conversely, vagrancy had been used against women as early as the 1830s in Montreal. Although distinctions were later made between “vagrants” and “common prostitutes,”

⁵³ There is a lingering uncertainty behind my method of determining gender via names alone. Some names that are clearly gendered today may have been more neutral in the early-twentieth century. A clear example is that of a man named Rose who was arrested for vagrancy in July 1912. Nevertheless, these cases are likely rare and, importantly, the records of the *Daily Colonist* give us insight into the gender of most remaining unclear cases.

⁵⁴ Lennon, *Boxcar Politics*, 24-25.

women continued to be charged under anti-homeless statutes.⁵⁵ The use of Statute A against women did not necessarily imply sexual equality before the law. Canadian vagrancy law gave magistrates the choice to impose sentences with or without hard labour and, in Victoria, most women were “only” sentenced to imprisonment. Sentencing patterns were different in Vancouver, where virtually all convictions resulted in hard labour sentences. These differences between the two cities speak more to Victoria Magistrate George Jay’s attitudes toward women than any national or regional beliefs about homeless women.

Racial data are also inexact in Victoria. Names help discern some identities, along with *Colonist* reports, which listed the race of defendants. In the absence of clear racial data, we can make a qualified assumption that many were white. The 1911 census shows Victoria to be predominantly Anglo-Celt and those defendants who were not prompted comment from the magistrate or *Colonist*. I have organized each case into three categories. “White” and “Asian” names are self-explanatory. Individuals with names such as John Smith are presumably white unless otherwise noted by the magistrate or *Colonist*. Chinese individuals were often recorded by a single name (i.e. Wong, Yip, Chung etc.) and two men recorded as “Singh” were likely South Asians. “Various ethnicities” is a broad category for names that do not appear to be Anglo-Celt or Asian in origin. There are several individuals within the “various ethnicities” category who are identified as a specific ethnicity but whose small numbers do not justify separate categories.

Table 2.4 Victoria Vagrancy Charges per Year, by Race/Ethnicity

Year	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	Total
White or unstated	80	106	141	133	99	39	598
Asian	0	4	5	15	19	24	67
Various ethnicities	7	7	11	12	15	6	58
Total per year	87	117	157	160	133	69	723

CoV CR-0116 Magistrate’s Record Book

Although Asian names are not always clear, *Daily Colonist* crime reports confirm fifty-five of the sixty-seven cases. Among various ethnicities, seven were either named in the *Colonist* or used a translator. The

⁵⁵ Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions*, 185-188.

rest are individuals with Eastern or Southern European appearing names. A significant point to take from the racial data is that the drop in overall vagrancy charges does not apply to Asians. Instead, Asians go from zero arrests in 1910 to making up fifty-seven percent of all arrests in 1915. Along with significant numbers of Asians, there were a small number of other racialized persons. Specifically, four Black individuals, two Italians, and a single “Russian or German Jew” from Poland are recorded in the *Colonist*.⁵⁶ One Indigenous person was also arrested for vagrancy over the period surveyed.⁵⁷

Just over fifty percent of Victoria cases resulted in guilty verdicts – 1.4 percent for crimes other than vagrancy. Sixteen percent of cases resulted in dismissal or withdrawal of charges and another seven percent were unclear. Twenty-seven percent of cases involved defendants failing to appear before the court. These are almost certainly instances where the magistrate ordered defendants to leave the city. In five cases, the magistrate explicitly recorded this order in his notes but, as a rule, he maintained the legal façade that these individuals had chosen to avoid trial.⁵⁸ The *Colonist* was under no such restrictions and regularly reported when the magistrate ordered defendants to leave town.⁵⁹ Where a guilty verdict was rendered, a common sentence was three months hard labour. 240 cases, or sixty-seven percent of all convictions, resulted in hard labour sentences. Sixteen percent resulted in imprisonment without hard labour and another fifteen percent resulted in a suspended sentence or fine. The remaining two percent of cases are unclear. Around eighty percent of all cases in Victoria resulted in either conviction or forced removal from town. Such a high conviction rate suggests that few of those brought before the magistrate had the means or will to fight their charges. Whether all eighty percent of cases involved homeless persons

⁵⁶ “For Vagrancy,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, December 29, 1910, 7, “The Police Court,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, January 6, 1911, 6, “The Police Court,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, March 29, 1912, 6, “Sentence Repealed,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, May 3, 1912, 7, “Goes to Jail,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, July 10, 1914, 6, “Jail for Begging,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, October 21, 1914, 6, “Charged With Vagrancy,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, March 13, 1915, 6.

⁵⁷ “Jail Sentences,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, June 6, 1913, 6.

⁵⁸ CoV CR-0116 Magistrate’s Record Book January 7, 1910, June 13, 1912, March 19, 1914, October 27, 1914, and February 12, 1915.

⁵⁹ “To Leave City,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, April 10, 1912, “On Own Recognizances,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, August 10, 1912 and “Vagrants Convicted,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, April 29, 1914 are some examples of this.

is not as clear, but we can state that the magistrate believed most defendants were “loose, idle, and disorderly persons,” a legal term that Canadian law tied to homeless persons from 1892 until 1972. While these records are insightful, missing data identifiers reduce the value of the Victoria police courts. Moreover, while 723 vagrancy charges over the period surveyed is a sizeable number for Victoria, we must turn to Vancouver-based records for a greater analysis of homelessness.

There are significantly more vagrancy cases tried in Vancouver between 1910 and 1915. 7,144 charges of vagrancy or related charges were laid, corresponding to 6,228 unique names. Like Victoria, it is unclear whether some names are multiple persons, but the number of charges alone are nearly ten times as many as in Victoria. Vancouver had grown significantly by 1911 to become three times larger than Victoria. Moreover, the city was on the mainland and was a significant transportation hub as the terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). Vancouver also had a reputation as an “open city” after the 1910 election of Louis D. Taylor. A follower of Henry George and a left-of-centre politician, Taylor believed the solution to issues of vice was to manage rather than try to eradicate it.⁶⁰ Although Taylor lost re-election in 1912, his policy may have influenced arrest rates and the city’s reputation for homelessness.⁶¹

The Vancouver magistrates were quite precise in how they recorded cases, listing specific statutes broken. The Vancouver magistrates also rarely tried individuals for more than one vagrancy offence at a time. There is therefore considerably less overlap in Vancouver cases. Table 2.5 lists the numbers arrested per year by offence. Statute A charges are the most common, accounting for seventy-one percent of cases. The remaining charges cover a range of offences, with a significant number involving sex workers. Vancouver vagrancy charges peak in 1912, compared to 1913 in Victoria. Statute J charges in Vancouver do peak in 1913, the same year the Criminal Code was updated to reinforce anti-sex work aspects of the

⁶⁰ Daniel Francis, *L.D.: Mayor Louis Taylor and the Rise of Vancouver*, (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2004) 30-31, 81-84 and Marquis, “Vancouver Vice,” 251.

⁶¹ Francis, *L.D.*, 85-87.

vagrancy law. Despite the difference in peak year, Vancouver vagrancy charges follow a similar trajectory to those in Victoria. Eighty-four percent of charges recorded in Victoria are likely Statute A, compared to seventy-one percent in Vancouver. There are more sex work charges in Vancouver, possibly because of my sampling method and the subjective recording of charges in Victoria. Two charges that only appear in Vancouver are drunk and disorderly and breaches of the Railway Act. The former was often laid against groups, with one or two charged with vagrancy, while the latter are instances of men being arrested for riding the rails. While many Victorians were charged with being drunk, the local Victoria magistrate rarely combined cases like the Vancouver magistrates. Meanwhile, Railway Act offences do not appear in the Victoria records, likely reflecting the lower number of railways on the island at the time.

Table 2.5 Vancouver Vagrancy Charges per Year

Charge Laid	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	Total
Statute A	753	848	1184	888	752	663	5088
Statute B	8	31	37	17	21	18	132
Statute C	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Statute D	37	46	57	49	28	47	264
Statute E	15	36	52	25	18	7	153
Statute F	30	32	30	26	41	54	213
Statute G	5	0	1	0	0	0	6
Statute H	0	5	0	0	0	0	5
Statute I	0	14	16	46	68	90	234
Statute J (Keeper)	39	55	17	35	2	0	148
Statute J (Inmate)	38	83	132	238	83	36	610
Statute K	9	19	21	12	0	0	61
Statute L	6	4	13	10	6	4	43
Related charges	4	25	27	37	48	25	166
Unclear	1	0	2	10	0	6	19
Total per year	947	1198	1589	1393	1067	950	7144

City Archives of Vancouver (CAV), Police Court Calendar 1910-1915.

As in Victoria, the Vancouver magistrates did not record race or gender explicitly, but the number of men and women charged with vagrancy appears similar between each city. Seventy-one percent of all Vancouver charges were laid against men, while twelve percent of cases were probably men.⁶² Sixteen percent of all cases involved women, with another one percent likely women. Assuming probable cases

⁶² Most of these cases were instances where the first name is only an initial (e.g. J. Smith) but it is reasonable to assume these cases were probably men.

are correctly identified, the rate of arrest is proportionately the same as in Victoria – an 83:17 male/female ratio. Although Victoria and Vancouver both had lopsided gender ratios in 1911, these numbers show significantly more men arrested for vagrancy than their proportion of either city’s population. Unlike in Victoria, women in Vancouver are most likely to be charged with either Statutes I and J – about seventy percent of all women’s charges in Vancouver. While Statute I charges clearly place these women on the street, Statute J charges present a more puzzling question because they place women within a residence. Do brothels constitute “housed” living? I will return to this question in chapter four. Most of the remaining charges laid against women are under Statute A. Only thirty cases involved charges other than A, I or J violations. The small number of women’s vagrancy charges outside of these three statutes suggest that gendered notions of who a vagrant was remained important. There were clear parameters by which women could be a “vagrant.” Women could not be domestic abusers, loiterers or disturb the peace. Although the tendency to define vagrancy so broadly that women could be charged with it was unique to Britain and Canada, there were still limits on what type of a vagrant women could be.

The racial data for Vancouver are comparatively more complete. Between 1,052 to 1,940 cases involved individuals whose racial or ethnic identity could be easily discerned.⁶³ I will focus my analysis here on 1,052 cases recorded in the mugshot book. Table 2.6 lists defendants arrested per year by race.

Table 2.6 Vancouver Vagrancy Arrests per Year, by Race

Race	1912	1913	1914	1915	Total
White	84	341	167	101	693
Black	9	59	21	15	104
Asian	2	20	10	17	49
Various Ethnicities	18	82	48	58	206
Total per year	113	505	246	191	1,052

CAV, Police Court Calendar 1910-1915, and Prisoners’ Record Book, 1912-1917. 1910 and 1911 are not included as there are no mugshots before October 1912.

⁶³ 1,052 accounts for those appearing in the mugshot book and 1,940 is the maximum number whose racial or ethnic identity may be identified using the method I used in Victoria. Neither number is ideal – mugshots for the reasons I have noted, while names written in cursive by magistrates who did not always take accurate records are difficult to interpret accurately.

There is significant variation between the number of cases recorded with mugshots and cases requiring Asian language translators. Counting cases with translators, there are likely 336 Asian cases, significantly more than the forty-nine mugshots. There are about 295 cases of Chinese individuals, twenty-six Japanese persons and fifteen South Asian defendants. It is also worth noting that some names in the Victoria record appear white without corroborating data (e.g. John King), suggesting there may be more Asians arrested in Vancouver. Despite the low numbers recorded in the mugshot book, an increase in charges against Asians still occurs in 1915, if not as overtly as in Victoria. Eleven Indigenous persons were arrested for vagrancy, of which six are recorded as “half-breeds,” and five as “Indians,” only one of whom was charged with Statute A. The rest are mainly women arrested for prostitution and charged under Statute J as inmates of brothels. The small number of Indigenous persons in the records for both cities is important and possibly reflects an intentional undercounting of Indigenous persons among the broader urban poor.

One of the most shocking results is the number of Black individuals arrested. African Americans account for five percent of all cases where race is known, rising to six percent if we include Black Canadians and Afro-Caribbeans. By comparison, less than 0.1 percent of Vancouver’s population was Black in 1911.⁶⁴ The number of African Americans who have mugshots are equal to the number of Scots in the mugshot book – yet Scots made up 23.8 percent of the 1911 population. While it is possible that Black persons were more likely to be photographed by the Vancouver police and their outsized presence may be misleading, they are still excessively overrepresented in the police courts.

The final significant racialized group appearing in the police court records for Vancouver are Continental Europeans, primarily from Scandinavia, Eastern and Southern Europe. At least 156 cases involve these ethnicities. These are individuals we would see as white today but who would not necessarily have been so in the early-twentieth century. These groups passed as “white” but their inclusion was always

⁶⁴ Specifically, there were 142 Black persons recorded, out of a total population of over 123,000. Canada, 1911 Census (Vancouver).

conditional.⁶⁵ Cases involving Continental Europeans correspond to 14.5 percent of arrests in the mugshot book and around 26.5 percent with translators. Conversely, these groups make up 6.8 percent of the 1911 census population in Vancouver. The mugshot data suggest the Vancouver police harassed communities they considered “non-white.” The sole exception appears to be Asians, but this may be misleading. Poor record keeping may hide some Asians in the police record and others may not have been counted among the homeless but were instead charged with drug or gambling offences. Barring a complete sample of all cases tried by the Vancouver police courts between 1910 and 1915, my conclusions must be tentative.

Finally, let us touch upon two categories that can only be gleaned from the mugshot data – ages and occupations. The data correspond to one subset of vagrancy arrests; overall numbers are unavailable, as magistrates either did not record them or the records are lost. Table 2.7 lists defendants by age.⁶⁶

Table 2.7 Ages of Vancouver Police Court Defendants

Age category	Mugshot cases	Percentage	1911 Census	Percentage
Under 20	103	9.8%	36,197	29.3%
20-24	320	30.4%	18,431	14.9%
25-29	292	27.7%	18,638	15.1%
30-34	147	13.9%	14,057	11.3%
35-39	87	8.2%	11,103	9%
40-44	55	5.2%	7,570	6.1%
45-49	23	2.1%	5,769	4.7%
50-59	20	1.9%	6,117	5%
60-69	2	>0.1%	2,451	2%
Over 70	0	0%	888	0.1%
Blank	3	>0.1%	2,196	0.2%
Total per year	1052	100%	123,417	100%

CAV, Police Court Calendar 1910-1915, and Prisoners’ Record Book, 1912-1917 and Canada, 1911 Census (Vancouver).

Those arrested for vagrancy were much younger than the overall population of Vancouver. 67.9 percent of defendants were under the age of thirty, compared to 59.3 percent of the city’s population. Furthermore, a considerable number of those under thirty in the census were children younger than fifteen, none of whom would have appeared before the Vancouver magistrates. The older an individual became, the less

⁶⁵ See Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, 104-128, for an extended discussion of this issue.

⁶⁶ This is to match the Associated Charities record which follow shortly.

likely he or she was to be charged with vagrancy. The results reflect the realities of homelessness – few homeless individuals today pass the age of fifty without either finding a home or dying on the streets.⁶⁷

The data for occupations are similarly limited but specific numbers are worth noting. Table 2.8 lists occupations by broad categories as defined by the International Labour Office (ILO) and the Historical International Classification of Occupations (HISCO). Individuals in the service and primary industries, as well as manual labourers, are overrepresented in the police courts. The high number of service workers is due to women being recorded as sex workers. Not surprisingly, prostitutes are proportionately significant in a criminal record but not the census. The higher number of primary industry and manual labourers is less surprising. Both occupations were affected by economic dislocations in British Columbia. Primary industries were a dominant economic driver in the early years of colonization and industrialization, while manual labouring was a precarious occupation across North America.⁶⁸

Table 2.8 Occupations of Vancouver Police Court Defendants

Occupational Category	Mugshot Cases	Percentage	1911 Census	Percentage
Professional	28	2.8%	8,647	14.4%
Clerical	35	3.6%	5,067	8.4%
Sales	18	1.8%	5,092	8.5%
Service	286	29%	6,645	11%
Primary Industry	64	6.5%	2,469	4.1%
Manufacturing	153	15.5%	17,555	29.2%
Transport	92	9.3%	3,484	5.8%
Labour	308	31.3%	11,236	18.7%
Unclear/Missing/Criminal	6,109	N/A	63,222	N/A
Total	7,144	100%	123,417	100%

CAV, Police Court Calendar 1910-1915, and Prisoners' Record Book, 1912-1917 and Canada, 1911 Census (Vancouver).

Although police court records provide some examples of homelessness and poverty, they cannot be used alone. The criminalization of those accused of vagrancy easily leads to stereotyping. Moreover, police court accounts are incomplete, even with mugshots and news reports. Records are sparsely detailed,

⁶⁷ Stephen W. Hwang, "Mortality Among Men Using Homeless Shelters in Toronto, Ontario," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 283, 16 (April 2000) 2154-2156.

⁶⁸ Baskerville and Sager, *Unwilling Idlers*, 76-77.

mugshots were only taken of those presumed likely to reoffend and papers focused on conspicuous cases. Vancouver dailies may not have even recorded police court cases at all, as the proceedings were not newsworthy in the “big city.” Victoria’s small population may explain why the *Colonist* placed a dedicated reporter at the police courts. To add to police records, I will turn to the records of the Associated Charities.

The Associated Charities of Vancouver’s “Statistics book” is around 150 pages long and lists all charity applications in Vancouver between January 1, 1912 and December 3, 1914. There appear to be no records available after this date and records from before 1912 are informal and incomplete. Due to the limited nature of a Masters thesis, I cannot document all 7,200 cases. Instead, I have sampled all cases involving homelessness. There were two criteria for determining whether an individual should be included. First, if an individual is listed as living at a shelter, I have recorded him or her. For shelter addresses, I have used Diane Matters’ article, “Public Welfare Vancouver Style, 1910-1920,” and her list of shelters and the number of beds available nightly.⁶⁹ The second criterion is those cases recorded as “Homeless.” Only thirteen cases were recorded as such. Nevertheless, based upon shelter addresses and those listed as homeless, there are 1,968 cases. Another 401 have blank address fields which may or may not suggest homelessness. There is no reason given for not providing an address and, while the Charities were usually precise in their records, those with blank addresses were more likely to be missing information across all fields. Blank fields likely indicate individuals who either chose not to give information or could not give an address for reasons other than homelessness.

As with the police court records, there are issues with the ACV’s records. Other than name, gender, address and time in Vancouver, each case was sorted into predetermined categories. Age was recorded in intervals of five to ten years and I have reworked the 1911 census data and police court records into similar categories. “Race” is problematic as well – it was given as seven options: Canadian, English, Scotch, Irish,

⁶⁹ Diane Matters, “Public Welfare Vancouver Style, 1910-1920,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 14, 1 (Spring, 1979) 4, 7.

Colonial, American and Foreign. Welsh was added later. Thus, nominally white Britons and Anglo-Celt settlers are divided into a variety of categories and, conversely, all others are combined into one – Foreign. Nevertheless, the Charities document is one of the only records of shelter residents in the early-twentieth century. It also provides interesting details that the police records lack, entirely or partially. The Charities document has problems, but it remains a remarkable source on a poorly recorded subset of the population.

Of the 1,968 cases, 1,951 are men and seventeen are women. The number of women rises slightly to thirty-three if we include blank addresses, but the proportion is still minuscule. There is no definitive reason for the lack of women in shelters. I would tentatively suggest that women did not apply to the ACV for aid because the shelters that catered to women were more self-reliant in their operations. The locations given for women’s shelters in the Matters’ article consisted of a mix of “respectable” lodging houses for working women and “protective homes” for former prostitutes, unwed mothers and abused spouses.⁷⁰ Only the lodging houses might equate to the men’s shelters and, even then, they were predicated on women paying for their stay. The implication may have been that women who were in need could stay for free, but the lodging houses undoubtedly still intended to profit. Finally, those women who were staying in the protective homes were not treated in the same way as the men in shelters. These locations functioned like quasi-prisons, with women perhaps technically free to leave but unable to do so even when they wanted to. In the 1911 census, residents of the Salvation Army’s Rescue Home and Maternity Hospital, which catered to unwed mothers and prostitutes, were listed as “inmates,” while residents of the Central City Mission and the Salvation Army hostel were listed as “lodgers.”⁷¹ The gendered difference in labelling suggests that women were expected to be cared for in shelters, but at the cost of their freedom.

The ages of individuals listed ranges broadly. There were three children under the age of ten and twelve individuals over seventy years of age. All three children were pauper burials. Among those over

⁷⁰ Matters, “Public Welfare Vancouver Style,” 7.

⁷¹ Canada, 1911 Census, Vancouver.

seventy, two are recorded as being sent to the Old People’s Home but the remaining ten are given varying amounts of aid other than housing. The Old People’s Home was not particularly large – it appears to have only had about sixty residents on average – and probably did not take new residents often.⁷² Most charity applicants were between the ages of twenty and forty, with significant but lower numbers applying among those forty to sixty. The largest distinct group are those aged twenty-five to twenty-nine, who make up nearly twenty-four percent of all applicants. The next largest group were those twenty to twenty-four, followed closely by those thirty to thirty-four. Table 2.9 provides ages data in detail.⁷³

Table 2.9 Ages of Police Court Defendants, Shelter Residents and the 1911 Census Population, Vancouver

Age Categories	Shelter Residents	Percentage	Mugshot cases	Percentage	1911 Census	Percentage
Under 20	65	3.3%	103	9.8%	36,197	29.3%
20-24	338	17.2%	320	30.4%	18,431	14.9%
25-29	469	23.8%	292	27.7%	18,638	15.1%
30-34	322	16.4%	147	13.9%	14,057	11.3%
35-39	272	13.8%	87	8.2%	11,103	9%
40-44	178	9%	55	5.2%	7,570	6.1%
45-49	110	5.6%	23	2.1%	5,769	4.7%
50-59	132	6.7%	20	1.9%	6,117	5%
60-69	52	2.6%	2	>0.1%	2,451	2%
Over 70	12	0.6%	0	0%	888	0.1%
Blank	18	0.9%	2	>0.1%	2,142	0.2%
Total	1,968	100%	1,051	100%	123,363	100%

CAV, Associated Charities of Vancouver Statistics Book, 1912-1914, Police Court Calendar 1910-1915 and Prisoners’ Record Book, 1912-1917 and Canada, 1911 Census (Vancouver).

These numbers suggest certain commonalities and differences between the numbers for the 1911 census and the police courts. Police court defendants are the youngest subset of the homeless, followed by shelter inhabitants. Younger individuals appear less likely to have sought out charity and therefore found themselves before the police courts. As one aged, homeless individuals became more willing to countenance the idea of charity, perhaps to avoid the spectre of the magistrate and hard labour.

⁷² Megan J. Davis, *Into the House of Old: A History of Residential Care in British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003) 61.

⁷³ It is worth noting that the 1911 census numbers likely undercount the number of young men in the city as many would have been out of town working in primary industries such as mining and forestry when the census was taken in the summer.

87.9 percent of shelter inhabitants were single, with the married and widowed accounting for around 10.3 percent of all remaining cases. Another 1.8 percent of cases were left blank. The preponderance of unmarried men is unsurprising given the nature of work and poverty in early-twentieth century western Canada. Unmarried men were the source of a great deal of the BC labour force, often coming with the goal of earning some money before returning home.⁷⁴ The presence of a large port in Vancouver also increased the numbers of single men passing through the city. Those who were widowed tended to be older, as we might expect. The largest subset of widowers were those aged fifty to fifty-nine, with significant numbers aged forty-five to forty-nine and sixty to sixty-nine. Ages rose among the married as well, if not as markedly. Most married homeless charity applicants were thirty-five to thirty-nine years old, with many forty to forty-four. Those who were single tended to be young but there were significant numbers of unmarried men in their late thirties and early forties. The number of single men recorded by the Charities in shelters is much higher than the overall proportion of single individuals in Vancouver. Fifty-six percent of all Vancouverites were single, nearly forty percent were married, and the rest were mostly widowed or, occasionally, divorced. Even if we replicate the overwhelmingly masculine nature of the Charities book by removing women from the 1911 census, the proportion of single men only rises slightly to sixty percent of all cases. Large groups of unemployed single men were the stuff of nightmares for municipal authorities, who feared that these men might become violent radicals.⁷⁵

Race, as noted previously, was categorized oddly, and might be better regarded as ethnicity. Of those listed, English applicants make up the largest single category. Not only did many Canadians hold strong cultural attachments to England at the turn of the century but many recent immigrants were also

⁷⁴ Donald Avery, "European Immigrant Workers and Labour Protest in Peace and War, 1896-1919," in *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada: Essential Readings*, ed. Barrington Walker, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2008) 126.

