

Media Portrayals & Public Perceptions of Homelessness

A Critical Discourse Analysis of BC News Media

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The Crime Reduction Research Program

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The CRRP is a research grant program administered and funded by the Province of British Columbia in collaboration with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The CRRP is focused on investing in independent research to inform priority policing operations, policies, and programs related to public safety in British Columbia. In doing so, the CRRP also aims to foster greater collaboration between government, law enforcement, and academic experts in the field of policing and public safety.

Eligible research topics are identified on an annual basis by the BC Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General and the RCMP based on current and emerging provincial priorities. All grants are awarded on a merit basis by the CRRP Working Group.

Disclaimer

The statements, findings, and recommendations contained in this report have been reached independently by the authors of this report and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Province of British Columbia.

Background

Recent research in Canada demonstrates an increase in rates of homelessness. With Metro Vancouver's annual homeless count in 2017, a 30 % increase in homelessness from 2014–2017 was reported. According to the 2018 report on Homeless Counts in BC, 7655 individuals were identified as homeless. A majority of those identified were accessing shelters. We know that in reality there are many more individuals who are not being accounted for as the homeless counts only capture those who are “visible homeless” and are considered the “tip of the iceberg” of the actual population experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness (The Homelessness Services Association of BC, 2018).

In reviewing research and public comments about homelessness, it appears that there are disconnects between how the general public perceives individuals who are homeless and who these individuals actually are. Additionally, and of specific interest to this study are the misconceptions permeating society that people who are homeless are a threat to community safety due to engagement in criminal and nuisance or disorderly behaviour. These inaccurate public perceptions and the narrative assumed by the public fuels moral panics and supports the Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) narrative. This research explores where these perceptions and stereotypes originate and how they are confirmed or refuted. In agreement with Grant, Derksen, & Ramos (2018), “examining media coverage helps to illuminate some of the ways that communities socially construct local problems and planning solutions” (p.15).

Through a critical discourse analysis of six BC news media sources and articles they published from 2016 to 2018, that include the words “homeless” in title and homeless and police in the text, we examined and interpreted how homelessness and individuals who are homeless are portrayed. Based on an extensive review of evidence-based research and literature, we anticipated that homelessness and people who are homeless would be portrayed with a narrative that is consistent with the public perception that homelessness is more of a criminal justice than a social justice issue. As consistent with other discourse and content analyses conducted by other researchers, we also expected to see negative tones explicitly and implicitly signaled through both the specific words/framing employed by journalists as well as references and comments designed to invoke negative responses in readers.

As part of our analysis of public perspectives, we also examined how the media documented the kind and volume of relationships between police and people who are homeless. Based on our review of existing research on the public's perception of the relationship between homelessness and crime, we hypothesized that police would be frequently discussed and featured in the media, providing commentaries on homelessness that would reinforce the perceived relationships between crime and homelessness. We also expected to see incidences of criminal and nuisance behaviour frequently reported and exaggerated in the media. We were especially interested in exploring if the Not In My Backyard (NIMBY) narrative is present in the public discourse.

Finally, we anticipated that the way the media reports on homelessness supports the public's inaccurate perceptions and fears of homelessness.

This report begins with a review of the research and literature that informs our hypothesis and frames our research. The literature review introduces the sources consulted that support the need for and orientation of this project. The methodology of this project is unique as it involves the blending of a critical discourse analysis from an English literature perspective and qualitative research from a criminological perspective. Although unique in actual design and sample, this research methodology was inspired by the precedence setting research of a series of studies that used content or discourse analysis to examine how the media frames information, especially stories about homelessness and people who are homeless (Grant et al. 2018; Calder, Richter, Burns & Mao, 2011; Gaetz, 2013; McCarthy & Pauly, 2017; Schneider, Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2010; Spinelli, 2015).

The results favour the hypothesis that the media articles reviewed do generally emphasize pathos (that is they appeal to the reader's emotions through charged language or allusions to stereotypes that arouse fear, anger, panic, and, on occasion, sadness) and assign authority to subjective witnesses (that is rather than citing researchers, official representatives or advocates for the homeless, they rely on the ethos—or authority—of people who own homes in a neighbourhood, business owners, and bystanders, etc.) more than official representatives. This approach provides those without an understanding of the complexities of homelessness a platform, turning them into authorities on the subject through the power of testimonial, which, according to classical rhetoric and argumentation, encourages the audience to perceive the speaker as authority on the issue. However, when official representatives are present in the media, such as Municipal officials, homeless advocates, and police or law enforcement personnel, the message that homelessness is a complex social issue and not a criminal justice issue and that there is not a direct relationship between homelessness and crime is communicated.

The final section of this report presents the recommendations, and the next steps for research, which includes a call to influence local governments, police authorities, media outlets and advocates to maintain their accurate reporting and their position that homelessness is a complex social issue rather than a criminal justice matter. It is suggested that those in actual authority take control of the narrative appearing in the media to ensure that the apparent disconnects between public perception and evidence-based research, and policies are reconciled.

Literature Review

Mass Media's Social Influence

Mass media, including newspapers (both print and online), is where the public receives the overwhelming majority of their information, especially that related to research, crime, deviance, and social justice (Boyd, 2016; Dahlstrom, 2014; Eversman & Bird, 2016; Krinsky, 2016). Importantly, as criminologist Neil Boyd (2016) asserts, "as the power and reach of

mass media have grown over the last century, so too have the media's abilities to influence public perceptions of criminal activity..." (p.26). And, as this report contends, this influence extends to public perceptions of homelessness.

Media outlets, and thus the journalists creating the stories, have dual goals: selling papers and stories, and reporting accurate and objective information (Dahlstrom, 2014). In pursuit of these goals, two theories of these "storytelling roles" emerge. The gatekeeping theory asserts that journalists act as gatekeepers who create reality by (re)constructing it to fit audience demands as well as organizational needs, timing, and ease of transmission (Dahlstrom, 2014). In other words, the media tells the public what it "wants to see" and hear, and also acts as an agent of control in creating the narrative that is consumed as reality (Schneider et al., 2010). How the media tells or "frames" a story will have an impact on how the story influences the reader (Calder et al., 2011; Grant et al., 2018; Schneider et al., 2010;). It is important to note that the public is not a passive consumer of information but is an active consumer: audiences who read and encounter these stories eventually stimulate further social processes (Boyd, 2019; Chandler & Munday, 2011; Schneider et al., 2010). This results in a symbiotic relationship where the public implicitly encourages and rewards the media for creating and reinforcing ideals and public perception, which leads us to hypothesize that the public perception of homelessness and the media's representation of homelessness are in sync and fuel each other.

The cultivation theory explains how the economic or profit driven focus of the media means that the stories are written to increase profit rather than accurately represent reality. In their meta-analysis on cultivation in media, Shanahan & Morgan (1999) argued that cultivation analysis considers the media's social and cultural positioning as both purveyor of information and news and a business:

"the right to produce messages stems from social power, while social power is accrued thought the right to produce messages.... The cultural process of story-telling is now in the hands of global commercial interests, who are largely unknown, unchosen and unelected, and who have little incentive to be interested in the content of their stories beyond their ability to attract specific, well-defined, profitable audiences, with a minimum of public objections" (p.12-13)

To further support this argument about the media's implicit (and cultivated) biases, Dahlstrom (2014) stated that,

"the narrative worlds presented in entertainment media are systematically skewed and individuals who are exposed to larger amounts of these stories tend to internalize and share the beliefs and values portrayed..." (para. 21)

The cultivation theory also explains the media's focus on crime, specifically the interest in sensationalized violence, and incidences that fuel risk, panic, and fear that is statistically invalid (Dahlstrom, 2014). Boyd (2016) stated that the media presenting crime through the lens of a problem frame helps the story sell and appeals to the emotion (fear and risk) of the reader by talking about crime and deviance as extraordinary, "bad" and affecting

many people (Boyd, 2016, p.29). Interdisciplinary researchers call this phenomenon “deviance amplification,” a known sociological process where mass media exaggerates the seriousness and incidences of deviance (Ben-Yehuda, 1990). Where deviance amplification appears, it supports the process of denouncing this behavior as threatening the social order and asserting the power and social dominance of the creators and consumers of media who are using the media as a medium of social control (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). This then lays the ground for the creation of a moral panic. This dynamic is concerning, especially in the context of homelessness featuring of these types of narratives in the media influence the reader’s “understanding of who should be protected, who should protect them, and who they should be protected from” (Boyd, 2019, p. 31).

Moral Panic

A moral panic is a public reactive response to an event or story that cultivates feelings of worry, concern, and fear among people; it typically places demands on Government for changes to policy, legislation, and demands for change (Boyd, 2016; Eversman & Bird, 2017; Krinsky, 2016; Tighe, 2010). The phenomenon of moral panic is typically marked by unreasonable/exaggerated public concerns about social problems and deviance that are disproportionate to the actual threat or risk (Boyd, 2016; Cohen, 1972; Krinsky, 2016; Eversman & Bird, 2017). Although based on fallacy or inaccurate information, moral panics are employed as modes of social control to further communicate and actualize the perceived threat to social order and mainstream values and goals (Eversman & Bird, 2017). It is anticipated that the media accounts on homelessness will manifest a moral panic that works in hand with the NIMBY narrative to over-dramatize and criminalize homelessness.

Public Perception of Homelessness

Recent research on public perceptions of homelessness are reporting a shift to more sympathetic, compassionate, and/or understanding attitudes towards homelessness (Dittmeier, Thompson, Kroger & Phillips 2018; Grant, Derksen, & Ramos, 2018; The Salvation Army, 2011; Tsai, Lee, Byrne, Pietrzak & Southwick, 2017). However, these findings need to be closely examined to understand where and how these shifts occurred since such changes in perception were neither overwhelming nor consistent across regions, social groups, gender, or generational gaps.

For example, in their research on public perceptions of homelessness between 1990 and 2016, Tsai et al. (2017) observed that although attitudes towards homelessness were changing, the public still seemed to be unaware of the needs and identities of homeless individuals. While they found that the largest changes in attitudes “were related to greater support for the rights of homeless individuals to sleep, setup shelter, and panhandle in public areas” (p. 605), the perception of people who are homeless as young and minorities was still overestimated. They also stated, “our results suggest that the public currently is not aware that sizable proportions of homeless individuals are older, uneducated, white, with mental health, and substance abuse problems” (Tsai et al., 2017, p. 605). Tsai et al.’s

(2017) study thus indicated that people still do not understand the diversity of individuals (children, parents, seniors etc.) and the complexity of homelessness as a social justice issue.

Moreover, as a 2011 report from The Salvation Army demonstrated, the public's lack of understanding aligned with their negative and fear-based views of people who are homeless. As part of the "Dignity Project," The Salvation Army explored the view of 1,000 Canadians on homelessness. Although they reported that many participants are sympathetic towards individuals experiencing homelessness, there are still many (although a minority) who believed that individuals are to blame for their lack of housing and that they lack a good work ethic. Although 1/4 of the respondents in the sample stated that they themselves needed some type of assistance to alleviate issues with a lack of affordable housing and making ends meet, the overall views recorded about homelessness in this study were inaccurate and considered negative or unfavorable. For example, 40% of those surveyed believed that homeless people wanted to live on the streets; 30% felt that homelessness can be evaded by working hard; 43% never gave money to homeless people; 40% believed homeless people are mentally ill; and more than 1/3 reported that they were scared of homeless people (The Salvation Army, 2011). The research cited above demonstrates that the public continues to view individuals who are homeless as posing a risk to their personal safety and security despite the availability of evidence-based research that describes the realities and needs of individuals who do not have homes.

A large component of the public discussion surrounding homelessness draws on the discourse of NIMBY, which the Homeless Hub (n.d.) resource centre defines as:

"The opposition to affordable, supportive or transitional housing [which] is usually based on the assumed characteristics of the population that will be living in the development. Common arguments are that there will be increases in crime, litter, thefts, violence and that property taxes will decrease. The benefits for the residents of the development are often ignored."

In other words, people may be sympathetic and understanding and even supportive of the needs for housing and resources for people who are homeless, but everything changes once the issue of homelessness comes into their communities or neighbourhoods (Homeless Hub, n.d.; Spinelli, 2015; Tighe, 2010; Ward, 2015).

The public's ignorance for the complex needs of this population and the social and systemic barriers they are facing is concerning. Of additional concern is that the unique, lived experiences of the homeless population is not being heard or validated by the public at large. One of the major considerations that needs to be explored is how and why homelessness is being understood and responded to as a criminal rather than a social justice issue. It is also important to understand how the stereotypes of the homeless person are misleading and not representative of homelessness in our communities and cities. With media being the primary accessible outlet for information, it is important to examine whether the media is reinforcing or challenging these perceptions.

