

School of English – Masters by Research

Home without a home:

A corpus linguistics analysis of discourses
surrounding homelessness from 2010-2018

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Abstract

This thesis analyses constructions of homelessness in the UK between 2010 and 2018. Corpus linguistics methods were employed alongside Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse mainstream news discourses surrounding homelessness, homeless charity discourses and Hansard discourses on homelessness. The research looks at definitions of homelessness alongside the dominant definition of homelessness as 'houselessness' in mainstream media and how those with power perpetuate reductive definitions which impacts on public understandings of homelessness. Discursive labelling strategies, such as 'the homeless', are used by mainstream media to signal a sense of 'otherness'. These labels demonstrate a negative ideological evaluation of people experiencing homelessness whereas homelessness charities and Hansard discourses are more likely to discuss people experiencing homelessness with reference to their humanity. Analyses of homelessness and causation point towards negative forms of representation which align with government legislation where those experiencing homelessness are responsabilised and pathologised for their individual life circumstances. Homelessness discourses are paradoxical and while personal narratives within homelessness charity discourses appear to provide people experiencing homelessness with a voice, these narratives are *not* the experiences of people as they chose to portray them. Homeless social networks are created through the commonality of homeless people's experiences and offer benefits such as logistical and emotional support to maintain a positive identity and survive the hardships of homelessness life. However, homeless social networks are paradoxical in nature because an individual may be re-housed but lack the security and protection that homeless communities can provide. Mainstream media and homelessness charities circulate sympathetic discourses which appear as positive but have detrimental consequences to public opinion surrounding homelessness. The thesis concludes with an examination of *The Independent's* homeless veterans' campaign which draws on paradoxical notions of banal nationalism to create a sympathetic perspective to elicit public donations to assist with the plight of homelessness.

Contents

1. Introduction	10
1.1. What is homelessness?	10
1.2. Systemic factors putting people at risk of homelessness in the UK	13
1.3. UK homelessness intervention and prevention	14
1.4. Future implications for homelessness in the UK	17
1.5. Studying homelessness discourses	20
1.6. The current study	21
2. Methodology	23
2.1. Critical discourse analysis (CDA)	23
2.2. Corpus linguistics	25
2.2.1. Word dispersion	26
2.2.2. Corpus comparison and Keywords	27
2.2.3. Collocations	28
2.3. The Corpus	30
2.3.1. The British Press	31
2.3.2. News texts	33
2.3.3. Charity texts	37
2.3.4. Hansard discourse	38
3. Homelessness Definitions	40
3.1. UK definitions of homelessness	40
3.1.1. Statutory homelessness	40
3.1.2. Rough sleeping	40
3.1.3. Hidden homelessness	41
3.2. Looking towards a new definition of homelessness	41
3.2.1. Homelessness as 'houselessness'	42
3.2.2. Definitions of 'home'	43
3.2.3. Definitions and power	45
3.2.4. A new definition of homelessness	46
3.3. Labelling strategies in discourses surrounding homelessness	47
3.3.1. 'Homeless people' vs. 'the homeless'	47
3.3.2. 'Tramps, 'vagrants' and 'drifters'	53
3.3.3. Locality and visible homeless labels	56
4. Homelessness and causation	60
4.1. The homelessness causation dichotomy	60
4.1.1. Issues with the dichotomy	60
4.1.2. Structuration	62
4.1.3. 'New orthodoxy' and positivist notions of causation	62
4.1.4. Realist approaches to causation	64
4.2. Analysing causation in discourses surrounding homelessness	64
4.2.1. Substance/alcohol addiction	68
4.2.1.1. The rise of 'spice' in Manchester	69
4.2.1.2. Substance addiction and quantification	71
4.2.2. Mental health	72
4.2.3. Poverty	76
4.2.4. The private rental sector and eviction from private tenancies	78
4.2.5. Welfare reforms and conditionality	80
5. Homelessness, identity and social networks	83
5.1. Homeless identity	83
5.1.1. Snow and Anderson's (1987) identity talk study	84

