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### Week 11: Media, Community, and Difference

A recent example of media stereotyping and stigmatization I witnessed was a Fox News program my grandmother showed me about homelessness in her community; the San Francisco Bay Area. This program perpetuated the idea that homeless people were uneducated and suffering from mental illness or addiction. It seems that the reporter searched for people that were "characters" and who looked especially disheveled. Personally, it felt like they were sensationalizing. The program had a stigmatizing effect because it leads you to believe that these people were somehow disgraceful and deserving of these poor conditions because they'd succumbed to addiction or weren't searching for work.

The reality is that the cost of living in the Bay Area is so high that it is easy for anyone to slip into poverty. The average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Oakland California is approximately 3,000 dollars. Therefore, there are far more homeless people who are clean, educated, hold stable jobs, and are still forced to live out of their car or couch surf because rent is so ridiculously high. The stereotype perpetuated by this program is incomplete and inaccurate.

This type of coverage amplifies collective differences because it shows a very narrow view of the problem. It doesn't approach homelessness as something that can happen to anyone. Instead, it portrays homeless people as a group of unfortunate "others". It makes it easier for more well off bay area residents to distance themselves from less fortunate people within their

community. In my opinion, this program could be an example of poverty porn because the people being interviewed seemed like they were being talked down to as if they were not a member of the same community. They also showed rows of tents lining the underpass of a highway when the reality is that the majority of people who are technically homeless in the Bay Area are not unemployed and living in tents, they simply do not have a permanent address. They portrayed homelessness as a state that is distant from simply being poor.