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A Rhetorical Analysis of The Homeless Community in San Francisco
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Introduction

Rhetoric is considered to be exclusive to persuasion. However, scholars (edbauer, grant-davie, boil and barnett) have shown that rhetoric is not limited to persuasion and goes beyond. They showed that rhetoric views how language, material, individuals work in an interconnected web. any situation might be rhetorical. To illustrate how rhetorical situations are not limited to public speaking and art of persuasion, we will analyze how a social situation such as homelessness is a rhetorical situation. More specifically, we will look at a video clip on the internet that showcases an incident between a middle-class man and a homeless woman in the city of san francisco (). In addition to the video, we will be using youtube's comments about the video, and the video of the interview done by a news channel, and the reddit comments about the first video.

To do so, we will use three methods including rhetorical situations, rhetoric of things, and rhetorical circulation to explore that the situation of homelessness is rhetorical in materialistic, public, and political ways and it should be addressed to create a better understanding around an issue (homelessness) that have remained unsolved for decades. My contribution is significant as it not only adds to the rhetoric of homelessness studied by other scholars from specific points of view (for example, melanie loehwing and her analysis of political discourse about homelessness), but also looks at the rhetoric of homelessness as an intricate web of rhetorical situations that is required by such a complex issue (homelessness).

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At the beginning of the homeless crisis in the United States in the 1970s, a group of homeless activists began voluntarily living on streets to publicize homelessness suffering. According to one of these activists who was interviewed by Washington Post “there’s an insanity, an absurdity” regarding public disgust and indifference towards the homeless. He continues “our social and economic systems drive people apart, instead of bringing them together. That is why we feel the need for radical change” (p1. Qtd. In Loehwing). There is a lot to unpack here. One can see the issue of homelessness is still ongoing in our society and the rhetoric around helping homeless people is still the same. In the same quote from the activists, we see that the issue of homelessness is related to “public,” (which by extension means people), “social and economic systems” that refers to state, budgeting, government, and society norms.

The first rhetorical question that one immediately thinks of is “what is home” and how “homelessness” (as not having a home) is defined based on the meaning of home. These questions are essential as they build many discourses made by individuals or states that suggest the solution or dissolutions towards homelessness, sometimes simplifying the issue of homelessness in the country. The rhetoric around “home” often encompasses a sense of comfort, safety, belonging, and stability tied to a physical space. In this regard, homelessness could be seen as the absence or loss of that safe place, a state where an individual lacks a stable, adequate, and regular residence.

However, homelessness has not been viewed as such by different stakeholders (public, private, or state). For example, in her book, *Homeless Advocacy and the Rhetorical Construction of the Civil Home*, Melanie Loehwing looks at how the rhetoric of homelessness used by the government has simplified the issue of homelessness to the lack of a physical space. Talking about the eradication of veteran homelessness in several cities (San Francisco, Phoenix, San Antonio), the government

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provided permanent housing to a few homeless and the spokespersons of the state simply announced the end of homelessness. Considering homelessness as a lack of housing produced a reductivist rhetoric around homelessness. One can think of the report of “opening doors: federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness,” a comprehensive strategy introduced by the United States interagency council on homelessness in 2010 (loehwing 2-10). Most of these discourses failed to address the issue of homelessness beyond the lack of housing. In his article, best also emphasizes the lack of meaning of homelessness to be problematic. He states: “this lack of meaning leads to homelessness being covered as a social condition rather than something that happens in a broader context. Like poverty, homelessness is often covered as a social problem rather than a policy problem” (best 85). Looking at other research done by urbanists (sarah johnson), social justice workers and activists (mary l. G. Theroux, adam b. Summers, lawrence j. Mcquillan), the challenge of homelessness also comes from psychological abuse, mental health issues. As observed by a social worker “causes of homelessness are many and often attached to trauma with a strong correlation to mental health issues. Other progressions into homelessness could involve compounded health issues, hospitalization later in life, losing resources, or becoming financially homeless. Each need long-term personalized and customized care for success” (theroux, ackerson et al 4). This statement shows that the issue of homelessness involves many aspects, many agents, many parties, therefore, the rhetoric around homelessness comes from different points of view and requires a diverse analysis.