5.1.2. Threats to identity	87
5.2. Homeless social networks and communities of practice	89
5.2.1. The formation of social networks and communities of practice	89
5.2.2. Homeless social networks and communities	90
5.2.3. Peer and homed networks	92
5.2.4. Homeless social network formation	93
5.2.5. Who belongs to homeless social networks?	94
5.2.5.1. Current or former partner(s)	94
5.2.5.2. Family	95
5.2.5.3. Friends	96
5.2.5.4. Other	97
5.2.6. The characteristics of homeless social networks	97
5.2.6.1. Selfhood and positive identity	98
5.2.6.2. Logistical, emotional, material and moral support	99
5.2.6.3. Instrumental support	100
5.2.6.4. Protection	101
5.2.7. The dangers of homeless social networks	102
5.2.7.1. Issues with network members not helping	102
5.2.7.2. Deviant behaviours	103
5.2.7.3. Communities founded on substance/alcohol addiction	103
5.2.8. Issues with social networks and returning to the mainstream	106
6. Homelessness profiles	109
6.1. Homelessness narratives	109
6.2. Analysing narrative structures in homelessness discourses	110
6.2.1. Homelessness charity narratives	110
6.2.2. Media narratives	116
6.2.2.1. 'Anyone can end up homeless'	119
6.2.2.2. 'A day in the life of a homeless person'	121
7. Seasonal responses to homelessness	125
7.1. Seasonal spikes in coverage	125
7.1.1. Christmas	126
7.1.2. Newsworthiness	127
7.1.3. Weather conditions	127
7.2. Sympathetic discourses	128
7.2.1. Characteristics of sympathetic discourses	128
7.2.2. Benefits of sympathetic discourses	129
7.2.3. Issues with sympathetic discourses	130
7.2.4. The paradoxes behind sympathetic discourses	134
7.2.5. Moving towards more effective discourses	135
7.3. Homeless appeals – <i>The Independent's</i> homeless veterans' campaign	135
7.3.1. Veterans experiencing homelessness	137
7.3.2. Evoking the metaphor of being at war	137
7.3.3. Homeless veterans and banal nationalism	140
7.3.4. The obligation to donate to veterans	145
8. Conclusion	148

List of tables, figures and excerpts

Tables

Table 2.1. <i>Number of words, articles and discourses in the corpus.</i>	31
Table 2.2. <i>Number of words and articles in the news corpus and sub-corpora.</i>	35
Table 2.3. <i>Number of words and articles by national/local newspaper in the news corpus and sub-corpora.</i>	35
Table 2.4. <i>Number of words and articles in the charity corpus and sub-corpora.</i>	37
Table 2.5. <i>Number of texts and words in Hansard corpus.</i>	39
Table 6.1. <i>Circumstances leading to homelessness in homeless charity narratives.</i>	112

Figures

Figure 1.1. <i>Definitions of core and wider homelessness.</i>	11
Figure 1.2. <i>Rough sleeping counts in England 2010-2018 (Homeless Link, 2019).</i>	12
Figure 1.3. <i>Number of households in England in statutory homelessness 2010-2018 (MHCLG, 2019).</i>	13
Figure 1.4. <i>Summary of changes introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act (Shelter, 2018).</i>	16
Figure 1.5. <i>Projected increase in homelessness in the UK (Crisis, 2018).</i>	18
Figure 1.6. <i>Forecast of core homelessness in the UK (Crisis, 2018).</i>	18
Figure 2.1. <i>The British Press (adapted from Baker et al, 2013).</i>	32
Figure 2.2. <i>Broadsheet vs. tabloid (adapted from Bednarek, 2006).</i>	33
Figure 2.3. <i>Circulation and newspapers in the UK from 2010-2018 (adapted from Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2019).</i>	36
Figure 2.4. <i>References to 'homeless' in Hansard debates from 2010-2018.</i>	39
Figure 3.1. <i>Labelling strategies by sub-corpora.</i>	48
Figure 3.2. <i>Most popular homeless labelling terms in all news texts by year.</i>	49
Figure 3.3. <i>Most popular homeless labelling terms in all news texts by left-leaning newspapers.</i>	50
Figure 3.4. <i>Most popular homeless labelling terms in all news texts by right-leaning newspapers.</i>	50
Figure 3.5. <i>Homeless labelling terms in national news texts.</i>	54
Figure 3.6. <i>Usage of 'beggar(s)' and 'rough sleeper(s)' in news texts.</i>	56
Figure 3.7. <i>Levels of rough sleeping in Manchester from 2010-2018 (Homeless Link, 2019).</i>	58
Figure 3.8. <i>Usage of 'rough sleeping' vs. 'rough sleeper(s)' in local charity texts.</i>	58
Figure 4.1. <i>Narrative types in media and third-sector materials (Crisis, 2018).</i>	66
Figure 4.2. <i>A systemic view of why people become and remain homeless (NPC, 2018).</i>	66
Figure 4.3. <i>Most common homelessness causes cited in homeless charity personal narratives.</i>	67
Figure 4.4. <i>References to 'spice' in all news texts.</i>	69
Figure 4.5. <i>Deaths related to synthetic cannabinoids in England and Wales from 2014-2018 (ONS, 2018).</i>	70
Figure 4.6. <i>References to 'mental health' in news texts by year.</i>	75