⁷⁵ Mark Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows: The Industrial Workers of the World in British Columbia* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1990) 64-85.

British.⁷⁶ Foreigners make up around ten percent of all cases, which is less than the overall population in the 1911 census who would have been categorized as “foreign.”⁷⁷

Table 2.10 Associated Charities, Vancouver Police Court and 1911 Census Race Categories

Race Categories	Shelter Residents	Percentage	Mugshot cases	Percentage	1911 Census	Percentage
Canadian	358	18.2%	230	14.2%	5,993	4.9%
English	692	35.2%	129	7.9%	47,065	38.7%
Scotch	410	20.8%	84	5.2%	29,430	24.2%
Irish	169	8.6%	47	2.9%	15,030	12.3%
Colonial	34	1.7%	7	0.4%	79	>0.1%
American	63	3.2%	304	18.8%	2,885	2.3%
Foreigner	202	10.3%	811	50.2%	20,069	16.5%
Welsh	10	0.5%	7	0.4%	1,163	0.1%
Blank	30	1.5%	4	0.2%	N/A	N/A
Total	1,968	100%	1,623	100%	121,714	100%

CAV, Associated Charities of Vancouver Statistics Book, 1912-1914, Police Court Calendar 1910-1915 and Prisoners' Record Book, 1912-1917 and Canada, 1911 Census (Vancouver).

The data used for the 1911 census refer to the racial background of a person rather than their actual citizenship. A possible explanation for why the “Canadian” category seems small in each document is that it was the count of self-described Canadians. An individual could have been a resident of Canada dating back generations and still be marked as “English,” for example. Canadian ethnicity appears to refer to those residing in Canada since the early colonial period – Francophones especially. If we consult a secondary data point in the census – Year of Immigration – we find that 43.5 percent of all Vancouverites were born in Canada, suggesting that the ethnic Canadian category undercounts those born in Canada.

“Foreigners” make up a slightly higher proportion of the 1911 population of Vancouver than they do shelter inhabitants. These groups also make up a disproportionate number of those charged with vagrancy. The stark contrast between each document strongly suggests that the Charities functioned to support Anglo-Celt individuals primarily. Eastern and Southern Europeans could apply for aid, but Asians

⁷⁶ *Fifth Census of Canada, Volume II: Religions, Origins, Birthplace, Citizenship, Literacy and Infirmities, by Provinces, Districts and Sub-Districts* (Ottawa: C.H. Parmelee, 1913), x.

⁷⁷ “Foreigner” in the contexts of early-twentieth century popular discourse refers to all non-Anglo-Celt persons except for Indigenous Canadians. 16.5 percent of Vancouverites would meet this definition in the 1911 census.

could not. Of 7,200 cases, only one Chinese name appears in the entire document – a man who had tuberculosis and was not homeless. Asians would have to look to their own communities and benevolent societies, charities, and associations, as well as the missionary societies looking to convert them.

The time spent in Vancouver before applying for aid is a unique metric. The census gives a vague idea of when an individual first arrived in Canada, and the mugshot book lists an individual’s home city, but the Associated Charity’s records are particularly detailed. There were five categories which corresponded to varying periods of time spent in Vancouver. Those who have lived in Vancouver for less than 6 months can be categorized as “non-residents.”

Table 2.11 Shelter Residents, Time in Vancouver, per year, Associated Charities of Vancouver

Time in Vancouver	1912	1913	1914	Total
Less than 1 week	183	61	65	309
1 week to 1 month	312	77	138	527
1 month to 6 months	181	26	147	354
6 months to 1 year	214	64	240	518
Over 1 year	74	55	131	260
Total per year	964	283	721	1,968

CAV, Associated Charities of Vancouver Statistics Book, 1912-1914.

In 1912, most charity applicants were residents of Vancouver for less than a month. The overall number of applicants dropped in 1913, but new residents continued to make up considerable numbers. In 1914 most applicants were longer term residents of Vancouver. The large proportion of non-resident applicants in 1912 is curious because it contradicts past studies on poverty, many of which argue that charities were particularly stingy with non-residents. Palmer and Héroux highlight how Toronto’s House of Industry agonized over the thought of spending aid on tramps.⁷⁸ Great Depression-era studies also suggest that non-residents struggled to access relief.⁷⁹ The Associated Charities records suggest that they were open to aiding travelling workers. Moreover, itinerant labourers were not a clear majority among charity recipients living in shelters, even if they remained a sizable proportion. An examination of all 7,200 cases might

⁷⁸ Palmer and Héroux, *Toronto’s Poor*, 42-76.

⁷⁹ McCallum, *Hobohemia and the Crucifixion Machine*, 35, 41, 125-126.

show that those staying at shelters were outliers, but we would expect the number of long-term residents to rise as we include those with fixed addresses. This document suggests that the idea the homeless were drifters who flocked to the Pacific Northwest to find work and a warm climate may be too simplistic an explanation for the region's large homeless population. A fuller investigation of the Associated Charities record and similar documents in other cities will be a key avenue of future inquiry.

The occupations listed for shelter inhabitants are significantly different from both the 1911 census results, as well as the city's police court records. A similar pattern prevails where white-collar workers are underrepresented among the homeless but, even where the records align, there are some stark differences. The table below lists the results for all three sources.

Table 2.12 Occupations in Vancouver, Associated Charities, Police Court Records and 1911 Census Results

Occupational Category	Shelter Residents	Percentage	Mugshot cases	Percentage	1911 Census	Percentage
Professional	15	0.8%	28	2.8%	8,647	14.4%
Clerical	29	1.5%	35	3.6%	5,067	8.4%
Sales	8	0.4%	18	1.8%	5,092	8.5%
Service	62	3.2%	286	29%	6,645	11%
Primary	119	6.0%	64	6.5%	2,469	4.1%
Manufacturing	232	11.8%	153	15.5%	17,555	29.2%
Transport	160	8.1%	92	9.3%	3,484	5.8%
Manual Labour	1284	65.2%	308	31.3%	11,236	18.7%
Illegible/Unknown/Blank	59	3%	N/A	N/A	63,222	N/A
Total	1,968	100%	984	100%	123,417	100%

CAV, Associated Charities of Vancouver Statistics Book, 1912-1914, Police Court Calendar 1910-1915 and Prisoners' Record Book, 1912-1917 and Canada, 1911 Census (Vancouver).

The most significant difference is the number of manual labourers in shelters. Labourers were particularly vulnerable to being homeless. Manual labourers were twice as likely to be police court defendants compared to the 1911 census population and they are still more likely to be shelter inhabitants. Manual labourers were particularly susceptible to poverty and unemployment, so these numbers are expected, but the high number compared to even the police records is striking. The considerable number of sex workers in the police courts explains the difference in part, but the number of manual labourers in shelters remains

significant. The result is particularly conspicuous because several shelters catered to individuals in certain specific occupations, such as sailors or loggers, who would not be counted as “general labourers.”

There are twenty-one addresses listed in the case book, including the various locations listed for individuals marked “homeless.” Examples include the Salvation Army’s maternity hospital, the YMCA, Central Park, and the Old City Pound, as well as some random street addresses. Five shelters accounted for eighty-two percent of all listed locations. The two with the most residents were the Central City Mission (CCM) and the Vancouver City Rescue Mission (VCRM). The CCM alone accounted for half of all homeless persons listed in the Charities case book. Together, seventy-five percent of all residents are listed at either location. The sole reason for the larger number of Central City Mission applicants may simply be that the Rescue Mission was not completed until mid-1912. If we look at the numbers by year, the Rescue Mission has the most applicants listed in 1913 and 1914. With 250 beds at the CCM and 300 at the VCRM, it is not surprising that the two account for so many recorded cases. Several shelters were run by religious organizations with a mandate to both house the large numbers of homeless men passing through Vancouver but also to offer these men a chance at salvation. The CCM was a multi-faith venture organized by multiple downtown Protestant missions which organized gospel services and evangelizing among the urban poor.⁸⁰ Along with the CCM’s big tent approach, the Salvation Army, and the Anglican Church each ran independent shelters. The Salvation Army had a hostel known as the Metropole Hotel while the Seamen’s Institute and St. Luke’s Home were associated with the Anglican Church.⁸¹

⁸⁰ CAV, Friendly Aid Society – Constitution and minutes, COV-S447, Agency of the Evangelical Churches of the City, *Second Annual Report of the Central City Mission* (Vancouver, 1910), 5.

⁸¹ Matters, “Public Welfare, Vancouver Style,” 4. Matters lists St. Luke’s as a shelter, but it does not appear in the ACV book. Matters does not indicate that St. Luke’s is an Anglican mission but there is information suggesting this. First, while most information on St. Luke’s is not publicly available, a citation listed on the MemoryBC site notes that a local Anglican minister founded it. Moreover, a St. Luke’s affiliated with the Anglican Church is still located on the same site Matters’ list, though as a hospice. See MemoryBC, <https://www.memorybc.ca/st-lukes-home-vancouver-b-c>, and Pete McMartin, “Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap,” *Vancouver Sun*, December 15, 2011, <https://www.pressreader.com/canada/vancouver-sun/20111215/282845072850439>.

The smaller number of residents at three other men's shelters included in the Charities document are also noteworthy. The Salvation Army is especially interesting – their hostel at Gore and East Hastings had ninety-four beds which, while fewer than either the CCM or VCRM, was still the third largest overall. The numbers listed in the Charities document are strongly contrasted with the number listed at this address in the 1911 census – seventy-eight individuals from 1912 to 1914 versus eighty-five on one day alone in 1911. As well, at least seventeen Vancouver police court defendants were released on suspended sentences to go with officers of the Salvation Army. Why are the Salvation Army numbers so low? One possibility is that the Army's shelter, the Metropole, was run primarily as a hotel. Residents could stay for free if in need but were encouraged to pay. The Salvation Army may have appealed to those who could not afford respectable housing, wished to avoid the waterfront rooming houses but felt "above" staying at the CCM or VCRM. Moreover, among those who did stay without paying, it is likely they would have found aid "in-house," as the Salvationists offered a variety of services other than room and board.⁸² Finally, though the Salvation Army was a constituent member of the Associated Charities, it is possible that they saw the predominantly Methodist Central City Mission as competition in the quest to save working men's souls and provided more services to ensure that those who stayed with the Salvation Army could be converted.

The remaining shelters recorded were two benevolent societies offering beds for men in certain occupations – the Strathcona Institute for Sailors and Loggers and the Anglican Church's Seamen's Institute. The Strathcona had forty beds, while the Seamen's Institute had thirty. Again, both have few recorded residents – only seventy-seven combined over the course of the period surveyed. Matters does note that these locations operated similarly to the Salvation Army – those who could pay were asked to but no one would be turned away if a bed was available.⁸³ It is likely that those who applied for charity

⁸² A list of services commonly offered by the Salvation Army in Canada is given in R.G. Moyles, *The Blood and Fire in Canada: A History of the Salvation Army in the Dominion, 1882-1971* (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1977), 70-71.

⁸³ Matters, "Public Welfare Vancouver Style," 4.

and were staying at these locations were visiting sailors and loggers who had fallen on hard times, saw themselves as “above” the main shelters and were able to access aid on the basis of their employment.

Finally, the reasons given for charity applications, as well as the relief granted, offer insights into why homeless individuals applied for charity. Those applying for aid were categorized by seven causes and could receive eleven forms of relief.

Table 2.13 Reasons for Requesting Charity by Shelter Residents, Associated Charities of Vancouver

Cause for Charity Application	Frequency	Percentage of all cases
Inefficiency	0	0%
Destitution	1001	50.9%
Destitution, Homeless	1	0.1%
Destitution, Homeless, Sickness	1	0.1%
Destitution, Old Age	2	0.1%
Destitution, Sickness	365	18.5%
Homeless	5	0.3%
Homeless, Sickness	2	0.1%
Desertion	1	0.1%
Desertion, Sickness	5	0.3%
Sickness	402	20.4%
Old Age	0	0%
Maternity	1	0.1%
Blank	182	9.2%

CAV, Associated Charities of Vancouver Statistics Book, 1912-1914.

Destitution and sickness make up most cases. The numbers of those listed explicitly as homeless are low – only thirteen total. As noted, “homelessness” had a different meaning in the 1910s that referred primarily to those who had suffered a tragic loss of housing. While shelter residents would be considered homeless today, historically the term held a different colloquial meaning which bears out in its use by the ACV.

Eleven types of relief could be granted, and few applicants were given only one form of aid. Food, medical aid, and employment assistance were the most common forms of relief granted individually but many applicants received some combination of aid. The following table lists each unique instance where a type of aid was granted. The numbers add up to over 100 percent of total cases, reflecting instances where multiple forms of support were given.

Table 2.14 Relief Granted to Shelter Residents, Vancouver Associated Charities

Relief Types	Number of Cases
Hospital	63
Medical Aid	767
Food	1,526
Lodging	1,293
Employment	864
Transportation	22
Total Support	12
Temporary Support	779
Visit of Nurse	4
Free Dispensary (Medicine)	715
Pauper Burial	7
Blank	27

CAV, Associated Charities of Vancouver Statistics Book, 1912-1914.

Food and lodging were the most frequent forms of relief, while medical aid and access to pharmaceuticals were also common, along with temporary supports. The Associated Charities also attempted to organize employment for some applicants. There were three common combinations of relief. Food, lodging, employment, and temporary support were granted in 597 cases. In 305 cases, medical aid, food, lodging and free dispensary were given. Finally, in 228 cases, medical aid and free medicine were provided. The forms of relief given suggest that three subsets of individuals applied for aid. The first were those who were unemployed due to economic circumstances or personal crisis. The second and third groups were those who were sick, with the former needing more aid than the latter. These numbers are not particularly surprising – poverty and poor health go together, especially in environments without socialized medicine. A question remains regarding what “lodging” constituted for the Associated Charities. Since most cases are individuals listing shelters as their addresses, the implication is that the lodgings found for them were elsewhere. Unfortunately, there are no notes indicating where those receiving aid for housing went.

Certain traits predominate among the homeless living in shelters and those arrested by the police. Over eighty-five percent of all arrests in both cities are of men. Similarly, virtually all shelter inhabitants are men. Manual labourers make up a clear majority of shelter residents and are the largest distinct group of arrested homeless individuals. The homeless also appear to be young, with just over fifty percent under

thirty years of age. However, the data collected also leave us with some questions. Each police court document is missing important data points. Although the Vancouver police mugshot book fills in some gaps, less than one-fifth of all cases are recorded in detail. The Charities document is most complete, but the categories used are awkward to analyze. Moreover, police court data suggests the Associated Charity records significantly undercount homeless women and racialized persons. The principal conclusion we can take away thus far is that the homeless appear to be a particularly vulnerable subset of Victoria and Vancouver's urban populations. Poor white men predominate but women and racialized persons are still significant minorities. These subsets of the urban homeless are noteworthy, as most works on pre-World War Two homelessness suggest white men were such an overwhelming majority of the homeless that it is unnecessary or pointless to discuss racialized persons and women. To find whether these results are an artefact of the sources used or a novel result, let us look at a third subset of the homeless – roomers.

Chapter 3 – Rooming Houses and the Urban Poor

Rooming houses lined the waterfront of Vancouver and made up a considerable proportion of downtown housing in Victoria by 1911. Multi-unit dwellings sprung up across each city to house their growing populations like many other North American cities in the early-twentieth century. Of the various multi-unit dwellings built, rooming houses were often of the lowest quality. The rooming house is defined by its barebones layout. Units rarely had self-contained bathrooms and, in most cases, cooking facilities. Rooms were often poorly lit and ventilated, and buildings were poorly constructed and maintained.⁸⁴ Rent in a rooming house was often cheap but the trade-off was slumlord renting practices. The rooming house was, and remains, one of the most precarious and transient forms of housing. Rooming houses were also a source of significant controversy, not only because of their decrepit nature but also their inhabitants.

First, we need to contextualize rooming houses in period literature. Several sources can be used but I will focus upon J.S. Woodsworth's *My Neighbour* and the Vancouver Social Survey of 1913. *My Neighbour* was a follow-up to Woodsworth's *Strangers Within our Gates* and discusses several issues of urban life. Chapter 4, "The Undermining of the Home," is especially instructive. Woodsworth laments the growing numbers of homeless youth in Canada. To him, homelessness is not just sleeping rough; rather, to be homeless is to be a boarder or renter. Woodsworth notes that many urban districts are filled with buildings where groups share rooms or common areas, do not eat at home, and spend their time between sleep, work, and the theatre.⁸⁵ He saves a particularly damning condemnation for the cheap lodging house, a step below the apartments Woodsworth disdains. Woodsworth describes how an "ill-paid, aimless and roving life" creates the homeless man.⁸⁶ Again, homelessness is not the act of sleeping rough but rather living an unfulfilling life in cramped and unhealthy conditions. Woodsworth quotes several sources on

⁸⁴ For modern descriptions of rooming houses, see Erin Mifflin and Robert Wilton, "No place like home: rooming houses in contemporary urban context," *Environment and Planning* 37 (2005), 404, Judy Villeneuve, *Homelessness: A Call for Action*, (Burnaby: BC Housing, 1999) 2, and The Downtown Interagency Meeting, *The 'Hard to House' in Victoria* (Victoria: Community Council of Greater Victoria, 1988) 1-2.

⁸⁵ J.S. Woodsworth, *My Neighbour: A Study of City Conditions, A Plea for Social Service* (Toronto: Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, 1913), 95-96.

⁸⁶ Woodsworth, *My Neighbour*, 97.

populations in urban centres, women's experiences of urbanity and juvenile delinquency. Between these surveys and interviews, Woodsworth gives his own definition of what constitutes an ideal life. While discussing unaffordable housing in urban areas, Woodsworth writes that "The detached house in the middle of the lot with its front and back gardens and lawns is becoming a dream of the past."⁸⁷ Apartments, tenements, rooming houses and even detached homes divided into multiple units do not meet his definition of respectable housing. Woodsworth offers no immediate solution to the issue of the "undermined home," though it is clear by his subject matter that an increased supply of single family housing, amenities for children in urban areas and supports for single, working women would all fit his ideal.

Woodsworth's description of rooming houses as a form of homelessness gives two key insights. First, the notion of homelessness as more than just rough sleeping is not a modern concept but one rooted in early sociology and urban studies. His definition of rooming houses as a form of homeless housing suggests advocates at the time, like today, would have seen roomers as homeless persons. Moreover, though Woodsworth implies all forms of renting are examples of "homelessness," he is particularly concerned with the rooming house (i.e. the cheap lodging house). Although Woodsworth's more expansive definition of homelessness is unrealistic and not useful for our purposes, his identification of the rooming house as a particular site of homelessness within his expansive definition is important. Finally, Woodsworth's use of this definition in conjunction with other works from Canada, the United States and Britain suggests that the notion of rooming houses as a form of homelessness was an accepted theory throughout the sociological milieu by 1911. One can then infer that census enumerators might have been aware of the connotations behind this term. Therefore, roomers in the census are likely individuals we would regard as homeless and people whom experts at the time probably regarded as homeless.

⁸⁷ Woodsworth, *My Neighbour*, 97, 101.

Another lesser known work on Vancouver poverty is a social survey taken in 1913 by the Methodist and Presbyterian churches. The report is one of several written on major city centres in the early-twentieth century.⁸⁸ The survey is split into six parts which give a short history of colonial Vancouver, as well as information on the city's population, municipal administration, social issues and industrial life.⁸⁹ Section VI, "Community Problems," discusses the four most significant issues facing the city – bar-rooms and drinking, crime, housing and health. Regarding housing, the authors quote some of the city's regulations, or lack thereof, on lighting and ventilation, developable space, running water, sewer connections, overcrowding, basement units, cleaning staff and fire escapes. Although the report notes that the city expects these rules to be enforced on new and existing structures and that there are dedicated inspectors to patrol these buildings, Vancouver had also "begun to repeat the housing evils of the eastern cities."⁹⁰ The authors decry the poor lighting and ventilation of dumbbell apartments, as well as a loophole for factories that allowed 100 percent lot coverage, reducing the effect of the dumbbell design. The authors also list eight lodging houses of varying quality and style, noting that the city's definition of a rooming house includes all eight and that broad, poorly enforced regulations allow poor living standards to persist. The authors conclude by noting a common loophole was for roomers to claim they were cooking in their unit, a defining characteristic of lodging houses in city legislation, along with a racist anecdote about Chinese men learning to greet inspectors with "me cookee here" to avoid eviction.⁹¹ Much like Woodsworth, the Vancouver social survey does not give overt suggestions for addressing these social ills. The goal of these works is to encourage "enlightened" legislators to respond adequately. The Vancouver

⁸⁸ *The Report of a brief investigation of social conditions in the city which the need of an intensive social survey, the lines of which are herein suggested* (Vancouver, 1913), 4.

⁸⁹ *The Report*, 6-14.

⁹⁰ *The Report*, 18.

⁹¹ *The Report*, 18-19.

social survey authors appear to approve of existing legislation concerning housing in Vancouver and, rather than a call to action, the report is more an appeal for the city to enforce its own existing laws.

The social survey gives us valuable insights into the attitudes of social workers and activists. In the early-twentieth century, social work was largely the purview of Christian social gospellers who believed that social science could advance Christian socialism.⁹² Although it is unlikely that the individuals who wrote the report were “professionals,” the notion of professional and amateur engagement with social sciences was not yet established in the early-twentieth century. Evangelical Protestant churches often engaged with secular academics and other activists to construct a significant literature throughout North America.⁹³ The role of social gospellers, and their evangelical zeal, is important to emphasize as it undoubtedly inflects their work.⁹⁴ Some of the data are liable to be inaccurate, particularly that related to racialized persons. Nevertheless, the social survey’s report on Vancouver housing conditions is bleak, illustrating local activists’ awareness of slum-like conditions in Vancouver. Moreover, their awareness was tied to concerns about the nature of those living in rooming houses. Although the authors do not refer to roomers explicitly as homeless, they would have likely been aware of the same theories that Woodsworth uses to discuss these individuals. The social survey is written with many of the paternalistic sentiments which dictated policy toward vagrants, sex workers and the homeless alike. Moreover, the survey discusses police court prisoners, such as vagrants, and the poor assistance they received after being released from jail. While the location of these references may be coincidental, the survey discusses the criminalized homeless and roomers consecutively in the “Community Problems” category.

Together, *My Neighbour* and the social survey also highlight the key role liberal individuality played in the development of social policies among evangelical Protestant groups. Woodsworth firmly

⁹² Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, *A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900-1940* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 86.

⁹³ Valverde, *Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, 129.

⁹⁴ Christie and Gauvreau, *A Full-Orbed Christianity*, 131.

believes that a life of “forced” communalism is at the root of growing homelessness among Canadian youth. His attitudes toward multi-unit dwellings of any type suggest he would reject well-built apartments and rooming houses alike. He accepts, reluctantly, that highly populated urban centres will not simply disappear but still advocates for a future that is remarkably similar to the post-World War Two suburban ideal. Although Woodsworth was an avowed socialist later in life, *My Neighbour* was published before his conversion.⁹⁵ Meanwhile, the social survey also hints at the dangers of a forced collective lifestyle. For the authors of the report, the dangers of unsafe housing and unhealthy living conditions are intimately tied to the supposed dangers of unrestricted immigration. The survey’s authors do not offer as radical a vision for the future as Woodsworth but in their critique is a fear of the Other who does not live as they do. Although the report’s authors fear the presence of racialized persons in vast numbers, they also fear the growth of a subclass of impoverished, unhealthy, and illiberal workers in Vancouver.