Criminalization of Homelessness

Of particular interest to our study is the relational assumption and representation of people who are homeless as criminals or individuals who pose a specific risk to personal and community safety. In reality, research suggests that homelessness is symptomatic of criminal justice system involvement rather than a predictor of future criminal behavior (Mayer & Reichert, 2018; NHCH, 2011; Roebuck, 2008). For example, in both the 2017 and 2018 Metro Vancouver study on homelessness, only 6% of individuals reported “conflict with the law” as a barrier to accessing housing, which was a decrease from previous years (B.C. Non-Profit Housing Association, 2017; The Homelessness Services Association of BC, 2018). The *National Health Care for the Homeless Council* (NHCH) in the USA (2011) reported that homelessness increased as a result of incarceration in that only 15% of inmates reported homelessness prior to incarceration but 54% reported homelessness following release from incarceration. They found that prison jeopardized housing arrangements and individuals who did not have fixed addresses were more likely to be denied bail (NHCH, 2011). Moreover, in his report *Homelessness, Victimization and Crime*, Roebuck (2008) and his later report with MacDonald (2018) on homeless youth, he stated that people who are homeless reported both positive and negative interactions with police and that their crimes were more visible as they had limited access to private spaces. In addition, much of their criminal behavior is related to municipal bylaw offences and offences which meet their survival needs (Mayer & Reichert, 2018; NHCH, 2011; Macdonald & Roebuck, 2018). Roebuck (2008) noted that data from Canadian studies indicated a lack of causation and a lack of evidence to support the misconception that homelessness caused criminal behavior and was a public safety risk.

A recent study that examined the geographical occurrences of crime situated around several different cold weather shelters in the City of Vancouver in 2016 indicated that there were relationships between incidents of crime and the operation of these temporary shelters. Faraji, Ridgeway & Wu (2018) reported a 56% increase in property and mischief crimes within 100 metres of the shelters (with a reduction as you moved farther away) but incidences of breaking and entering into commercial buildings located closer to shelters were reduced. It is important to note that this research explored the emergency temporary shelters only and no other forms of accessible or emergency housing venues, such as encampments, or resources for homeless individuals. It is also important to note that all of these shelters were opened in industrial or commercial rather than residential neighbourhoods. Faraji. et al. (2018) stated that although the data suggests a causal relationship, there was a lack of rationale to support the understanding of this relationship. They did contend that many of the possible explanations for this relationship can be caused by other factors and that the replication of criminal incidents in the future can be mitigated by better interventions such as increased security or change in policing.

A major factor in the criminalization of homelessness is the broken windows theory developed by Wilson & Kelling (1982). The broken windows theory, developed from sociological and structural theory, premises that the deterioration of neighbourhoods

starts with “broken windows” which then attracts social disorganization, public disorder and criminality ultimately encouraging more serious crime. This theory, although heavily criticized for negatively impacting policing practices, being motivated by unsubstantiated public fear, and criminalizing the poor, racial minorities, and homeless, has influenced policing policies in major cities throughout the United States (Baird, 1999; Howell, 2016; St. Jean, 2007). With respect to homelessness, broken windows policing implies that areas of social disarray and dishevelment attract crime and deviant activity, and demands that the police take a crime control approach on removing homeless individuals from the street. Sparks (2018) asserted that this mode of policing did not prevent the problems it was meant to solve but rather created them as the police became active creators and agents of further social problems and disorder. These police actions further criminalize homelessness as does the creation of and public demand for bylaws and legislation that prevent people from sleeping outdoors. Here, the general public and politicians are supporting and actualizing the criminalization of homelessness (Aykanian, & Lee, 2016; Hennigan, 2019; Hodge Jr, DiPietro, Horton-Newell, 2017; St. Jean, 2007; Tsai et al, 2017). Furthermore, barriers are formed where zoning bylaws, neighbours, and business owners actively prevent and contest the construction of affordable housing or shelters in their neighbourhoods (Gaetz, 2014; Kieschnick, 2018; Spinelli, 2015; Ward, 2015). The creation of these barriers is the NIMBY phenomenon at work (Tighe, 2010). The media plays an important role in circulating and reinforcing the narratives that portray the homeless as a nuisance, danger, or burden to society. These narratives have the power to influence public responses towards homelessness, leading to public’s demands for and expectation of a law and order response towards homelessness (Calder et al., 2011; Schneider et al., 2010; Sparks, 2018). Thus, although being homeless is not a criminal offence, the enforcement of bylaws and legislation that require the involvement of the courts and the police create the perception that being homeless is criminal.

What these policies and approaches to homelessness ignore is that police are typically the first point of contact for the most vulnerable individuals, and they often exercise discretion to connect these individuals with resources rather than arresting them (Sparks, 2018). There appears to be a limited amount of research in the public discourse on the interactions of the police and homeless individuals.

Critical Discourse Analysis of Media

In order to describe the stereotypes and myths associated with the public perception of homelessness and its criminalization, it is necessary to conduct a discourse analysis of how the media and police are reporting on homelessness and, subsequently, portraying people without homes (Calder et al., 2011; Schneider et al., 2010; Spinelli, 2015). In most cases, previous studies revealed that the discourse around homelessness can be complicated. For example, in their qualitative content analysis of the media portrayal of rooming houses in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Grant et al. (2018) reported that a majority of articles were focused on events or incidents and that the tone of the articles was “overwhelming[ly] negative” with only 3% identified as positive in note. They found that

the reports often covered crime, fires, and nuisance behaviours, but, interestingly, while the events reported had negative and sometimes criminal connotations, the discussion of residents was usually sympathetic. The rooming- house residents were portrayed as vulnerable, as “poor, transient, marginalized ... [and the comments further] pointed to concerns about substance abuse, mental illness, violence and dependency” (Grant et al., 2018, p. 10). The voice of neighbours and the public were most often presented, and elected officials and government staff commented in 60% of the cases. This focus on how homelessness is discussed in the press is important because a majority of people report that what they know about homelessness is from personal observation and media (Schneider et al., 2010), and we know that media can influence public perception (Calder et al., 2011; Gaetz, 2013; Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Schneider et al., 2010; Lindgren, 2009; McCarthy & Pauly, 2017).

Researchers who have explored media coverage on homelessness report that media plays an active role in creating and reinforcing negative reputations and stereotypes (Calder et al., 2011; Grant et al., 2018; Kearns, Kearns, & Lawson, 2013; Schneider et al., 2010). For example, an analysis by Gaetz (2013) asserted that comments made by politicians and media framed homeless youth as being “dangerous and delinquent and a threat to public safety and the local economy and tourism.” Similarly, in a discourse analysis that explored media portrayals of homelessness in Victoria’s tent city (also known as InTent City), McCarthy and Pauly (2017) found that despite feelings of community, safety, social order, trust, and support among the residents of InTent city, the criminalization of this area in media reporting distorted the public perception of this space (McCarthy and Pauly, 2017). They concluded that “media portrayals shape the public’s opinion of who is deserving and underserving in our community” (p. 1). Finally, Calder et al.’s (2011) research provided an extensive review of the literature and existing research on how homelessness is portrayed through particular frames in the media and called for more research in this area, specifically further examinations of how people who are homeless are understood by journalists and portrayed in the media. Ultimately, these studies demonstrate how the media shapes and develops narratives of homelessness and, furthermore, how these narratives pave the way for legislation that infringes on the subsistence strategies and spaces frequented by individuals who have no homes (Calder et al., 2011; Kieschnick, 2018; Schneider, 2010).

Significantly, although the homeless are often depicted and discussed in the media, they are rarely empowered to tell their own stories and have their voices heard. Hodgetts, Hodgetts & Radley (2006) found that “homeless people are rarely given the opportunity to frame their own experiences, relationships or public images” (p. 498). This, McCarthy and Pauly (2017) noted, is a huge part of the problem. They argued that “portrayals directly informed by people experiencing homelessness are critical to counter stereotypes and find solutions to homelessness” (p. 1) In their analysis of four Canadian news sources, Schneider et al., 2010 reported that when quotes were provided on homelessness in an article they found that only 18% of the quotes were from individuals who were homeless (or in the past) whereas 71% came from experts, advocates or authorities.

In light of the above, we argue that a critical discourse analysis is crucial at this point in time, specifically given the rise of online news reporting. There is a wealth of information available that profiles the homeless populations, but research is lacking on where misperceptions and stereotypes of homelessness and people who are homeless are born, reinforced, and spread through society. There is no need to further research the already vulnerable people within the homeless population as they are not the root of the problem. Rather, the question of how this population is being criminalized and feared, rather than supported and understood, needs to be explored. Consequently, researchers must turn their attention to how our socially constructed perceptions of homelessness might influence and reflect how homelessness is understood and addressed in our communities (Calder et al., 2011; Schneider et al., 2010).

Further to this exploration there needs to be some tangible and realistic recommendations on how the discourse and rhetoric can be shifted to align with the research-based evidence that discusses the most vulnerable people in society, those without homes, and the meeting of their needs.

Methodology

The research design of this study was a qualitative critical discourse analysis. Bringing together an interdisciplinary research team (2 primary investigators and 4 student research assistants) with the combined experience of conducting rhetorical and critical discourse analysis in English, and qualitative research and understandings of criminal and social justice issues in Criminology, allowed us to provide an extensive and holistic critical analysis. Critical discourse analysis as a research methodology provides an interdisciplinary approach, analyzing how communication methods (what is said and how it is said) is a social process. In this case, we were interested in tracing how and where the three rhetorical/persuasive appeals (pathos, the appeal to emotion; ethos, the appeal to authority; logos, the appeal to logic and reason) appeared in media reports on homelessness. These appeals are engrained in western forms of argumentation and represent the building blocks of persuasive writing (and all acts of writing are inherently acts of persuasion). Identifying these three appeals and then further examining their presence and influence in media reports on homelessness is the first step in understanding how social narratives of homelessness develop and circulate in society. The narrative of criminalization is circulating somehow and analyzing the current discourse in media allows us to trace where it comes from and develop strategies to confront it.

Research Question

Our primary research objective was to critically examine and interpret how homelessness and people who are homeless are portrayed in mainstream BC media. We anticipated that homelessness and people who are homeless would be portrayed with a narrative that is consistent with the public perception that homelessness is more of a criminal justice than

a social justice issue. In addition, we expected to see negative tones explicitly and implicitly signaled through the specific words/framing employed by journalists as well as through references and comments designed to invoke negative responses in readers.

As part of our analysis of public perspectives, we examined how the media documented the kind and volume of relationships between police and people who are homeless. Based on our review of existing research on the public's perception of the relationship between homelessness and crime, we hypothesized that police would be frequently discussed and featured in the media, providing commentaries on homelessness that would reinforce the perceived relationships between crime and homelessness. We also expected to see incidences of criminal and nuisance behaviour frequently reported and exaggerated. Finally, we were interested in exploring if the NIMBY narrative was present in the public discourse. We anticipated that how and when the media reported on homelessness would support the public's perceptions and fears of homelessness.

We explored how homelessness and people who are homeless were discussed and described in news media, focusing specifically on features associated with persuasion and rhetoric, including words used, emotional appeal/tones (pathos), whose voices were being heard (ethos and pathos), and the presence of facts and statistics to support information (logos). We were particularly interested in how public perceptions and voices are portrayed within articles that featured the word "homeless". It was anticipated that the public would appear sympathetic towards individuals who are homeless in some situations but that when directly impacted by homelessness and people who are homeless in their neighbourhoods or communities, negative tones and the NIMBY rhetoric would be present.

Sample Selection

This project began with a *Google* Internet search and News Media search in the CBCA (Canadian Business and Current Affairs) and Canadian Newsstand databases to identify the major print media news sources in BC. The major sources identified were *The Province*, *Vancouver Sun*, *Times Colonist*, *Prince George Citizen*, *Kelowna Capital*, and *Globe and Mail*. For broadcast news featured in print online, we identified *CTV News Vancouver*, *CBC (British Columbia)*, and *Global News BC* as our primary sources. We researched the funding sources, distribution, publishers, and affiliations with these news sources and selected them based on them being widely available mainstream media sources. Our cursory analysis involved creating our target population by exploring the number of articles from the three most recent years (2016–2018) that featured the word "homeless" as a key word. These years were chosen for the following reasons: increased publications and discussions around homelessness, access to archived media sources, consistency with the amount and volume of online news media articles.

Given the volume of the information retrieved, we conducted further frequency analysis to better understand the content and provide access to a realistic, albeit meaningful and representative, sample for critical discourse analysis. We conducted a frequency analysis

to see how many articles were published in the news sources by year and month. Our search was confined to articles meeting the following criteria: “homeless” (keyword search), “homeless” (in title), “homeless” (in text, not title), “homeless” and “police” (keyword search). From this search, 6413 media articles were identified (see Table 1). As shown in the media articles, the results for the online news media sources (*CBC News*, *Global News BC*, and *CTV News Vancouver*) were only searched for “homeless in title” and “homeless and police.”

Table 1. Media Articles Search Results (Target Population).