Figure 4.7. <i>CDA-informed categories used in grouping Keywords.</i>	77
Figure 5.1. <i>Peer and homed networks (adapted from Rowe and Wolch, 1990).</i>	92
Figure 5.2. <i>Time-space model of homeless persons' activity for one day (Rowe and Wolch, 1990).</i>	101
Figure 7.1. <i>Overall volume of UK national newspaper coverage on homelessness from 2010-2018.</i>	125
Figure 7.2. <i>Articles directly/indirectly about the homeless veterans' campaign.</i>	137
Figure 7.3. <i>Labelling strategies for veterans within the homeless veterans' campaign.</i>	142
Figure 7.4. <i>Different types of roles of the formation 'our armed forces' in the level of the clause within the homeless veterans' campaign.</i>	143
Figure 7.5. <i>Collocates preceding 'country' within the homeless veterans' campaign.</i>	145

Excerpts

Excerpt 3.1. <i>Concordance lines of 'no fixed abode' in national news media texts.</i>	52
Excerpt 3.2. <i>Negative headlines including 'tramp' from The Sun.</i>	54
Excerpt 3.3. <i>Positive headlines including 'tramp' from The Sun.</i>	55
Excerpt 4.1. <i>Quantification with reference to substances in homeless charity personal narratives.</i>	71
Excerpt 4.2. <i>Mental health issues leading to homelessness.</i>	72
Excerpt 4.3. <i>Mental health as exacerbating issues with homelessness.</i>	73
Excerpt 4.4. <i>Mental health as making services difficult to access.</i>	74
Excerpt 4.5. <i>Mental health and substance addiction issues.</i>	74
Excerpt 4.6. <i>Homeless person discussing negative impacts of 'mental health' label.</i>	75
Excerpt 4.7. <i>Concordance lines using 'poverty' in homeless charity personal narratives.</i>	78
Excerpt 4.8. <i>References to eviction from private rented accommodation leading to homelessness.</i>	79
Excerpt 5.1. <i>Concordance lines linking to family social network breakdown.</i>	91
Excerpt 5.2. <i>Concordance lines of 'relationship' linking to relationship breakdown.</i>	91
Excerpt 5.3. <i>Concordance lines of 'drug(s)' linking to drug-taking and removal from accommodation.</i>	91
Excerpt 5.4. <i>Concordance lines of 'family' in homed networks in local charity personal narratives.</i>	95
Excerpt 5.5. <i>Concordance lines of 'family' in peer networks in local charity personal narratives.</i>	95
Excerpt 5.6. <i>Concordance lines of 'friends' in local homeless charity personal narratives.</i>	96
Excerpt 5.7. <i>Concordance lines showing fleeting social networks.</i>	97
Excerpt 5.8. <i>Concordance lines showing alcohol/substance addiction as a relief.</i>	103
Excerpt 5.9. <i>Concordance lines showing alcohol/substance facilitating induction into new communities.</i>	104
Excerpt 6.1. <i>Questions asked to formerly homeless individuals in homeless charity narratives.</i>	110
Excerpt 6.2. <i>Issues and improvements cited for homelessness services in homeless charity narratives.</i>	112