Rooming houses were a significant issue in the census and often viewed from two perspectives. The first was one of city-building and competition between urban centres. In 1891, a scandal broke out when it was discovered that Victoria had a population of only 16,000. Local politicians and business leaders refused to accept the census results and commissioned another local census which found that the “actual” population of the city was 22,981 people.⁹⁶ The 1901 census appears to have caused less controversy, as Vancouver had overtaken Victoria but by a relatively small margin.⁹⁷ When it became clear the city had fallen well behind Vancouver in 1911, however, there was indignation and accusations

⁹⁵ Kenneth McNaught, *A Prophet in Politics: A Biography of J.S. Woodsworth* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 91-96.

⁹⁶ Patrick A. Dunae, Donald J. Lafreniere, Jason A. Gilliland, John S. Lutz, “Dwelling Places and Social Spaces: Revealing the Environments of Urban Workers in Victoria Using Historical GIS,” *Labour/Le travail* 72 (Fall 2013), 44-45.

⁹⁷ The 1901 census was not without controversy in Victoria, as a civic census administered by the city and endorsed by the *Daily Colonist* suggests, but otherwise there was relatively little written publicly about the census returns that year. See “The Census” and “Civic Census,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, May 3, 1901, 4, 5.

that enumerators had undercounted Victoria by at least 10,000 people.⁹⁸ The 1911 census appears to have caused controversy in other cities too, with Calgary, Edmonton and London, Ontario accusing enumerators of failing to accurately record their populations.⁹⁹ In most of these cities, rooming houses were cited as locations where enumerators had inaccurately counted. A letter to the editor in the *Colonist* argues that the Atlantic Hotel, a well-known boarding house, regularly had sixty-five to eighty-five residents and may have been undercounted.¹⁰⁰ The *Calgary News Telegram* reported that the city's population would have increased by 10,000 with the inclusion of "omissions and transients," and the *Edmonton Journal* headlined their article on the census results with "Census Figures of 24,882 for City Raises Big Storm of Protest."¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, the *Edmonton Bulletin* wrote on the difficulties enumerators found in counting "boarders and lodgers in regular boarding houses and families, as well as the class of roomers in commercial dwellings and offices."¹⁰² These concerns were rooted in inter-urban rivalry, as cities competed to be seen as the largest in their region and therefore the best site for investment. Concerns surrounding rooming houses were a means to claim enumerators inadequately counted urban populations.

There was some discussion of the issue of rooming houses as sites of urban decay and social ill outside the census. These articles on rooming houses were largely negative. Using the search function for the *Victoria Daily Colonist* and isolating for 1900-1920, we find that the most relevant articles on roomers are all crime-related. Some relate to cases involving theft and murder, while several refer to attempted

⁹⁸ For example, the front page of the *Daily Colonist* carried headlines such as "Much Worried Over Census," "Records Indicate 40,000 Population," and "Census Figures Are Inaccurate," on October 19, 1911, with opinion pieces and editorials such as "Wanted, Another Census" on the 19th, 4, and "Unsatisfactory," on October 20, 1911, 4.

⁹⁹ "Official Census Figures Are Revealed as a Result of Early Report and They Are 50,700: Inclusion of Omissions and Transients Would Bring the Total Population up to 60,000," *The News Telegram*, July 26, 1911, 3, "Census Figures of 24,882 For City Raises Big Storm of Protest," *Edmonton Journal*, October 18, 1911, 1, 3, "Official Figures Are Wrong, Says Census Commissioner," *London Free Press*, October 18, 1911, 1.

¹⁰⁰ "Victoria's Population," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, October 22, 1911, 15.

¹⁰¹ "Official Census Figures are Revealed as Result of Early Report and They Are 50 700," *The News Telegram*, July 26, 1911, 3, *Edmonton Journal*, October 18, 1911, 1, 3.

¹⁰² "Census Work About Finished," *Edmonton Bulletin*, July 6, 1911, 8.

suicides – a criminal offence until 1972.¹⁰³ If it were possible to search other major dailies, it is likely there would be more articles on crime in rooming houses. Key is that “roomers” and “rooming houses” will appear as sites of crime, decay and poverty in other newspapers. Although cities were already conceived of as locations of filth and destitution, rooming houses were unique sites of deprivation. These were not lodging houses nor boarding houses but merely rooms in unsafe and unhealthy buildings where even cooking was a luxury. Substandard even by the low standards of the early-twentieth century, the rooming house was a location only the most desperate inhabited. Those individuals who lived in rooming houses did so on a temporary basis and, as today, were one missed rent payment from living on the streets.

Examples of specific rooming houses can be found in the 1911 census results. It is important to note that the dataset collected for the Vancouver results is still incomplete and missing some addresses. As a result, the observations made below must be tentative. Two forms of rooming house predominate. The first are situations where individuals rent a room in a house with a family. Unlike boarders, these people likely indicated that they were not receiving food as part of their rent. These individuals are scattered throughout Victoria and Vancouver and are often the only roomers recorded in some census sub-districts. The second subset of roomers are most rooming house residents. These individuals often lived in buildings with at least five other people listed as roomers, with the largest buildings having thirty to sixty residents in Victoria. These roomers are concentrated in specific sub-districts. In Vancouver, the largest number of roomers are in sub-district 25, whose boundaries correspond to a sliver of land bounded by Main, East Hastings, Gore and Prior. Significant populations are also found in sub-districts 23, 28 and

¹⁰³ See “Arrests May Clear Theft Mysteries,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, July 12, 1911, 8, “Juryman Fined for Non-Appearance,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, September 11, 1911, 7 and “Crazed Chinese Kills Relatives,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, Feb 14, 1915, 3 for just some examples. For the decriminalization of suicide, see Antoon A. Leenaars and David Lester, “Comparison of rates and patterns of suicide in Canada and the United States, 1960-1988,” *Death Studies* 16, 5 (1992), 427.

40.¹⁰⁴ In Victoria, most roomers are in sub-district 8. Though a street guide was not provided for Victoria, a scan of addresses shows it corresponded to several blocks bounded by Pandora, Quadra, Fort and Wharf.

Two rooming houses can be highlighted in Victoria and Vancouver. In Victoria, the Atlantic Hotel at Johnson and Broad was a well-known rooming house and a notoriously transient residence. The author of the *Colonist* article referred to above writes of, "... [the hotel's] rooms, which are occupied every night and have been for many years," while also noting that most are double rooms and contained multiple residents coming and going regularly. Multiple suicides are reported at the hotel, as well as armed robberies and assaults.¹⁰⁵ The hotel is also the home of two men whose names were published in a list of "deserving" individuals requiring work during the pre-World War One recession.¹⁰⁶ Despite claims that the hotel may have been undercounted, the census results offer interesting insights into the average resident. Forty-six individuals are listed as residents, with thirty-seven listed as roomers. Along with the owner and his family, there are three wives of residents, two men who are not listed as roomers and the brother of a hotel resident. The inhabitants of the Atlantic are broadly similar to the overall city rooming house population. The hotel is occupied mainly by single, British men between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-nine. Thirty-five percent work as manual labourers, thirty percent in transport and fifteen percent in factories. Most residents are also recent immigrants to British Columbia. Forty-six percent of Atlantic Hotel residents had arrived since 1905, including four the year of the census. Though we do not have a similar metric to the Associated Charities category "Time in Vancouver," these numbers do suggest that the hotel's residents were more transient than the average Victoria resident in 1911.

¹⁰⁴ Statistics Canada, "Street Indexes to 1911 Census, Vancouver," <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/Pages/censuses-street-indexes.aspx>.

¹⁰⁵ "Victoria's Population," *Colonist*, 15. See also "Another Jewel Robber Gets Three Years," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, August 19, 1911, 7, "Heavy Penalty," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, October 16, 1914, 6, or "Charged With Having Drug," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, June 5, 1921, 6, for other examples.

¹⁰⁶ "Unemployed," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, November 15, 1913, 10.

For Vancouver, let us look at the Maple Leaf rooming house. Unlike Victoria, because Vancouver dailies are not digitized, I cannot find a similarly “notorious” location like the Atlantic Hotel; I have chosen to use a random site instead. The Maple Leaf was located at 207 East Pender St. and had twenty-eight residents. The residents were largely single, Anglo-Celt men aged twenty-five to twenty-nine. Like Victoria, the largest subset of these roomers were labourers, but many were factory, transportation, and service workers. The number of recent immigrants is higher than Victoria, though the most recent arrivals came in 1910. Finally, there is a defining feature of the rooming house which does not appear in the census but in *Henderson’s Vancouver Directory*. If we look up the Maple Leaf’s address, it is close to the edge of Vancouver’s Chinatown. Chinese residences begin at 139 East Pender, less than a block away. In an era when Vancouver’s Chinatown was regarded as an unhealthy and dangerous location, we can infer that the Maple Leaf was not a desirable place for white Vancouverites.¹⁰⁷ The rooming house was likely a place of last resort for individuals who could not find better housing in the city. This is also reflected in the low yearly wages of the residents. Nearly three-quarters of the Maple Leaf’s inhabitants earned less than the city’s average annual wage of \$785.86.¹⁰⁸ Some wages earned were as low as \$300 a year. By contemporary understandings these were homeless persons, but they are also homeless by the historian’s definition. With this definition of rooming houses, we can begin to look at roomers in each city.

First, we should discuss the cities’ overall populations. Both had significant gender imbalances, with ratios of 60:40, men to women. Victorians were slightly more likely to be single, with sixty-two percent of all respondents being unmarried compared to fifty-six percent of Vancouverites. Vancouver was a slightly younger city, with 55.7 percent of residents under the age of thirty, compared to 51.7 percent in Victoria. Each city was predominately Anglo-Celt. 77.9 percent of Victoria’s population and seventy-

¹⁰⁷ Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991), 81-92.

¹⁰⁸ Statistics Canada, “*Canada Yearbook 1927, Total number of wage earners and average yearly earnings...*,” https://www65-statcan-gc-ca.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/acyb02/1927/acyb02_19270777005a-eng.htm.

five percent of Vancouver were British. The next largest racial group in each city were Asians. 10.9 percent of Victorians and 3.1 percent of Vancouverites were Chinese. 11.6 percent of all Victorians were Asian, with Japanese persons making up most other Asians. Few South Asians were recorded in Victoria in 1911. 5.8 percent of Vancouverites were Asians, but Japanese individuals made up nearly half of the Asian population. There were also a sizeable number of South Asians. Continental Europeans made up significant minorities in each city. Germans were the largest ethnicity in both cities, followed by French and Italians in Victoria and Italians and Scandinavians in Vancouver. Each city was largely Christian, with 78.6 percent of all respondents in Victoria and 80.4 percent of respondents in Vancouver indicating they were members of a Protestant denomination. Seven percent of Victoria residents and nearly ten percent of Vancouverites were Roman Catholics. Anglicans were the largest single faith in Victoria while Presbyterians predominated in Vancouver. Ten percent of Victorians and under five percent of Vancouverites indicated they followed an Asian faith. Meanwhile, 2.7 percent of Victoria residents and 1.6 percent of Vancouver residents indicated they were irreligious, reflecting the high proportion of nonreligious individuals in BC.¹⁰⁹ Both cities had similar working populations. Factory workers made up the largest occupational category in both cities, and manual labourers were also a significant population.

Table 3.1 Victoria and Vancouver 1911 Census Results

Variables	Victoria 1911	Percentage	Vancouver 1911	Percentage
Sex				
Male	18,950	60.3%	74,088	60%
Female	12,415	39.5%	49,263	39.9%
Marital Status				
Single	19,309	62%	69,072	56%
Married	10,888	35%	49,222	39.9%
Widowed/Divorced	929	3%	3,414	2.8%
Age				
Under 20	8,735	28.7%	36,176	29.3%
20-24	3,506	11.5%	14,524	11.8%
25-29	4,034	13.3%	18,037	14.6%
30-34	3,395	11.2%	15,380	12.5%
35-39	2,800	9.2%	11,443	9.3%
40-44	2,406	7.9%	8,659	7%

¹⁰⁹ Lynne Marks, *Infidels and the Damn Church: Irreligion and Religion in Settler British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 3-5.

45-49	1,808	5.9%	6,074	4.9%
50-59	2,131	7%	6,976	5.7%
60-69	1,013	3.3%	2,893	2.3%
Over 70	586	1.9%	1,077	0.9%
Immigrant Status				
Immigrant	18,334	58.4%	69,692	56.5%
Born in Canada	13,086	41.6%	53,725	43.5%
Race				
White	25,291	80.5%	99,283	80.5%
English	16,327	52%	46,887	38%
Irish	2,356	7.5%	15,030	12.2%
Scottish	5,536	17.6%	29,430	23.8%
Welsh	256	0.8%	1,163	0.9%
American	372	1.2%	2,885	0.2%
Canadian	413	1.3%	3,645	2.9%
Continental European	2,084	6.6%	15,495	12.6%
Black	55	0.1%	189	0.2%
Asian	3,727	11.9%	7,176	5.8%
Chinese	3,427	10.9%	3,814	3.1%
Japanese	177	0.5%	2,486	2%
South Asian	87	0.2%	797	0.6%
Mongolian	31	>0.1%	48	>0.1%
Indigenous	21	>0.1%	90	>0.1%
Religion				
Protestant	24,269	78.6%	98,753	80.1%
Anglican	11,263	36.5%	32,786	26.6%
Methodist	4,157	13.5%	33,572	27.2%
Presbyterian	5,771	18.7%	17,686	14.3%
Other Protestants	3,078	10%	14,709	11.9%
Roman Catholic	2,156	7%	12,034	9.8%
Orthodox	19	>0.1%	370	0.3%
Jewish	144	0.5%	992	0.8%
Muslim	0	0%	143	0.1%
Hindu/Sikh	82	0.2%	518	0.4%
Buddhist	143	0.5%	2,077	1.7%
Chinese Faiths	3,156	10.2%	3,252	2.6%
Shinto	0	0%	89	>0.1%
No Religion	872	2.8%	1,500	1.2%
Occupations				
Professional	2,312	14.9%	8,647	14.4%
Clerical	1,042	6.7%	5,067	8.4%
Sales	1,267	8.2%	5,092	8.5%
Service	1,929	12.4%	6,645	11%
Primary Industry	484	3.1%	2,469	4.1%
Manufacturing	4,000	25.7%	17,555	29.2%
Transportation	1,361	8.8%	3,484	5.8%
Manual Labour	3,151	20.3%	11,236	18.7%
Employment Rate	15,546/31420	49.5%	60,195/123,417	48.8%
Class				
Employer	928	3%	4,395	3.5%
Employee	12,839	40.8%	48,476	39.3%
On Own Account	3,026	9.6%	12,883	10.4%
Total	31,420	100%	123,407	100%

Canada, 1911 Census (Victoria and Vancouver)

Roomers made up a small proportion of each city's residents. 2,133 individuals in Victoria and 3,604 in Vancouver are listed as roomers. Proportionally, more Victorians were roomers, but the use of the term varied between cities. In Vancouver, most renters were listed as lodgers. 20.6 percent of Vancouver residents were lodging, while 2.9 percent roomed and less than one percent boarded. Conversely, fewer Victorians rented but the city's renters were less likely to be lodgers. Five percent of Victoria's residents lodged but 6.6 percent roomed and 9.6 percent boarded. Rooming house residents were a particularly masculine group, with 86.1 percent of all roomers in Victoria recorded as men and only 13.8 percent women. Roomers were largely single as well. 84.4 percent of roomers in Victoria were unmarried, while 12.3 percent were married, and two percent were widowed or divorced. How many of these married individuals were couples living together in the rooming houses or were simply persons noted as married is unclear as enumerators recorded roomers by their relation to the head of the household, not each other. Roomers were relatively young, though few were under the age of twenty. 4.2 percent of roomers were younger than twenty but, only 16.7 percent were over the age of fifty. The majority, 77.7 percent, were between the ages of twenty and fifty. The largest single age group were those twenty-five to twenty-nine, at 23.6 percent of roomers. They were followed by those twenty to twenty-four, who made up 17.3 percent of roomers, and individuals aged thirty-five to thirty-nine, who made up 16.5 percent.

Victoria roomers were similar racially and ethnically to the rest of the city. Anglo-Celts were virtually equal in number – they were 76.7 percent of roomers versus 77.9 percent of the city's population. The few Asians recorded as roomers were Chinese individuals, who only made up 2.9 percent of roomers. The enumerators in Victoria recorded almost all Chinese men in Chinatown as “boarders,” throwing off our numbers. There is no apparent reason for this decision. David Lai's description of living conditions in Victoria's Chinatown suggests Chinese individuals were rooming.¹¹⁰ Moreover, boarding house residents

¹¹⁰ David Chenyuen Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1988), 222-227.

are overwhelmingly Chinese in Victoria. Seventy-five percent of boarders are Chinese, while 66.3 percent of all Chinese Victorians are listed as boarders. Perhaps the enumerator misunderstood Chinese living conditions and presumed the men were boarders. Conversely, there may have been some truth behind newspaper accusations of miscounting of rooming houses by enumerators. Regardless, it is unlikely enumerators would have properly listed Chinese persons in the census, as they were not seen as worth the effort to properly count. Continental Europeans made up a larger proportion of roomers than the overall city population – 14.5 percent of all cases. Italians were the largest ethnic minority among Victoria roomers, followed by Germans. Around eighty percent of all cases recorded a year of immigration, with small numbers dating back as far as the 1850s and many after 1900.

Most roomers were Christian, with nearly seventy-six percent of all roomers belonging to a Protestant denomination. 11.6 percent of roomers were Catholic, slightly more than the city's population. The number of Asian religions was lower, with only sixty Confucians recorded among roomers – again, due to enumerating decisions.¹¹¹ Nearly nine percent of roomers give no religion, making Victorian roomers quite irreligious. Those living in rooming houses tended to work as manual labourers and in manufacturing. 18.2 percent of all roomers gave no occupation. Rooming house residents were generally like the overall city population, with fewer professionals and more manual labourers. Finally, most roomers were workers, with nearly seventy-five percent indicating they were employees. Another ten percent indicated they worked on their own account and less than four percent claimed to be employers. The remaining cases were unclear. From these numbers, a Victoria roomer appears likely to be a Protestant Anglo-Celt, single, a recent immigrant and working in manual labour.

¹¹¹ Lynne Marks argues that meaningful analysis of the religion of racialized peoples in the census is impossible. Though my thesis does not focus upon religion, the difficulty of discussing racialized peoples in the census should be emphasized. See Marks, *Infidels and the Damn Church*, 51-52.

Table 3.2 Victoria and Vancouver 1911 Census, Roomers

Variables	Victoria 1911	Percentage	Vancouver 1911	Percentage
Sex				
Male	1,845	86.1%	3,241	89.9%
Female	295	13.8%	365	10.1%
Marital Status				
Single	1,802	84.1%	2,413	66.9%
Married	271	12.7%	986	27.3%
Widowed/Divorced	45	2.1%	60	1.7%
Age				
Under 20	92	4.4%	246	6.8%
20-24	370	17.5%	674	18.7%
25-29	506	24%	1,056	29.3%
30-34	356	16.9%	623	17.3%
35-39	236	11.2%	377	10.5%
40-44	195	9.2%	232	6.4%
45-49	149	7.1%	121	3.4%
50-59	120	5.7%	117	3.2%
60-69	53	2.5%	38	1.1%
Over 70	34	1.6%	10	0.3%
Race				
White	1,725	80.5%	1,274	35.3%
English	1,056	49.3%	899	25%
Irish	172	8%	241	6.7%
Scottish	385	18%	923	26%
Welsh	36	1.7%	16	0.4%
American	48	2.2%	94	2.6%
Canadian	28	1.3%	23	0.6%
Continental European	326	15.2%	651	18.1%
Black	4	0.2%	20	0.6%
Asian	63	2.9%	712	19.7%
Chinese	61	2.8%	702	19.5%
Japanese	0	0%	3	>0.1%
South Asian	0	0%	5	0.1%
Mongolian	2	>0.1%	3	>0.1%
Indigenous	0	0%	0	0%
Immigrant Status				
Immigrant	1,717	80.2%	2,778	77%
Born in Canada	425	19.8%	828	23%
Religion				
Protestant	1,600	76.2%	2,215	61.5%
Anglican	813	38.7%	496	13.8%
Methodist	239	11.4%	435	12.1%
Presbyterian	346	16.5%	863	23.9%
Other Protestants	202	9.6%	421	11.7%
Roman Catholic	244	11.6%	527	14.6%
Orthodox	1	>0.1%	10	0.3%
Jewish	6	0.3%	31	0.9%
Muslim	0	0%	1	>0.1%
Hindu/Sikh	0	0%	1	>0.1%
Buddhist	0	0%	6	0.2%
Chinese Faiths	60	2.9%	687	19.1%
Shinto	0	0%	0	0%
No Religion	188	9%	28	0.8%
Occupations				

Professional	157	9%	196	6.3%
Clerical	103	5.9%	143	4.6%
Sales	122	7%	91	2.9%
Service	185	10.6%	396	12.8%
Primary Industry	74	4.2%	66	2.1%
Manufacturing	403	23.1%	765	21.2%
Transportation	189	10.8%	265	8.6%
Manual Labour	512	29.3%	1,173	37.9%
Employment Rate	1745/2142	81.5%	3,095/3,606	85.8%
Class				
Employer	80	3.7%	71	2%
Employee	1594	74.4%	2,936	81.4%
On Own Account	250	11.7%	284	7.9%
Total	2,142	100%	3,606	100%

Canada, 1911 Census (Victoria and Vancouver)

Vancouver roomers were a similarly masculine population – just under ninety percent were men. Roomers were also likely to be single in Vancouver; nearly sixty-seven percent were listed as unmarried. Interestingly, this is a lower proportion compared to Victoria’s rooming population, with the difference made up almost entirely by married individuals, who account for 27.4 percent of all Vancouver roomers. Like Victoria, Vancouver rooming houses are filled with young people. At 7.9 percent of all roomers, a slightly higher proportion are under the age of twenty, while only 4.6 percent were over the age of fifty. The largest single age group among Vancouver roomers were those twenty-five to twenty-nine, who made up 29.3 percent of all roomers. They were followed by those twenty to twenty-four and thirty to thirty-four, at 18.7 percent and 17.3 percent, respectively. Most roomers were between the ages of twenty and fifty, with 84.4 percent of the city’s rooming population between these age brackets.

57.6 percent of roomers came from England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, though proportionally, Vancouver roomers were less likely to be Anglo-Celts than Victorians. Chinese persons make up a full 19.5 percent of all roomers in Vancouver, 6.5 times greater than their proportion of the city’s population. Chinese individuals account for nearly all Asian roomers, with only five South Asians and three Japanese recorded. Continental Europeans made up 16.8 percent of the rooming house population, slightly higher than their percentage of the city’s population. Italians make up the largest single ethnic group, with the next largest group being Swedes. Black roomers make up a recognizable, if still small, proportion of

rooming house residents. Overall, immigrants make up a majority among Vancouver roomers, with around 67.6 percent giving a year of immigration. Although less than in Victoria, most Vancouver rooming house immigrants were recent arrivals, with sixty percent of all roomers having arrived since 1900. 264, or 7.3 percent of Vancouver roomers, arrived in 1911. Religiously, Vancouver roomers are like the city's population, with 61.4 percent Protestants and another 14.6 percent Catholic. Asian religions are followed by over nineteen percent of roomers in Vancouver, again reflecting the considerable number of Chinese roomers. The irreligious make up less than one percent of all roomers, which is lower than the city average, as well as the corresponding population of roomers in Victoria.¹¹²

Vancouver roomers had similar occupations to Victoria's roomers. 32.5 percent of Vancouver roomers were manual labourers, with another 21.2 percent working in factories. As in Victoria, differences in number between professionals and manual labourers are clear while individuals working in sales are also less likely to be roomers. Finally, as in Victoria again, Vancouver roomers are largely employees. 79.2 percent are wage earners, while 7.6 percent were working on their own account. Only two percent claimed to employ others, with the remaining cases either unclear or unanswered. Once again, the numbers suggest that a Vancouver roomer is most likely to be a white male, likely single, Christian, young and a manual labourer. Although there are some differences between the two cities, the data thus far suggest that the only real difference is that Victorian roomers tend to be whiter, single and a bit older.