Source	"Homeless" (KEYWORD SEARCH)			"Homeless" (IN TITLE)			Homeless (in TEXT NOT TITLE)			Homeless & Police (IN TEXT)		
	2018	2017	2016	2018	2017	2016	2018	2017	2016	2018	2017	2016
Prince George Citizen	71	33	60	16	1	18	71	32	58	11	3	7
Times Colonist	310	276	449	47	32	57	303	269	438	86	46	84
Province	145	167	194	22	30	34	140	166	189	27	29	40
The Vancouver Sun	201	193	202	28	33	30	173	160	172	45	50	37
Kelowna Capital	121	50	62	20	6	16	117	49	59	13	5	9
BC CBC	N/A	N/A	N/A	55	75	18	N/A	N/A	N/A	24	23	24
Global BC	N/A	N/A	N/A	70	55	40	N/A	N/A	N/A	16	6	15
BC CTV	N/A	N/A	N/A	13	30	13	N/A	N/A	N/A	8	19	27
Globe and Mail	15	13	0	4	2	0	15	13	0	3	5	0
Total	863	967	967	275	264	226	819	689	916	233	186	243

Based on closer analysis of the data and the realization that a more manageable and focused sample size was needed, the sample was reduced to include only the 3 major print media news sources: *Vancouver Sun*, *Times Colonist*, and *The Province*. We also analyzed 3 online news sources: *CBC News*, *Global News BC*, and *CTV News Vancouver*. We did not analyze any audio or video news, or online newsfeeds. We exclusively examined sources that were retrievable through online sources as we were unable to view original print copies of newspapers. *Kelowna Capital* was removed from the sample due to errors in data organization that left us with concerns over the reliability of the data collected. *Globe and Mail* and *Prince George Citizen* were excluded as sources were minimal and few featured original media stories about homelessness (i.e. articles were reproduced from other news sources). The only other exclusions were those articles pertaining to homelessness of animals and not humans. We recognize that the remaining sources are likely regionally bound and focused on Vancouver and Victoria areas.

To further narrow and focus our sample, articles that had “homeless” in the title rather than in the text only were included since headlines are what grab attention and provide the author with an ideal venue to set purpose, scope, and tone and persuade the reader. Secondly, articles that had both “police and homeless” in the text were included. This was important to ensure that our sample had articles that were relevant to our research scope and question in exploring how police are portrayed in articles on homelessness.

Since our focus is on how information is being reported, rather than where homelessness is occurring, we kept all articles that met the aforementioned criteria regardless of the geographic location of the case or incident being reported.

Data Collection

The *Times Colonist*, *Vancouver Sun*, and *The Province* were accessed through the *Canadian NewsStream* (via *ProQuest*) online research database. Unfortunately, in the process of downloading these sources from the database and into the analysis software, we lost the uniqueness and publishing features of the articles such as images and comments. We initially had hoped to analyze the public comments posted on the articles but found that we had no reliable access to these comments.

For *CTV News Vancouver* and *Global News BC*, we retrieved the articles directly online. We used the *CBC* online archives to access those articles published by *CBC News (British Columbia)*. We were able to view and download these media sources right on their websites with photos and images intact and in some cases with advertisements and public comments. Some of this content was not converting properly making some articles (specifically from *Global News BC*) not entirely readable; the impact of this was minimal.

To ensure that our sample was complete and valid, the research assistants were working in a team and working closely with the principal investigators to ensure that all of the articles were retrieved regardless of the browser or search engines being used. Once the articles were identified, they were downloaded and imported into *N-Vivo* analysis software using their “*NCapture*” feature. The *NCapture* feature essentially screenshots and saves the file so that it can be coded and analyzed regardless of its original format. Data were stored and saved within the *NVivo* (12 plus version) software program.

Articles were organized as individual files within folders by year and by source. Those that had “homeless in title” (765) were kept separate from those that had both the keywords “homeless and police” in text (309). Articles that appeared in both subsets of data were accounted for in our total count of articles and throughout our data analysis. There were 27 articles that featured both “homeless in title” and “homeless and police in text.” The sample that was used for the discourse analysis is comprised of 1050 original articles. With the qualitative nature of this study and the focus on analyzing the discourse presented, we were confident that the volume and composition of the sample was complete and ample.

Analysis

Research assistants were employed to code the articles based on the themes that emerged. Initial analysis of the data began in *N-Vivo* by conducting a word frequency search within the dataset to identify some of the common words appearing in the text. This is incorporated into our analysis in the next section and was integral enhancing our critical discourse analysis.

N-Vivo software calls these themes “Nodes.” Research assistants were directed to code for themes on logical information (logos), who was speaking/voice of authority in the article (ethos), and the feeling and/or emotional reaction that the tone elicited (pathos). The research assistants were hired based on their ability to recognize and distinguish between

logos, ethos and pathos as English literature students. As sociological research methods students they also were trained in qualitative coding.

To explain further, for logos, the research assistants focused on where and when fact-based information was presented. For example, when there was information stated that was logical or factual, they would code it as logos. In addition, anything that was stated as a fact/statement with no emotion was coded as logos.

Ethos involved identifying who was “speaking,” or whose perspective was featured in the article and the authority these figures possessed and/or projected. The research assistants also coded speaker’s identities and/or which group they are speaking for (e.g. mayor, councillor, police spokesman, etc.). This assisted us in further identifying advocates and politicians in order to analyze how they spoke about homelessness and people who are homeless, and to identify any themes. We were interested in exploring who is framing the discourse within the articles. We then further broke down the data into nodes and sets where we grouped the individuals into collective identities, including neighbours, community members, business owners, etc. For instance, someone with no identified affiliation was grouped as “the public” while mayors and city councillors were a separate group as were police and those who identified as advocates.

The third theme that was identified was pathos, which is the feeling or emotion that was elicited in the article. Pathos is important because journalists and reporters use emotion for latent communication of tone and to appeal to readers. This section was further organized into the types of emotions or feelings that were being evoked among readers. This was more difficult to analyze as this can be a subjective interpretation based on individual readers. Research assistants and the principal investigators worked closely together to ensure that pathos was accurately identified and coded as neutral, positive or negative.

Other nodes (themes) that we tracked and that emerged from the data were the following: locations where homelessness was receiving media attention and its frequency, and times of year/seasons when articles were published. In order to ensure reliability and validity we enabled the automatic coding function within *N-Vivo* to ensure that we were not missing any other relevant themes or nuances in the data.

All of the work done by the research assistants was cross checked by other research assistants and the principal investigators to ensure consistencies, reliability, and validity in coding. Research assistants logged any questions or concerns, or decisions that they made which were then discussed with the research team regularly. The coding process was collaborative with the principal investigators closely involved.

Results



Figure 1. Word cloud of article content.

Words Most Commonly used in Articles on Homelessness

The above Word Cloud (Figure 1) was generated through an analysis of the words most frequently occurring in the text. As demonstrated, “homeless” was the most commonly used word followed by “people,” “housing,” and “homelessness.” This highlights that homelessness discourse is predominantly centered on discussing homeless individuals as a collective social identity. Few, if any, modifiers or adjectives appear (see discussion of pathos). The word “homeless” also appeared as part of the noun “homelessness” (a state of those who do not have homes), and this emphasis on homelessness aligned with the frequency of the word “shelter” in our data set (shelter in this context meaning temporary immediate housing solutions). The word “shelter” was present in 346 articles (for a total of 1268 references) that have “homeless” in the title. The repetition and focus on the word shelter usually appeared in discussions of solutions or responses to homelessness, promoting the idea that homelessness can be solved with shelters (see discussion for more information on shelters and their place in the media’s representation of homelessness).

Other words that appeared frequently in articles collected in the “homeless in title” category were “tent” (259), “camp” (281), “cost” (221), and “bylaw” (191). These were all located using the “text search” function in *N-Vivo*. “Tents” and “camps” were frequently discussed as communities of people who are homeless assembled in public space. Many of the large camps were named. The most frequently noted encampments or tent cities were Sugar Mountain in Downtown Eastside Vancouver; Regina Park, Saanich’s Tent City; Tent city outside Victoria’s courthouse; Surrey’s Whalley Strip; Reeson Park in Victoria; Goldstream Provincial Park; Vancouver’s 950 Main street; and Anita’s Place Homeless Camp in Maple Ridge. The responses noted in these articles usually evoked pathos and were negative with many members of the public voicing their concerns and issues. The

content of articles such as “Local businesses sour on Sugar Mountain tent city” (Vancouver Sun), “Police clear homeless campers from controversial Saanich tent city” (Global News BC), “Debate over homeless camp brings demonstrators to Maple Ridge city hall” (CTV News Vancouver) makes it clear that it was these gatherings of temporary shelters (tent or camps), organized by people who are homeless themselves, were undesirable. Significantly, single homeless people or small groups did not seem to elicit the media’s attention. It seems that media almost exclusively reported on incidences where a neighbourhood or community seemed to form.

In order to ensure an unbiased and neutral perspectives in viewing the dataset, we enabled the automatic coding feature within *N-Vivo*. The major themes (nodes) that emerged were: “Homeless people” (445), “housing” (384), “shelter” (292), “city” (287), and “camp” (203). These themes were consistent with the trends and themes we noted. The differences in the numbers of the files were the differences between the automatic coding functions inability to ascertain context as we did through our manual coding processes.

Regional Geographical Reporting

With the news sources examined being based regionally out of Vancouver and Victoria, the two biggest metropolitan centres in BC, it was not surprising that a majority of the articles discussing homelessness focused on Vancouver and Victoria areas. Specifically, 277 articles mentioned Vancouver and 250 discussed Victoria. It was interesting to note that only 57 articles (from the category “homeless in title”) were about the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver. We had originally anticipated that this would be much higher as this neighbourhood in Vancouver is known for its large homeless population.

Of particular interest was the news coverage of areas outside of the aforementioned major centres. The other half of our sample included reports that referenced smaller cities typically defined as more suburban and residential centres both within and outside of the Lower Mainland and the Greater Victoria area. The pie chart below features the locations (not Vancouver and Victoria) most frequently mentioned in articles: Surrey (81), Kelowna (50), Maple Ridge (47), Abbotsford (36), Nanaimo and Parksville (40), and Saanich (40).

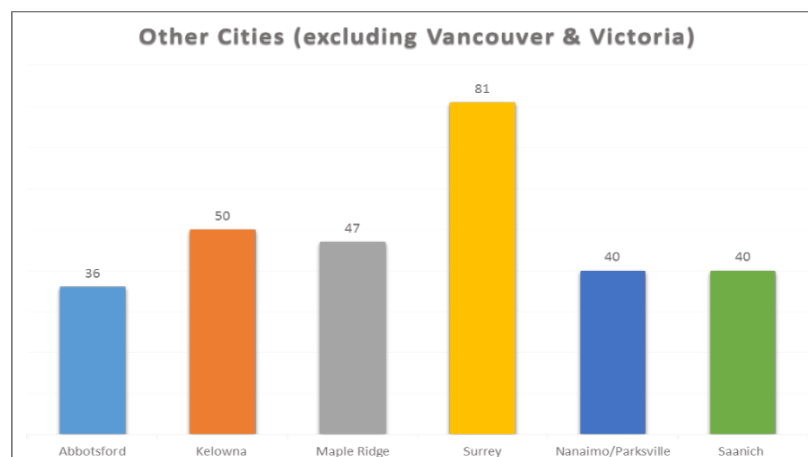


Figure 2. Other cities by number (not Vancouver and Victoria).

Event Based Coverage of Homelessness

There were very few articles in our sample that included information/research on homelessness unrelated to a specific event. Examples that demonstrate the event or incident based focus of the reporting on homelessness in BC News media is provided in Figure 2. It is important to note that this table features a sample of the diversity of reports that we catalogued as based on incidents or events rather than focusing on homelessness as an ongoing social issue.

The only exceptions to reports on homelessness that were event-based were the publication of the results of Metro Vancouver's homeless survey and similar local data collection (indicated in 22 articles), and a few feature stories. Some of the feature stories were feel-good stories that shared how someone overcame homelessness. Titles included, "No home but hope for future: my own key, my own front door" (Times Colonist) and "A (tiny) place for the homeless to call home" (Times Colonist), and "A new role; Corey Reid has turned his struggle with drugs into help for others" (Vancouver Sun). Furthermore, in examining the images in the articles, many were based on situations and did not feature people. There was only one article image that contained statistical information. This particular image featured the Fraser Valley Homeless count by municipality from 2004–2017. More on the types of images included in media stories about homelessness is presented in the discussion section on pathos and the images are presented in Appendix 1.

Our results suggested that media coverage on homelessness is primarily reactive; most stories are precipitated by an event, including, but not limited to, funding and resource announcements, such as opening of shelter beds or housing opportunities, as well as announcements on lack of supports. In addition, there were media reports following the construction of encampments or their removal as well as stories that covered public protests and community responses to concerns about the location or the need for resources to address homelessness. The word "protest" was located in 98 articles, and a majority of these articles were focused on public reactions to homeless solutions in their communities. Examples of some of these headlines were: "Anti-Homelessness Activists occupy Vancouver council chambers" (Global News Vancouver); "Court order protesters to stop blocking homeless housing project" (CTV News Vancouver); "Homeless housing plan stokes fear; Hundreds rally in protest against Provincial plan to convert hotel in Maple Ridge" (The Province) and "Injunction against protesters of Maple Ridge homeless housing project" (CTV News Vancouver). Some examples of headline where protests were in support of individuals who were homeless are: "New tent protests lack of affordable Vancouver housing" (CTV News); "Nanaimo tent city supporters, resident protest eviction" (Global News Vancouver); "Homeless Surrey Resident protesting alleged thefts from camp" (CTV News Vancouver); "Handful of homeless Vancouverites turn down housing because of neighbourhood protests" (CBC News Vancouver).