Excerpt 6.3. <i>Acts of public compassion in homeless charity narratives.</i>	113
Excerpt 6.4. <i>Issues with the system cited in homeless charity narratives.</i>	113
Excerpt 6.5. <i>Formerly homeless people offering charity to others in homeless charity narratives.</i>	114
Excerpt 6.6. <i>Topics cited by individuals to feel positive about the future in homeless charity narratives.</i>	115
Excerpt 6.7. <i>Homeless people encouraging others to make positive decisions in homeless charity narratives.</i>	115
Excerpt 6.8. <i>Aspects of life that current homeless people wish for in homeless charity narratives.</i>	116
Excerpt 6.9. <i>Homeless people at their lowest point and hitting 'rock bottom' in media homeless narratives.</i>	117
Excerpt 6.10. <i>Reminiscence of former lifestyle before homelessness in media homeless narratives.</i>	118
Excerpt 6.11. <i>Positive conclusions within media homeless narratives.</i>	119
Excerpt 6.12. <i>Discussion of how homelessness can affect anyone in media homeless narratives.</i>	119
Excerpt 6.13. <i>Positive endings to media homeless narratives.</i>	120
Excerpt 6.14. <i>Lifestyle shifts in media homeless narratives.</i>	121
Excerpt 6.15. <i>'Out of the ordinary' activities described in media homeless narratives.</i>	122
Excerpt 6.16. <i>Homeless causation pathways in media homeless narratives.</i>	123
Excerpt 6.17. <i>Negative endings in 'a day in the life' media homeless narratives.</i>	124
Excerpt 7.1. <i>Homeless people needing help from others in sympathetic discourses.</i>	129
Excerpt 7.2. <i>Individual issues leading to homelessness in sympathetic discourses.</i>	132
Excerpt 7.3. <i>Sentimental images of rough sleepers in winter in sympathetic discourses.</i>	132
Excerpt 7.4. <i>Individual action in sympathetic discourses.</i>	133
Excerpt 7.5. <i>Metaphorical examples of 'war' in the homeless veterans' campaign.</i>	138
Excerpt 7.6. <i>Concordances of 'battle' in the homeless veterans' campaign.</i>	138
Excerpt 7.7. <i>Concordances of 'fight' in the homeless veterans' campaign.</i>	139
Excerpt 7.8. <i>Newspaper headline in the homeless veterans' campaign.</i>	140
Excerpt 7.9. <i>Concordance lines of 'our armed forces' within the homeless veterans' campaign.</i>	143
Excerpt 7.10. <i>Concordance lines of 'we' within the homeless veterans' campaign.</i>	146
Excerpt 7.11. <i>Concordances of 'owe' within the homeless veterans' campaign.</i>	146

Home without a home: A corpus linguistics analysis of discourses surrounding homelessness from 2010-2018

Chapter 1 – Introduction

The number of people experiencing homelessness in the United Kingdom has soared since the introduction of the Conservative-led Coalition government back on the 11th May 2010. The Coalition government brought in a plethora of austerity, welfare and social policy reforms including significant housing benefit cuts, intensified regimes of conditionality, welfare reforms and more severe sanctions, capped housing benefits, public expenditure reductions, and a weakened housing safety net (Reeve, 2017; Crisis, 2018). The national homeless charity, Crisis (2018), found that homelessness cases, predominantly episodes of rough sleeping, began to increase as a result of the Coalition government's welfare reforms, ever-increasing rent prices, an unstable private rental market and a lack of affordable housing.

1.1. What is homelessness?

Being homeless means not having a home; even those with a roof over their head can still be considered homeless. People experiencing episodes of homelessness can be split into two main categories: core and wider homelessness (*see Figure 1.1*). Core homelessness includes households experiencing acute forms of homelessness or are living in unsuitable temporary accommodation. Wider homelessness refers to those who have already experienced episodes of homelessness and live in short-term accommodation on a temporary basis (Crisis, 2018). However, homelessness is an unstable, transitory experience which means that individuals often move between these categories.

Core homelessness:
Rough sleeping
Sleeping in tents, cars, public transport
Squatting (unlicensed, insecure)
Unsuitable non-residential accommodation (e.g. 'beds in sheds')
Hostel residents
Users of night/winter shelters
DV victim in Refuge
Unsuitable temporary accommodation (which includes B&B accommodation, hotels etc)
'Sofa surfing' – staying with others (not close family) on short-term/insecure basis/wanting to move, in crowded conditions (this does not include students)
Wider homelessness
Staying with friends/relatives because unable to find own accommodation (longer-term)
Eviction/under notice to quit (and unable to afford rent/deposit)
Asked to leave by parents/relatives
Intermediate accommodation and receiving support
In other temporary accommodation (e.g. conventional social housing, private sector leasing)
Discharge from prison, hospital and other state institution without permanent housing

Figure 1.1. Definitions of core and wider homelessness (Crisis, 2018).