The data above offer some insights into roomers as part of Victoria and Vancouver's overall population, but we can learn more from the census. Unlike the police court records and the Associated Charities case book, the 5,737 roomers are only one subset of larger populations. Using statistical

¹¹² These Vancouver numbers are surprisingly low, both in comparison to Victoria but also within the contexts of existing literature. For example, Lynne Marks has found that nearly nine percent of lodgers, boarders, and roomers in 1901 Vancouver were irreligious. My choice to sample a specific subset of the urban homeless may contribute to the differences in our results. Moreover, there are a significant number of blank results recorded for Vancouver roomers – around 2.5 percent of all cases. Though these blank cases may not necessarily indicate irreligion, they do imply that the enumerators did not record roomer's religion carefully and that the results may underestimate the actual number of irreligious roomers. Marks, *Infidels and the Damn Church*, 151.

modeling, we can look at what factors made one more likely to be a roomer. I will run logistic regression tests on the 1911 censuses for Victoria and Vancouver. Logistic regression is used when attempting to estimate the odds that an event or outcome will occur when the dependent variable is a dichotomy. An example would be trying to find what factors contribute most to high test scores, with passing grades and failing grades being represented as 1 and 0, respectively. When we only have a single variable (continuing with this example, the gender of students writing tests), we can make simple comparisons, but these results are rarely statistically significant. On the other hand, when we have multiple variables (i.e. sex, age, race, social class etc.), we lose the ability to see which factors outweigh others. If we were to find that, out of 100 students, fifty passed and fifty failed but of the fifty who failed, forty-five were racialized persons, we might be inclined to suggest that race plays a factor. However, we may also find that, of the forty-five racialized students who failed, forty were men and five were women, or thirty-five were working class individuals and ten were upper-middle class. Logistic regression is used to sort out the effects of one condition, controlling for others, to test statistical models in a rigorous manner.

I will be using logistic regression to test a binary comparison of roomer/not roomer. The files consulted are those for Victoria and Vancouver in 1911, including their surrounding municipalities. There are 31,420 cases for Victoria and 123,417 for Vancouver.¹¹³ By comparison, there are only 5,737 roomers total in both cities. A logistic regression test will attempt to determine the probability one becomes a roomer and will be represented in an odds ratio. The test will present three results for each variable. The first result will be a Beta statistic (B), which presents the odds one becomes a roomer in logarithmic form. The number given is the change in odds associated with the independent variable.¹¹⁴ Alongside the Beta

¹¹³ Note – the numbers I have used differ slightly from the formal counts for each city. In the case of Victoria, the sum of 31,420 people includes 299 sailors and passengers who were docked in the city during the census. For Vancouver, the total of 123,407 includes the municipalities of Point Grey and South Vancouver (which were amalgamated into modern Vancouver in 1928) as well as North and West Vancouver, still independent municipalities today.

¹¹⁴ In this case, the dependent variable will be roomer and the independent variable will be one of the census categories recorded, with reference categories based upon a stereotype of a homeless person in the early-twentieth century providing a base figure to compare against.

statistic will be the significance (Sig.). Anything less than .05 indicates a statistically significant result. Finally, the column Exp (B) will denote the estimated odds ratio, which represents the Beta statistic odds in a simplified fashion. A result of 0.5, for example, would suggest that the independent variable highlighted has a negative change in the odds of being a roomer compared to the reference category while, conversely, a result of 1.5 would suggest that individuals with this characteristic are 1.5 times more likely to be a roomer than the reference category.

The independent variables are sex, marital status, race and ethnicity, immigrant status, age, religion, occupation, and class. As a reference category, I will use a period stereotype of the “tramp” and attempt to compare that against the rooming house populations of each city. This method will help test the validity of the popular image of the homeless person in the early-twentieth century and, in doing so, determine whether the odds of being a roomer rose if one matched the stereotypical image. The subject I will use in the logistic regression test will be a white male, English Anglican, aged twenty to twenty-four and working as a labourer for wages. I will also test for immigration status, though the stereotype is not specific enough to indicate immigration; the reference category will default to “non-immigrant.” I have displayed the results of the logistic regression test in a series of tables below.

I will begin with the 1911 census for Victoria. Sex, marital status, immigration status, profession and class status are grouped as they appeared in the census. Age, race, and religion are adjusted slightly to better illustrate the data rendered. Age is organized using the same categories as the Vancouver Associated Charities. Race and religion are combined due to the nature of the 1911 census categories, as well as the nature of period definitions of race. Religion played a significant role in racial and ethnic identity and creating combined categories allows us to make comparisons between varying Anglo-Celt ethnicities who might otherwise be subsumed in a general category. As a minor note, South Asians do not appear in the Victoria census as roomers but do appear in small numbers in Vancouver.

Table 3.3 Victoria Logistic Regression, Roomer/Not Roomer as Dependent Variable, 1911

Variable	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender			
Female	-1.143	.000	.319
Reference Category: Male			
Marital Status		.000	
Married	-2.520	.000	.080
Widowed/Divorced	-1.208	.000	.299
Reference Category: Single			
Age		.000	
Under 20	-1.438	.000	.237
25-29	.511	.000	1.668
30-34	.619	.000	1.856
35-39	.605	.000	1.832
40-44	.836	.000	2.306
45-49	.957	.000	2.604
50-59	.643	.000	1.902
60-69	.541	.013	1.718
Over 70	.550	.133	1.734
Reference Category: 20-24			
Immigration Status		.000	
Immigrants	.600	.000	1.823
Reference Category: Non-immigrant			
Race/Ethnicity/Religion		.000	
English, Other Rel.	-.106	.220	.899
Irish Catholic	.067	.731	1.070
Irish Protestant	.120	.157	1.127
Scottish Presbyterian	.007	.947	.993
Scottish, Other Rel.	.022	.863	1.023
European, R.C.	.608	.000	1.836
European, Prot.	.966	.000	2.628
French R.C.	.069	.846	.933
Chinese	-3.472	.000	.031
Aboriginal	-18.368	.999	.000
Black	-20.838	.996	.000
Reference Category: English, Anglican			
Occupational Categories		.000	
Professional	-.819	.000	.491
Clerical	-.830	.000	.436
Sales	-.711	.000	.491
Service	-.544	.000	.580
Primary Industry	-.668	.000	.513
Manufacturing	-.888	.000	.412
Transport	-.825	.000	.438
None	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reference Category: Manual Labour			
Class		0.14	
Employer	.062	.697	1.064
Working on own Account	-.321	.005	.726
Reference Category: Worker			
Constant	-1.113	.000	.322

As Table 3.3 shows, most variables in the logistic regression test for Victoria are significant. Racial categories are mostly non-significant, as are some class and age categories but there is much we can take away from these results. Sex and marital status are both definitive: the odds of being a roomer fall for women, as well as married and divorced or widowed individuals. Age is also significant. Only the value for those over seventy years of age is non-significant, though those aged sixty to sixty-nine are close. The tramp stereotype suggests that rooming house inhabitants should be young, but the results show otherwise. While the odds of being a roomer rise for young adults, they rise even further for those in their forties.¹¹⁵ Immigrants have significantly heightened odds of being roomers compared to the non-immigrant reference category. Racial data are largely inconclusive. Only the values for Continental Europeans and Chinese people are statistically significant. Protestant Europeans have greater odds of being roomers than the reference category of English Anglican and Catholic Europeans have similarly high chances. Conversely, Chinese persons have significantly lower odds of being roomers. This is a misleading result because the Victoria enumerators significantly undercounted Chinese roomers. Occupational categories are largely statistically significant, and each job type shows lower odds of being a roomer than the reference category of manual labourer. Finally, the class status results are mixed. Employers are statistically insignificant while those working on their own account are significant. Those working on their own account have lower odds of being roomers than the reference category of waged workers.

Overall, the logistic regression model presents some interesting conclusions for Victoria. Some characteristics fit the stereotype used as the basis for the reference category. The odds a roomer is a man, single and working as a general labourer for wages are significant and conform to the tramp mythos. However, other variables present a more complicated picture. The odds a roomer will be young are lower

¹¹⁵ This is a surprising result and one that does not appear to be simply an error in the test. I ran the model a second time using a slightly altered set of categories (Child [0-14], 15-29, 30s, 40s and 50+) and the odds a roomer would be in their 40s was over two times that of the reference category of 15-29, suggesting the original results are indeed accurate.

than most other variables and the odds a roomer will be in their late-forties are higher than any other value. There is no connection between the age of roomers and the tramp stereotype. Race and immigration status also present a complicated image. The odds a roomer will be an immigrant are statistically significant but not especially high. The racial values tested are mostly statistically insignificant and, of the three significant values, one is thrown off by poor enumeration. Roomers do have higher odds of being a white-passing individual, but the myth is not consistent on this point. Finally, the results for class status suggest roomers have higher odds of being waged workers but the values for each category are barely significant. Nevertheless, the tramp stereotype appears partially borne out in the Victoria results.

Let us shift focus to the Vancouver test. I have used the same reference categories as for Victoria. As in Victoria, most values are statistically significant. Variables for age and race differ between each city; in Vancouver, age loses significance in the older categories and racial categories are significant, unlike in Victoria. Once again, there is much to take away from the results. Sex is definitive and the odds a roomer will be a woman fall compared to the reference category of male – nearly identically between each city. Marital status differs between cities: the odds a roomer will be married remain low, if not as clearly as Victoria, while the odds a roomer will be divorced or widowed rise in Vancouver. Since Victoria roomers tended to be older and old age is intuitively tied to widowhood, these results seem apparent. However, the odds a roomer in Vancouver will be older than the reference category of twenty to twenty-four are unclear. The values for those under twenty and from twenty-five to thirty-nine are statistically significant, as well as the category sixty to sixty-nine, if barely. The significant results show the odds an individual will be a roomer rise most for those twenty-five to twenty-nine, but the odds fall as one ages: individuals sixty to sixty-nine have significantly lower odds of being roomers.

Table 3.4 Vancouver Logistic Regression, Roomer/Not Roomer as Dependent Variable, 1911

Variable	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender			
Female	-.938	.000	.391
Reference Category: Male			
Marital Status		.000	
Married	-1.076	.000	.341
Widowed/Divorced	.416	.000	1.516
Reference Category: Single			
Age		.000	
Under 20	-.817	.000	.442
25-29	.447	.000	1.564
30-34	.262	.000	1.300
35-39	.160	.046	1.174
40-44	.42	.659	1.042
45-49	-.063	.597	.939
50-59	-.235	.062	.791
60-69	-.559	.014	.572
Over 70	-.484	.415	.616
Reference Category: 20-24			
Immigration Status			
Immigrants	.039	.498	1.039
Reference Category: Non-immigrant			
Race/Ethnicity/Religion		.000	
English, Other Religion	.300	.000	1.350
Irish Catholic	.320	.021	1.377
Irish Protestant	-.013	.906	.987
Scottish Presbyterian	.584	.000	1.794
Scottish, Other Religion	.816	.000	2.261
European, Roman Catholic	.815	.000	2.259
European, Protestant	.238	.020	1.269
French Roman Catholic	.171	.418	1.187
Chinese	2.320	.000	10.178
Aboriginal	-17.469	.999	.000
South Asian	-3.516	.000	.030
Black	1.470	.000	4.351
Reference Category: English, Anglican			
Occupational Categories		.000	
Professional	-.959	.000	.383
Clerical	-1.020	.000	.361
Sales	-1.353	.000	.258
Service	-.453	.000	.636
Primary Industry	-.812	.000	.444
Manufacturing	-.543	.000	.581
Transport	-.102	.215	.903
None	-1.420	.005	.242
Reference Category: Manual Labour			
Class		.000	
Employer	-.746	.000	.474
Working on own Account	-.546	.000	.579
Reference Category: Worker			
Constant	-2.576	.000	.076

Immigration status and race also offer some interesting insights. Immigration status is statistically insignificant in Vancouver, suggesting that social worker allusions to a connection between homelessness and immigration to Canada may be overblown. Racial results offer even greater insights. Unlike Victoria, most racial categories are statistically significant. Among these significant categories, all show greater odds of being roomers than the reference category of English Anglican. The odds a roomer will be Chinese are over ten times the reference category. These results are significant and in stark contrast to Victoria's, strongly suggesting that Victoria's results are an outlier. The value for Black persons is also significant, with odds a roomer will be Black over four times the reference category. These racial results suggest that English Anglicans were both a particularly privileged group in Vancouver and that roomers were a diverse population compared to the city overall. Occupational categories are largely alike to Victoria, apart from the statistical insignificance of transport workers. Class status is more definitive in Vancouver, with each value showing lower odds of being a roomer than the reference category of a waged worker.

The Vancouver logistic regression results present some remarkable insights. Victorian roomers had higher odds of fitting the tramp stereotype than Vancouver roomers. Vancouver roomers have similar odds of being male and manual labourers, but they are less likely to be single or older. Though immigration status plays an insignificant role in Vancouver's results, racial results suggest Vancouver roomers are more likely to come from a diversity of backgrounds. Not only do Vancouver roomers not fit the tramp stereotype, they do not align with the Victoria results either. This may be the most significant result from the tests. If each broadly aligned, it would be possible to infer that results in other cities should be similar too. Instead, these results suggest that homeless populations could differ significantly between cities. Even if the results aligned, they would be more likely to show a divergence from the tramp stereotype. The failure of Victoria's enumerators to correctly count the city's Chinese population suggests that the

Vancouver results are more realistic – results which refute the stereotype. Following this logic, the use of the tramp stereotype to categorize homeless persons in the early-twentieth century may be incorrect.

Period sociological and popular works suggest that roomers were part of the wider homeless population that tramps, and hoboes belonged to. If, in keeping with this definition, we scrutinize the results of the logistic regression tests, we find that roomers, and potentially all homeless individuals, do not correspond to period archetypes of the homeless person. Victoria roomers appear to be older, single white men, primarily from continental Europe, working as manual labourers. Conversely, Vancouver roomers seem to be younger, racialized men, more likely to be divorced or widowed but, like Victoria, still manual labourers. Besides the higher odds a roomer will be a man and a labourer for wages, there is little overlap between each city, nor does each city's rooming house population appear to meet the tramp stereotype. Victorian roomers come close but, with the poor enumeration of Chinese roomers, this result may be misleading. The data presented suggest that taking the specific construction of the tramp and hobo and making it representative of the early-twentieth century homeless may be incorrect. Undoubtedly, some urban centres had homeless populations that corresponded to the tramp stereotype, but not all did. If racialized persons and women were a discernable and even significant part of the homeless population, why do they not appear in period popular works?

Chapter 4 – Racialized and Gendered Experiences of Homelessness

Although I have briefly discussed women and racialized persons, this chapter will focus on these groups in more detail. Homeless women and racialized persons appear in some historical works, but often as footnotes or short asides. Authors have offered various reasons for their inability, or unwillingness, to engage with racialized persons and homeless women. Ella Howard argues that engaging with Black experiences of homelessness was unviable in her work, *Homeless: Poverty and Place in Urban America* because her geographic focus on the Bowery precluded a broader examination of New York homelessness, and homelessness in Harlem in particular.¹¹⁶ Mark Wyman's *Hoboes, Bindlestiffs, Fruit Tramps and the Harvesting of the West* does a better job of acknowledging racialized itinerant labourers in the early-twentieth century, but women rarely feature.¹¹⁷ DePastino's *Citizen Hobo* has a similar issue. Even Todd McCallum's *Hobohemia and the Crucifixion Machine*, which is more successful than most at discussing homeless women and racialized persons, still primarily focuses on the single, white, male unemployed.

A key issue for a history of homelessness is the nature of the records themselves. Indigenous peoples are largely missing from my consulted records, and Asians appear sporadically in Vancouver compared to Victoria. A first reading of the Charities document implies, incorrectly, that the city's homeless population consisted almost entirely of Anglo-Celt men. The 1911 census offers more insight on homeless populations, but poor enumeration limits its value. These gaps in source material are problematic. Along with issues the Associated Charities document presents, the need for a significant focus upon criminal records is also problematic. Historians have a responsibility to accurately present historical data in a socially conscious manner. Reinscribing criminal traits upon vulnerable populations risks enabling contemporary acts of violence. This is especially problematic when discussing specific subsets of the homeless population who continue to face sexual and racial discrimination above and beyond the oppressive conditions of homelessness. Ideally, criminal records would not be a significant

¹¹⁶ Howard, *Homeless*, 9-10.

¹¹⁷ Mark Wyman, *Hoboes: Bindlestiffs, Fruit Tramps, and the Harvesting of the West* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010).

part of the evidence base for a history of homelessness. Nevertheless, it is necessary to engage with criminal records to locate the homeless in the past, especially women and racialized persons.

Addressing race and gender effectively requires an intersectional analysis. Intersectionality was first termed in a 1989 article by Kimberlé Crenshaw. Crenshaw critiqued anti-discrimination, anti-racist and feminist theories that presumed experiences of racial and gender discrimination were similar across various identities. Crenshaw argues that feminist and civil rights proponents alike failed to see the different experiences Black women had of sexual and racial discrimination. Rather than examine the specific discrimination Black women faced, theorists attempted to shoehorn Black women into two overarching, ill-fitting categories: Black and woman.¹¹⁸ Intersectional analysis remains a key lens through which we examine the lived experiences of racialized persons, historically and contemporarily. My analysis begins with an overview of specific gendered or racial experiences of homelessness before shifting to focus on specific groups within these broader categories. My analytical style allows discussion of broad topics and more specific experiences of homelessness. Racialized persons faced shared forms of discrimination, but Black men's experiences differ from those of Asian or Eastern European men. Similarly, homeless Black women faced different struggles from homeless white women and homeless Black men alike.

The use of "vagrancy" to describe sex workers complicates what was a straight-forward definition in other jurisdictions. As anti-sex and anti-drug statutes suggest, Canadian vagrancy law functioned as a form of social policing and criminalized more than just rough-sleeping. Women charged with Statute I are likely homeless, as the charge implied a wandering lifestyle upon arrest. However, Statute J charges clearly refer to individuals found in brothels. Where do brothels fit between "homed" and homeless living? At first glance, we might want to call brothels a form of homelessness. Women would often live in a single room with many other women in sometimes decrepit buildings. Brothels were often in rooming houses

¹¹⁸ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 139 (1989), 150.

too.¹¹⁹ Conversely, brothels are clearly a step above rooming houses. Women living in brothels were often well taken care of and successful prostitutes could make significant sums of money. Sex workers regularly gave up \$25 to \$300 in the Vancouver police courts – around \$555 to \$6,665 today. My solution to this issue has been to discuss those women described as “vagrants.” Not all sex workers were vagrants to the Vancouver police. The Vancouver police rarely charged defendants with more than one statute of the vagrancy law. The Victoria magistrate did appear to charge some women with both Statutes A and I but, because he used imprecise language, I cannot determine this definitively. Nevertheless, I can speak to the use of the label “vagrant.” While labelling defendants as a “vagrant” or “loose, idle, and disorderly” did not necessarily make them homeless, it did speak to what the magistrate believed the defendant’s conditions were. That there is some crossover between rooming houses and brothels also suggests this is a reasonable compromise for a shorter work. I will focus on women charged with Statute A.

381 women in Vancouver and seventy-three women in Victoria were charged with Statute A, with seventy-two of the Vancouver defendants recorded in the mugshot book. These women were charged specifically with Statute A or, in the case of Victoria, “vagrancy,” alone. Due to the lack of detail on police court defendants in both cities, I will focus my analysis on the seventy-two women who were listed in the Vancouver mugshot book. Most of these women were under the age of thirty – 86.1 percent. Only one woman was over the age of forty. Although a small sample size, women arrested for vagrancy appear to be young, like male defendants. The lower number of older women likely reflects a tendency to institutionalize women who did not live “respectable lives.” The races of women arrested are similar to overall numbers, with Black and Continental European women overrepresented and Asian women

¹¹⁹ For example, in Vancouver a woman was arrested at the Astoria Rooms at 74 Hastings West on April 11, 1910, two men and five women at the Glasgow Rooming House, probably 503 Westminster Avenue (now Main Street) on December 9, 1910 and seven women and four men were arrested in the Central Rooming House at 445 Richards Street on April 7, 1911, CAV, Police Court Calendar 1910-1915 and *Henderson’s City of Vancouver and North Vancouver Directory, 1910* (Vancouver: Henderson Publishing, 1910).

underrepresented. Fifty-six percent of women arrested are white Anglo-Celts, with white Americans making up a surprising number of arrests.¹²⁰ There is no obvious answer as to why, though some period news articles feature Canadians complaining about American vagrants causing trouble and otherwise being a nuisance.¹²¹ Although perhaps just emblematic of Canadian anti-Americanism, there may be some validity behind these complaints. Finally, occupations recorded for these women speak to gendered assumptions about their place in the workforce. Nearly thirty percent of the women are recorded as “prostitutes.” The police had a separate “criminal occupation” category to record illegal activities committed by defendants, so the recording of women as “prostitute” under the occupational category suggests that sex work was a genuine answer. Fourteen percent gave their occupations as “waitress” and twelve percent as “housekeeper.” Seventy-three percent of women arrested for Statute A were service workers of some sort, with the next largest group being the unemployed, no career recorded or listed as housewives. Workforce participation was around fifty-three percent, rising to sixty-eight percent if we count sex work. The smaller figure corresponds to the general rate of workforce participation in Vancouver and Victoria in 1911, though the participation rate for women was only around fifteen percent in each city.

Let us take a moment to look at some cases involving criminalized homeless women – specifically, three cases that appeared in the *Victoria Daily Colonist*. These stories ran a gamut of differing reactions to women’s presence on the streets and the potential actions that could be taken against them. The first case is that of “Violent Violet,” who first appeared in the *Colonist* on January 19, 1910. Violet Newall was apparently a well-known delinquent, with the *Colonist* noting that, “Kind-hearted people had argued with her, been kind to her, magistrates had given her fresh starts – in fact no stone had been left unturned

¹²⁰ Specifically, women listed as one of the four major ethnic groups of the British Isles (English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish) or generic Canadians and Americans. Hyphenated North Americans (Italian-American, French-Canadian etc.) are listed with Continental Europeans.

¹²¹ An example of this is Chas. L. Barker, “War on Undesirables Along the Frontier,” *The Globe and Mail*, July 22, 1911, A2.

to reclaim Violet.”¹²² Despite her good intentions for the new year, Newall, “fell off with flashing lights” and “...was arrested under most objectionable circumstances.”¹²³ She was sentenced to six months hard labour – one of only three instances where women were given hard labour sentences in Victoria.¹²⁴ Violet’s story did not end here, however, and she was brought back before the magistrate again on October 22, 1912. Newall was again charged with vagrancy after being found “practically insensible from the results of smoking opium.”¹²⁵ She was found passed out in a room only eight feet square on October 13 and claimed to have been in the room for at least four to five days. She also stated that she was addicted to opium and cocaine. Newall was sentenced again to six months in jail, but the magistrate appears to have shown “mercy,” imposing only a six-month term of imprisonment, not another hard-labour sentence.¹²⁶

Newall’s story is one that recalls modern tales of drug addiction, police persecution and spiraling consequences for drug users. Her story also suggests that women who did not conform to acceptable notions of femininity risked being punished for transgressing gender norms. While it was common in Vancouver for the magistrates to impose hard labour sentences on men and women alike, Victoria’s magistrate rarely did so. Perhaps Magistrate Jay felt that Newall’s actions in 1910 implied a “masculine” contravention of the law and therefore she needed to be punished as a man. In her second case, where she played to a more feminine trope, she was shown slight leniency. Magistrate Jay’s decision to punish Newall for her transgressive behaviour also reflects some of the original intentions of vagrancy law. Mary-Anne Poutanen argues that the initial drive to clarify and regulate vagrancy law in early-nineteenth century Montreal was rooted in a desire to turn public spaces into bourgeois sites of consumption. Although efforts to police public spaces were directed against men as well as women, women bore the brunt of these attacks.

¹²² “Violent Violet Violates,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, January 19, 1910, 7.

¹²³ “Violent Violet Violates,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 7.

¹²⁴ Two other women received sentences of 2 month’s hard labour on April 8, 1910 and June 29, 1914. CoV, CR-0116, Magistrate’s Record Book.

¹²⁵ “Victim of Opium,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, October 22, 1912, 5.

¹²⁶ “Victim of Opium,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 5, CoV, CR-0116, Magistrate’s Record Book.