There appeared to be limited media coverage on members of the "homeless" population who are in shelters or temporary housing arrangements, and the narratives of the "shelter

using” populations, who are still within the definition of homeless, were almost entirely absent. Also, there were no articles (besides those announcing the annual homeless count results) that defined homelessness or those who are the “invisible homeless” (those accessing precariously or unstable housing arrangements or those who are on the brink of homelessness. This creates a misconception about who are the “homeless,” the actual nature of homelessness. This supports and reinforces the research in the 2018 homeless counts report in Metro Vancouver and Tsai et al’s (2017) research that state that most people’s understanding of homeless is those who are “visibly homeless” or the “street homeless”.

There were several articles that celebrated the good-will of many people and organization in raising funds and creating awareness about homelessness. We found that these articles also were based around events rather than creating ongoing general awareness and dialogue about homelessness. Some of the headlines that featured these types of events are featured in Table 2 but some additional examples are: “Taking it on the chin for charity; Beard vote to help homeless” (Vancouver Sun), “UBC law students help Vancouver’s homeless get government ID” (Global News BC); “Volunteers bring Thanksgiving to the hungry and homeless” (Vancouver Sun); “Online fundraiser raises over \$1,100 to buy wagons for Vernon’s homeless” (Global News BC); and “Development firm invests in people” (Times Colonist).

Finally, advocates, who were primarily representatives from Not-for-Profit or Non-Governmental agencies, seemed to only be given voice (authority) to defend people who are homeless and to put pressure on Governments for better responses to homelessness. Their ongoing work and advocacy as long term and continual was not highlighted. They were primarily referenced following events and their appearances were framed in a way that presented them as being responsible for immediate solutions. This creates the illusion that homelessness can be resolved easily and neglects to recognize the realities of the complex and varied issues that lead to an individual’s homelessness as well as the barriers that they must overcome. It also supports the view that homelessness is an event rather than a process. After all, these organizations do not have the influence nor the capacity to make systemic changes and create solutions. As these results demonstrate, what is missing is the proactive, non-reactionary release and dissemination of evidence-based research that demonstrates both the complexity of homelessness as a social issue as well as the diversity of homeless individuals.

Table 2. Sample headlines demonstrating event/incident-based media reports.

Headline	News Source
“Duelling protests fuel tension over Nanaimo homeless camp”	Vancouver Sun
“4 Victoria police officers injured in incident at tent city for the homeless”	CTV News Vancouver
“Anti-capitalist’ activists step up to assist tent city protests”	The Province

Headline	News Source
"Burrard camp-out to help feed city's homeless youth"	Vancouver Sun
"Online fundraiser raises over \$1,100 to buy wagons for Vernon's homeless"	Global News BC
"Fashion fundraiser aids Cool Aid"	Times Colonist
"10 left homeless, pet bird killed in Metro Vancouver house fire"	CTV News Vancouver
"Death at Tim Hortons highlight health care gap for homeless"	CBC News
"Homeless deaths on the rise: Advocates claim"	The Province

Date Based Coverage of Homelessness

Since we collected the data based on a calendar year (January 1 to December 31), we briefly explored if there was a pattern or change in the amount and type of media reports on homelessness in certain years or months. As demonstrated below in Figure 3, we broke down articles in "homeless in the title" category from the three major print sources (*Times Colonist*, *The Province*, and *Vancouver Sun*) according to month and year of publication. As demonstrated, out of the three years, 2017 featured the most articles with the word "homeless" in the headline. The online media sources were not included in this breakdown.

In 2016, the most articles with "homeless in the title" were published in the *Times Colonist* during the months of January and February. The *Vancouver Sun* published the third highest number of articles for that year in August 2016. For 2017, March and June were the highest months for reports with "homeless in the title." For 2018, September and October had the highest reported number of articles. The content of the articles in the *Times Colonist* in the fall of 2018 coincide with the Regina Park homeless tent cities in Saanich and Goldstream Park, and the injunctions to remove encampments from these areas. This spike in articles, interestingly, also coincided with the October 2018 municipal elections.

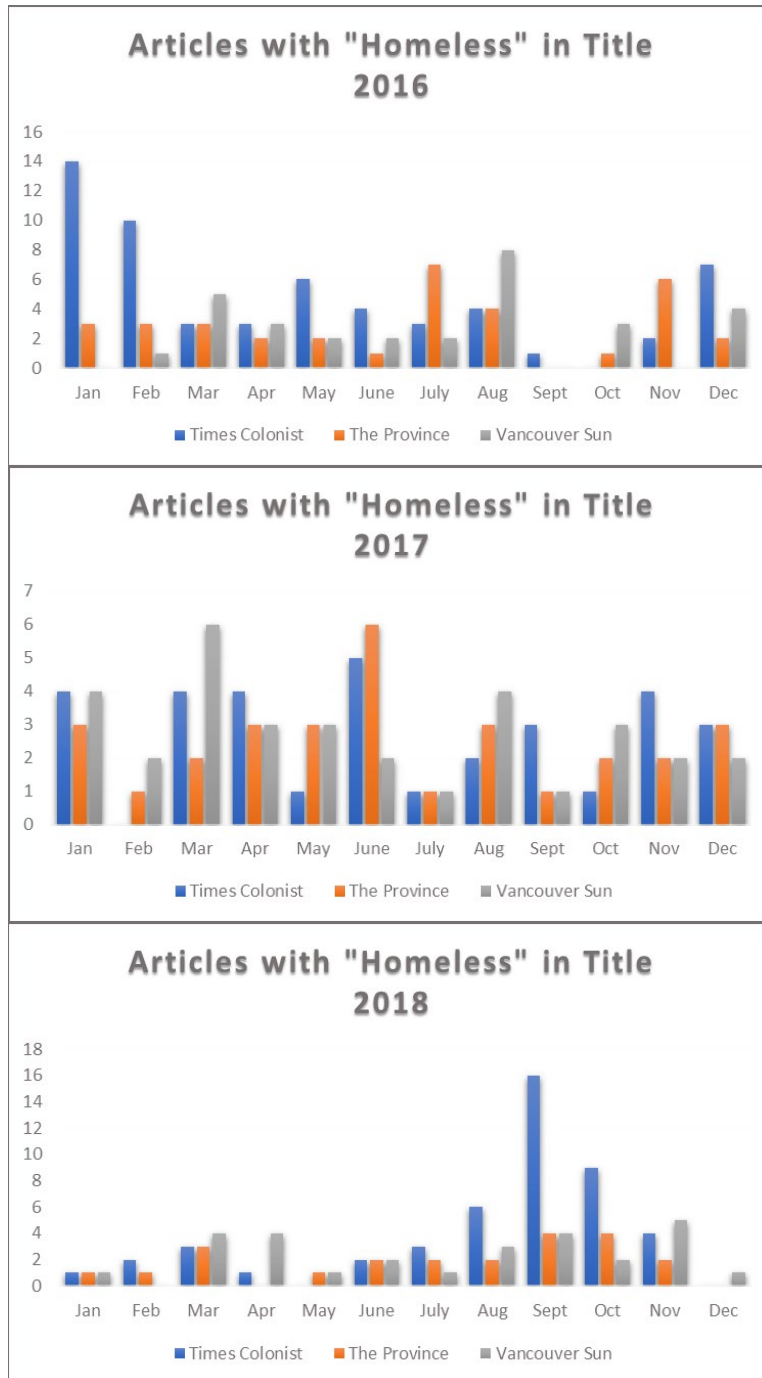


Figure 3. Print articles with homeless in title published by year and month.

Consequently, a number of articles published in September and October 2018 cited/referenced the commitment or lack thereof by city officials when it comes providing resources for homeless populations. Some examples include, “Homeless advocates protest outside Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson’s last council meeting” (Global News BC) and “40 new shelter beds to open for homeless in Vernon” (CBC News). In another article “Homelessness tops Hepner’s agenda; Surrey...” (The Province, February 2, 2018),

the Mayor of Surrey is described as “ensuring people are no longer congregating and camping on 135A Street as she prepares for this fall's municipal election, which she hopes will see her win a second—and final—term as Surrey's leader.”

Finally, we noted that when colder than normal weather hit BC's south coast, more articles citing concern for the homeless population appeared. Examples of the types of headlines published in the winter months in comparison to the summer months are in Table 3. It is noted that there are more articles about issues and nuisances created with tent cities in the summer months and more weather focused concerns in the winter months. This change in the narrative based on the season is discussed further in the discussion.

Table 3. Sample headlines for winter months and summer months (2016–2018).

Examples of Headlines in Winter Months	Examples of Headlines in Summer Months
“Cold conditions threaten homeless; additional shelters opened in Lower Mainland” (Global News BC, December 5, 2016)	“Cathedral wants tent city shut down; Dean says despite church support, homeless camp is degenerating” (Times Colonist, May 17, 2016)
“Fire destroys homeless camp, displacing residents in frigid cold” (CTV News Vancouver, December 15, 2016)	“Cameraman attacked at tent city; Building manager robbed, injured nearby by two men” (Times Colonist, May 27, 2016)
“Arctic outflow warnings spark concerns for homeless population” (CTV News Vancouver, December 13, 2016)	“Calls to police from tent city up: VicPD” (Times Colonist, June 16, 2016)
“Advocates fear for homeless and seniors during cold stretch” (CBC News, January 2, 2017)	“A calendar of chaos at tent city; Courthouse Camp” (The Province, June 17, 2016)
“Chilliwack's homeless bond together to survive cold snap” (CBC News January 3, 2017)	“A long hot summer for tent city and its Mad As Hell neighbours; Residents want 24hour police protection from homeless campers in local park” (The Province, June 17, 2016)
“Cold takes its toll on homeless; Winter a stressful time for local shelters and the vulnerable people they try to serve” (The Province, January 8, 2017)	“Court grants injunction to evict Vancouver tent city residents” (CTV News Vancouver, June 26, 2017)
“Vancouver's homeless face cruel dilemma — do you risk lighting a fire to survive the cold?” (CBC News, November 19, 2017)	“B.C. makes second bid to evict Victoria homeless campers” (Global News BC, June 27, 2016)

Examples of Headlines in Winter Months	Examples of Headlines in Summer Months
"Because of Marpole protesters, homeless people may spend winter out in the cold" (Global News BC, December 5, 2017)	"Local businesses sour on Sugar Mountain tent city" (The Vancouver Sun, June 29, 2017)
"Helping Metro Vancouver's homeless through the cold" (CTV News Vancouver, December 23, 2017)	"Campers again told to move; Saanich vows 'another step' if tent city stays, Nanaimo boosts sanitation at encampment" (Times Colonist, July 12, 2018)

Descriptions of People who are Homeless

In the beginning of our analysis, we examined the words that appeared most frequently in describing people who are homeless and the homeless population. The words that appeared most frequently were "help/assistance" (433 articles), "jobs" or "employment" (158 articles), "addictions"/ "drugs or alcohol" (145 articles), and "mental health" (138 articles). The other most commonly used words are featured below in Figure 4.

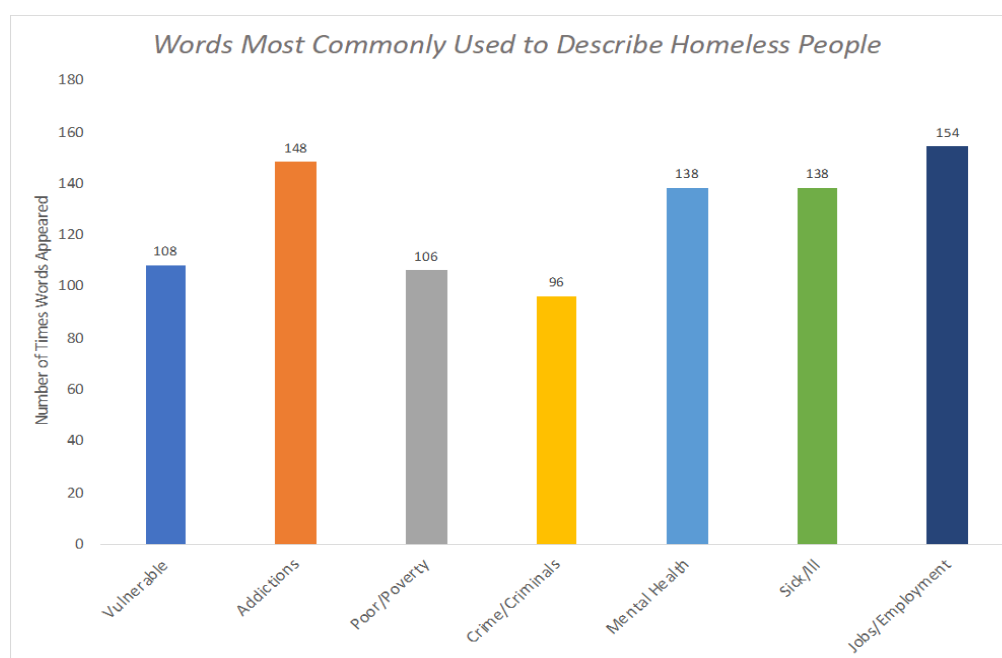


Figure 4. Words most commonly used to describe homeless people (number of articles).