In their article, “rebalancing the rhetoric: a normative analysis of enforcement in street homelessness policy,” sarah johnson et al. Point out to a range of philosophically informed normative ‘lenses’, including paternalist, utilitarian, rights-based, contractualist, mutualist and

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social justice perspectives regarding policymaking about homelessness. We find the definitions of these perspectives important in understanding the rhetoric of homelessness in san francisco as it also involves various perspectives. According to the article, paternalism is when enforcement measures are often justified by claims that they serve the best interests of homeless individuals, aiming to protect them from potential harm. Some stakeholders argue for a form of justifiable paternalism,” safeguarding vulnerable people from the consequences of their decisions. On the other hand, the utilitarian perspective is when proponents of enforcement focus on its broader societal impacts, highlighting negative effects of activities like rough sleeping or begging on public spaces and safety. They argue that these actions have detrimental effects on local communities and justify enforcement to mitigate these impacts. The article also talks about rights-based perspectives. There’s opposition to enforcement, citing homeless people’s rights to choose their lifestyle, even if it might harm them. Critics argue against imposing societal values on individuals experiencing homelessness. One of the other interesting perspectives is mutualism. Based on principles of mutual care, some stakeholders oppose enforcement, stressing society’s duty to care for homeless individuals without forcing them to comply with specific norms. Others support enforcement, driven by the belief in upholding community standards and safety. The last one that is important is the social justice lens claiming that interventions protect the welfare of homeless individuals. However, opposition to enforcement often highlights systemic issues contributing to homelessness and argues against penalizing individuals for circumstances beyond their control (359-364).

Inspiring from the general perspectives regarding the issue of homelessness and the specific scholarship that we will use in the following sections including specifically grant-davie’s notion

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of “compound exigency” (every situation can be rhetorical and can be multifaceted, a web of interactions of rhetoric), we will analyze the video clip and the comments through different methods: rhetorical situation, rhetoric of things, and rhetorical circulation.

Method a-1: rhetorical situation

One of the essential methods to investigate the rhetoric of homelessness in the video clip that we will be analyzing is “rhetorical situation”. Coined by lloyd bitzer, rhetorical situations outline the elements influencing any act of communication or persuasion. In the infamous article, “rhetorical situation,” bitzer explains that we usually study what a speaker says and how they say it, but to truly understand their words, we need to look at the “why”: the situation. Something is happening around them, pushing them to speak, and shaping what they say. According to him, “rhetorical situation as a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterance; this invited utterance participates naturally in the situation, is in many instances necessary to the completion of situational activity, and by means of its participation with situation obtains its meaning and its rhetorical character” (4-5). However, richard vatz, an expert in rhetoric, claims that rhetorical situations are dependent on the rhetor. According to him the rhetor is who makes salient “choices” and creates the situation. He states, “to the audience, events become meaningful only through their linguistic depiction. Therefore, meaning is not discovered in a situation but created by rhetor” (157). in “rhetoric and its situation,” consigny offers a third ground for what bitzer and vatz suggest about the rhetorical situation. Consigny states, “the rhetorical situation is an indeterminate context marked by troublesome disorder which the rhetor must structure so as to disclose and formulate problems” (178). He adds on to that by explaining that

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the situation is not a product of rhetor's imagination, but it includes real people, actions, facts in a certain time and place.

Another important point of view that can better help me understand rhetorical situations is Aristotle's standpoint on the meaning of "rhetoric" which he mainly defines as an ability of "seeing" the available means of persuasion (Kennedy 16). According to him, there are three concepts in rhetoric that describe the different ways a speaker or writer can persuade an audience. Character of the speaker[ethos], in the speech[logos] and audience's emotion [pathos] (38-39).

Building on Bitzer's definition of rhetorical situation, Grant Davie provides more details in his article: "the rhetorical situation and their constituents". He goes through three concepts of rhetorical situations that were suggested by Bitzer and adds more constituents to each of them. For exigency, Grant-Davie adds these questions to serve as an analytical lens: "what is discourse about?", "why is the discourse needed", "what is the discourse trying to accomplish"? Second constituent is rhetors: Grant Davie explains that rhetor is a part of rhetorical situations. In addition, he states, "rhetors need to consider who they are in a particular situation and be aware that their identity may vary from situation to situation" (269). Third constituent is the audience. Grant-Davie explains that audience and rhetoric have a dynamic situation. The type and definition of audience can vary depending on the discourse community and the reader himself. The third constituent is constraints. Grant Davie adds to the definition of constraints by Bitzer by mentioning that the "persons, events, objects, and relations which are parts of the situation because they have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence" (269). He explains that these elements are related to each other and can affect each other for effective communication. In general, Grant-Davie highlights the significance of rhetorical awareness. Rhetors must be aware of