Rough sleeping is the most dangerous and extreme form of homelessness. These people involved in episodes of street homelessness are more likely to have long-term histories of poverty, disadvantage and trauma (Fitzpatrick et al, 2013). Rough sleepers typically experience frequent in-and-out episodes of homelessness over a lengthy duration, are continually re-housed and excluded from housing options, and have intermittent contact with housing and social welfare services (Dobson, 2018). Those experiencing rough sleeping also have a plethora of barriers to resettlement (Parsell, 2010) such as financial barriers (including budget cuts, benefit reforms, and the lack of affordable housing), institutional barriers (such as the limited capacity for services to respond to complex needs) and personal barriers (i.e. those with no choice or who perceive rough sleeping as less undesirable than other limited options available to them).

Most common public perceptions of homelessness revolve around rough sleepers. While the methodological difficulties in quantitative counts of rough sleepers have been noted (Kemp 1997), it is difficult to argue with the increasing levels of visible homelessness in the UK. These figures are collected by local authorities but those not using homelessness services, either through deliberate choice or because they are not aware of the institutional help available, are particularly difficult to count (Clarke, 2016). The official numbers of those sleeping on the streets have more than doubled since 2010.

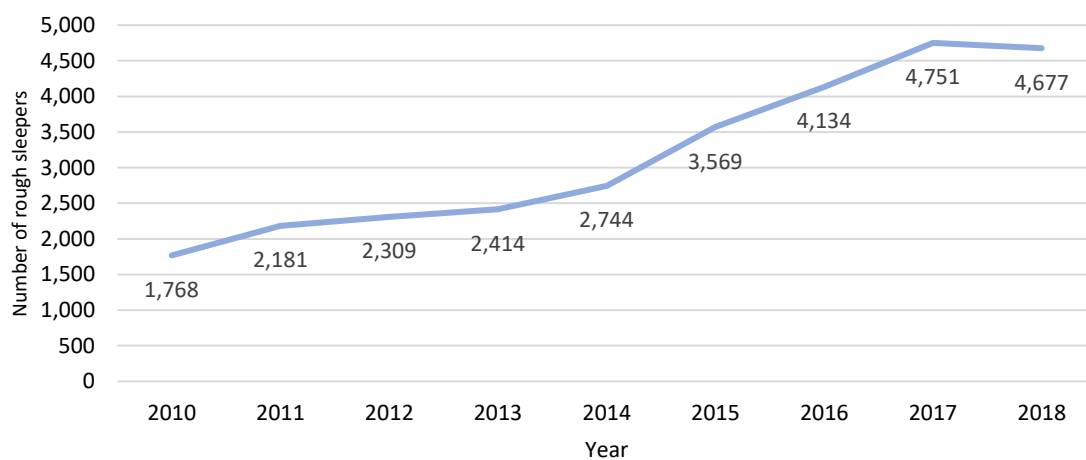


Figure 1.2. Rough sleeping counts in England 2010-2018 (Homeless Link, 2019).

The statutory homelessness system establishes individuals/households who are required to be secured accommodation by local authorities. The primary homelessness duty of local authorities is to provide temporary accommodation for those experiencing homelessness. The local authority owes a duty under the homelessness legislation and in many cases resolves this duty through the offer of a social rented tenancy (Fitzpatrick and Pleace, 2012: 235). However, homeless households must be *eligible* to be owed this duty. Households are required to be unintentionally homeless (i.e. have not fallen into homelessness through any fault of their own) and priority need, which categorises them as recognised vulnerable groups (such as households with dependent children, pregnant women, vulnerable adults with mental illness or physical disability). Single homeless people often do *not* fall within this statutory framework and are thus expected to support themselves (Fitzpatrick and Pleace,

2012). The number of those eligible and in statutory homelessness increased by over 28% between 2010 and 2018.