Overall, there was a surprising lack of references to youth, seniors and Indigenous people. We found that only 120 articles referenced youth, 118 seniors, 63 Indigenous Peoples, and 21 immigrants or refugees. This is of particular concern because recent research in BC indicates that the youth population is particularly vulnerable, especially in homeless camps and on the streets. In comparison to the research on the homeless population in BC, these results indicate that the media is not capturing the entire homeless population in their reporting. It appears that those who are accessing supports, such as temporary housing and those on the fringe of homelessness, are not being discussed. In turn, this

reinforces the public's inaccurate perception that the homeless population are atypically those who identify as the "street homeless."

Other significant key words noted in articles that had "homeless in the title" included, "help" or "assistance," which appeared in 433 articles; "need," which appeared in 302; and "kind" or "care," which appeared in 203. "Threat of danger" or "safety concern" appeared in over 300 different articles (when combined together). "Scared" and "afraid" were only reported in 54 articles, and "threat" or "danger" appeared in 72 articles. The context and meaning of the use of these words is discussed further with respect to the tone (pathos) and who is speaking (ethos).

Homeless as "Accidental"

Of particular interest was that media also used the word "homeless" to describe individuals who, due to unforeseen or environmental factors outside of their control (e.g. fire, flood etc.), were no longer able to return to their permanent residence. There were 31 articles that discussed homelessness as a result of a fire.

We were curious as to why the media and the public called these people "homeless." It was observed that these types of homeless situations were written about using empathetic tones with comments from sympathetic witnesses and community members. Funds were often being raised with many stories also referring to arrangements being made to support these individuals. Moreover, this type of homeless person was not held accountable or responsible, or expected to make any changes, and they were always portrayed as victims with calls for support always expressed. Homeless advocates were not featured in this context. Examples of this kind of story include, "100 homeless as fire destroys White Rock apartment couple" (The Province), "101 Surrey resident homeless after fire ravages apartment (Vancouver Sun), and "Dozens homeless after Langley fire; Spreads Quickly" (The Province). These people featured in these articles who are deemed "homeless" are not associated with threats to safety, addiction, drugs, or criminal and nuisance behaviour.

Criminal & Nuisance Behaviour

Given the difficulty among the general public in ascertaining criminal and nuisance behaviour, these terms and behaviours have been combined in analysis as featured in Figure 5. In our analysis, it appeared that criminal, deviant, and nuisance behaviour was rarely separated and distinguished.

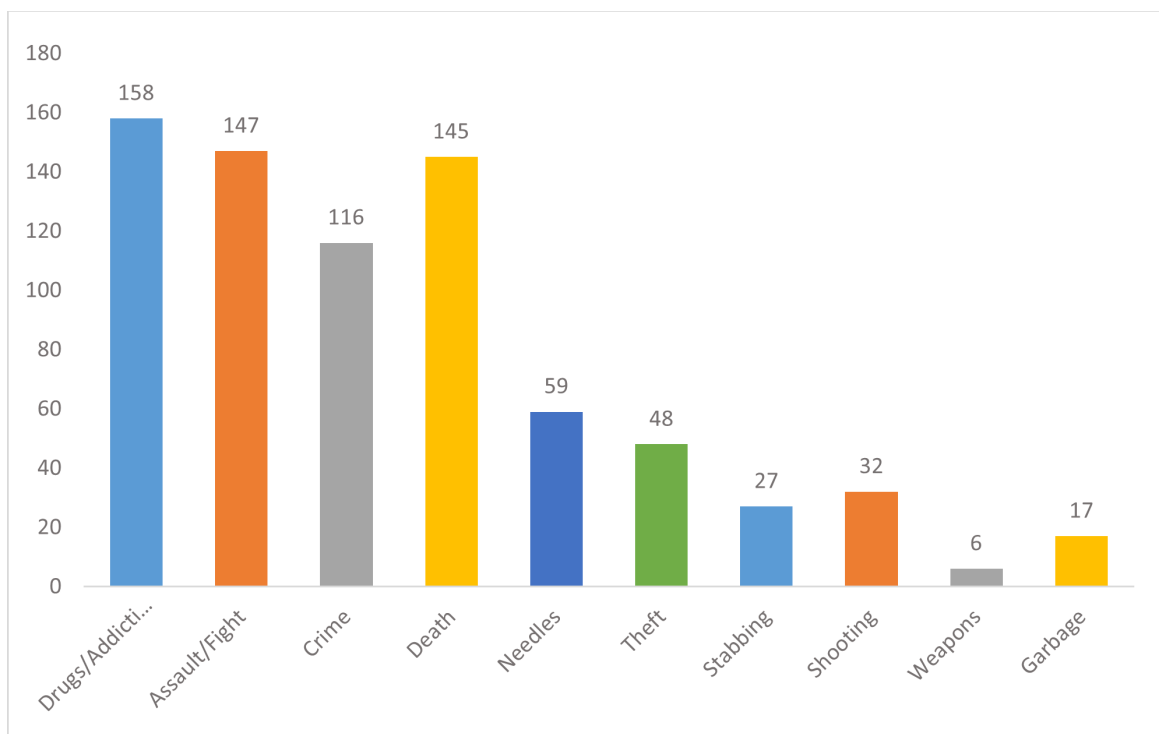


Figure 5. Most frequently mentioned criminal and nuisance behaviour (number of articles).

As Figure 5 indicates, the most frequently mentioned type of criminal or nuisance behaviour was drugs or addiction (145 articles). Very rarely was this explained; rather, it was inferred or assumed but nonetheless spoken as fact. For example, in the article "Police calls round tent city surge; Victoria officer cites drug-linked violence; anti-camp voice says neighbours terrified," a neighbour commented on addiction being a concern with homeless populations:

"They want them to get help, they want them to get treatment, they want them to get housing if that's what is required. But looking over there at what the living conditions are and what's going on, having drug addicts next to drug addicts all day long is not helping any drug addict." (Times Colonist, May 15, 2016)

Many articles also included references to discarded needles, which elicited concerned comments about addicts and danger in the same articles about homeless camps and people who are homeless. For example, in "Homeless camp may cost Saanich taxpayers nearly \$1M," Community business investor Shannon stated, "various parking lots nearby are attracting all sorts of threatening people, many of whom are carrying weapons or hypodermic needles" (Vancouver Sun, July 16, 2018).

It was concerning to see many examples where homelessness, drug addiction and drug dealing and crime are seemingly used interchangeably. This is really evident in the following article, "Church builds wall to keep out drug users, homeless campers,"

A concrete-block wall and a black metal fence are going up in front of Central Baptist Church, at 823 Pandora Ave., to keep drug dealers, drug users and homeless campers

away...The idea is to reduce crime and make it a safer space for everyone," said Pastor Barton Priebe." (Times Colonist, Dec. 22, 2016)

There were several examples like this throughout the sample, these are discussed more through this report.

In addition to this reporting on addiction, there were several articles that cited nuisance and criminal behaviour in connection with tent cities and encampments, mostly (but not only) located in Victoria: "A calendar of chaos at tent city; Courthouse Camp" (The Province), "Cathedral wants tent city shut down; Dean says despite church support, homeless camp is degenerating" (Times Colonist).

In the majority of cases, these reports about nuisance and criminal behavior were mainly told from the perspective of the neighborhood's residents and business owners as seen below:

"The church has tried to deal with a challenging situation for years, then took a modest step to ensure people - old people, kids - coming to church didn't have to step over needles, garbage or worse, and that church staff didn't have to pick up after people or deal with campers with mental-health and addiction issues." In the article, Don't apologize for church's walls (Times Colonist, December 28, 2016)

"Businesses find needles all over their parking lot—60 to 70 a day. There's people tracking back and forth ... leaving garbage and trash. A lot of theft and unsafe activities happen." In the article, "Daycare owner has worries of shelter 'nightmare'" (CBC News, August 23, 2016)

"...needles and human feces were cleaned from the cathedral lawn, a naked person was found in the washroom, two people were observed injecting drugs in sight of Christ Church Cathedral School students and a delirious person had to be removed from the property." In the article, "Cathedral wants tent city shut down; Dean says despite church support, homeless camp is degenerating" (Times Colonist, May 17, 2016).

"Neighbours are watching a rise in violent crime as the group at tent city morphs into a younger, more confrontational crowd, and we just want the government to act," said neighbour James Campbell," in the article, "Police calls round tent city surge..."(Times Colonist, May 15, 2016)

"People don't want to bring their families to the front of my shop because I have this little alcove across from my shop and there's forever people peeing in there, pooping in there, dropping their garbage in there, shooting needles in there." In the article, "Vernon Business owners cry for help amid homeless crisis" (Global News, October 24, 2017).

It is important to note that the majority of these references and statements about criminal and nuisance behaviours were being made by members of the public. There are connections being made here between behaviours and housing situations without the ability to confirm or distinguish them. This is interesting since we can observe a behavior that can be distinguished as criminal or nuisance, but how are people determining that the person committing those acts or those being called "homeless" are actually homeless.

This example clearly demonstrates this as the reporter documents his afternoon sitting by a wall constructed outside a Victoria church in the *Times Colonist* article from December 22, 2016 entitled “Victoria Church builds a wall to keep out drug users, homeless campers”

“About noon Wednesday, passersby stopped to comment about the wall. “Where will we sit now?” said a homeless woman to the attendant outside. “It’s about time,” said another woman. “I come by here every night. It’s crazy.” A few metres away, a young man injected drugs into his arm in an open stairwell beside a Subway restaurant. Two other men on the sidewalk openly traded cash for something in a small clear bag.”

The subjective (and perhaps biased) interpretation of a situation is evident in this article. For example, how did the reporter determine that the first passerby was a “homeless woman” and the context and clarification on what the other woman meant by “It’s crazy,” could be misleading.

Significantly, there was a very limited amount of data or research cited to support the incidence of criminal behaviour in the media reports. For instance, as presented above, information was often provided by the journalists without citation or reference, and claims were presented with no support from authorities nor were verifiable statistics present (see discussions of ethos and pathos). In addition, there were minimal cases where the police were quoted directly linking an increase in criminal behaviour to the people who were homeless. We further examine where this information is coming from, who is talking, and the tones elicited in the discussion section.

The only cluster of articles where there appeared to be many substantiated claims of criminal or nuisance behaviour was with respect to the Tent City in Victoria. One such article is “Police calls round tent city surge; Victoria officer cites drug-linked violence; anti-camp voice says neighbours terrified” (*Times Colonist*). In addition, in his ruling on the injunction to dismantle Victoria’s tent city, the presiding judge was cited as explaining that the increase in criminal incidents was one of the main reasons he ruled in favor of the injunction (see the section on criminalization for further information). Although through careful analysis the judge and police officials when quoted in articles do not state that people who are homeless are directly responsible for criminal or nuisance behaviour, but rather state that the creation of spaces where individuals who are homeless gather (such as tent cities or encampments) can attract these unwanted incidences. This lack of clarity in the media reports seems to reinforce negative stereotypes and support the misperceptions of people who are homeless as addicts, drug users, criminals and nuisances. Likewise, it suggests that drug users, thieves, loiterers and people creating nuisances are being viewed as homeless. This is analyzed more in the discussion.

Criminalization of Homelessness

In analyzing the word “police”, we noted it was mentioned in 743 (or 3/4) of the articles and referenced 2132 times. Very few of these articles (approximately 20) featured a reference to the police in the titles. Police provided a comment in 57 different articles. We found overwhelming evidence to support that police are more sympathetic and

supportive of homelessness, and specifically individuals who are homeless, than the public. Police appear to be aligning more with advocates, recognizing that homelessness is a complex social issue and not a criminal issue. It is important to note that despite their appearance in a majority of the sample, the police were not frequent speakers nor were they described as engaging in law enforcement roles. Rather, they were referenced in terms of their roles as first responders (e.g. responding to fires, public requesting police response, etc.). Lastly, police clearly separated criminal and nuisance behavior from homelessness.

The word “bylaw” was found in 255 articles within our sample. Reference to “courts” and “injunctions” appeared in approximately 300 articles, or about 1/3. Since bylaws are created at the Municipal Government level, we expected to see mayors and city officials involved and commenting on homelessness. Such figures were quoted in 28 articles, but their positions/titles were mentioned in over 200.