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the specifics of a given circumstance and modify their communication strategies as necessary. Another important aspect that Grant-Davie brings up is the notion of compound exigency. A rhetorical situation can be compound, meaning it encompasses multiple, interconnected sub-situations within it. To say that all the elements of a rhetorical situation (exigence, rhetor, audience, and constraints) are like tangled wires. They are connected and influence each other, and the more you analyze a situation, the more connections we will find. Even though these parts aren't separate boxes, thinking of them that way at first can be helpful. It gives us different angles to look at a situation, like different tools to understand it. Another point of view that will help with the analysis of the clip is Aristotle's categorization of rhetorical situations: deliberative, epideictic, and judicial. We will specifically be using deliberative and epideictic methods. Deliberative method deals with judging the person/act/situation while epideictic "discusses the virtues and the concept of *to kalon*, the "honorable," "fine," or "noble," and to a lesser extent its opposite, *to aiskhron*, the "shameful," which are the bases of praise or blame in epideictic rhetoric" (75).

We will be considering all these elements in my analysis of the video clip and the other texts surrounding the clip in the following section.

A-2: analysis

Using Bitzer's definition of audience, here, we will start by looking at the audience of the video clip. As Bitzer put it: "a rhetorical audience consists only of those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change" (7). The primary audience that can be impacted by the video are the YouTube and Reddit users who have liked and viewed the video. However, these audiences necessarily don't make change, nonetheless, they can be impactful in the social circulation to finally make the change. Even a viewer is impactful enough to make the

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video to be viewed and be shown on youtube shorts that might be suggested to more people resulting in more awareness. Thereby, it can find its way into more official public news which includes public people and cities' policymakers and encourage them to work towards a solution.

These concepts help to analyze the behavior of the man in the video after he was interviewed and help me to look at the comments section to see who people blame and what might be the reason for their blame.

Aristotle points out how “epideictic premises can be converted into deliberative ones by applying them to advice about future action rather than praise of what has been done in the past” (75). This comment (on reddit) refers exactly to what aristotle states about epideictic rhetoric changing to deliberative rhetoric that calls for taking actions in the future, The video went viral; therefore, news channels showed the video and interviewed the man to give more nuanced information about the situation. (https://youtu.be/M_Z2BsK5xqw?feature=shared) . These concepts help to analyze the behavior of the man in the video after he was interviewed and help me to look at the comments section to see who people blame and what might be the reason for their blame.

According to the comment, the blame (epideictic) is on the “government” and the overall comment calls for change about the homeless situation (deliberative). Using the epideictic lens, aristotle explains (76):

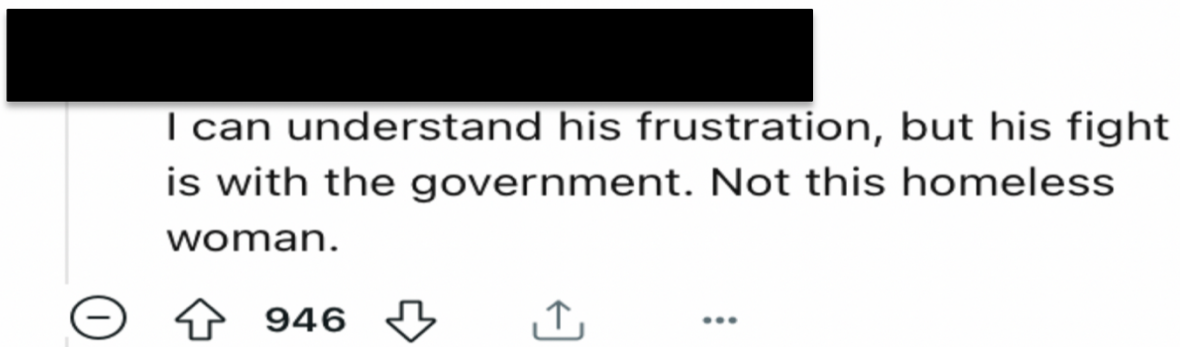
Now kalon describes whatever, through being chosen itself, is praiseworthy or whatever, through being good [agathon], is pleasant because it is good. If this, then, is the kalon, then virtue is necessarily kalon; for it is praiseworthy because of being good [agathon]. now virtue [aret] is an ability [dynamis], as it seems, that is productive and preservative of

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goods, and an ability for doing good in many and great ways, actually in all ways in all things.