Women's use of public space to conduct business, legal or illicit, was restricted to prevent the "contamination" of public morals.¹²⁷ Newall's first arrest appears to come from a public display, where she flaunted the law despite the pleadings of friends, family, and court officials. Her second offence, and the still harsh punishment she receives, cannot be read outside the contexts of her arrest record. However, because the second crime occurred out of sight of the law and public, and Newall played a more sympathetic and obedient figure, she avoids the more "masculine" punishment of breaking stone in jail.

Another case which illustrates the confluences of racism and sexism is that of Louise Seward. Seward was arrested on May 2, 1914, along with Ulric Gravel and Chin Fat. According to a May 16, 1914 article in the *Colonist*, Fat and Gravel were accused of forcing Seward into prostitution. The magistrate remarked that the case was "one of the most deplorable that had come before him," and sentenced Gravel and Fat to two and three years in the BC Penitentiary, respectively.¹²⁸ Seward was also given one month's imprisonment for vagrancy, in part because the magistrate believed she gave inconsistent evidence.¹²⁹ An example of "white slavery" hysteria, the Seward case was also one of several that carried over into the Vancouver records.¹³⁰ Ulric Gravel and Louise Seward appear as brothel keepers in October 1913, with Seward giving her name as Eliza Gravel. The Gravels were found in 534 Main Street with a German woman charged with Statute J. The mugshot records suggest that the Gravels were partners in running the brothel. Both are charged with being "Keepers of a disorderly house," but in the *Colonist* article, Seward claims her brother had stopped sharing the proceeds of her work. The magistrate's decision to give Seward only a month in prison is interesting with the Vancouver arrests in mind. It is likely that the Victoria police knew of the Gravels. Vancouver mugshots often had references to charges laid in other jurisdictions.

¹²⁷ Poutanen, "Regulating Public Space in Early-Nineteenth Century Montreal," 43-44.

¹²⁸ "Severe Sentence," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, May 6, 1914, 6.

¹²⁹ "Severe Sentence," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 6.

¹³⁰ Renisa Mawani, *Colonial Proximities: Crossracial Encounters and Juridical Truths in British Columbia, 1871-1921* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 71-122 discusses this hysteria in detail.

Charges laid in Victoria would be recorded by case number, suggesting the two forces communicated regularly. Why did the magistrate show a brothel keeper leniency? Seward appears to have played her part by confessing to being a prostitute and admitting she had not been acting independently. Perhaps when it came time to implicate Chin Fat, Seward failed to play her part as the white damsel to Fat's white slaver, resulting in her one-month prison term. Nevertheless, by playing the fallen prostitute and "confessing her sins" to the magistrate, she was given a much lighter sentence than her unfortunate companions.

The final case I would like to highlight is that of Sadie Smith. Smith was one of only three identifiable cases of Black persons charged with vagrancy in Victoria. She also appears in the Vancouver records. Her first recorded arrest was just outside the period surveyed – in January 1909, when she was arrested for smoking opium in Victoria.¹³¹ She then appears to have travelled to Vancouver, where a Sadie Smith is recorded as being arrested for being an inmate of a brothel in May 1910. From here, she returns to Victoria and, on January 6, 1911, is arrested again for vagrancy. She was recorded as being released on her own recognizances, "a tacit hint to leave the city."¹³² It appears she does, as Smith is arrested as a keeper of a brothel in Vancouver in November 1911. Her next and final reference is in an obituary. Smith died of chronic phthisis and debility (tuberculosis) on May 20, 1914, age twenty-six. Her death certificate indicates that she was born in Tennessee and that she received a pauper's burial in Ross Bay Cemetery.¹³³ I cite the story of Sadie Smith to illustrate a common tale for homeless women – indifference. Smith is better recorded than many, but her record consists entirely of court cases and newspaper crime reports. We can piece together a little about her life from these accounts but otherwise she is lost to history. Alongside a grim confrontation with the value of life and memory that historical inquiry provokes, a question arises about Smith's final days. Although Victoria had few homeless shelters before the Second

¹³¹ "Vagrants Sentenced," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, January 26, 1909, 6.

¹³² "The Police Court," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, January 6, 1911, 6.

¹³³ "Obituary Notices: Sadie Smith," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, May 20, 1914, 7, GR 2951, Volume 29, British Columbia, Division of Vital Statistics, Death registrations, 14-09-029380, Sadie Smith.

World War, a women's rescue and a home for aged and infirm women were both operating by 1914.¹³⁴ Smith does not appear in Charity documents for either city. Why does she only appear in criminal records?

Women's shelters existed in the early-twentieth century, but they were rare. As the Associated Charities of Vancouver's statistics book showed, few women applied for aid after arriving in a shelter. Diane Matters notes that women's concerns were rarely dealt with by Vancouver aldermen until after women had "fallen," with rescue homes for former prostitutes being the focus of city council's funding.¹³⁵ Small actions to support working women were carried out in 1914, when stenographers formed a mutual aid society in September. Later, the Office Women's Association of Vancouver aimed to represent female office workers. The OWA dissolved itself within a week and joined with a second, larger group that happened to be formed at the same time – the Women's Employment League. The WEL called for three principal actions – preferential hiring for homeless women, half wages for existing working women to encourage hiring and a cooperative venture to employ women. The cooperative became a toy factory that ran for a brief period during the Christmas season, employing 250 women at \$3.50 a week. The factory received 600 applications for work, with 400 of these applications from single women. The WEL also kept a list of 1,189 women who were looking for work, either in the toy factory or other locations. According to Matters, the WEL withered away with improved economic conditions during the war, as well as the establishment of a city-run Women's Employment Bureau in 1915.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, the above does not give much more than a glimpse at the conditions women were facing. We know that at least 1,189 women were unemployed, and many were either homeless or facing homelessness but little else. Much of the information Matters cites appears to come from news articles quoting relief officers, suggesting the material is either lost or, if available, hidden within other materials. Similarly, while much has been written

¹³⁴ CoV PR-0126, Friendly Help Society fonds, Minute Book, Lucretia Gould, *History of the Aged and Infirm Women's Home: Victoria, British Columbia 1897-1928* (Victoria: Charles F. Banfield, 1928).

¹³⁵ Matters, "Public Welfare Vancouver Style," 6.

¹³⁶ Matters, "Public Welfare Vancouver Style," 8.

on the WEL by other authors, most cite Matters or similar materials to her.¹³⁷ If there is more available, it is not apparent. There is also the issue of the era when Matters wrote. Her article is focused on working class experiences of homelessness, poverty and, logically, working women. However, she unintentionally misses a key point of class differentiation that played out during the formation of women's anti-poverty groups. An amateur history of Victoria's Aged and Infirm Women's Home is illustrative here.

The Aged and Infirm Women's Home was located on McClure Street and was established in 1898 after several impoverished, elderly women were found in poor housing or with abusive relatives. The home was modeled on an earlier scheme, as well as the city's Aged and Infirm Men's Home in Oak Bay.¹³⁸ Many of the women who came to live in the Aged and Infirm Home appear to have been middle and upper-class individuals who had fallen on hard times. Lucretia Gould's history of the Home, written in 1928, offers some examples of early residents and the roles they played in setting up the Women's Home. Gould was a founding member of Victoria's Friendly Aid Society, a semi-private charity that organized outdoor relief in Victoria after 1895.¹³⁹ Gould's history cites the first three residents of the Women's Home, using them to illustrate the values of the Society. Gould begins with the story of a Mrs. McGowan who, at eighty-three years old, was living in a shack, far behind on her rent and living with her "harmlessly irresponsible" niece, who was dependent upon McGowan and seemingly refused to work.¹⁴⁰ She was given "extra comforts" but little else, as the FAS was low on funds.¹⁴¹ A Mrs. Soper later appeared requesting aid. Soper, "of very respectable appearance," was the mother of two young children whom she locked in a room while she sold photographs for 25 cents a dozen.¹⁴² She requested furniture from the

¹³⁷ For example, Irene Howard's work on Helena Gutteridge discusses some of the materials Matters cites, as well as Matters' BA graduating essay which forms the basis for the article cited. See *The Struggle for Social Justice in British Columbia: Helena Gutteridge, the Unknown Reformer* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 108-112, 280.

¹³⁸ Gould, *History of the Aged and Infirm Women's Home*, 6.

¹³⁹ Baskerville and Sager, *Unwilling Idlers*, 153.

¹⁴⁰ Gould, *History of the Aged and Infirm Women's Home*, 3.

¹⁴¹ Gould, *History of the Aged and Infirm Women's Home*, 4.

¹⁴² Gould, *History of the Aged and Infirm Women's Home*, 4.

Friendly Aid Society so that she could teach Chinese children English to earn money. Gould notes approvingly that she was, "...with her own thriftiness...completely in a small way supporting herself and children."¹⁴³ Finally, a Mrs. Fairburne became the impetus behind the writer's "strenuous efforts to establish a House for Aged and Infirm women."¹⁴⁴ The wife of a formerly prosperous man and "prominent member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows," her case was brought to Gould's attention after it was discovered her husband was in a room of the city's Aged and Infirm Men's home while she "was weeping herself miserable with no place to go and no one to care for her."¹⁴⁵ Eventually, Soper was asked to house Fairburne and McGowan's niece Garner temporarily before eventually being given a position as matron in the Aged and Infirm Women's Home when it was established.¹⁴⁶

The descriptions of the women brought to the Women's Home portray them as respectable despite their circumstances. The most important individuals behind the establishment of the Women's Home were two formerly wealthy women – McGowan and Fairburne. Of the women Gould highlights, she is most sympathetic to these two and their plight. Soper's industry and efforts to find work draw praise rather than pity. Garner invites Gould's ire for her "feeble-mindedness," though she is still portrayed somewhat sympathetically. Gould notes that Garner's husband was killed in a mining accident and that the incident, as well as the selfish actions of the man's "friends," had left her "penniless, with health, both bodily and mentally, seriously impaired."¹⁴⁷ Finally, though she notes that "No distinctions have ever been made as between nationalities, those supported by the Government or city funds receiving the same kind care as that given to ladies paying the highest price..." it is quite clear by Gould's description of the residents, as well as her list of residents' nationalities, that distinctions were made by the organization as to who was

¹⁴³ Gould, *History of the Aged and Infirm Women's Home*, 4.

¹⁴⁴ Gould, *History of the Aged and Infirm Women's Home*, 4.

¹⁴⁵ Gould, *History of the Aged and Infirm Women's Home*, 3-4

¹⁴⁶ Gould, *History of the Aged and Infirm Women's Home*, 5-9.

¹⁴⁷ Gould, *History of the Aged and Infirm Women's Home*, 5.

allowed into the home.¹⁴⁸ The Women's Home does not appear to have been welcoming to working class or racialized women. If it was, Gould works hard to erase any presence they had in the institution.

Having covered women's experiences of homelessness generally, I would like to shift focus to racialized women. A distinction must be made between the experiences of white and racialized women. Racialized women's smaller numbers in the police courts meant that their cases often attracted greater attention than cases involving white women. With that attention came consequences for racialized women that white women often did not face. White women generally appear in newspaper accounts either nameless or as victims of circumstance. Racialized women are treated as exotic individuals or, often, as career criminals who deserve whatever punishment is handed them. As the case of Sadie Smith suggests, racialized women also had a harder time accessing charity. We are left with little to examine other than police court data collected in Vancouver, as the Victoria records are unsuitably vague.

Black women are shockingly overrepresented in the Vancouver police court records. Forty-seven Black women were arrested for vagrancy, of whom eighteen were arrested under Statute A. Most Black persons arrested for vagrancy were Americans, with seven Black Canadian women arrested as well. Interestingly, with only ten Black Canadians arrested overall, Black Canadian women were far more likely to be arrested than Black Canadian men. Black women make up forty-five percent of all cases involving Black persons. Women overall only make up around seventeen percent of all cases or twenty-two percent of cases in the mugshot book. It is also worth reiterating the number of Black persons living in Vancouver in 1911 – less than 0.1 percent of the city's population, or 142 of 123,403 people recorded.

Not only are Black persons disproportionately represented in the police courts for vagrancy, but they are also regularly discussed in racist terms. One woman is crudely referred to as a “notorious

¹⁴⁸ Of Gould's list, only Italians might be read as “non-white.” Gould, *History of the Aged and Infirm Women's Home*, 15

Nigger.”¹⁴⁹ In another case, a man known to the Los Angeles police department is referred to as a “very bad Negro.”¹⁵⁰ The casual use of these terms in the mugshot book strongly suggests that anti-Black racism was normalized among Vancouver police officers. Another example of police racism is the comparative detail of Black women’s records, some of the most detailed accounts in the mugshot book. Although it was common for repeat offenders to have notes on earlier or ensuing arrests in other jurisdictions, Black women’s arrest records were particularly detailed. While overzealous recording and police attention was a common response to women’s transgression of the law and “acceptable” ways of living, the lengths to which Vancouver police monitored Black women were significant. There is no fixed rule to describe vagrancy records kept by the Vancouver police, but most cases do not have detailed descriptions and of the few that are exhaustive, Black women make up a considerable number.

Asian women barely appear in the police courts in Vancouver. Four Chinese women and a Japanese and South Asian woman may appear in the overall record – these individuals required translators and were recorded as “Mrs.” or “Miss.” These low numbers are only noteworthy as a reminder that Canadian immigration laws prevented Asian women from coming to Canada in any significant numbers until the 1950s. Japanese women did begin arriving in greater numbers as part of the “picture bride” phenomenon but even then the Canadian Japanese community had a particularly lopsided gender divide.¹⁵¹ Unlike other racialized women, there was a rescue mission established for Chinese and Japanese women in Victoria. The Chinese Rescue Mission was established in 1886 and sheltered at least 400 women by 1923.¹⁵² As Shelly Ikebuchi notes, despite a discourse suggesting most women brought to the mission

¹⁴⁹ Prisoners’ record book, S202, City of Vancouver Archives, entry date December 6, 1912. I have not included this woman’s name to preserve her privacy.

¹⁵⁰ Prisoners’ record book, S202, City of Vancouver Archives, entry date December 7, 1912. I have similarly avoided naming this individual. I see no reason to associate them with such crude racism.

¹⁵¹ Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man’s Province, 1914-1941* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 56-57.

¹⁵² Shelly D. Ikebuchi, *From Slave Girls to Salvation: Gender, Race, and Victoria’s Chinese Rescue Home, 1886-1923* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 4.

were “freed” sexual slaves, many were compelled to enter the home for reasons such as poverty or sickness. Moreover, many of the home’s inhabitants found the paternalistic and autocratic rules of the institution intolerable and escape attempts were common.¹⁵³ The Chinese Rescue Mission did provide a refuge for women genuinely entrapped by abusive relations or human traffickers but for many, the Mission was simply another paternalistic institution trying to dismantle and erase their culture. Even where racialized women had the potential to seek aid, it was unappealing and marked by racism and sexism.

Another group of women’s records worth looking at are Continental Europeans. As I have emphasized throughout my thesis, experiences of racism, poverty and state harassment differ from group to group. Often race is discussed as an essentially dichotomous relationship between European people’s experiences of poverty and the experiences of racialized persons. In the early-twentieth century, however, Continental Europeans – Eastern, Southern and Scandinavian Europeans, as well as Jewish individuals, were often racialized as well. Today only the most virulent of Anglo-Saxon white nationalists would deny their whiteness but in the early-twentieth century their claim to white identity was disputed. At minimum, non-Anglo-Celt whites might be best regarded as “probationary” whites – they had access to whiteness in a way which Black, Asian, and Indigenous peoples did not and do not but were subject to restrictions and the possibility of exclusion from white identity. An analogous modern situation would be European-descended Latinx in the United States. Many Latinx people pass as white but have a complicated relationship with this whiteness, as seen by the American census category “Hispanic” and the growth of Latinx white supremacy as part of the broader, on-going neo-Nazi and white nationalist revival.¹⁵⁴

The number of Continental European women recorded as homeless is small, though larger than the number of Asians. We can discuss examples across nearly all the datasets listed, though the numbers

¹⁵³ Ikebuchi, *From Slave Girls to Salvation*, 46-52.

¹⁵⁴ Gabriela Resto-Montero, “With the rise of the alt-right, Latino white supremacy may not be a contradiction in terms,” *Mic*, December 27, 2017.

recorded in the census and by the Associated Charities are too small for any definitive analysis. Thirty-eight Vancouver roomers, thirty-two Vancouver police court defendants, fourteen Victoria roomers and three Associated Charity applicants were recorded as European or Euro-American with ancestry from outside the British Isles.¹⁵⁵ If we look at these eighty-seven cases together, the largest single ethnic group are Germans, followed by Swedes. Italians and French individuals (mainly French-Canadians) tie for third largest groups overall. The ages of these women range from four months to eighty-five years old, with the majority under the age of twenty-nine. Among Vancouver police court defendants, the largest subset gave their occupation as “prostitute,” followed by those without a career listed and housekeepers. Most are described as some form of sex worker but ten are described as merely “vagrant.” As was often the case in the Vancouver police courts, many of the sex workers skipped bail. Similarly, many who were given the choice between jail or a fine chose to pay. Collectively, fourteen women paid or forfeited \$832.50 – \$100 more than the average annual wage for a worker in Vancouver at the time and equivalent to \$19,000 today.¹⁵⁶ Unlike Black and Asian women, women from Continental Europe seem to have been treated better by the Vancouver magistrate. Only a little over one-third were convicted for vagrancy and, of those convicted, only one appears to have served a prison sentence – a three-month stint with hard labour. These numbers are lower than the overall conviction rates in the Vancouver police courts, both for women defendants and among all cases. However, it is also important to note the small numbers here. There are thirty-two identifiable cases of Continental European women in the police courts. This compares to 1,192 cases involving women and the 7,144 vagrancy and related cases tried by the Vancouver magistrates.

¹⁵⁵ The Victoria police court records do not explicitly list race and my system for determining ethnic identity via names is too vague to allow for a detailed examination. The Victoria records are not particularly detailed in any case and are likely similar to the Vancouver records.

¹⁵⁶ CAV, Police Court Calendar 1910-1915 See Statistics Canada, *Canada Year Book, 1927/1928*, https://www65.statcan.gc.ca/acyb02/1927/acyb02_19270777005a-eng.htm for a list of average wages among wage earners in 1911.

Further investigation and sources are necessary to make any more definitive statements on the way the Vancouver police treated Continental European women.

Finally, Indigenous women only appear a few times in the record, though again in greater numbers than Asian women. Six Indigenous women are recorded in the Vancouver police court records, along with another woman in Victoria. The Victorian woman, as well as three of the Vancouverites, are of mixed descent, with the remaining three only recorded as “Indians.” Indigenous persons are technically overrepresented in the police court records, but it is worth noting that there are only 111 persons of Indigenous descent recorded in both cities in 1911. Of the eleven women arrested, only the Victorian and a Vancouverite are charged with vagrancy, though we cannot be certain the magistrate in Victoria meant Statute A. There is a reason for Indigenous persons not being recorded as vagrants which I will return to momentarily.

I will shift focus now to racialized men’s experiences of urban poverty. Continental European men accounted for around 418 vagrancy cases in Vancouver, or twenty-six percent of all cases where race is known or probably known.¹⁵⁷ If we count only those recorded in the mugshot book, the number drops to eighteen percent but there is still a clear overrepresentation in the police court records compared to the 1911 census population. These same groups made up just over ten percent of Vancouver’s overall population. Among roomers, they make up closer to seventeen percent, suggesting a disproportionate number were living in poverty. Finally, we can tentatively suggest that these groups make up around ten percent of cases in the Associated Charities document. Although the racial category of “Foreigner” is not clearly defined, most of the names recorded as “foreigners” appear to be Eastern and Southern European. Moreover, as I noted earlier, Asian names rarely appear in the Charities case book, suggesting that publicly funded charity was intended for white, or white-passing, persons.

¹⁵⁷ This if we include those with names obviously from Eastern, Southern and Scandinavian Europe, as well as those recorded needing interpreters who catered to these groups

Unlike people of colour, Eastern and Southern Europeans did not receive quite the same attention in the newspapers. In Victoria, as noted, only an Italian and a “Russian Jew” were overtly described by their ethnicities in *Colonist* crime reports.¹⁵⁸ An incident occurring in Vancouver during the First World War is worth examining here. On April 7, 1915, several men were arrested for vagrancy Statute F (causing a disturbance) in Vancouver. Several days later, the men were brought before the police magistrate and additionally charged with being part of an unlawful assembly. Of the seven men, five were sentenced to six month’s hard labour, one was given the choice of paying a fine of \$25 (with \$4.50 court costs) or one-month hard labour and the last man was sent on to “the next court of competent criminal jurisdiction.”¹⁵⁹ The *Vancouver Daily News Advertiser* had relatively little to say about these men other than their charges and that they had engaged in a riot.¹⁶⁰ *The Province* was more detailed and offers some insights into the anxieties of Anglo-Celts during the war. Under the alarmist headline “Planned to Break High-Power Lines,” the *Province* draws upon the testimony of Detective Joe Ricci, who had been present in the crowd as an informant. According to Ricci, the rioters were spurred on by John Condie, an Italian and apparent “Socialist.” Condie allegedly denounced the British Empire and urged the mainly Italian crowd to burn the Italy’s consulate and to loot stores if city charities stopped issuing meal tickets. He apparently stated that if city council did not provide relief, he would cut the wires powering the city’s electricity and lead the crowd in rioting and pillaging. Ricci then arrested Condie who, as the paper notes, “burst into tears and wept bitterly” throughout the trial.¹⁶¹ The article quotes the magistrate admonishing the men for their actions, saying they were not hungry but spiteful. He claims that when the men looted a fruit store, they threw the fruit at police rather than eating. The magistrate also tried to shame the men by referring to

¹⁵⁸ “Jail for Begging,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, October 21, 1914, 6 and “Goes to Jail,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, July 10, 1914, 6, respectively.

¹⁵⁹ CAV, Police Court Calendar 1910-1915, April 7 and 15, 1915.

¹⁶⁰ “Unlawful Assembly,” *Vancouver Daily News Advertiser*, April 13, 1915.

¹⁶¹ “Planned to Break High-Power Lines,” *The Province*, April 13, 1915.

“young girls, who by their slender incomes as stenographers were keeping their parents as well as themselves, contributing their mite to help keep these men on the bread line, and it was by rioting and looting that they showed their gratitude.”¹⁶² Finally, the magistrate thanked the police for their quick action, darkly hinting that “very much more serious disturbances would have occurred” otherwise.¹⁶³

The *Province*'s article is loaded with racialized and symbolic meaning. The focus is on Detective Ricci and Condie, with Ricci playing the part of the “good” immigrant in contrast to Condie, the saboteur and rabble-rouser. The crowd that Condie assembles is also portrayed in menacing terms and appears quick to anger. Conversely, the mob is unable to mount an effective riot, in large part due to the actions of the heroic Ricci. Yet Ricci's story is suspicious, as he claims to have sat idly by and watched a riot develop until the very last moment, at which point he casually arrested the ringleader without any apparent struggle. As those of us who recall the Sûreté du Québec's actions at Montebello, Quebec in 2007, the 2010 Toronto G20 summit, or the various police riots and false flag operations that occurred during the Great Depression, Canadian police have a long and storied history of engaging in actions to provoke riot and justify their ensuing crackdown.¹⁶⁴ Allusions to Condie being a “Socialist” make Ricci's claims more dubious. Finally, Condie's description is not as an unrepentant radical but rather a broken, pathetic man. Condie's threatening actions justify his arrest and punishment but at the same time he appears as a weak and pathetic individual who weeps throughout his trial. This imagery of the simultaneously weak and powerful foe is a classic form of propaganda and, as Umberto Eco argues, a defining aspect of Ur-fascism – a set of values that combined to form interwar fascist ideology but which have antecedents in earlier, autocratic ideologies.¹⁶⁵ State power was brought to bear against six men who made the grievous error of

¹⁶² “Planned to Break High-Power Lines,” *The Province*.

¹⁶³ “Planned to Break High-Power Lines,” *The Province*.

¹⁶⁴ Steven Lambert, “Quebec police admit agents posed as protesters,” *Toronto Star*, August 23, 2007, Colin Perkel, “G20 report blasts police for ‘unlawful’ arrests, civil rights violations,” *Globe and Mail*, May 16, 2012, Michael Lonardo, “Under a Watchful Eye: A Case Study of Police Surveillance during the 1930s,” *Labour/Le travail* 35 (Spring, 1995), 11-41.