Many of the comments from City officials were in response to public concerns or events where they were explaining how they would react to a particular situation. It was clear that there are a diversity of positions and responses across various municipal governments. For instance, several of B.C.’s mayors spoke about approaches to homelessness that understand it as a social justice issue. In “Not in my park! How B.C. Mayors are handling homeless campers” (CBC News, February 22, 2017), for example, the reporter documented Parksville Mayor Marc Lefebvre’s supportive position:

“...despite public concerns, he says some locals don't want a shelter at all. ‘I've had people say to me ‘Don't let anybody come to town!’” said Lefebvre, who won't kick bench campers out of city hall on frigid days. “Well what do you want me to do? Put a sign at the entrance to Parksville and say: if you are mentally ill; if you are poor; if you haven't got a place to live, don't come here?!”

Similarly, in “Abbotsford's Mayor refutes claims city is dismantling homeless camps” (CBC News, January 22, 2016), the reporter captured the Mayor’s comments about the city’s intent:

“We haven't taken any camps down. We have asked people to comply with the judge's orders... ‘We worked very hard. Within a month of the court's decision, we had a 40 bed, temporary winter shelter up and running, and the response has been very positive.”

Finally, Mayors Gregor Robertson (Vancouver) and Lisa Helps (Victoria) were typically cited for their support for the homeless and their explanations of how all levels of Government need to take action to address homelessness in BC communities.

However, not all the articles featuring comments from Mayors showed their support for the homeless. For example, the *Global News BC*’s July 24, 2018 article, “City council in Vernon supports ban on ‘homeless’ shopping carts,” featured the Mayor of Vernon’s strong views with respect to the enforcement of the city’s bylaws. He was quoted as saying that the strict enforcement of bylaws (and thus criminalization of homelessness) “send[s] the message that ‘Look, we’re serious about this.’ If you want to drag around three

shopping carts full of junk and then leave them on somebody's property, you'll have to either modify that behavior or find a jurisdiction where you can do that." Other articles demonstrated a lack of commitment among municipal governments to fulfill election promises around issues related to homelessness, see "Housing the ail of two cities" (Vancouver Sun); "Vancouver's fix rejected by Burnaby mayor" (Vancouver Sun) and "With Thousands Now Homeless, Mayor Playing the Blame Game" (Vancouver Sun).

Judges or Justices were mentioned in 68 of the articles listed in the category "homeless in title." However, for those articles that had both "homeless" and "police" in the text, 104 articles mentioned Judges or Justices. This was expected as police are the ones who enforce the injunctions that are granted by the Judges to remove encampments. We expect that the mention of injunctions, judges or courts simply confirms the incidences of criminal behaviour in the minds of the readers. In our analysis of how judges were referenced, there are two articles that need to be highlighted to contextualize the nature of injunctions, specifically why injunctions are granted and how the decision to grant them is approached by the judges.

In an article for the *Times Colonist* on July 7, 2016, Chief Justice Hinkson explained that he granted an injunction based on the increase in criminal behaviour: "I find that the violence and criminal activities at the encampment have markedly increased since March of this year to the point where the encampment is unsafe, and for that reason conclude that the encampment poses a risk to both its residents and the residents and businesses in the area of the encampment." In contrast, an article published in the *Vancouver Sun* on June 27, 2017, stated that "B.C. Supreme Court Justice Joel Groves granted an injunction to dismantle the tents and other structures [but]...In granting the injunction, the judge said he identified with the "hopelessness" felt by the homeless and noted the frustration from the judges' standpoint that they can't do anything about such tent city cases." He clearly stated that the residents of the encampment did violate a law by constructing the encampment and as such needed to move. The law that they violated was a bylaw, his decision was not based on individual criminal behaviour. It is important to note that he does not hold the individuals accountable or blame the individual who are homeless but it is the gathering of people and the environment created that the injunction is resolving. The data suggests that the process for injunctions and the enforcement of them against people who are homeless by police are complex and taken seriously.

Discussion

Shelters versus Long Term Housing

As mentioned in the results, the word "shelter" occurred frequently in our search. This result is concerning as shelters are designed to meet immediate and short-term needs for housing. They are designed, funded, and organized for emergencies; they are essentially band-aid solutions and should not be used as solutions for homelessness issues and housing crises. Many of the people who are homeless and advocates commented that

these are not ideal solutions for many reasons, including that they are short term, they separate families, rarely house individuals who are struggling with addictions and they do not allow companion pets. For example, in the article entitled, “New Homeless Camp in Victoria” (The Vancouver Sun, April 24, 2017), the reporter described how a tent-city resident had “tried living in shelters but was always separated from his wife or kicked out.” In the article entitled, “A long hot summer for tent city...,” another Tent City resident, Lee, told a *Province* reporter Michael Smythe that “I’d rather live here than a shelter...It’s safer here than the shelters. The shelters are dangerous” (The Province, April 24, 2016). In the CBC News article, “City shelters should strive to keep people who are homeless and their pets together” an advocate shared “The problem of homeless shelters not accepting companion animals in a nearly nationwide problem, and one that greatly—and gravely—affects both animals and their humans” (CBC News, Dec 19, 2018).

In further analysis of headings based on seasons or months (as demonstrated above in Table 3), we noticed that there was more of a humanitarian cry for responses to homelessness in the winter and more complaints about encampments in the summer. Although homelessness is a year-round issue, these results suggest that the discourse shifts based on the season. We analyzed three years of data and saw no change to this cycle. This lack of change supports the reality that homelessness, and the issues that surround homelessness, are long term and complicated, and short-term solutions are not alleviating the situation. The issues and commentary reappear year after year with stories about homeless appearing as a constant in the media, and while there may be changes in the frequency and focus of stories, the discourse is relatively consistent.

The Public and Not in My Backyard

In the results, we paid particular attention to when and where homelessness appeared in the media. There is minimal media coverage on individual cases of homelessness, the amount of people who are experiencing homelessness, and those on the brink of homelessness. As mentioned briefly in our results, media attention seems to be given in situations where people who are homeless are gathering and establishing what resembles a neighbourhood or community. Public demands and discontent with this are definitely receiving media exposure when these homeless communities move into residential and suburban neighbourhoods. This gives rise to the phenomenon of a moral panic as people perceive the “arrival” of these homeless communities as threatening their safety, leading to a devaluation of their property and contributing to a rise in crime. This also fulfils the theory of NIMBY, namely that people are fearful based on the stereotypes of people who are homeless and seem to only become interested in homelessness (e.g. construction of shelters, low-income and/or high-density housing, etc.) when they are directly impacted (Homeless Hub, n.d.; Tighe, 2010).

From our analysis, it appears that regardless of the situations or discussions, residents do not want people who are defined as homeless, or previously homeless, or on the brink of homelessness in their communities. We observed that some residents in West Kelowna, Maple Ridge and Marpole have expressed their outrage and concerns to the media, with

some even staging protests about the building of shelters and low-income housing in their neighbourhoods. This is interesting because their tones and messages were similar to those who were being impacted by the tent cities. In the example of Marpole, a judge granted an injunction to remove the protesters from the construction site of a temporary housing project. As stated in the *Global News* (December 5, 2017) article, “Because of Marpole protesters, homeless people may spend winter out in the cold: city”, the protesters had delayed construction for so long that it meant the potential residents were to spend another winter homeless. One of the protesters from Marpole, was quoted as stating “Stanley Park is the best place for the homeless” (Global News BC). This is an exemplar for NIMBY as the resident states that homelessness should move to another community.

Ethos – Voice of Authority

Ethos is the appeal to the authority of the speaker. In the media articles considered as part of this study, the speakers quoted possess one of two kinds of ethos: the speaker either occupies a socially recognized position of authority (e.g. police, city councillors, mayors, experts on and advocates for the homeless) or possesses authority due to their proximity to the issue (e.g. community members who live by shelters, and homeless people etc.). These proximate authorities tend to lack reliability when compared to community authorities like the police and homeless advocates, as they tend to see the situation narrowly from their personal experiences. However, as our discussion of pathos will demonstrate, proximate authorities, especially those opinions and experiences recounted by community members and business owners, disproportionally influence the narratives about homelessness that circulate.

Media reports on homelessness cite community authorities with some regularity. This was difficult to count precisely as there is no clear definition of who community authorities actually are and many articles cited several supports and advocates, as such we have not provided a measurable figure as our focus was on the context of what was being said and by whom rather than the frequencies. Community authorities are often representatives from organizations or institutions within society, those who have the authority, power and knowledge to speak on certain matters. The authority figures noted are advocates from Government or non-governmental agencies, police, city staff, and elected officials. These authority figures are often flagged in the title of articles (along with the word “homeless”). For instance, articles such as “Advocates fear for homeless and seniors during cold stretch” (CBC News), “Advocates plan to help the homeless vote in upcoming municipal election” (CBC News), “Homeless advocates help Metro Vancouver’s most vulnerable brace for cold weather” (CTV News Vancouver), “‘We can’t risk people’s lives’: Maple Ridge Council votes to prohibit homeless camp” (Global News BC), and “Saskatchewan policy on busing homeless to B.C. ‘ridiculous,’ says Vancouver councillor” (CBC News). The police are similarly flagged in article content although, perhaps significantly, such titles infrequently include mention of the police and rarely provide comments from the police in the text. The articles tend to report on police actions with relation to homelessness or they provide

second-hand information as in “‘We can’t risk people’s lives’: Maple Ridge council votes to prohibit homeless camps” (Global News BC, October 25, 2017). In this article, the Mayor of Maple Ridge is cited as stating that “council had received reports from police and firefighters that there were significant issues of criminality increasing in the camp.” Here, the police are invoked and represented by the mayor with no further information or evidence provided. Such references to the police and police actions serve to further criminalize the homeless, creating a narrative that links police action to homelessness.

Police Interactions with Homelessness

When quoted directly, as in “Residents want help for tent dwellers; Homeless camps in Richmond’s Hamilton neighbourhood have varied in size over last month” (CBC News), “Protestors delaying construction of Marpole homeless housing” (CTV News Vancouver), “Goldstream Provincial Park Campground closed after homeless campers move in” (Global News BC), and “Residents pan youth-jail shelter plan” (Times Colonist), the RCMP/police are very moderate and careful in their discussion of crime and homelessness. In “Residents pan youth-jail shelter plan” (Times Colonist, February 16, 2016), for example, the news story describes how West Shore RCMP Staff Sgt. Steve Wright “told the standing-room-only crowd of about 140 that he’s been assured by acting Victoria Police Chief Del Manak that break-ins have not increased in the neighbourhood surrounding Victoria’s tent city. ‘Calls for service for people with medical issues, definitely that has increased, but I’d just like to try to alleviate the concerns.’” Similarly, in “Goldstream Provincial Park Campground closed after homeless campers move in”), the reporter follows up on community concerns over increased criminal behaviour, noting, “RCMP have heard reports of crime in the park, but say it’s too soon to tell if they can be attributed to the homeless campers” (Global News BC, September 20, 2018).

Even when criminal behavior is referenced, the police do not criminalize the homeless as a group. For instance, in “A divided camp: Some defend arrival of homeless, others want them to leave” (Times Colonist, Sept. 20, 2018), the news story reports that a West Shore RCMP spokesperson stated “earlier in the day that while there are good people at Goldstream as part of the tent city... some come with a history of police involvement.” The sentence structure here is significant. The comment about those with a history of police involvement appears as an independent clause, subordinating the comment about there being good people. However, the qualifier *some* limits the number of people associated with potential criminal behavior, further demonstrating that even in reported statements about potential criminality, the police carefully define who they are referring to. In another example, “Tent city beset by violence and threats—police chief” (Times Colonist, May 20, 2016), the police clearly separate the homeless population from criminal activity. Here, quotes from the police chief emphasize that the criminal behavior noticed at Victoria’s tent city is not due to the homeless living there; rather, it is due to “street-gang members [who] have infiltrated the encampment,” making “both residents and service providers... intimidated and many neighbours worry for their safety.” The language used by the police chief groups together the homeless, service providers, and community members,

avoiding the divisive *us versus them* discourse so prevalent in comments from the general public. As these examples suggest, quotations from the police often demonstrate that they are actively attempting to alleviate fears and promote the safety of all residents regardless of their housing situation. Furthermore, they are clearly delineating between housing situations (homelessness), and criminal and nuisance behaviours.

Homelessness Narrative

Despite the presence of counter-narratives provided by community authorities and the homeless themselves, narratives about criminality and homelessness persist. Our data suggests that one reason such narratives continue to circulate and inform perceptions about the homeless is because of the power of proximate authorities and their testimony which tends to confirm the stereotypes and misconceptions of the general reader. Interestingly, the continued presence of fear-based narratives around homelessness suggests that statements from those who experience homeless and/or live in shelters or encampments lack authority in the eyes of public. Reasons behind this lack of trust in the authority of people who are homeless needs further study; however, our discourse analysis suggests that one of the reasons for the cultural dismissal of the voices and experiences of those who are homeless is due to audience: the newspapers under discussion are read by populations distant from and albeit unfamiliar with the realities and complexities of homelessness. As we discuss in the following paragraph, this lack of understanding allows them to fall victim to confirmation bias and the authority fallacy. The media's over reliance on the beliefs articulated by those who the reader views as their peer (i.e. community members, neighbours, business owners) confirm the reader's own fears (see discussion of pathos) and are further spread through social networks and influence public perception thus confirming and reinforcing their (false) beliefs. (Calder et al., 2011; Crowley & Hawhee, 2012; Gaetz, 2013; Grant et al., 2018; Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Lindgren, 2009; McCarthy & Pauly, 2017; Schneider et al., 2010).