We can apply the definition of virtue to the rhetorical situation of homelessness in san francisco. Most of the comments do not necessarily praise but do approve of what the man has done. the virtue of citizens seems to be similar to the man as they believe that the homeless body is an interruption of businesses and life of the people of the city. if virtue is “an ability for doing good in many ways,” one can argue that this statement does not apply to the situation of the homeless in san francisco since both the man and some of the commenters on youtube believe that it is not possible to do good as they must protect their properties against the presence/interruption of homeless. If we watch the video of the interview, the man says, “it is a very sad situation. She [homeless woman] is very psychotic. We totally understand what an awful thing it is to do [spraying water] but we also understand what an awful thing it is to leave her on the street.” therefore, the man sees the situation as a systematic problem and thinks what he has done should not address the blame on him as he was protecting his business while claiming that the act of spraying water to be disturbing.

Here is another comment on reddit that has received more than a thousand likes:



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The information that is missing here is that no one talks about what the woman exactly was doing to interrupt the man's business except sitting in front of his gallery. The man and other people's actions seem to come from the history that they have been having with the city and other homeless people. It seems that even the presence of the homeless persons bothers them. In these comments, one can see a commenter saying "when the homeless people are harassing" therefore, they don't see homeless people as individuals but a group that their presence is harassing and disturbing even if they are just sitting in the corner of the street.

In the judicial rhetoric part, Aristotle states, "necessarily, people do everything they do for seven causes: through chance, through nature, through compulsion, through habit, through reason, through anger, through longing" (85).

In addition, he says, "by compulsion [occur things] that come into being through the actions of the doers themselves [but] contrary to their desire and reasonings." The compulsion is what both man and comments claim. The compulsion of the situation of the city makes this man do a disturbing action even if he claims that "I understand what an awful thing it is to do." This is the way that he is judged.

Interestingly, Jenny Edbauer adds an essential point of view about rhetorical situations. In her article, "unframing models of public distribution: from rhetorical situations to rhetorical ecologies," she explains that rhetorical situation is not defined only by traditional definition of rhetorical situation that view rhetoric as elemental conglomerates including audience, rhetor, exigence, constraints, and text. However, rhetorical situations are ecological like a network of "lived practical consciousness or structure of feeling" (5-9). This understanding helps us to see the

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intricate relationship that exists between rhetorical situation constituents. As a result, we will look at each of the rhetorical situations as a complex matter and explore their interrelationships. Talking about the space of places clarifies the interaction between individuals within these spaces. More specifically, she states, “place becomes decoupled from the notion of situs, or fixed (series of) locations, and linked instead to the in-between en/action of events and encounter” (edbauer 10). This idea helps us better understand the “encounters.” the encounter of the homeless with the city affects all of the material and people around them.

We remember in august of 2023, my sister and we went out to visit a bookstore. After that we decided to walk, and we took the street that goes behind the bookstore. That street is called market street which is one the infamous streets in sf. We experienced a culture shock because most of the street was occupied in an unusual way by small tents and homeless who were sitting or sleeping. There were two or three other pedestrians like us that were just trying to navigate their way out as quickly as possible. The market street was malfunctioning. Stores were closed and even if they were open, they would keep the door locked. The pedestrians wouldn't cross the street and it was obvious that businesses were not in a good condition. There are different reasons for the malfunctions. First, the sidewalks were occupied. Second, they were occupied by bodies which are known for not having manners based on their condition, therefore, unsafety and obscurity was felt by both pedestrians and local people. This indicates that the unusual life of homeless in large numbers affects the life of the other civilians and impacts the dynamics of networks between these two groups and the city. The condition itself calls for exigency. An unusual social encounter between people from different classes and the city. These encounters shape the interactions between.

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The example of market street resonates very well with the video clip. While the sidewalk does not belong neither to the man (coming from a middle-class), nor the homeless woman, the unusual presence of the woman there interferes with the living of the man. We can also argue how the city (as a space) can be interpreted as fix for a citizen and fluid for a homeless person. It is important “to understand geographies as embodied, and how the process of social construction of space occurs at the level of the body, not just at the level of the city or street or nation” (nedra reynolds, qtd in edbauer 10). While the man in the video grasps the city as something which has more fixed borders because of the expectation that he has as a citizen of that city, homeless persons see the city as more fluid.