¹⁶⁵ Umberto Eco, “Ur-fascism,” *New York Review of Books*, June 22, 1995, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1995/06/22/ur-fascism/>.

voicing frustration at their poverty while being Italian. Although in times of war hysteria abounds and reactions to real and perceived treason are amplified, the act of being a foreigner in wartime Canada ensured these men would be publicly humiliated and disproportionately punished for their actions.

Although Continental European experiences of homelessness were marked by prejudice and harassment, these communities did not face the more overt harassment and prejudice racialized communities did. As vagrancy data showed, racialized persons faced a heightened chance of being arrested for being homeless than their proportion of the Canadian population in 1911. Some groups were more likely to be affected than others, however. Asians were a clear target of police harassment in Victoria while in Vancouver, Black persons were the focus. Conversely, neither Asians nor Black persons appear to have been recorded in the Charities case book. At least fifty-six Black men were arrested for vagrancy over the period surveyed. The majority were from the United States, though several Caribbean and Canadian Black men were also arrested. Like most police court defendants, Black men tended to be young, with the oldest arrested being fifty-seven but most arrests were of individuals between the ages of twenty and thirty-five. Nearly forty percent of all arrested Black men were in the service industry, mainly as barbers, cooks, and waiters. Manual labourers make up the next largest subset at 21.4 percent of cases overall. These results reflect racist hiring policies which limited the jobs available to Black men.

One case involving a mixed-race couple further reflects Vancouver police racism. A Black man and white woman were arrested for vagrancy in December 1912. Both were from the American Pacific Northwest and both were deported upon conviction. The two also appeared in the police court mugshot collection. However, only the Black man was recorded by the magistrate in the police court records. The white woman he was arrested with, who shares his last name, has minimal details with her mugshot and no specific charge. She is referred to as a prostitute but her “charge” is simply recorded as “for Deportation.” Although the Vancouver police occasionally failed to properly record individuals arrested

for vagrancy, this would be a particularly glaring error. Rather, the record seems to suggest that the white woman's crime may have been her sexual relationship with a Black man. Although there is no "smoking gun" in the record, the lack of charges laid against the white woman, as well as copious evidence of anti-Black sentiment in the Vancouver police mugshots, suggests that the couple's arrest may have been racially motivated.

Asian men make up a higher number of arrests compared to Black men. Somewhere between 53 and 336 are arrested in Vancouver, with the majority in each instance being Chinese men. The smaller number refers to the number photographed by Vancouver police, as well as a few individuals who were overtly noted in the police records as "Hindu" or "Chinaman." The larger number reflects every case where Lambert Sung, Goro Kaburagi and Won Alexander Cumyow, among others, are recorded as translating for the police. These individuals were only called upon for Chinese and Japanese cases and therefore these cases likely involved Asians. It is also worth noting that the manner of recording an individual's name can be telling. The magistrates in Vancouver and Victoria did not bother to ask Chinese men their surnames and these records often stand out. Asians are slightly underrepresented in the Vancouver police courts, at only 4.7 percent of all arrests. However, my sampling method for police court records only included cases where individuals were overtly listed as vagrants. Many cases involving gambling (likely violations of Statute J) were recorded as "gaming" and not "Statute J, gaming." Similarly, parallel legislation penalizing the smoking and possession of opium meant that Statute J's drug prohibition clause was rarely invoked. Not all Asians are easily identifiable in the record either. In Victoria, several cases involve individuals with white-sounding names such as John or Sam. Unlike Victoria, where the *Daily Colonist* and municipal police reports are readily accessible and discuss the race of defendants, Vancouver has no major daily available for keyword search and municipal crime reports do not indicate race.

Among those Asian men who we can find in Vancouver, there are certain attributes worth noting. Most recorded arrests are Chinese men, with another eight Japanese and two South Asian individuals recorded. The majority are under the age of fifty, though Asians tended to be older, with the largest subset being those aged thirty to thirty-five. The largest single occupational group are manual labourers, along with cooks and cannery hands. Asian arrest records follow no pattern in Vancouver but, in Victoria, Asian arrests rise significantly over the period surveyed. Both cities appear to have taken harsh action against Asians after the start of World War One, but Victoria was particularly strident in its dealings with Chinese men. In 1910, no Asians appear to have been arrested in Victoria. According to annual police reports, two Chinese men were convicted of vagrancy but either the annual report is incorrect, or these men were not recorded properly in the police court book.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, what matters is that the numbers of Asians arrested that year were proportionally less than the number of Asians living in Victoria. By 1915, fifty-seven percent of all vagrancy arrests in Victoria were of Chinese men. Although there was a slight increase of Asian arrests in 1915 in Vancouver, it was not to such a disproportionate extent.

Why were Asian men targeted by the Victoria police? One possibility is racist hiring practices instituted by employers. According to a Presbyterian minister, fifty percent of the Chinese workforce were unemployed by 1915.¹⁶⁷ Even if exaggerated, Asians may have been laid off in significant numbers by 1915 to allow white workers to take their place in factories. Many would be left violating the law, if through no fault of their own. It is also possible that Victoria police officers took advantage of the war to harass the Chinese community. The Victoria police were more concerned with issues of vice than the

¹⁶⁶ CoV, CR-0016 – City of Victoria annual reports, 1910, 1913-1915. I am wary of taking the Victoria police court reports at face value. First, they are incomplete – the reports for 1911 and 1912 do not contain any police data. Second, as other authors have noted, the Victoria police engaged in strange race-marking exercises in these reports. Constrained to only three categories, many were assigned random racial identities. All Asians were listed as Chinese, for example, and various racialized persons were presumably listed as White, rather than Indian or Chinese. See Renisa Mawani, *Colonial Proximities*, 130-136 and Penelope Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers: Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in 19th-Century Pacific Rim Cities* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 227-229.

¹⁶⁷ Roy, *The Oriental Question*, 17.

Vancouver police. With war beginning and an impending increase in young men in Esquimalt who would be looking for ways to relax, the police may have decided to crackdown on gambling and drug use – activities likely seen as more harmful than sex work, considering the long-running presence of brothels in Victoria and the monopolization, real or imagined, of gambling and drug trafficking by Chinese *tongs*.¹⁶⁸

Whatever the reason for the increase in arrests, there is a case that appears in the *Daily Colonist* in January 1915 which suggests that the magistrate was not necessarily convinced of the homelessness and unemployment of the Asian men the Victoria police were arresting. The *Colonist* reported that a Chinese man’s vagrancy charge was dismissed when evidence was shown that the man had several bags of rice in his room. According to the magistrate, “...it could not be held that the accused was without ‘visible means of subsistence.’”¹⁶⁹ It is a strange reading of Statute A but, within the contexts of the rapidly increasing number of Asian men being charged with vagrancy, perhaps the magistrate decided to give Victoria police a warning that just arresting Chinese men was not sufficient evidence of their guilt.

Between the three principal documents used for my thesis, Indigenous persons only appear in the police courts. There are no homeless Indigenous persons recorded by the Associated Charities and no Indigenous roomers. There are twelve individuals arrested for vagrancy between both cities over the period surveyed, only five of whom were charged with Statute A and only one who was overtly recorded as a “vagrant.” In the contexts of the on-going crisis of Indigenous homelessness in Canadian urban centres, these numbers seem small.¹⁷⁰ Certain factors contributed to early-twentieth century Canadian cities being essentially devoid of an Indigenous presence. First, Indigenous persons were an incredibly small minority of the population by 1911. Only 1.4 percent of all Canadians were Indigenous. British

¹⁶⁸ David Chenyuen Lai, *The Forbidden City within Victoria* (Victoria: Orca Publishing, 1991), 34.

¹⁶⁹ “Action Dismissed,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, January 15, 1915, 6.

¹⁷⁰ See Jesse Thistle, *Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press, 2017), Andrew Leach, *The Roots of Aboriginal Homelessness in Canada* (West Vancouver: Aboriginal Housing Management Association, 2010) and *Aboriginal Homelessness – 2017 Count in Metro Vancouver* (Vancouver: Metro Vancouver, 2017) for some literature on this on-going crisis.

Columbia had a higher than average number of Indigenous persons at five percent of the population, but there were simply fewer Indigenous persons in Canada. Second, whatever presence Indigenous peoples had in urban centres was actively being erased by the 1910s. In Victoria, Lekwungen peoples lived both on a reserve across the harbour from downtown Victoria, as well as scattered throughout the city. There was a concentration of Indigenous residents on lower Johnson Street and ventures between Indigenous craft makers and Jewish businessmen which characterized the area's reputation for "genuine Indian curios."¹⁷¹ By 1911, however, the Songhees reserve in Victoria West was on the verge of being moved and most Indigenous persons in the city had left. A similar scenario took place in Vancouver where the village of Senakw, organized as the Kitsilano Indian Reserve, was "negotiated" and sold to industrial interests and the CPR for \$218,750 in 1911.¹⁷² Only twenty-one people were listed as Indigenous in the 1911 census for Victoria and another ninety were recorded in Vancouver. Alongside the removal of an Indigenous presence in urban centres was a parallel effort to control free movement off reserves through a pass system. Although never formally instituted in BC, the provincial government regularly asked steamship companies to refuse passage for Indigenous women unless approved by an Indian Agent.¹⁷³

Finally, ideology played a role in deciding who was seen as homeless. Specifically, vagrancy law was not applied to Indigenous persons. As noted, only twelve Indigenous people were charged with vagrancy over the period surveyed in both cities. By raw numbers alone, one would be inclined to think that Indigenous peoples were not likely to be homeless, but I argue that these numbers mask an ideological impediment to labelling Aboriginal persons as vagrants. Penelope Edmonds notes in *Urbanizing Frontiers: Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in 19th-Century Pacific Rim Cities* that a mythos of the

¹⁷¹ Rebecca Kobrin, *Chosen Capital: The Jewish Encounter with American Capitalism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 174-179.

¹⁷² Robert A.J. McDonald, *Making Vancouver: Class, Status, and Social Boundaries, 1863-1913* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996), 217.

¹⁷³ Keith Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance and Resistance: Indigenous Communities in Western Canada, 1877-1927* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2009), 60-68, 76.

“vagrant Indian” played a significant role in the development of settler-Indigenous relations in early colonial Melbourne. She also notes similar practices in Victoria, if at a lower scale.¹⁷⁴ However, neither Australian nor British Columbian police used vagrancy charges against Indigenous peoples. On the Prairies, vagrancy laws were initially used against Indigenous peoples but rarely by the turn of the century.¹⁷⁵ Following Edmonds, I argue that Indigenous persons already existed in a state of transgression of settler norms. Indigeneity cannot be reconciled with white settler colonialism and it is only through the acceptance of all aspects of settler culture and the concomitant rejection of Indigeneity that an Indigenous person stops this transgression. Therefore, Aboriginals were already in violation of the social norm vagrancy law attempted to police. How could an Indigenous person be homeless if they did not live as a settler and conform to settler norms? Indigenous persons may indeed have been among the homeless, but they do not appear in vagrancy records. The lack of non-white persons more generally in the Charities document and the removal of Indigenous persons from urban centres in this era means that any homeless Indigenous persons who might have existed were likely erased from the historical record.

An example of this ideology plays out in one of the rare instances where an Indigenous person was arrested for vagrancy. Annie McDonald was arrested on June 5, 1913 and, as the *Colonist* notes, was married to a white man with children she had allegedly abandoned in New Westminster.¹⁷⁶ It is likely McDonald would not have been arrested for vagrancy without her marriage to a white man contextualizing her as a member of settler society. The news report refers to her as having been intoxicated and wandering about town. She was also arrested with two white women, reinforcing her position as a settler. The fact that she is the only Indigenous person arrested for vagrancy in Victoria between 1910 and 1915 is in stark contrast to the numbers of Aboriginal persons arrested for drunkenness in this same period – 170 over five

¹⁷⁴ Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers*, 212-213.

¹⁷⁵ Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance and Resistance*, 62-63.

¹⁷⁶ CoV CRS-0116, Magistrate’s Record Book and “Jail Sentences,” *Victoria Daily Colonist* 6 June 1913, 6.

years. There is some overlap between drunkenness charges and vagrancy charges among both Anglo-Celts and racialized persons which does suggest that these charges functioned as a form of homeless policing. Moreover, vagrancy law in Canada did highlight “drunkenness” as a vagrant act under Statute F and 34 Vancouver defendants were charged as “drunk and disorderly vagrants.” I am unable to discuss the relationship between alcohol-related charges and homelessness in-depth due to the limited nature of a Masters thesis but it is important to emphasize that, while Indigenous persons do not appear among the ranks of vagrants, they are not completely missing from the police court records, nor is there definitive evidence that there were no homeless Indigenous persons in the period I have surveyed.

Race and gender played a key role in the experience of homelessness in the early-twentieth century. Although their lives were not enviable, homeless white men were comparatively privileged. They had greater access to charity and fewer restrictions on their ability to move freely. White men breaking the law might have attracted attention but not as much as women or racialized persons did. Whether it was racist policing, sexist dismissal or a combination of both, life as a homeless person for non-Anglo-Celts was difficult. It is also important to acknowledge and emphasize that Anglo-Celt men were not the only individuals who were homeless. Although ostensibly white men make up most homeless individuals in the datasets used, there remains a significant presence of women and people of colour. This is despite the Associated Charities records, which illustrate racial and sexual discrimination in the provision of relief. Without this document, the white majority among the homeless shrinks significantly and, if we exclude Continental Europeans from the overall “white” total, the majority shrinks even further. While it would be incorrect to state that white men did not make up most homeless persons, their historiographical dominance has been excessive. An entire mythos has been constructed around a specific and unrealistic image of the early-twentieth century homeless, one that has had long-running effects.

Chapter 5 – Popular Representations of the Early-Twentieth Century Homeless

In this concluding chapter, I will address the tramp mythos. This particular romanticized and popular construction of homeless identity dates to the late-nineteenth century. Many historians writing on related topics to myself have focused their inquiry on the tramp, in part because tramps have remained such an enduring representative of the early-twentieth century homeless. Within the contexts of my thesis, I have used “homeless” pointedly. The term “homeless” is more broadly descriptive of the conditions many individuals found themselves in the early-twentieth century. Using a broader definition of homelessness can also be a useful starting point for inquiries into histories of ascribed identities like race, class, or gender. A homeless history allows us to re-examine Canadian history as one of subaltern peoples and identities. The homeless person’s status as an outsider marks them as a target of particular state repression. As earlier chapters have shown, the act of being poor often had terrible results for those arrested by Victoria or Vancouver police. Those who sought out charity or who managed to find a rooming house were not spared the condescension of social workers, politicians, and the police alike.

Capitalism necessitates a free-moving and impoverished body of labour to support itself but the need for mobile and cheap labour was not compatible with the policing of itinerant labourers through vagrancy laws. It was here that an important tension within hegemonic liberalism developed. Free movement began to conflict with a growing desire to monitor and control “Others,” to transform them into “good” citizens. The impulse toward surveillance was motivated in part by self-preservation, as the homeless became an integral element of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).¹⁷⁷ Most of the 150,000 members the IWW claimed at their peak are believed to have been homeless men.¹⁷⁸ Whether there was any validity to these claims, popular opinion in the early-twentieth century associated the

¹⁷⁷ Ian McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and the People’s Enlightenment in Canada, 1890-1920* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2008), 187-192.

¹⁷⁸ Eric Thomas Chester argues that the IWW’s strength lay within its roots in mining and the Western Federation of Miners, but he also does not deny that there is some validity to the notion that the IWW organized significantly among itinerant labourers. Eric Thomas Chester, *The Wobblies in Their Heyday: The Rise and Destruction of the Industrial Workers of the World during the World War I Era* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2014), xi, 227

homeless with the IWW, turning the beggar into a potential weapon of working class discontent. Amid these growing tensions between the needs of capital and the state, the white tramp mythos appeared.

The “white tramp” is a specific conceptualization of the homeless that first appears in this era and expands upon period definitions such as Ben Reitman’s. The “anarchist hobo doctor” stated that, “There are three types of the genus vagrant: the hobo, the tramp and the bum. The hobo works and wanders, the tramp dreams and wanders and the bum drinks and wanders.”¹⁷⁹ These broad categories have been the subject of a variety of books, films and songs. They have also been taken for granted as representative of the early-twentieth century homeless. Reitman’s definition covers many stereotypes, but these categories are not all-encompassing. Importantly, underscoring popular conceptions of terms such as “hobo,” tramp” and “bum” are certain preconceived notions – specifically, that these figures are young, white, and heteronormative men.¹⁸⁰ Regardless of the tramp’s portrayal as “good,” “bad,” or “neutral,” the basic characterization remains. There are also multiple versions of the tramp across time, with the first depictions emerging in the mid-nineteenth century and remaining a popular symbol into the mid-twentieth century.¹⁸¹ Yet, as my thesis suggests, the early-twentieth century homeless person could hold a variety of different identities which do not fit the tramp stereotype. Why did the stereotype emerge?

I argue that the myth of the white tramp appeared in response to growing tensions between the ideological conception of liberal individuality and the increasingly panoptic and coercive hegemonic regime. One example of the mythical tramp was a figure who wandered and journeyed as a form of fulfilment. This version of the tramp became a vessel through which disaffected middle class men could live vicariously while reaffirming the values of period liberal ideology. Tales of adventure were written

¹⁷⁹ Nels Anderson, *The Hobo: The Sociology of the Homeless Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923), 87.

¹⁸⁰ In this case, youthful imagery is more common in period materials, whereas contemporary depictions of hobos tend to portray elderly individuals. This likely reflects the age of the trope and its seemingly undying nature in the face of rapid social change. See John Lennon, *Boxcar Politics*, 157-189 for an extended discussion of this.

¹⁸¹ Lennon, *Boxcar Politics*, 13-14.

that valorized masculinity and its relationship to nature in the face of the supposed feminizing effects of industrial urbanity.¹⁸² Boys and young men could look to these hardy heroes and imagine themselves hoboos or tramps within the safety of their own homes. Nothing prevented these young men from exploring the world themselves but the urge to explore could be tempered through the literary experience of adventure while reinforcing social norms privileging white male superiority.

Jack London's *The Road* is an excellent example of the valorized tramp. London's book is regarded as semi-autobiographical – he often refers to events that can be corroborated by his diary and, occasionally, arrest record.¹⁸³ As each chapter is effectively a short story, there is little flow to the book. What plot there is revolves around London's often exaggerated memories of his time as a “road kid” and “tramp-royal.” Chapters like “Confession,” where London brags about his story-telling and lying abilities, or ““Pinched”” and “The Pen,” where he describes his time in prison, are generally believable accounts while chapters such as “Holding Her Down” or “Bulls” are probably exaggerated. In “Holding Her Down,” London recounts when he rode a passenger train out of Ottawa, Ontario. London claims he boarded the train with twenty other hoboos, all of whom are quickly removed. With so many men boarding the train, the crew are particularly alert and soon become aware of London's continued presence. The “shacks” (brakemen) chase after him at every stop but each time London gets away. Sometimes he runs ahead of the train where they cannot reach him and then must pass him to continue their journey. Other times he climbs aboard the roof and sneaks into a carriage they cannot enter until the train halts. Finally, after multiple attempts to remove him, London tricks the “shacks” into thinking they have lost him and he falls asleep in a mail car. When he awakes, the brakemen are shining a light in his face, but they are so impressed by his skills in

¹⁸² R. Blake Brown, “‘Every boy ought to learn to shoot and to obey orders’: Guns, Boys, and the Law in English Canada from the late Nineteenth Century to the Great War,” *Canadian Historical Review* 93, 2 (June 2012), 201-202 and Tina Loo, “Of Moose and Men: Hunting for Masculinities in British Columbia, 1880-1939,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 32, 3 (Autumn, 2001), 300-301.

¹⁸³ Jack London, “Untitled Journal,” in *Jack London on the Road: The Tramp Diary and Other Hobo Writings*, edited by Richard W. Etulain (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1979), 28-60.

“holding down” the train that they merely state, “Well, I guess you can ride Bo. There’s no use trying to keep you off.”¹⁸⁴ His success in “holding down” is a point of pride for London and, as he notes earlier, it is his right and obligation as a “tramp-royal” to be the last one on the train.¹⁸⁵

Key is London’s belief in the supremacy of the individual. He writes as much in the chapter “Two Thousand Stiffs,” which is a recollection of his time in Kelly’s Army. Charles T. Kelly led a large contingent of hoboes under the umbrella of Jacob Coxey, an American businessman who organized a protest march on Washington D.C. in 1894.¹⁸⁶ London was an ardent supporter of the movement in the beginning, but he quickly grew tired of marching and starving. When stopped at Des Moines, Iowa by the railway companies, Kelly’s Army decided to use makeshift rafts and float down the Mississippi River. London, along with ten other men, immediately darted off with their boat and went ahead as a self-appointed “advanced guard,” collecting food and supplies intended for the Army for themselves. London justifies himself by writing, “This was hard on the Army, I’ll allow; but then, the ten of us were individualists. We had initiative and enterprise.”¹⁸⁷ To London, the experience of riding the rails was a competition, where those who excel will eventually become part of a privileged class of persons who have thrown off the bounds of effete and unnatural industrial society. London notes at the beginning of “Road-Kids and Gay-Cats” that he did not become a tramp because of sociological interest, as some papers suggest, but rather:

I became a tramp – well, because of the life that was in me, of the wanderlust in my blood that would not let me rest... I went on “The Road” because I couldn’t keep away from it; because I hadn’t the price of the railroad fare in my jeans; because I was so made that I couldn’t work all my life on “one same shift”; because – well, just because it was easier to than not to.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Jack London, *The Road* (New York: Peregrine, 1907 [1970]), 24-50.

¹⁸⁵ John Lennon discusses London’s obsession with skill and “rights” extensively, *Boxcar Politics*, 59-84.

¹⁸⁶ Benjamin F. Alexander, *Coxey’s Army: Popular Protest in the Gilded Age* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2015), 1-4, 80-87.

¹⁸⁷ London, *The Road*, 185.

¹⁸⁸ London, *The Road*, 152.

He is not some intellectual who jumped a train one day to study hoboes in their “natural environment,” nor is he someone who can work “one same shift” for life. London is an individual and nothing will stop him from exercising his right to wander.

London’s individuality does not sit outside the bounds of liberal ideology, despite his well-known advocacy of socialism. When discussing the ways he and other prisoners organized, London writes “And we who were in control of the system of communication, naturally, since we were modelled after capitalistic society, exacted heavy tolls from our customers. It was service for profit with a vengeance...”¹⁸⁹ Similarly, in “Bulls,” London goes on a long screed against police and the society that enables the “bull.”¹⁹⁰ Despite his ostensible socialism, London’s individualist beliefs are deeply rooted in American libertarian traditions. For example, he regularly refers to his rights as an American – often as he is disabused of said rights.¹⁹¹ These references are undoubtedly ironic and meant to shine light on the failings of liberal society, but they are not a demand for collectivism either. London calls for a new brotherhood of man – one in which the strongest will be able to live as they please. These beliefs have led other authors to argue that London’s socialism was paper-thin at best. Some, including London’s daughter Joan, criticized him as espousing proto-fascist views, in much the same guise as Mussolini, who also began his political career as a socialist.¹⁹² Importantly, London’s belief in the individual is not dramatically outside the norms of period liberal ideology. London places himself on the side of liberty and free movement but his beliefs are still compatible with a libertarian capitalist society. Remove the “fat-cats” and monopolists and London’s issues with capitalism are seemingly resolved. London’s tramp persona was one of many

¹⁸⁹ London, *The Road*, 113.

¹⁹⁰ London, *The Road*, 196-197.

¹⁹¹ London, *The Road*, 77-81, 94-96, 208.

¹⁹² Jonah Raskin, *The Radical Jack London: Writings on War and Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 36.

he created – such as sailors and Arctic explorers. They all shared a common, individualistic bent that allowed London’s readers to live vicariously through him and his adventures, real and exaggerated.