Our data set indicates that statements from proximate authorities, specifically community members (neighbours and business owners), occur with more frequency than those of the homeless, and even the police, and such statements are often based on experience, giving them more authority and validity, transforming perceptions and fears into facts. The language in such reports tends to emphasize how the community members have witnessed increases in criminal and nuisance behaviour. In "As housing for homeless increases in Victoria, so does opposition" (CBC News, October 16, 2017), for example, the reporter writes that "Organizations and individuals in Victoria's Burnside Gorge neighbourhood are raising concerns about problems with crime and disruptive behaviour outside its existing Rock Bay Landing shelter on the edge of a residential neighbourhood." Something similar occurs when reporters provide comments from business owners. In "Businesses fret about troubles of street; Downtown owners empathetic but seeing more homeless effects, says tourism leader" (Times Colonist, April 16, 2016), a business owner states that she wants to "to stimulate discussion by relating some of her experiences." In the same article, the Hotel Association of Greater Victoria uses data from a survey to

highlight what their members perceive as a spike of criminal behaviour due to homelessness. They state that their members reported that “there is about a 500 per cent increase in security costs and incidents where security has to get involved and intervene.” Such seemingly objective and quantitative data contributes to the authority of this community organization. Accompanying statements from business owners describing their experiences further develops the authority and validity of the association’s claims about homelessness and the rise in crime. Equally important is that fact that quotations from proximate authorities are given as much space as those from more reliable experts and community authorities. This creates a false sense of equivalency, and implicitly increases the authority of fear-based opinions, which themselves are based on rumour and stereotypes and seem to even override the comments of community members who demonstrate compassion for the homeless (see discussion of pathos). The result is the perpetuation of such beliefs despite evidence to the contrary. For example, in the article “Goldstream Provincial Park Campground closed after homeless campers move in” (Global News BC, September 20, 2018) the reporter notes that residents who opposed the camp had “expressed concern over a spike in crime in the area” and clearly linked this perceived spike with the homeless. Similarly, in “A divided camp: Some defend arrival of homeless, others want them to leave” (Times Colonist, September 20, 2018), some residents stated that “they know who to blame” for the perceived rise in criminal activity inside and out of the park—this despite the RCMP stating they had no clear link between “the reported ‘uptick’ in crime” and “the homeless campers.” The language used to describe the resident’s beliefs (*we know*) presents them as authorities, holders of knowledge. Moreover, the fact that they know who is responsible suggests the power of narratives of criminality, which, as seen here, overwrite community authorities like the police even as they frame the police as not addressing the issue. The information presented by the public, how they are quoted, and the content of their claims creates a perfect storm for the creation or continuance of a moral panic. Furthermore, the presence of these narratives provides authority and power to the fear that perpetuates the NIMBY phenomenon.

Pathos - Appeals to Emotion & Manifestation of Tones

Our study of media stories of people who are homeless suggests that the media publishes articles that both overtly and implicitly appeal to pathos. Of the articles included in our sample, those that overtly appealed to pathos tended to appeal to the reader’s empathy and/or sense of injustice. For instance, a number of articles captured under the node *pathos* focus on homeless seniors, especially in relation to housing availability and medical care. Articles such as “82-year-old spends nearly a week in a homeless shelter” (CBC News), “Agencies say more seniors and families among homeless; Housing shortage due to rising rents strains resources as winter arrives” (Vancouver Sun), “Housing crisis in B.C. pushing seniors to brink of homelessness: advocates” (Global News BC), “Homeless seniors on the rise; shelters” (The Province), and “Homeless senior feels like dying” (The Province) all draw attention to the issues facing a relatable (i.e. everyone eventually ages or faces struggles associated with illness) and vulnerable population for which the reader is primed to feel

sympathy due to cultural norms and beliefs around the elderly and the notion that society should be taking care of this population.

A second type of empathy-inducing article found in the node for *pathos* uses the word “homeless” in reference to people displaced from their homes by fires and other disasters. Here, homelessness is framed as a tragedy caused by events outside of the person’s control. This type of homelessness (homelessness through a sudden change seen to be outside of the person’s control like fire, job layoffs, etc.) is fundamentally the same as the type of homelessness defined as a choice or lifestyle. However, those who become homeless due to unforeseen circumstances are often presented as individuals, as victims experiencing personal tragedy. In these stories, the word “homeless” was most often used as an adjective, as in “Homeless senior feels like dying” (The Province) and “Homeless Vancouver family desperate to find a place to live” (CTV News Vancouver), or homeless was something the individual (or family) becomes: “Fire, high rents may make Abbotsford family homeless again” (CTV News Vancouver) and “GoFundMe campaign launched for Port Moody kids left homeless in fatal fire” (CBC News).

The stereotypical or street homeless, on the other hand, especially those who need transition housing and/or live in tent cities, or on the streets, are presented and discussed in very different terms. First, they are often presented as part of a collective social entity. They are *the* homeless; they are a noun. Their individual identities are subsumed by their homeless status. Even in articles that include quotations from advocates, the homeless are referred to as a group, and while such stories are sympathetic in tone, they nonetheless perpetuate the existence of *homeless* as a noun. “Fire destroys homeless camp, displacing residents in frigid cold” (CTV Vancouver, December 15, 2016), for instance, provides comments from homeless advocates but simply refers to those displaced as group, using words like “all residents,” “some homeless residents,” and plural pronouns such as “them.” This merger of being homeless with a person’s individual identity perpetuates narratives of the homeless as a collective other, a social problem to be solved. It also allows for stereotypes, including those that link homelessness to criminal and other socially deviant behaviours, to develop and retain their hold over the public imagination. Finally, it implies that homelessness is representative of a criminal justice issue and not the result or consequence of a multitude of social justice issues. The fact that phrases like “safety,” “concern,” and “dangerous” are often used in such articles further establishes a narrative where the homeless are not the victims of disaster but creators of disaster (or the potential for it).

Narratives about the danger of homeless encampments and the behaviours of the homeless, however unintentionally on the part of the media, rationalize reader biases about the homeless and criminal behaviour. The repetition of community concerns about people who are homeless further confirms these beliefs, seemingly effacing counter-narratives that describe the successful integration of shelters in communities and among businesses. As Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee (2012) explain, “people who are afraid can make others fearful as well” (p. 175). At least one article from *CBC News*—“Abby pastor fears backlash against homeless after fatal school shooting”—comments on how media

reports about crimes by “the homeless” can affect public responses. Certainly, the repeated comments from community members and business owners in articles on temporary housing and shelters about discarded needles, condoms, and litter, as well as the rise in petty and property crimes suggest that there is a single narrative about homelessness and criminality. This is an ideal example of, as one headline calls it, the “homeless effects” (Times Colonist, April 16, 2016) that have become commonplace fears among those who have little contact with the homeless. For example, articles such as “Recipe for Disaster’: Parents fear homeless facility next to daycare” (CTV News Vancouver), “Residents of Vancouver neighbourhood protesting modular housing unit for homeless” (CTV News Vancouver), “Daycare owner has worries of shelter nightmare for Maple Ridge” (CBC News), “Businesses fret about troubles of street; Downtown owners empathetic but seeing more homeless effects says tourism leader” (Times Colonist), and “Businesses raise fears over homeless shelter” (The Province), all contain similar language. The use of this language and tones further encourages moral panics that position homelessness as creating threats to the safety of communities and families, once again reinforcing NIMBY narratives.

In exploring the types of images used in the articles, it was interesting to note that whenever an article was featuring a negative pathos or tone the images accompanying the article were that of the chaos or disarray that homelessness can attract (refer to images in Appendix 1.3). This suggests that regardless of the words used, the choice of images emphasized the core emotional appeal of the article. Very few images were actually from the sites being discussed. For example, if the public was concerned about the impacts of a homeless shelter or homelessness in their neighbourhood, images that would elicit concerns—such as discarded needles, litter, destruction, and disheveled looking people—accompanied the text. We found that many articles used the same images. Alternatively, articles that were discussing the humanity of the homeless, the work of advocates and supporters, and the charitable actions of others were accompanied by warm, feel-good images (see images in Appendix 1.1). Of particular interest, we found that articles that appeared neutral or even positive in the headlines and in parts of the text had images that elicit negative or “criminal” images of homelessness. These images are featured in Appendix 1.2. Those articles with a neutral tone that conveyed information through logos (statement or fact), and do not particularly appeal to emotion in image or headline are featured in Appendix 1.4.

Based on the results of our study of *pathos* in the media, we would suggest that both the representation of street homelessness as lifestyle choice and the repetition of community fears in the press have a cumulative effect that ultimately confirms pre-existing biases about homelessness and criminality among the public despite the presence of published counter-narratives.

Application of Key Findings

Through critically examining discourse in media we have found that the portrayal of the people who are homeless and homelessness is inaccurate. The perceptions of the public

presented in the media is disconnected from the evidence-based research and subject matter experts, including those in law enforcement (and related fields). Furthermore, the identity of people who are homeless as individuals is lost as they are entrenched into a social identity of “homeless”. It is clear that being defined as “homeless” becomes their master status and they are understood to be a member of a stereotyped social group. People who are homeless are viewed and framed as the problem, portraying their homelessness as their fault. This confirms the research in Calder et al.’s (2011) report which found that media is influencing public perceptions.

From our sample, we can state with confidence that the focus of the media tends towards reactionary, event-based reports on homelessness, primarily using pathos (negative tones) and ethos (questionable authorities). The content of these stories creates and enforces the ideology that people who are homeless should be feared as they are engaging in criminal and nuisance behaviour. The focus on negative event-based reporting is consistent with Grant et al.’s (2018) media analysis of articles on Nova Scotia’s rooming houses. Furthermore, we also found that how the media reports on homelessness, including what events or issues they cover, frames the social problem as criminal as reported in Calder et al.’s (2011) research. The frames created and discussed are more diagnostic (focusing on the problems) rather than prognostic (the solutions). It is clear that the issue of homelessness is portrayed in the media as a criminal justice more than a social justice issue with the homeless being presented as a nuisance and being accused of criminal behaviour. However, through closer analysis, it is also clear that the people who are speaking about homelessness should not be spotlighted by the media and presented as an authority. Our research supports the findings from Gaetz (2013) and Pauly & McCarthy (2017) who state that the media and authorities who are speaking about homelessness confirm the inaccurate perceptions that people who are homeless are dangerous. Moreover, in exploring where the reports of homelessness in media were the most negative, we found that such reports did not focus on areas where homelessness is prevalent (as in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver), rather, they focused on residential neighbourhoods and communities. This supports Lindgren’s (2009) findings that homelessness and criminal behaviour is reported more when it is statistically less likely, thus fuelling moral panics and supporting the NIMBY protestors. This confirms that the NIMBY phenomenon is not only present in the public voices but is also reinforced through the fear-based narrative (Grant et al., 2018; Homeless Hub, n.d.; Spinelli, 2015; Ward, 2015).

When police are actively involved in “policing homelessness” it is usually because they are enforcing a court ordered injunction. Many media reports documented that when the police were involved in the processes of removing encampments, these scenarios were typically handled with respect and sensitivity. We did not come across cases where police relationships and engagement with people who are homeless were brutal or excessive. Broken Windows theory was not really supported within our data. However, we can ascertain that police generally are not supporting public perceptions nor adopting a crime control or order maintenance enforcement model. Rather, the media reports demonstrate

that their involvement is responding to calls for assistance. Finally, while there are a number of articles that reference the passing and enforcement of bylaws, criminalizing homelessness, the police and justice professionals are very rarely the ones confirming or stating the incidences of criminal behavior.

To reiterate, there is not a strong association of criminal behaviour among homeless populations but rather the content and tone of the information being reported in the media creates this illusion, amplifying the misconceptions and fueling moral panics, fear, and inaccurate beliefs that homelessness and crime are intricately related. We cannot ascertain if incidences of criminal and deviant/nuisance behaviour are actually being done by the homeless population given the information presented by the media. As Faraji. et al. (2018) stated, there are many other factors that need to be considered and isolated before we can say with confidence that an increase of crime around shelters or homeless areas are caused by people who are homeless.

Conclusion

Recommendations

Our analysis of the discourse surrounding shelters makes it clear that responses to homelessness are not getting any better and, as we see a growing homeless population, we need to create more sustainable solutions to manage the housing crisis in BC. This means an active investment in creating more long term affordable and accessible housing and documenting the success of housing initiatives (Tsai et al, 2017). It is important that there is involvement from those who are experiencing homelessness as well as to ensure that solutions are meaningful and appropriate.

On an optimistic note, despite the negative and sometimes hostile press, the message of needing to respond to housing crises with more meaningful and long-term options, seems to be echoed throughout the sample. These voices and their solutions need to be amplified. Collaboration with all levels of Government and Government agencies is crucial. It is clear that the media is reporting content on homelessness, and we suggest that the Government capitalize on this and publicize the evidence-based counter-narrative.