In the article entitled, “the rhetorical situation again: linked components in a venn diagram” donna gorrell states (401):

Rather than a rhetor independently seeking knowledge of the interests, needs, and biases of an audience in an effort to change that audience and impose a perception of reality, the venn, with the addition of directional arrows, shows that the audience is participatory, and that change is likely to occur in the rhetor as well as in the audience through engagement in the rhetorical situation. The resulting text is a participant effort.

This model helps us see the situation of the homelessness which is our topic better. In reality the population of homeless people is increasing in sf and the encounters between them, and other citizens is becoming a problem in everyday life. Person who took the video of the encounter between man and homeless women captured the exigency of the situation. The audience can be the local people, city policymakers, state policymakers and the u.s. Government, or anyone who is interested in the subject and views the video. The constraints can come from the culture: social class differences, language that people use for describing homelessness, can be the laws of the

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state, can be the problem of money. But the important subject here is the problem of housing and discovering the reasons why some people lose their houses or leave their houses should be undertaken because the homeless lifestyle creates problems for both homeless people and any other person that encounters them and it should be investigated for common good.

Donna gorrell also states (405):

A true rhetorical situation has an intrinsic audience; a text produced without consideration of that audience is doomed to failure. This is not to say that a rhetor must be acquainted with an audience or even know who that audience is; the rhetor can even create an appropriate audience. However, there must be shared constraints: expériences, values, beliefs, and so.”

This definition of the rhetorical situation completely explains the rhetorical situation of this video because the texts or comments that were created by people addressed the same values such as the unpracticality of the government, the feeling unsafe and losing privacy even over technologies despite the important privacy-preserving methods by Pasandi, H.B., 2023, financial loss because of the presence of the homeless person in front of the local businesses, also sympathy for sf because it is turning to a place that is filled with homeless people. For example, in this comment:

Although, venn diagram shows the constituents of the rhetorical situation, donna gorrell claims that it has some constraints. She states (407):

The venn circles have limitations for representing rhetorical situations. One limitation is that on the page they are static and two-dimensional whereas rhetorical situations are “fluid, dynamic, and highly interactive,” (garrett and xiao 1993, 38) with layers of multiplicity; they are almost always unstable and can change at any moment, like reality itself.

The exigence that calls for rhetoric may increase or vanish. Constraints such as time limits,

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format, environment are in constant flux. Subject matter changes with each new discovery, and audiences are restless. Any diagram, including mine, therefore must be seen as capturing only a moment.”

This notion is completely true. Because the exigency and reality are changing at any moment. The moment of exigency that we have chosen seems important for that moment, however, it has been ten months since the emergence of the video and the exigency of homeless interruption in san francisco. Therefore, one can say that the rhetorical situations are fluid and can change based on the time as well. For example, in the wintertime, it rains more, therefore homeless people circulate to warmer places in the city and their place is not fixed. Also, we could say that christmas itself creates a dynamic of happiness and celebration that makes people to be less sensitive to others or less angry. However, my research analyzes that moment and the constraints, values, beliefs surrounding it.

Method b-1: rhetoric of things

The “rhetoric of things” extends the principles of rhetoric beyond traditional verbal or written communication to encompass the persuasive power of objects, artifacts, and material culture. It suggests that physical objects can communicate messages and influence perceptions like how language does. Other scholars such as benet and latour suggest that every element can be considered material. In the article entitled, “the force of things: step toward an ecology of matter” jane benet states, what a “thing” might be. She explains that things or matter are not passive objects but rather they are active participants in the world around us. She states, “thing-power materialism figures materiality as a protean flow of matter- energy and figures the thing as a relatively composed form that hazards an account of materiality even though materiality is both
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too alien and too close for humans to see clearly” (349). In addition, the author explains Landau's concept of the power of non-human materiality as “self-organize” which means that things influence their own environment and the behavior of other things. She explains that matter exists in connection with other things in a web. She states (355):

Thing- power, as a kind of agency, is the property of an assemblage. Thing-power materialism is a (necessarily speculative) ontology that presumes that matter is inclined to make connections and form networks of relations with varying degrees of stability. Here, then, is an affinity between thing- power materialism and ecological thinking: both advocate the cultivation of an enhanced sense of the extent to which all things are spun together in a dense web.