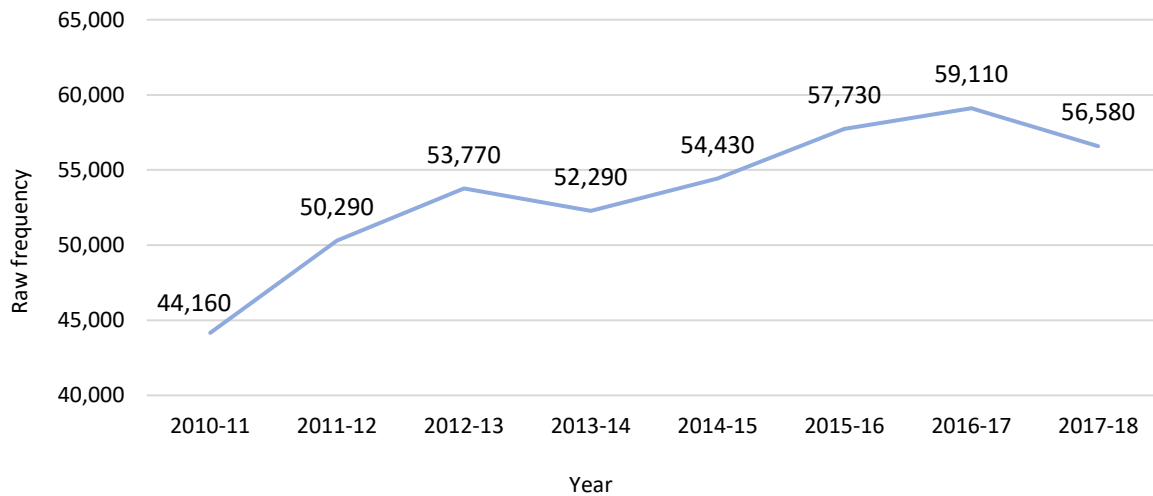


Figure 1.3. Number of households in England in statutory homelessness 2010-2018 (MHCLG, 2019).

Individuals living in temporary accommodation are also homeless because temporary accommodation is *not* a home. People who are repeatedly in and out of the system are known as the hidden homeless. Hidden homelessness includes those who temporarily live in hostels, bed and breakfasts (B&Bs) and are sofa-surfing with family or friends around the country. While forms of homelessness such as rough sleeping are more visible, those living in insecure and precarious conditions are concealed from the public (Clarke, 2016).

Research has suggested that a third of young people have sofa-surfed at some stage in their lives (Clarke, 2016). Staying with family or friends as a short-term solution may enable young people to repair fragmented relationships within their social networks while also giving them a roof over their heads. However, this form of homelessness is particularly ephemeral and is not a permanent solution to those at risk of longer-term episodes of homelessness.

1.2. Systemic factors putting people at risk of homelessness in the UK

In 2012, the Coalition government reduced welfare spending by introducing strict levels of conditionality and benefit reforms. The government brought in sanctions to challenge issues

with benefit dependency which ostensibly existed in those outside of work. These sanctions have been perceived as a method of reinforcing state authority over groups on the social periphery, such as people experiencing homelessness (Reeve, 2017). This systemic welfare retrenchment by the Coalition government blames and stigmatises individuals for their social issues. This, in turn, simultaneously delegitimises vulnerable people experiencing homelessness while legitimising political inefficiencies. Conditionality means that claimants must meet specific behavioural and needs-based criteria in order to be eligible for state assistance (*see section 4.2.5*). This idea is centred on punitive measures towards purportedly deviant individuals and fails to assist the multifaceted, complex needs of those experiencing homelessness (Dwyer et al, 2015). The overall implication of these punitive measures is that the systemic causes of homelessness and the ineffectiveness of government policies are de-politicised and hidden from view. Instead, the attribution of blame is deflected onto vulnerable individuals who are punished for their lack of agency and reliance on social welfare (Dwyer et al, 2015).

A lack of affordable social housing supply and a reduction in services such as local authority funding for housing support has also resulted in decreasing options for those at risk of experiencing homelessness (Fitzpatrick et al, 2015). As a result of these reforms, the costly and unstable private rented sector became the primary housing provider for lower income households (Crisis, 2018). The loss of private tenancies has been cited as *the* leading cause of homelessness in England and accounts for 30% of all recorded homelessness cases (Crisis, 2018 – *see section 4.2.4*).

1.3. UK Homelessness intervention and prevention

The 2010-2015 Coalition government responded to increasing levels of homelessness by making a major change to homelessness legislation and introduced the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017). This Act came into force in April 2018 and brought in new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness. This Act does not, however, contain suggested duties to

provide emergency accommodation to those in immediate danger of rough sleeping (Crisis, 2018). The Homelessness Reduction Act places new legal duties on local authorities and adds two new duties onto the original statutory rehousing duty (*see Figure 1.4*). The Act is a radical reform and offers one of the biggest changes to the rights of people experiencing homelessness in over 15 years (Shelter, 2018). The Act shifts the focus from *intervention* to the *prevention* of homelessness through a myriad of new approaches and involves earlier service intervention, free advice, thorough assessment(s) of individuals, personalised responses and support for *all* those who are threatened with homelessness or are experiencing homelessness, and applicants to cooperate with local housing authorities (Shelter, 2018; MHCLG, 2019). The accommodation that applicants are helped to find must be suitable (in terms of habitability and proximity) and that institutions must collaborate to tackle homelessness (Shelter, 2018).