Due to the independence and role of media outlets, we understand that there is limited influence that policy makers, researchers, and even Governments can have. However, we hope that public awareness campaigns directed by all levels of Government will help replace misperceptions about homelessness with accurate information. In their research documenting the shift in public perceptions on homelessness, Tsai et al. (2017) noted that “the initiatives to ‘End homelessness’” and Federal initiatives to target homelessness may have played a major role in changing public perceptions to be more sympathetic and understanding (p. 6). They concluded that Governments can have a meaningful impact. We feel that mobilizing resources to change the public narrative needs to be a priority as their support and by in is essential.

We suggest that public education campaigns be developed to better cultivate an accurate understanding of the complexity of homelessness and the realities of the homeless population. Provincial and Municipal Governments should be requested to allocate resources to create a public education campaign across the Province to ensure people have accurate information and can make decisions based on evidence-based research that reflects facts and realities.

While their study focused on the UK, which is experiencing similar issues with the divide between public perceptions and the realities of homelessness, the key findings and recommendations of O'Neil, Gerstein Pineau, Kendall-Taylor, Volmert & Stevens (2017) are applicable to our findings as they are all supporting the goal of "reframing homelessness." The key findings and recommendations that we feel are consistent with our project are plenty and as follows. Firstly, not framing homelessness as a personal issue and, instead reframing it as a social issue that impacts everyone. O'Neil et al. (2017) state that people need to be aware of the systemic, structural, political and social barriers that create and sustain homelessness. Since homelessness does not take place overnight, it is not based on an event or incident, and there are many factors that lead to it, people need to understand that it is complex and requires multifaceted long-term solutions.

Secondly, O'Neil et al. (2017) recommend "making connections to the broader 'economic trends' that contribute to homelessness such as inflation, increased housing prices, increase in unemployment rates." As many members of the public understand these realities and are themselves likely impacted, we are curious if this would help create a commonality or relatability between the public and the homeless population that may close the divide and misunderstandings. We also need to ensure that in educating the public that we have a holistic approach and not just target emotion.

Thirdly, discussing and explaining the prevention of homelessness to the public is important (O'Neil et al., 2017). If people understand what investing in resources and supports to prevent homelessness looks like and how these resources and supports are beneficial to the entire community perhaps, they will be better supported and more successful. By the time we are trying to address homelessness, it may be too late; there are multiple opportunities to intervene as a society, and the public needs to be informed about them.

As for breaking down the perceptions of homelessness as a criminal justice matter, we suggest that the police services launch education campaigns that educate the public on how homelessness is not a crime. It would be helpful to explicitly explain the differences between bylaws and criminal laws and when the public should be seeking police support. Moreover, it needs to be clearly communicated that an individual's housing situation is not typically determined solely by their appearance or activities. Clarification needs to be made that criminal and nuisance behavior, and homelessness are completely independent. By featuring literature and media materials (social media, news articles, billboards etc.) alongside public meetings where and when people are concerned about homelessness in their neighbourhoods, these educational campaigns will provide the

public with accurate information, teaching them how to respond more appropriately before the panic sets in, may potentially quell their fears, and create more supportive communities.

Authorities need to get ahead of the stories in not only issuing media releases but by being proactive and celebrating prevention and intervention strategies that address the causes and complexities of homelessness. Additionally, of great importance is a needed influx of reporting on initiatives that are reducing the risk of homelessness in our population. News stories highlighting these initiatives should be presented frequently as direct counterprogramming to more sensational “news events” such as tent cities and conflicts over housing developments. This would help people understand the systemic dynamics of homelessness and that it is not an isolated phenomenon. For the public to understand that homelessness is a social issue that results from a lack of access to other resources and social barriers, it needs to be communicated that initiatives that address social justice issues such as low income housing, access to supports and resources, mental health, child care, food security, income assistance, violence prevention, elder and senior housing and care etc. all are working towards preventing and reducing homelessness.

It is also suggested that private and Government sectors supporting reductions on homelessness work on getting ahead of the media and public appetite for reactionary emotionally charged stories that create the perfect environment for the moral panics to perpetuate. Instead of waiting for an incident to happen and for the media and public to create drama, there needs to be more discussion on broader social issues related to homelessness rather than specific incidents. For example, authorities need to recognize and take the lead on an emergent story rather than competing with unsubstantiated authorities and sensationalized headlines for control of the narrative. Finally, Government and private sector authorities need to work on countering the power of confirmation bias and the authority fallacy by providing statements more consistently and with more of an emphasis on educating the public on homelessness as a social justice issue through highlighting narratives of success stories and/or the systemic barriers facing the homeless. It is the role of these authorities to demonstrate how people who are homeless should not be feared and viewed as criminals.

Next Steps

For a more complete analysis to capture public perceptions of homelessness in a natural and candid way we suggest further analysis of public comments to articles posted online. Additionally, in exploring the functions and utility of the program *Netlytics*, a social media analysis of how people are talking about homelessness online via social media networks and in association to news media would be intriguing. This would be really impactful for launching and implementing a public education campaign on homelessness through social media as through *Netlytics*, the best venues for posting the information and further exploring where narratives that circulate stereotypes and misperceptions of homelessness are created and maintained.

It also would be interesting to explore media reports of homelessness over a longer period of time. In this study, it would be impactful to explore if, when, and how the discussion of homelessness in the media changes across news sources and over time. This would help in isolating some of the factors we identified and exploring them in greater detail to understand if there are any forces that contribute to the changes in media reporting and public perceptions within media reports.

Of great importance is to continue to have police consistently present their position that homelessness is not a crime and that their involvement with people who are homeless is not always indicative of people who are homeless engaging in criminal or nuisance behavior. It is important to emphasize their front-line role in building relationships and their ability to help support individuals in locating and accessing resources. It is important to maintain the messaging that police presence does not indicate the presence of crime.

Lastly, the next steps are to critically analyze why and how much funding is being allocated for temporary solutions for homelessness and the housing crises, including shelters and short-term housing. The need (and repeated discussion of this need) to open up shelters for cold weather is indicative of a larger societal issue. The messages that shelters and temporary housing are appropriate responses to homelessness must be stopped. More pressure needs to be applied to all levels of Government and funders to critically review and create long-term solutions.

Limitations

Several of the limitations of this study have already been discussed in the methodology section. In particular, the fact that we did not analyze any audio or video news, or online newsfeeds means that in our analysis of *Global News BC*, *CTV News Vancouver*, and *CBC News (British Columbia)*, we were unable to analyze all of their published content such as the audio and visual stories that accompanied the text of the media report. This limitation was partially due to software limitations and our decision to capture material using *NCapture*, which creates a static PDF.

The relationship between video/audio reporting and textual media is worth further consideration. As is the fact that many millennial readers no longer turn to traditional print media and news resources for their news. Further research needs to be done into how and if the news stories published by traditional media outlets are being circulated and commented on through the social media and web platforms.

In addition, the traditional media is a capitalist enterprise governed by financial and political pressures, meaning that the reports published are subject to and shaped by the broader ideological agendas and affiliations of the publication's ownership. To address this issue, an examination of the discourse around homelessness in independent publications, including those published by the homeless community members themselves, needs attention. However, since this project was about the general public's perception of homelessness and how representations of homelessness in the press fuel these perceptions of criminalization, we feel that focusing on traditional, popular and, most

important, broadly accessible media resources best aligned with the scope and intention of our project. Lastly, we decided to cite the news sources rather than the authors name as in the media the publisher has finally say on how and what is published.

We recognize that with our background and knowledge that we are not experts in media or journalistic practices. Our focus is not to scrutinize journalists or media outlets but to critically analyze the published discourse from criminological and rhetorical literature perspectives. Rather, our intent is in exploring the role that media can play in how people understand, view and respond to individuals who are homeless and homelessness and as such we have refrained from making recommendations directly to journalistic practices.

The decision to exclude *Kelowna Capital*, *Globe and Mail*, and *Prince George Citizen* also means that our data set is geographically limited with most stories focused on neighbourhoods in the lower mainland and the Greater Victoria Regional District. However, this focus on homelessness in major urban centres is a symptom of the media, which tends to report from these centres. In addition, regional newspapers often run stories written by journalists affiliated with a press's central office. We recognize that many of the new sources that were analyzed are typically related; for example, *The Province* and the *Vancouver Sun* are owned by the same company. We did not critically examine if the media sources we considered reported on homelessness differently but feel that this was outside our scope of purpose. Also, although our sample was over 3 years, beyond exploring the frequency of articles published, we did not examine if there was a discourse change over time. We treated the data as a snapshot without deeply analyzing variations within the sample over time.

Most of our timeline issues were the result of the larger than anticipated sample size and the limitations we encountered using *N-Vivo*. *N-Vivo* did not provide the anticipated flexibility and tools required to effectively manage, organize, and label the files we imported. This is one of the reasons we decided to exclude *Kelowna Capital*. After initial issues with data importation and organization, we realized that in order to meet our deadlines, we would need to cut this particular source. We also underestimated the learning curve and complexity of this software analysis program. A major limitation with *N-Vivo* is the way it captures webpages (such as *Global News BC* and *CTV News Vancouver*). *N-Vivo*'s tool for importing webpages, *NCapture*, corrupted the data as images were layered over the text. We reviewed the content the best we could, but we recognize that we do not have a complete sample. The use of *ProQuest* and *N-Vivo* together also created some issues. *ProQuest* strips all metadata from the article, and even prior to importing it into *N-Vivo* we lost images, public comments, names of news sources, page numbers, and even the authors names in several of our sources. This is why we cite articles based on source that they were published rather than by author because while in many cases we could find where the resource was from and the year it was published, we could not always recover and locate all author names. We are certain that the sources of the media articles were correctly catalogued as we clearly labelled and managed these throughout the project. The inaccessibility of the comments sections when using *ProQuest* is why we decided to exclude these from our analysis. However, we found that the public were active

and present in participating in the news sources (*Global News BC, CTV News Vancouver, CBC News*) so were able to capture their perspectives.

While we are confident in the results presented as we manually coded and sorted material, which had a massive impact on our timelines, we remain concerned about *N-Vivo*'s complexity and lack of assistance on how to effectively use the program as well as its overall utility for this kind of project. We would recommend that future researchers limit their sample sizes and build in more time and resources for training with *N-Vivo* or explore other software platforms.

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Appendix 1

1.1. Positive Pathos

Images that project Pathos (tone) and demonstrate inconsistencies with headline, text of article and image.



The 'Cold Weather Clothing Drive' kicked off by Sun FM morning hosts B Mack and Karly on Monday morning runs through until Feb.10.

Global News

1.1.1. "Kelowna homeless shelter running out of time – Okanagan" (Globalnews.ca Dec. 10, 2018)



Homeless man talks to a UGM employee after receiving a bag provided by Citypak (Courtesy: UGM)

1.1.2. "'Street proof' bags handed out to Metro Vancouver homeless – BC" (Globalnews.ca Nov. 21, 2016)

1.2. Negative Pathos - Disconnect between Headline & Image

Not only do these images indicate a negative emotional response but they also demonstrate the disconnect between the headline and image.

WATCH: New Maple Ridge homeless shelter causes controversy, again



1.2.1. Headline - "Maple Ridge could be next in line for modular housing to ease homeless crunch - BC" (Globalnews.ca, Oct. 24, 2017)



1.2.2. Headline - "Rally held in Maple Ridge to protest proposed homeless shelter - BC" (Globalnews.ca, March 19, 2016)



1.2.3. Headline - "Petition calls for water fountain for Surrey homeless " (Globalnews.ca, July 3, 2017)



1.2.4. Headline - "A change in our whole life~' Hope from Surrey homeless as new housing opens - BC" (Globalnews.ca June 20, 2018)

1.3. Negative Pathos – Consistency between Headline & Image

Images consistent with the headline and text of article.



1.3.1. "Chilliwack parents taking action to clean up school grounds near homeless camp - BC" (Globalnews.ca September 15, 2016)



A view of the Christ Cathedral Church overlooking tent city before the block party at the camp in Victoria, B.C., on February 25, 2016. (Chad Hipolito / The Canadian Press)

1.3.2. "4 Victoria police officers injured in incident at tent city for the homeless" (CTV News Vancouver)

"B.C. in court seeking to shut down Victoria's homeless camp" (CTV News Vancouver)

1.4. Neutral Pathos

These images and articles elicit neutral tone with a focus on logos (fact/statements).



A temporary modular housing suite is visited by the public while on display in Robson Square in downtown Vancouver, B.C. on Tuesday October 3, 2017. (THE CANADIAN PRESS/Ben Nelms)

1.4.1. "B.C. experiments with 'Lego block' housing in fight against homelessness" (CTV News Vancouver, October 5, 2017)



The provincial government has bought a former Kelowna motel to create residences for the homeless.

Dan Couch/Global News

1.4.2. "Former Kelowna motel
being transformed into
housing for the homeless"
(Globalnews.ca Sept. 1, 2017)