In his book chapter, “where are the missing masses? the sociology of a few mundane artifacts,” Latour explains that we cannot understand technology or society by looking at either one in isolation. We need to look at the entire chain of delegation, and at the relationships between humans and machines, to understand how our world works. Latour strives to develop a vocabulary to better capture the multiple modalities and degrees of agency. Agency appears to him as a continuum, as a power differentially expressed by all material bodies” (Latour qtd. In Bennett 355). Going back to the video clip, we can see the video, the rhetor, the exigency, the actants (the man and the homeless) are related in a continuum, each having their own impact on the other, as a result they can be considered as things that are not passive.

One of the other concepts that Bennett studied to understand the materiality is the “naive movement” which according to Lucretius: “every real and potential thing is material” (Lucretius qtd. In Bennett 348). According to this definition, every element of the video can be treated as material including the body of the homeless.

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Thing-power materialism figures materiality as a protean flow of matter- energy and figures the thing as a relatively composed form of that flow. It hazards an account of materiality even though materiality is both too and too close for humans to see clearly. It seeks to promote acknowledgment, respect, and sometimes fear of the materiality of the thing and to articulate ways in which human being and thinghood overlap. It emphasizes occasions in ordinary life when the “us” and the “it” slip slide into each other. One moral of this materialist tale is that we are also nonhuman and that too are vital players in the world (349).

Drawing on aristotle’s definition of rhetoric, barnett and boyle deduct that “the point here is that every day physical structures may not exactly be arguments (and they are certainly not primarily linguistic—though they are surely integrated with language), but they are undoubtedly persuasive. As a result, it is important to consider these types of objects as crucial components of rhetoric” (digital version, page number not provided). This point of view is important in our understanding of the use of water in the rhetorical situation of the video clip.

B-2: analysis

The incident of spraying water on a homeless person as a means of removing them from a particular area illustrates the use of material or physical actions as a form of rhetoric. In this context, the action of spraying water serves as a non-verbal, material communication tactic to convey a message. The act of using water to move a homeless person from a location sends a strong message through material means. The water serves as a physical barrier, effectively disrupting the individual’s presence and making the environment uncomfortable or uninhabitable. According to david grueter in his splat: on throwing things and the messy politics of material

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protest, “the materiality of the object always impacts in a specific kind of way. The thing touches the investments that we hold, the experiences that we have with it, and calls up the ways that it can act on us” (grueter, page number not provided). It’s also important to see water in our case, how it splashes, how far it can be thrown, whether it is hot or cold, how much it hurts when it lands. Compared to other materials (for instance, eggs, milkshakes, etc.) water is less harmful, acceptable behavior, and yet a method of non-verbal communication that attempts to discourage the homeless person from staying in that area. From a rhetorical standpoint, this action communicates several implicit messages such as exclusion and rejection, dehumanization as it devalues the dignity of the homeless person by treating them in a manner that is inhumane. It also reflects power dynamics that reinforces power imbalances, showcasing authority over space and individuals who are less privileged. It’s a stark example of how physical means are used as a form of rhetoric to control or remove individuals deemed undesirable from a particular environment. Drawing on the notion of assemblage of objects, actions, actants, etc., we can see that “nonhumans and material objects are equally bound up with human actions in events. All actions come about not as products of deliberate human decisions, but from a heterogeneous, distributed agency of many actants, both human and nonhuman” (barnett and boyle), we can see how water as the main object used in the situation forms all the discourses (in the video and the comments) around the homelessness issue.

Method c-1: rhetorical circulation

In this section, we will be looking at rhetorical circulation by exploring the internet as a public sphere and emotions. First, we will look at the definition of “public sphere” provided by various scholars to then talk about counter public versus subaltern public. In his article “slow circulation:

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the ethics of speed and rhetorical persistence,” bradshaw talks about the circulation and ethos regarding rhetoric. He states: “circulation studies usefully shift our attention from classical models of rhetorical outcomes (e.g., rhetorical situation, instances of persuasion) to concerns regarding rhetorical transformations across time, space, and media” (480). Geoff eley suggests we think of the public sphere [in stratified societies] as “the structured setting where cultural and ideological contest or negotiation among a variety of publics takes place” (qtd. In fraser 68). Fraser adds on by quoting the german sociologist, habermas, “according to habermas, the idea of a public sphere is that of a body of “private persons” assembled to discuss matters of “public concern” or “common interest” (58). based on these definitions, public sphere involves private individuals assembling to deliberate on matters of common interest or public concern, focusing on ongoing rhetorical transformations across time, space, and various media, rather than just isolated instances of persuasion or traditional rhetorical outcomes. By extending these factors, one can consider the internet functions as a modern-day public sphere, enabling diverse participation, cultural discourse, and deliberation on matters of common concern, albeit with unique digital dynamics and challenges.