Another example of the mythical tramp is a comedic, vaudevillian character. The character functioned primarily as comic relief, though occasionally the comic tramp or hobo was a leading act. Unlike London’s “tramp-royal,” the comic tramp is a bumbling fool at the best of times, travelling and causing trouble wherever he goes. The comic tramp often ends up in trouble with the law, though the police are unable to capture him. Charlie Chaplin’s Tramp is possibly the best example of the comic tramp. The Tramp’s first appearance was in 1914 in either *Kid Auto Races at Venice* or *Mabel’s Strange Predicament*.¹⁹³ Both films are simplistic and only feature the Tramp as a “costume,” rather than a developed character. In *Kid Auto Races*, the plot is simply Chaplin’s character blocking a camera crew as they try to film soapbox and auto car races.¹⁹⁴ *Mabel’s Strange Predicament* has an actual plot and features several actors, including Mabel Normand, an early Hollywood star. At the start of the film, the Tramp flirts with Normand in a hotel lobby and, rejected, begins to drink. The drunken Tramp wanders upstairs where he finds Normand locked out of her room in her pyjamas. Running from his boozy advances, she ends up under the bed of a neighbouring husband and wife. Eventually Normand is found by the married couple, as well as her boyfriend, all of whom fight. The film ends with the husband being beaten to “hilarious” effect, Normand and her beau reconciled, and the Tramp beaten and forced to leave.¹⁹⁵

In both films, the Tramp is not necessarily homeless, though his demeanour and clothing suggest it. As Chaplin notes in his biography, the Tramp character was created for Normand’s film. The director told Chaplin that he needed “some gags,” and that Chaplin should dress himself up. Chaplin writes:

¹⁹³ The issue of which film should be regarded as the “first” Tramp film is disputed, as *Mabel’s Strange Predicament* was filmed first but *Kid Auto Races at Venice* was released first. For the sake of simplicity, I have simply discussed the films in order of release date.

¹⁹⁴ Charles Chaplin, *Kid Auto Races at Venice*, Directed by Henry Lehrman (Edendale, CA: Keystone Studios, 1914), retrieved via YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nUptPWbE88>.

¹⁹⁵ Charles Chaplin, *Mabel’s Strange Predicament*, directed by Mabel Normand (Edendale, CA: Keystone Studios, 1914), retrieved via YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5WtaPhTMQo>.

I had no idea what make-up to put on. I did not like my get-up as the press reporter. However, on the way to the wardrobe I thought I would dress in baggy pants, big shoes, a cane and a derby hat. I wanted everything a contradiction: the pants baggy, the coat tight, the hat small and the shoes large. I was undecided whether to look old or young, but remembering Sennett [the director] had expected me to be a much older man, I added a small moustache, which, I reasoned, would add age without hiding my expression. I had no idea of the character. But the moment I was dressed, the clothes and the make-up made me feel the person he was. I began to know him, and by the time I walked on to the stage he was fully born.¹⁹⁶

Chaplin himself then conceptualized the Tramp as a homeless character by the release of *Mabel's Strange Predicament*. Although it is not clear in the film, Chaplin himself notes, "...in the hotel lobby, I felt I was an imposter posing as one of the guests, but in reality I was a tramp just wanting shelter."¹⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the Tramp remained essentially a generic, vaudevillian trope for most of Chaplin's first films.

In April 1915, *The Tramp* was released and featured Chaplin alongside Edna Purviance and Ernest van Pelt. The film begins with the Tramp wandering down a dirt road while Purviance heads off to market with money from her father. Three thieves appear who surreptitiously steal the Tramp's lunch and try to rob Purviance but, thanks to the Tramp, the robbers are forced to flee. Purviance brings the Tramp back to the farm where her father offers him work and a meal. Unfortunately, the Tramp proves to be troublesome and simply annoys and injures the farmer and his farmhand. Meanwhile, the thieves return and confront the Tramp. Rather than attack him, they ask him to help rob the farm. The Tramp agrees and returns to the farmhouse, but it turns out he plans to betray the robbers and save the farm. Although the Tramp accidentally attacks the farmer at first, the farmer, farmhand, and Tramp work together to scare away the robbers. As they do so, the Tramp is accidentally shot in the leg. A few days later, the Tramp is relaxing with Purviance when her boyfriend arrives. Realizing she is taken and his presence at the farm

¹⁹⁶ Charles Chaplin, *My Autobiography* (London: Bodley Head, 1964), 154.

¹⁹⁷ Chaplin, *My Autobiography*, 155.

would only cause more trouble, he writes them a brief note and wanders off. The film concludes as the Tramp wanders down the road – a visual trope that would be a classic element of the Tramp persona.¹⁹⁸

Film historians regard *The Tramp* as the moment where Chaplin's character develops into the classic figure of the silent film era.¹⁹⁹ A key aspect of the character is that he is a wanderer. As well, though the Tramp is a "good guy" in *The Tramp*, he is not a heroic figure either. Near the beginning of the film he tries to steal Purviance's money and only changes his mind as she weeps beside him. He is also a bumbling idiot and constantly causing trouble for the farm. Nevertheless, the film's portrayal of the Tramp shows him to be at least capable of decency and good acts. He is the protagonist despite his flaws. Characters such as the Tramp played a significant role in popularizing the tramp persona. The Tramp's character was neither intrinsically good or bad, allowing him to be violent and sometimes criminal without implying those traits to be acceptable. As well, because the Tramp was not necessarily a heroic figure, he could be the target of violence and ridicule himself. Finally, though the comic nature of Chaplin's character softened the negative traits associated with him, these qualities were still part and parcel of the Tramp persona. Works such as London's were always popular but film and vaudeville productions, like Charlie Chaplin's films, as well as popular music, reached a far greater audience.²⁰⁰

The tramp persona plays a significant role in popular media. A key source of popular representations of the homeless is music, with the best examples found in the IWW's *Little Red Songbook*. First published in 1909, the booklets contained international revolutionary anthems, as well as poetry and songs written by union members.²⁰¹ Some of these songs would become international labour anthems

¹⁹⁸ Charles Chaplin, *The Tramp*, Film, directed by Charles Chaplin (Essanay Studios: Chicago, 1915), retrieved via YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNbGUIYC8EE>.

¹⁹⁹ Peter Ackroyd, *Charlie Chaplin* (London: Vintage Books, 2014), 75-76.

²⁰⁰ See "At Vancouver's Leading Play Houses; Pantages Theatre, 'On The Road'" *Greater Vancouver Chinook*, April 12, 1913, 11, "Theatrical & Musical; Pantages Theatre, 'Motoring,'" *Greater Vancouver Chinook*, April 24, 1915, 5, and an Ad for Chaplin's "The Tramp" at the Broadway Theatre, *The Western Call*, June 25, 1915, 8, for just a few examples.

²⁰¹ Richard Brazier, "The Story of the I.W.W.'s 'Little Red Songbook,'" *Labor History* 9, 1 (1968), 92.

themselves, such as “Solidarity Forever.”²⁰² Often the songs are set to the tune of hymns or popular music and many revolve around workingmen, tramps and hoboes. A 1916 edition of *I.W.W. Songs to Fan the Flames of Discontent* lists at least eight songs which involve the homeless. Most songs are about travelling workers, while others refer to the use of vagrancy laws to harass and imprison striking workers.²⁰³ In each situation, the tramp or hobo is valorized as a revolutionary figure. In “Harvest War Song,” set to “Tipperary,” the “pesky tramps and hoboes” return to John Farmer’s land to take what is theirs after years of early mornings and sleeping in hayfields.²⁰⁴ “Overalls and Snuff,” set to the Irish revolutionary song “Wearing of the Green,” is the story of a hop pickers strike where “Ford and Suhr” are freed from prison while “Horst and Durst” get “mad as hell.”²⁰⁵ “Walking on the Grass,” also set to “Wearing of the Green,” details how a “hungry horde” stop police and Pinkertons from “clubbing men and women just for walking on the grass.”²⁰⁶ I can only briefly discuss musical representations but key is that the threatened political violence in these songs, central to IWW organizing, also engendered anxious reactions from the growing middle classes.

Newspaper accounts of the homeless were rarely complimentary or neutral. An infamous example of anti-homeless vitriol is a *Chicago Tribune* editorial from 1877 which, as I noted earlier, called on residents to poison beggars and leave their bloated corpses in the street as a warning. I have also discussed some examples of anti-homeless attitudes, such as reactions to “Violent Violet” or the 1915 Vancouver Italian bread rioters. These examples, though based upon real stories and people, draw upon tropes of homeless persons to fill in gaps in less-than sensational reality and to impart certain feelings and responses

²⁰² Terese M. Volk, “Little Red Songbooks: Songs for the Labor Force of America,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 49, 1 (2001), 38, 39-40.

²⁰³ *I.W.W. Songs to Fan the Flames of Discontent* (Cleveland: I.W.W. Publishing Bureau, 1916), [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Songs_of_the_Workers_\(9th_edition\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Songs_of_the_Workers_(9th_edition)).

²⁰⁴ “Harvest War Song,” *I.W.W. Songs*. See Appendix for lyrics.

²⁰⁵ “Overalls and Snuff,” *I.W.W. Songs*. See Appendix for lyrics. This song details the events of the 1913 Wheatland, California hop pickers strike, when a riot broke out after shots were fired by a sheriff’s posse. See Cletus E. Daniel, “In defense of the Wheatland Wobblies: A critical analysis of the IWW in California,” *Labor History* 19, 4 (1978), 485-509.

²⁰⁶ “Walking on the Grass,” *I.W.W. Songs*. See Appendix for lyrics.

in readers. The *Province's* account of the Italian bread rioters was several paragraphs long, but the *Daily News-Advertiser* carried a much shorter account of the events – only a single paragraph. Although much of what the *Province* included was supposed court testimony, it is clear the paper also took the opportunity to attack the men and their masculinity – attacks that revolved around their economic position in part.

The *Daily Colonist* is an ideal source to find examples of popular anti-homeless feelings. The *Colonist* is not only a keyword searchable paper but it also regularly printed crime reports. At least 343 of Victoria's vagrancy cases appeared in the newspaper. Another fifteen individuals probably appear in the paper before or after the period surveyed. Most cases are recorded in a similar fashion – a common format was to record the names of the accused and their arraignment, the names of the arresting officer(s), and the outcomes of their cases (if known).²⁰⁷ Occasionally specific details about the defendants were included. An April 1, 1914 report on two men arrested for vagrancy notes that both had been living on the former Songhees reserve lands and “ha[d] been idle and disorderly.”²⁰⁸ At other times the paper took the opportunity to moralize about the arrested. The *Colonist* reported on December 13, 1913 about a man arrested for vagrancy by police chief J.M. Langley. Langley noted that the man had asked for fifteen cents so that he might get a bed. The officer followed the man and found he was telling the same story to everyone he passed. It was also “evident from his demeanour that in the meantime he had had some drinks.”²⁰⁹ The paper approvingly notes that the magistrate made “some pertinent remarks regarding the character of a man who would beg for money to get drink,” before sentencing him to two months hard labour.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ “Vagrancy Charges,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, August 15, 1911, 7, “Not Enough Evidence,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, December 27, 1913, 6 and “Severe Sentence,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, January 16, 1915, 6 are all examples of this format.

²⁰⁸ “Vagrants Arrested,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, April 1, 1914, 6.

²⁰⁹ “Two Month Term,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, December 13, 1913, 6.

²¹⁰ “Two Month Term,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 6.

The *Colonist* often took pleasure in mocking those arrested for vagrancy. In the “Sad Story of the Lorn Legion,” an article published in the *Colonist* in 1910, the author notes that six “husky, healthy young men” were brought before the magistrate for vagrancy. The first, a minister’s son, said he had arrived in town “with a lot of money,” celebrating innocently at first before falling among “evil companions.” He realized the error of his ways but too late – his money was gone and head aching. He promised the judge he would start work the next day but was given 3-months hard labour. Each man proceeded to tell nearly identical stories and, as the paper sardonically notes, each tale was cut off sooner and sooner until the magistrate handed down a 3-month sentence at the mere mention of “minister’s son.”²¹¹

The paper delights in poking fun at the men arrested and highlighting their workshy ways. There is much to take from the men’s descriptions, their supposed unscrupulousness or unwillingness to work. One sentence stands out, however: “This crowd was the regular New Year’s remuda of vag[rant]s, men who blow into town at the festive Christmastime in the hope that purse strings will be looser than usual and that the hilarious hand-out will appear with only a little coaxing.”²¹² The use of “remuda” to describe the men is subtle but significant. A remuda is the collection of horses cowboys would bring along with them while ranching. One horse could never handle a full day’s work alone and so ranchers would change horses as each tired. In calling the men a remuda, the author revealed an important truth about them. The paper’s disparaging description is contrasted with the necessary role the homeless are needed to play in BC’s economy. This is not a role they fulfill individually – their value is in their numbers. As each one falters, another worker can replace them. Without their labour, the economy of British Columbia would suffer as a rancher would with only one horse. Nevertheless, despite the *Colonist*’s unintentional acknowledgement of the critical role homeless workers played in BC’s economy, the story of the “Lorn Legion” also illustrates the paper’s distaste for the homeless.

²¹¹ “Sad Story of the Lorn Legion,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, January 4, 1910, 16.

²¹² “Sad Story of the Lorn Legion,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 16.

Another case which highlights the contempt the *Colonist* had for the homeless is Joseph O'Brien's. On January 15, 1911, a body was found at the Ten-Mile Post of the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway (E&N). According to the *Colonist*, a man had been found "[L]aying with his head over one of the tracks... and instantly killed."²¹³ The E&N and train operators were "reticent" to disclose any information about the man but a source with the city police informed the *Colonist* that the deceased was Joseph O'Brien, a local railway worker. O'Brien was apparently known to police, having passed a short stint in the provincial jail on a vagrancy charge. Although the paper notes no explanation was given for his untimely death, the *Colonist* hints that he was probably intoxicated at the time of the accident. Several days later, O'Brien was buried in Ross Bay Cemetery. Along with his obituary, the *Colonist* carried an editorial letter from a group known only as the "Mason Gang."²¹⁴ The authors were former colleagues of O'Brien's from a disbanded E&N work gang who took exception to the newspaper labelling him as a vagrant. They note that he had worked with them in the Niagara Canyon for several months and, "...had a tent and other property, besides money, and money due to him, when he went to Victoria."²¹⁵ The letter states that O'Brien was a steady worker and had only visited town twice throughout his time with the Mason Gang. The authors of the letter believed that O'Brien had been given "...dope, instead of whiskey, and so got locked up."²¹⁶ The letter also argues that had O'Brien been "a man of substance... all his faults would have been forgotten," and the paper would have only focused on what had made him the good man the Mason Gang remembered.²¹⁷ The letter concludes by requesting the *Colonist* give their letter the same

²¹³ "Struck by Train at 10 Mile Post," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, January 15, 1911.

²¹⁴ "Justice to the Dead," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, January 19, 1911, 7, "Obituary Notices," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, January 19, 1911, 8.

²¹⁵ "Justice to the Dead," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 7.

²¹⁶ "Justice to the Dead," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 7. Presumably "dope" here refers to opium – the drug was legal in Victoria right up to 1908 and remained an easily found substance in the city in this period. David Lai, "Chinese Opium Trade and Manufacture in British Columbia, 1858-1908," *Journal of the West* 38, 3 (July 1999), 21.

²¹⁷ "Justice to the Dead," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, January 19, 1911, 7.

prominence they had given to the article slandering O'Brien, an article they say, "would lead one to believe he was better dead."²¹⁸

O'Brien's story is a unique case, as most homeless persons did not have letters to the editor defending them from slander. Importantly, the letter suggests that newspapers unfairly maligned those who could least defend themselves. O'Brien was far from a hardened criminal, despite the *Colonist's* account. He only appeared in the Victoria police courts once. He does not appear in the paper before his first vagrancy charge either, meaning it is unlikely he was a known troublemaker. He was an older man, with the coroner recording his age as "60 years about."²¹⁹ Perhaps O'Brien had tramped as a young man on the mainland, but it is doubtful the city police or *Colonist* would have known. Yet the *Colonist's* account of O'Brien is built almost entirely upon his brief relationship with the police as a vagrant. If we reread the original article, we might reinterpret the "reticence" of the railway crews as not being fearful of revealing private information but rather an inability to speak while mourning the loss of a former co-worker. The references to drunkenness may simply be idle talk or bitter cynicism from the police – especially considering his death certificate makes no reference to alcohol. There is the possibility that the paper's account of O'Brien is broadly correct, but the key point is that while we cannot know these details, the *Colonist* felt it acceptable to use O'Brien as a vessel for stereotypes about the homeless after his death. His case, and others like it, force us to stop and think about popular accounts of the homeless.

Not all news articles portrayed the homeless in a negative light. For example, on March 26, 1911, the *Daily Colonist* published "Riding the Bumpers: How a Hobo Manages without a Ticket." The article is a full-page spread on hoboes and tramps in the Americas. It is accompanied by photos of men riding in various positions along the length of the train, as well as a cartoon of a tramp and a police officer. The

²¹⁸ "Justice to the Dead," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 7.

²¹⁹ GR 2951, Volume 25, British Columbia, Division of Vital Statistics, Death registrations, 10-09-625260, Joseph O'Brien.

piece notes that the “genus Hobo is an unknown classification on Vancouver Island.”²²⁰ According to the *Colonist*, the hobo “must always have some place to go from and some place to get to and... [A]n island, such as Vancouver Island, offers too many chances in favour of the Brothers of the Brass Button.”²²¹ The article continues in what can only be described as a training manual for “riding the rails,” with suggestions on preferred cars and warnings to avoid certain trains, as two young men from Chicago learned the hard way when they were nearly blown off the roof of a seventy-mile per hour express to New York. The author concludes by saying he had once tried “stealing a ride,” and, presumably, found it so uncomfortable that he recommends his readers “‘press the plush,’ i.e. pay for their train rides whenever possible.”²²²

The article is shockingly blasé in its description of train-hopping techniques. Arguably “Riding the Bumpers” would not have been printed on the mainland or, if it were, it would have been poorly received. However, on Vancouver Island, where the hobo was apparently rare, the *Colonist* felt comfortable in sharing methods of riding freight trains that would have proved useful off island. But their attitude does not match with the growing number of vagrancy arrests in Victoria, nor does it accurately represent the lack of “places to go” on Vancouver Island. Although it is true that there were fewer railways in 1911, the authors would have known that new railways were nearly complete. Along with the Esquimalt and Nanaimo and the Victoria and Sidney Railways, the BC Electric Railway and the Pacific Great Northern Railway were building new lines in the Saanich Peninsula and toward Sooke.²²³ There were also plenty of locations to hide on island without railways. The Lubbe Powerhouse, an early hydro-electric dam that was contracted to provide electricity for Victoria and the city’s street railway, was near the site O’Brien was found dead. Located between the village of Malahat and the now-abandoned settlement of

²²⁰ “Riding the Bumpers,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, March 26, 1911, 16.

²²¹ “Riding the Bumpers,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 16. “Brothers of the Brass Button” probably refers to police officers.

²²² “Riding the Bumpers,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 16.

²²³ Danda Humphreys, *On The Street Where You Live: Victoria’s Early Roads and Railways* (Surrey: Heritage House, 2000), 161.

Leechtown, men working at the plant kept a record of the weather and other notable events. Twice in early 1911 the journal notes that tramps had spent the night in the powerhouse.²²⁴ The lack of later references suggests either the engineers stopped recording individuals spending the night or, conversely, stopped allowing people to sleep in the plant but it is extremely unlikely no other homeless persons travelled along the nearby railways after 1911 – especially considering the example of O’Brien.

The newspaper may have been aware of the risks of publishing an article on how to ride the rails illegally, implied by the location of a subsequent article printed below “Riding the Bumpers.” The piece, entitled “What Police Supervision Really Means,” states: “Several times...prisoners held at our criminal courts have passionately held forth on the alleged tyranny practiced by the police on those who are placed by the courts... under supervision.”²²⁵ “Tyranny” appears to refer to supervised parole, both for those given suspended sentences and those recently released from prison. The author defends the police and their right to monitor these individuals, noting that the conditions he lists are not particularly onerous. At first glance, the second story is unrelated to tramps and hoboes but its placement immediately below the story of travelling hoboes seems to be a subtle reminder that the state maintains the right to control an individual’s free movement. It might also serve as a warning for those considering riding the rails – if they are arrested, they could face these same parole conditions. The reader is free to imagine themselves as a hobo but, should they actually attempt to ride the rails, there will be consequences for them.

The examples I have given thus far have been from the *Colonist* which, as a digitized archive, allows for a quick but thorough overview. The *Vancouver Sun, Province* and *Daily News-Advertiser* are only available on microfilm and would require too much time to research in an MA thesis. Thanks to the University of British Columbia’s BC Historical Newspapers Open Collection, there are some Vancouver-based newspapers available. Five weekly papers are available that give insights into how homeless people

²²⁴ BC Archives, MS-1321.5.1, Power house journal, 1911.

²²⁵ “What Police Supervision Really Means,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, March 26, 1911, 16.

were viewed in the city. These were the *Western Clarion*, *BC Federationist*, *Chinook*, *Express*, and *Western Call*. The *Clarion* was the mouthpiece of the Socialist Party of Canada, an “impossibilist” revolutionary organization and precursor to the Communist Party.²²⁶ The *Federationist* was the paper of the BC Federation of Labor and represented the mainstream Left opinions of groups that would form the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (C.C.F.).²²⁷ The *Chinook* was a South Vancouver paper, the *Express* a North Vancouver weekly and the *Western Call* was the mouthpiece of Henry Herbert Stevens, a prominent Vancouver Conservative Party MP. I have searched each paper for the terms “tramp,” “hobo,” “homeless” and “vagrant” or “vagrancy.” These terms are all synonymous in this period and, other than “vagrant,” have varying negative connotations. The articles range in date from 1904 to 1925, though most are published between 1910 and 1915. Keyword searches are a less than ideal research method, being prone to error or presenting more information than can be parsed usefully. For example, “tramp” provides an overwhelming number of hits with each paper because a keyword search cannot differentiate between a human tramp and a tramp steamer (a ship with a variable schedule and destination). Moreover, errors in the encoding of these documents result in occasional false hits or instances where searched terms do not appear. Nevertheless, keyword searches give a relatively thorough coverage in a short window of time.

The paper most sympathetic to the hobo was the *Western Clarion*. The homeless were a favourite subject for early radical left parties in North America. Most of the IWW’s 150,000 peak membership were travelling workers and many hobo expressions derive from IWW slang.²²⁸ Although the *Clarion* regularly feuded with the “Wobblies,” there was undoubtedly sympathy and, likely, overlap among the party and union membership.²²⁹ The *Clarion* reprinted articles and letters from hoboes, such as “A Red Find” or

²²⁶ Peter E. Newall, *The Impossibilists: A Brief Profile of the Socialist Party of Canada* (Twickenham, UK: Athena Press, 2008), 22, 62.

²²⁷ McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise*, 333.

²²⁸ Chester, *The Wobblies in Their Heyday*, xii, DePastino, *Citizen Hobo*, 95-126.

²²⁹ McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise*, 188, Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 112, Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows*, 57-58.

“Growth of the Movement,” where a member of the party travels by freight train to visit SPC locals.²³⁰ We also get articles such as “The Hobo,” a lengthy screed attacking state authorities, capitalists and social scientists alike for pathologizing the supposed refusal to work. The *Clarion* asks if all the unemployed in the world were hired, what would become of their labour? The paper answers its own question: “The conception is impossible. There is only a certain amount of work to be done and if those now out of work were put to work it would simply mean that those now working would be forced to take their places in the ranks of the unemployed.”²³¹ The piece also hints at the popular uses of hoboeing as a negative. The paper asks the reader to consider “another type of hobo,” one that possesses “all surplus value over and above the slave classes’ bare necessities of life.”²³² The *Clarion* is ironically comparing the capitalist class to the workshy tramp stereotype of popular media. For the *Clarion*, it is not the travelling wage labourer who is the real “parasite” but the capitalist. In “Socially Desirable,” the *Clarion* mocks political economists who argue that the “idle rich” are socially desirable. The paper uses a similar argument to Jack London in *The Road*, writing that “Tramps give employment to policemen, detectives, judges, court attachés, prison guards, settlement workers, charity experts, reformers and many others,” and finishes with a sarcastic plea to exercise caution when denouncing tramps, “lest we upset the whole fabric of criminology.”²³³

Although one of the most sympathetic publications to the homeless, the *Clarion* was not above using the tramp stereotype as an example of the ills of capitalist society. The *Clarion* engaged in a tendency among some early Canadian Marxists to denigrate and exclude those who did not fit into a specific image of working class identity. Marx identified individuals who refused work as being part of a fundamentally unrevolutionary formation that “belongs to capital quite as absolutely as if the latter had

²³⁰ James Thompson, “A Red Find,” *Western Clarion*, April 8, 1911, 4, “Growth of the Movement,” *Western Clarion*, December 2, 1905, 1.

²³¹ “The Hobo,” *Western Clarion*, February 17, 1912, 2.

²³² “The Hobo,” *Western Clarion*, 2.

²³³ “Socially Desirable,” *Western Clarion*, February 24, 1912, 1.

bred it at its own cost.”²³⁴ The homeless and work-shy were as much parasites as the capitalist and tying the two together allowed the *Clarion* to tap into traditions of working class pride in “respectable” labour.²³⁵ Nevertheless, the *Clarion* and SPC were prominent, but rare, defenders of the homeless.

The *BC Federationist* took a more neutral stance compared to the *Clarion*, insofar as they did not write much on the issue of homelessness. Generally, the *Federationist* focused on the mainstream labour movement and those working in “respectable” careers. Their focus did not necessarily exclude the homeless, who often worked in conditions the *Federationist* railed against. Nevertheless, the paper was principally concerned with working conditions in unionized industries. When the *Federationist* discussed hoboes, they often took on popular stereotypes regarding travelling workers. In an article on Australian Premier Billy Hughes’ decision to implement conscription, the paper notes that “Hughes owe[d] much to the Labor party and the unions,” having been picked out as an extraordinary figure from the ranks of the hoboes.²³⁶ The article almost immediately attempts to step back from the apparent slur, writing, “Not that there is any disgrace in being a ‘hobo,’ but I wish to say what the workers have done for him since they took him in hand.”²³⁷ Despite the qualification, it is apparent the writer does not hold the “hobo” in high esteem, nor is the hobo even necessarily a member of the working class. No regular hobo could become Premier of Australia, after all. The implication is that Hughes would be nothing more than an umbrella mender without the Australian Labor Party’s initial support. In 1920, the *Federationist* published a short poem that also speaks to the paper’s views on tramps. “Why Scab For a Temporary Job” is an anonymous piece that attacks the strikebreaker as the lowest of low.²³⁸ The poem is sarcastic and not meant to be taken literally. The tramp describes himself as an outcast, shiftless, a thief, drunk and even a murderer but, in

²³⁴ Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume. 1*, in David McLellan, ed., *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 479.

²³⁵ McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise*, 208-209.

²³⁶ W. Francis Ahern, “Umbrella Mender as Uncrowned King,” *BC Federationist*, September 22, 1916, 3.

²³⁷ “Umbrella Mender as Uncrowned King,” *BC Federationist*, 3.

²³⁸ Unknown, “Why Scab for a Temporary Job?” *BC Federationist*, February 27, 1920, 1. See appendix for a full copy of this poem.

the end, he is still better than a scab. The description is not particularly kind but at its core there is an implication that the tramp has a degree of self-respect and, importantly, class consciousness. “Why Scab For a Temporary Job” is an ideal example of shifting attitudes toward the homeless after the end of the Great War, when unemployment and the failure to uphold the promises made during war presaged responses to homelessness in the Great Depression.

The *Chinook*, *Express* and *Western Call* all took a more negative approach to the homeless, if by varying degrees. The *Western Call* was the most vitriolic. During the 1912 Free Speech movement in Vancouver, where the IWW played a crucial role, the paper’s editor, H.H. Stevens, published an editorial entitled “Breach of Faith with I.W.W.” Stevens focuses his attack on the *Vancouver World*, a daily that had been sympathetic to the protesters and the IWW. Stevens concludes by pointedly attacking the homeless, writing, “**Free Speech** is our **birthright**, being sons of Britain; and for free speech we join with all citizens, but for the lazy good-for-nothing hoboes and other enemies of our city and commonwealth we recommend arrest and the stone-pile cure.”²³⁹ The conflation of the homeless with various other “enemies” of the city is a harsh denunciation by Stevens. The labelling of the homeless as enemies also implies they cannot be “sons of Britain,” though who they might be is left unsaid. He is most likely referring to Continental Europeans, who made up a significant part of the radical left in Canada.²⁴⁰

The *Chinook* took a more neutral tone to the homeless, often discussing them but in a less critical light. In the aftermath of the Vancouver free speech “riots,” the *Chinook* offers a positively neutral account of the IWW. The paper notes the humorous ways the union’s abbreviation can be read (like “I Want Whisky” or “I Won’t Work”) but they also offer a grudging respect for the union’s rapid growth, writing:

Charlie [Nelson, a strike leader] said that the free-speech riots in Vancouver helped the cause along so well that hundreds of men...have since joined... and that now the I.W.W. people are in a position to pay \$1,200 a year for committee rooms on Cordova street. In view of the fact that the I.W.W. movement is only some three years of age, one would be

²³⁹ H.H. Stevens, “Breach of Faith With I.W.W.,” *The Western Call*, February 16, 1912, 1, emphasis in original.

²⁴⁰ McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise*, 398-407.

constrained to believe that the order must be one to be reckoned with, or the daily newspapers would not run I.W.W. stories on the first page and in the first column.²⁴¹ In a 1915 article on homelessness and unemployment among men living near the waterfront, the paper again takes a relatively neutral tone. The paper tuts at the men of “Anglo-Saxon stock, Americans, British and Canadians” for not saving their money as well as foreigners, who the paper suggests should not have been allowed into Canada at all but, compared to articles where the writer calls for the death of the homeless or implies that they are all lazy drunks, the piece is comparatively judgment free.²⁴²

The *Express* barely discussed homeless persons. While Burrard Inlet is not as difficult to cross as the Salish Sea, it still appears to have given a significant enough barrier to homeless persons that the North Vancouver paper did not fall into the same anti-homeless hysteria as other parts of Vancouver. The *Express*, like the *Chinook* and *Western Call*, mainly printed jokes about hoboes and tramps. Each paper published different versions of these jokes, each with varying degrees of comic value. These were printed alongside other jokes in an early version of the funny pages. Most of these revolved around the tramp or hobo as unintentionally clever. For example, one joke goes:

Tramp – Lady, I ain’t idle from choice, but I can’t get the sort of employment I want mum.

Kind Lady – What would you like to do?

Tramp – I’d like to be a college president, mum; do you know where I could get such a job?²⁴³

Another joke, printed in 1905, features a more sarcastic tramp:

Charitable Lady – But a man last week told me exactly the same story.

Tramp – Yes, lady Yer see, I made a fatal mistake in not havin’ the history of me life copyrighted.²⁴⁴

Other jokes make fun of the workshy, such as one where two neighbours discuss using animals to keep tramps away. One uses a dog and the other states they use a horse. The first neighbour asks, “A horse? Gracious! Are tramps afraid of a horse?” to which the second replies, “Yes; a saw horse.”²⁴⁵ One of these

²⁴¹ *Greater Vancouver Chinook*, “The I.W.W.’s,” May 25, 1912, 4.

²⁴² *The Greater Vancouver Chinook*, “Pick and Shovel Nomads Stuck in City Because Jobs are Scarce,” February 20, 1915, 5.

²⁴³ *The Express*, “Untitled Joke,” February 8, 1907, 2.

²⁴⁴ *The Express*, “A Fatal Mistake,” November 10, 1905, 2.

²⁴⁵ *The Express*, “Give it a Wide Berth,” May 18, 1906, 3.

short stories even seems to call for sympathy for the tramp, stating, “They say, from rising of the sun Until they light the lamps, A woman’s work is never done – But Neither is a tramp’s.”²⁴⁶ Key to all these jokes is the presumption that the tramps they are referring to fit the same basic mould.

A commonality between each of these stereotypes and tropes persists throughout. Although race and gender are not always stated overtly, the characters are implicitly white men. Ages range variously, with older men usually held up as sympathetic cases or cautionary tales for those tempted to wander. Young men feature prominently throughout each version of the trope. But it must be emphasized that they are white men. Deviations are worthy of note, with headlines such as “Laura, Girl Hobo, Sees New York,” qualifying “unique” cases in the papers.²⁴⁷ These cases are exceptional, not because racialized people and, to a lesser extent, women, were not liable to be homeless in the early-twentieth century. Instead, these groups are deviations from the stereotype and their presence among the turn of the century homeless risked dismantling a fiction built up around the tramp. Women and racialized homeless persons tainted the romantic imagery of the strong, independent white man tramping off into the sunset for adventure. Similarly, women and racialized people did not fit into the working homeless persona either. For those who sympathized with hoboes, the white man was the only “real” worker in their eyes. Women did not belong in the factory and racialized persons, whether local-born or recent immigrants, were unwelcome in North America. Conversely, for those who attacked the working homeless, women and racialized people were not useful for the “dangerous radical” hobo trope. Women were supposedly too weak to pose a threat to capitalism and racialized persons were stereotyped as simple-minded and easily led. Detractors instead engaged with the stereotype by portraying white men as the dangerous radicals and various

²⁴⁶ *The Express*, “Like and Unlike,” March 23, 1906, 3.

²⁴⁷ *New Westminster News*, “Laura, Girl Hobo, Sees New York,” September 9, 1913, 3. Another classic example of this trope is Ben Reitman’s Boxcar Bertha, a semi-autobiographical figure he writes about in his work, *Sister of the Road: The Autobiography of Boxcar Bertha*. Bertha Thompson did not exist, but part of her allure is in her gender and the transgressive nature of a “woman hobo.” Ben Reitman, *Sister of the Road: The Autobiography of Box-Car Bertha* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, 2014 [1937]).

racialized persons, and Eastern and Southern Europeans especially, as their unwitting adherents. The “sons of Britain” could not be seen as fearful of supposedly weak and simple-minded racialized persons but Anglo-Celts could fear other white men who “misused” their superiority to “cause trouble.” Thus, the white tramp persona could reify itself across a variety of related tropes, all of which worked to erase the presence of women and racialized persons from our historical memory of turn of the century homelessness.

Helped along by the popularity of various cinematic, literary, and other media tropes, the white tramp mythos became embedded in North American popular culture. The mythos persists to today, despite changes in the make up of homeless populations. For example, any fan of *The Simpsons* will recall the reoccurrence of the homeless throughout the series, including several episodes that prominently feature hoboes.²⁴⁸ There is also still a significant subculture surrounding hoboeing in the United States. Britt, Iowa has held a “Hobo Convention” and celebrated “Hobo Day” since 1900. The yearly convention features in several documentaries, more recent ones focusing upon the “death” of the hobo.²⁴⁹ Finally, several popular YouTube channels feature individuals living as “modern day hoboes,” not as tropes of early-twentieth century tramps but as rail riding thrill-seekers. Contributors BraveDave, RanOutOnARail and, until his death, hobestobe, each count thousands of subscribers and video views ranging from a few thousand to nearly a million.²⁵⁰ Although better conceived as part of a broader extreme outdoors sporting movement,

²⁴⁸ Examples include *The Day the Violence Died*, where Bart Simpson meets a homeless man who claims to be the original founder of *Itchy and Scratchy*, the *Simpsons*’ parody cartoon show, *Brother Can You Spare Two Dimes?* where Homer Simpson’s half-brother, Herb, lives as a hobo after losing his fortune over a poorly designed car made by Homer in a previous episode, or *Simpsons Tall Tales*, where the family jump a train rather than pay \$5 to fly to Delaware and meet a singing, story-telling hobo aboard their boxcar. In each instance, the homeless character fits the hobo mould – a white man, wearing a tattered suit and presenting a tough and slightly menacing but rugged figure. See “Brother, Can You Spare Two Dimes?” 59, directed by Rich Moore, written by John Swartzwelder. Fox Broadcasting, August 27, 1992, “The Day the Violence Died,” 146, directed by Wes Archer, written by John Swartzwelder. Fox Broadcasting, March 17, 1996, “Simpsons Tall Tales,” 269, directed by Bob Anderson, written by John Frink, Don Payne, Bob Bendetson and Matt Selman. Fox Broadcasting, May 20, 2001.

²⁴⁹ *Love Those Trains*, written and produced by James Lipscomb (Pittsburgh: The National Geographic Society, 1984), Aaron Lake Smith, “Death of the American Hobo,” *Vice News*, October 11, 2012.

²⁵⁰ Hobestobe, YouTube user, <https://www.youtube.com/user/hobestobe>, BraveDave, YouTube user, <https://www.youtube.com/user/bravedaveempire/featured>, RanOutOnARail, YouTube user, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8XCmWXE2J5dF7wXkzUVHtw>. See Josh Katzowitz, “Stobe the Hobo, the internet’s

a key part of the appeal for these YouTubers and their fans is to live out the dream of the hobo. As this chapter has illustrated, the dream has only ever existed as a fantasy.

In conclusion, this chapter has tried to break down a long-running mythology of the “white tramp,” with the goal of contextualizing and explaining its original purpose, as well as its long-running presence in North American media. The “white tramp” became a solution for tensions developing between capitalism’s need for cheap labour and the growing surveillance and penal functions of the liberal state. Rather than allow these tensions to boil over, risking the privileged place of capital, fictional characters developed that filled a niche in the imaginations of middle class urbanites who longed to return to nature and its “manly” freedoms. These fictional characters not only appealed to middle class machismo but also functioned as a warning to would-be tramps – wanderlust was a lovely thought but acting upon it could have consequences. Finally, stereotypes of tramps as revolutionaries, ne’er-do-wells and vicious criminals were cultivated to provide both a cautionary tale to those who might sympathize with the urban poor but also to justify the growing monitoring and criminalization of homeless persons. The tramp imagery was built upon racial, gendered and class notions of who was a member of the working class and, in doing so, functioned to erase the presence of women and racialized persons among the homeless. The tramp mythos has remained integral to North American popular culture and, as a result, has limited our understanding of historic poverty in the Americas. Historians must rethink the tramp stereotype and question just how valid the persona is. Continued reliance upon it only serves to limit our ability to understand the homeless of the early-twentieth century and complicates our ability to combat the existing crises in homelessness among women and racialized persons.

most famous train-hopper, dead after apparent accident,” *The Daily Dot*, November 17, 2017 for details on the death of James Stobie, aka Hobestobe.

Conclusion

The history of homelessness in North America is still remarkably understudied. Marxist and post-modernist scholars have tentatively engaged with the subject, writing valuable works on the ways the capitalist mode of production and the disciplinary state act to create, monitor and punish the homeless. These theoretical lenses, though useful, are limited in their ability to examine the homeless experience. Marxist analysis requires a rigid class framework while post-modernism relies on excessively wide historical temporality and generalized views of disciplinary power that do not account for the specificities of liberal ideology. I have used a neo-Marxist Gramscian theoretical tradition which synthesizes some of the best elements of each framework. Following Ian McKay's theories, I have argued that not only were the early-twentieth century homeless inevitable by-products of capitalist exploitation, but they were also a specific cultural construction used to facilitate the maintenance of liberal hegemony. Furthermore, drawing upon the works of Leonard Feldman and John Lennon, I have shown that the early-twentieth century homeless were defined by multiple, externally constructed identities. Two particular versions were common. The first was a group which existed only in fiction and was intended to either entertain or provide a vicarious outlet for young men with wanderlust. The second was an exaggerated portrayal of the existing homeless which served as a warning to those who wished to explore and a scapegoat for others who suffered the deprivations of the capitalist state. Neither caricature adequately represented the homeless, who were neither criminals nor a homogeneous population of labouring white men.

I have engaged with three significant datasets. First, vagrancy and charity records offered us an opportunity to examine the "literalist" homeless – individuals who were either sleeping rough or in shelters. The Victoria dataset suggested that the city's homeless were predominantly white men, but a lack of supporting evidence or alternative datasets limits the value of these records. The Vancouver police courts showed significant numbers of women and racialized persons arrested for vagrancy, though still fewer than the total number of white men. Conversely, the records of the Associated Charities of

Vancouver suggested that virtually all shelter inhabitants were white or white-passing men. These contradictory results necessitated a second dataset, the 1911 census. An examination of rooming house residents allowed the exploration of a broader subset of the urban homeless and not merely those sleeping rough. Roomers were the source of a significant social scientific literature at the turn of the century which categorized them as part of the same “underclass” as the homeless. I used a logistic regression test of the 1911 census to examine roomers as a subset of the urban populations of Victoria and Vancouver. Regression analysis is an ideal method for examining the independent effects of several conditions while controlling for others. For example, rather than simply generating tables showing the ages of roomers and inferring that rooming house residents were probably young, a regression analysis offers a unique insight into the independent association of age and the condition of being a roomer. Logistic analysis can provide strong, statistically sound results that are useful for a study such as my thesis. The logistic regression tests offered surprising results which suggested that roomers, and potentially all homeless persons, did not fit into any single trope. The broadly masculine nature of the homeless, as well as the overrepresentation of manual labourers, remained constants but race, age, marital and immigration status diverged between Victoria and Vancouver, as well as from the tramp stereotype I tested against. Regression analysis offers us an analytical precision that cannot be replicated easily, and the results gleaned from the census suggest that past presumptions about who the homeless were are imprecise and potentially flawed.

Rather than engage in a similar act of erasure as other historians of homelessness, I have discussed the experiences of homeless women and racialized persons. A wealth of data exist on the urban homeless which historians must engage with. Women and racialized persons were not only a substantial minority of the homeless, but they were also groups who faced particular forms of sexual and racial oppression, above and beyond the class oppression they experienced as homeless persons. Although shelters and rescue missions existed to help some, women and racialized persons were more likely to be arrested than

receive economic relief. I concluded my analysis with a significant critique of the white tramp mythos. This figure from the early-twentieth century has had an outsized effect on our study of historic homelessness and hinders our ability to properly examine historic and contemporary poverty. Most histories of the homeless revolve around the tramp figure, centring their experiences of poverty and persecution. Although it is clear that white men made up a considerable proportion of all homeless persons at the turn of the century, they were not alone. Instead, tropes built around figures such as Charlie Chaplin and Jack London, among others, have become stand-ins for the early-twentieth century homeless.

Homelessness is not simply the result of poor choices or moral failing, nor is it the result of an uncontrolled desire to travel. The homeless are a unique by-product of the hegemonic liberal ideological system. Their poverty is a consequence of capitalism's need for a fresh body of labourers to depress wages and take on menial labour. However, the homeless are also constructed as a distinct population within the greater reserve army of labour. The act of being without shelter is both a material condition and a cultural construct dictated by the political machinations of hegemonic liberalism. As a product of this intersection of capital and disciplinary power, the homeless are exposed to a particularly harsh form of capitalist oppression. The homeless of the early-twentieth century were no different, but historians of homelessness have tried to separate these two conditions of homeless experience. Some have argued that the homeless existed only to fulfil the Marxist function of a reserve army of labour. Others have argued that the homeless were a result of power dynamics in a disciplinary society which sought to mould ne'er-do-wells into upstanding citizens. The reality is a combination of the two, a reality which must be acknowledged and explored by historians of homelessness. To think historically about homelessness means we must examine material reality and cultural artefacts alike. Historians must critically engage with their source material when examining homelessness. To truly understand historic homelessness, we must strive to break down the meaning of "homelessness" itself.

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Appendix

Why Scab For a Temporary Job

Yes, I am an outcast, a tramp and
a bum;

I'm shiftless and dirty to boot;
I don't care a rap for your smiles
or your frown.

Nor a jot for your praise or your
hoot;

I live like a beast, so you say in
your scorn;

I'm a flaw in society's plan;
And you are right, I'm all these
and then some to boot.

But I never yet scabbed on a man.

I'll steal when I'm hungry, and
fight when I must,

And lie when it pays me the best;
I'm lazy and shameless and drink
like a fish,

And I'd murder, perhaps, if hard
pressed.

I'm a vagabond, worthless, and a
curse to the race;

I admit it, so just save your gab;
I'm crusty with dirt, but I've got to
go some,

To be dirty enough for a scab.

I'm low and degenerate, scarce fit
to live;

I admit it, and don't care a rap.

The ash barrel's my banquet, the
 gutter my bed.
 As I travel the face of the map,
 You can call me a scoundrel, a
 hound or a cur;
 They all fit, so just take a grab;
 I won't squirm at the dirtiest name
 in the bunch,
 But I'll shoot if you call me a scab.

---Unknown

Harvest War Song

(Tune: "Tipperary")

We are coming home, John Farmer; we are coming back to stay.
 For nigh on fifty years or more, we've gathered up your hay.
 We have slept out in your hayfields, we have heard your morning shout;
 We've heard you wondering, where in hell's them pesky go-about's?

CHORUS:

It's a long way, now understand me; it's a long way to town;
 It's a long way across the prairie, and to hell with Farmer John.
 Up goes machine or wages, and the hours must come down;
 For we're out for a winter's stake this summer, and we want no scabs around.

You've paid the going wages, that's what kept us on the bum,
 You say you've done your duty, you chin-whiskered son of a gun.
 We have sent your kids to college, but still you must rave and shout,
 And call us tramps and hoboes, and pesky go-about's.

But now the wintry breezes are a-shaking our poor frames,
 And the long drawn days of hunger, try to drive us boes insane.
 It is driving us to action—we are organized today;
 Us pesky tramps and hoboes, are coming back to stay.

Overalls and Snuff

(Tune: "Wearing of the Green")

One day as I was walking along the railroad track,
 I met a man in Wheatland with his blankets on his back,
 He was an old-time hop picker, I'd seen his face before,
 I knew he was a wobbly, by the button that he wore.
 By the button that he wore, by the button that he wore
 I knew he was a wobbly, by the button that he wore.

He took his blankets off his back and sat down on the rail
 And told us some sad stories 'bout the workers down in jail.
 He said the way they treat them there, he never saw the like,
 For they're putting men in prison just for going out on strike,
 Just for going out on strike, just for going out on strike,
 They're putting men in prison, just for going out on strike.

They have sentenced Ford and Suhr, and they've got them in the pen,
 If they catch a wobbly in their burg, they vag him there and then.
 There is one thing I can tell you, and it makes the bosses sore,
 As fast as they can pinch us, we can always get some more.
 We can always get some more, we can always get some more,
 As fast as they can pinch us, we can always get some more.

Oh, Horst and Durst are mad as hell, they don't know what to do.
 And the rest of those hop barons are all feeling mighty blue.
 Oh, we've tied up all their hop fields, and the scabs refuse to come,
 And we're going to keep on striking till we put them on the bum.
 Till we put them on the bum, till we put them on the bum,
 We're going to keep on striking till we put them on the bum.

Now we've got to stick together, boys, and strive with all our might,
 We must free Ford and Suhr, boys, we've got to win this fight.
 From these scissorbill hop barons we are taking no more bluff,
 We'll pick no more damned hops for them, for overalls and snuff,
 For our overalls and snuff, for our overalls and snuff,
 We'll pick no more damned hops for them, for overalls and snuff.

Walking on the Grass

(Tune: "The Wearing of the Green")

In this blessed land of freedom where King Mammon wears the crown,
 There are many ways illegal now to hold the people down.
 When the dudes of state militia are slow to come to time
 The law upholding Pinkertons are gathered from the slime.
 There are wisely framed injunctions that you must not leave your job,
 And a peaceable assemblage is declared to be a mob,
 And Congress passed a measure framed by some consummate ass,
 So they are clubbing men and women just for walking on the grass.

In this year of slow starvation, when a fellow looks for work,
 The chances are a cop will grab his collar with a jerk;
 He will run him in for vagrancy, he is branded as a tramp,
 And all the well-to-do will shout: "It serves him right, the scamp!"
 So we let the ruling class maintain the dignity of law,

When the court decides against us we are filled with wholesome awe,
But we cannot stand the outrage without a little sauce
When they're clubbing men and women just for walking on the grass.

The papers said the union men were all but anarchist,
So the job trust promised work for all who wouldn't enlist;
But the next day when the hungry horde surrounded city hall,
He hedged and said he didn't promise anything at all.
So the powers that be are acting very queer to say the least—
They should go and read their Bible and all about Belshazzar's feast,
And when mene tekel at length shall come to pass,
They'll stop clubbing men and women just for walking on the grass.