Within the paradigm of the public sphere, the concepts of “subaltern public” and “counterpublic” offer crucial insights into the dynamics of marginalized groups and their engagement within societal discourse. Originating from postcolonial studies and the work of scholars like nancy fraser, these notions encapsulate the experiences of marginalized or oppressed communities whose voices are often marginalized within the dominant public sphere. The subaltern public represents these marginalized groups excluded or relegated to the peripheries of mainstream discourse due to power differentials and systemic marginalization. Counterpublics, on the other hand, serve as alternative

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arenas created by these marginalized groups to voice their concerns, articulate their identities, and challenge dominant norms. one can say the internet (for example, reddit comments that we will use in the analysis section) can also become both a counter public and subaltern sphere that allows the voices of people who experienced homelessness and the people who advocate for this challenge to exist in the public sphere.

Another important factor in understanding the rhetorical circulation is the notion of “emotions” and how they shape the rhetoric around homelessness. Emotions function as potent currencies within rhetorical circulation, forming societal attitudes, influencing power structures, and creating divisions or alliances, much like forms of capital. In the context of homelessness, we found the work of two scholars who specifically talked about the emotion of “hate” and “disgust.” emotion operates as a significant form of capital within rhetorical circulation, as elucidated by sarah Ahmed (the cultural politics of emotion) and susan miller (disgust: the gatekeeper emotion) in their respective works. Ahmed contends that emotions, particularly hate, function as a form of social and political capital, similar to the economy of money within marx’s discourse. Hate is not totally an emotional response but a force capable of creating divisions and influencing power structures. It operates as a valuable currency within society, creating differences and displacements as it circulates. Miller expands on this notion by highlighting how disgust, while seemingly rooted in physicality, fundamentally affects the self. It is not solely the physical body but the vulnerability of the self to invasion or degradation by various agents—be it substances, disturbing concepts, or repellant individuals—that defines the emotion of disgust. In the next section, we will go through some of the rhetorical circulations on reddit as well as emotions.

C-2: analysis

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In the context of the public sphere, participation is an integral part. While the internet facilitates participation in the public sphere, not every contribution aligns with the sphere's ideals of informed, inclusive, and constructive dialogue. Brian Massumi has argued that participation is not a form of freedom from power, but rather a form of subjugation to power (Massumi interviewed by Mulder, 2007).

Here is the example of a lightheaded comment that is based on the pressure of participation as it reminds the participant of an animation that they watched rather than looking at the bottom problems of the network that has been created through homelessness as (others), citizens with home and city in SF. Also, one might claim that even the person who took the video, captured these scenes just because everyone talked about it at the time. They simply shared the video for the sake of forced participation on social media rather than wanting to make a change in the rhetorical circulation of the city with the homeless problem.

Another important matter that exists within the comments is the emotion of hate/disgust coming from different reasons, mainly the economical situations of the middle-class people who pay taxes. Paying taxes, particularly from the middle class, can inadvertently fuel the issue of "othering" (Miller and Ahmed) regarding the homeless population. Let's look at the comments about the same video that circulated on the internet:

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These comments, specifically the words “sick and tired of the homeless” that comes from a san franciscan in capital letters reflect on the emotions of disgust and possibly hatred. Most of the comments also point out to the funds available or not to homeless people. They address the concerns of middle-class citizens who pay taxes to the government and see no actions from the government regarding the issue of homelessness. These emotions, intertwined with financial concerns and perceptions of governmental inaction, contribute significantly to shaping public rhetoric on homelessness and illustrate the deep-seated societal divisions and frustrations within the san francisco community.

Conclusion

In examining the rhetoric surrounding homelessness, it is evident that while the issue seems simple, it involves a complex web of societal, economic, and individual factors. Analyzing the videoclips (on YouTube) and the comments (on YouTube and reddit) through the lens of rhetorical situation, rhetoric of things, and rhetorical circulation unfolded for us the layers of discourse that shape public perceptions and policymaking regarding homelessness. This approach contributed to an understanding that rejects traditional views of rhetoric, presenting a nuanced view of a societal challenge that requires multifaceted solutions. This research analysis can shed light for homeless activists, humanists, and students in a rhetorical class to look at a societal problem from different dimensions that scholars of rhetoric suggest.

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