The Act, however, has been criticised for its lack of impact and improvement of outcomes for those at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness. An Inside Housing (Bogle, 2019) report cited that while homeless presentations have gone up by 75%, the number of those placed in emergency accommodation has risen. The length of time that individuals stay within these types of accommodation has also increased (Bogle, 2019). This is problematic for local authorities with few resources due to government cuts. A lack of consistency in policy and procedure across housing associations working across local authorities has also been suggested as an issue (Bogle, 2019).



Figure 1.4. Summary of changes introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act (Shelter, 2018).

However, since the introduction of the Act, there have also been a range of positive factors. Single homeless people have been the largest group to seek further help (MHCLG, 2019). This is positive because this demographic is underrepresented within homelessness statistics, which has made it challenging to assess the types of service interventions that

have been provided for them (MHCLG, 2019). Housing associations have been more thorough in their benchmarking of current practices (Bogle, 2019) which has a greater social impact for people experiencing homelessness. As a result of the Act and its direct focus on more personalised approaches, local authorities and housing associations are less likely to adopt inflexible practices that are not appropriate to the needs of people experiencing homelessness (Bogle, 2019).

The Homelessness Reduction Act thus far demonstrates a political imperative to tackle the annually increasing issue of homelessness. It signals a cultural change in the approach to homelessness through the shift in focus from *intervention* to *prevention* and, in doing so, seeks to prevent homelessness at the root cause. Despite this, its effects on positive outcomes are currently equivocal. The Act encourages a more well-rounded perspective of homeless individuals by considering them as active citizens rather than passive applicants (Cowan, 2019). However, the private rented market remains the primary method for the new duties outlined within the Act, which means that the Act is likely to conceal long-term systemic issues in the housing system (Cowan, 2019).

1.4. Future implications for homelessness in the UK

In 2018, Crisis reported that almost 160,000 households were experiencing some of the most severe forms of homelessness across the UK. Without effective policymaking, interventions and personalised solutions for those expecting homelessness, these levels are set to soar *and* to double in the next 25 years (*see Figure 1.5*).

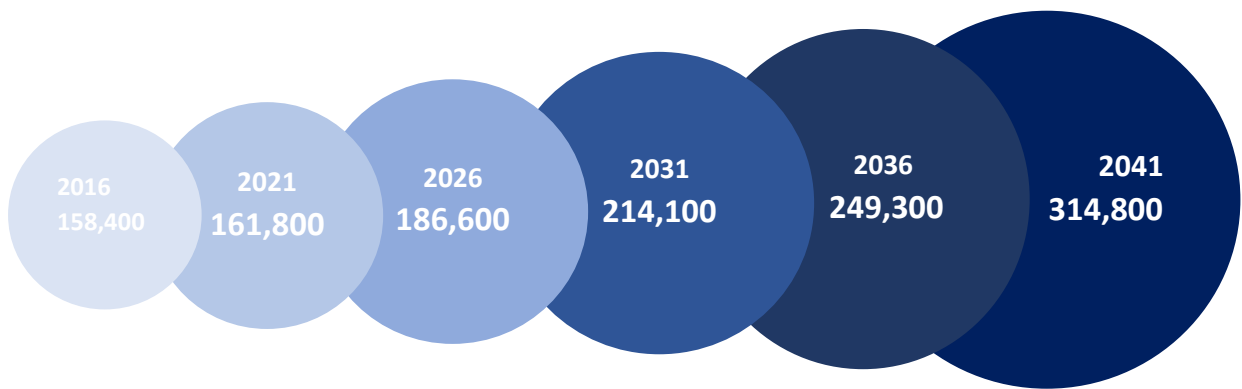


Figure 1.5. Projected increase in homelessness in the UK (Crisis, 2018).

Crisis (2018) broke these projections down further to represent a forecast of how core homelessness could increase in the next quarter of a century.

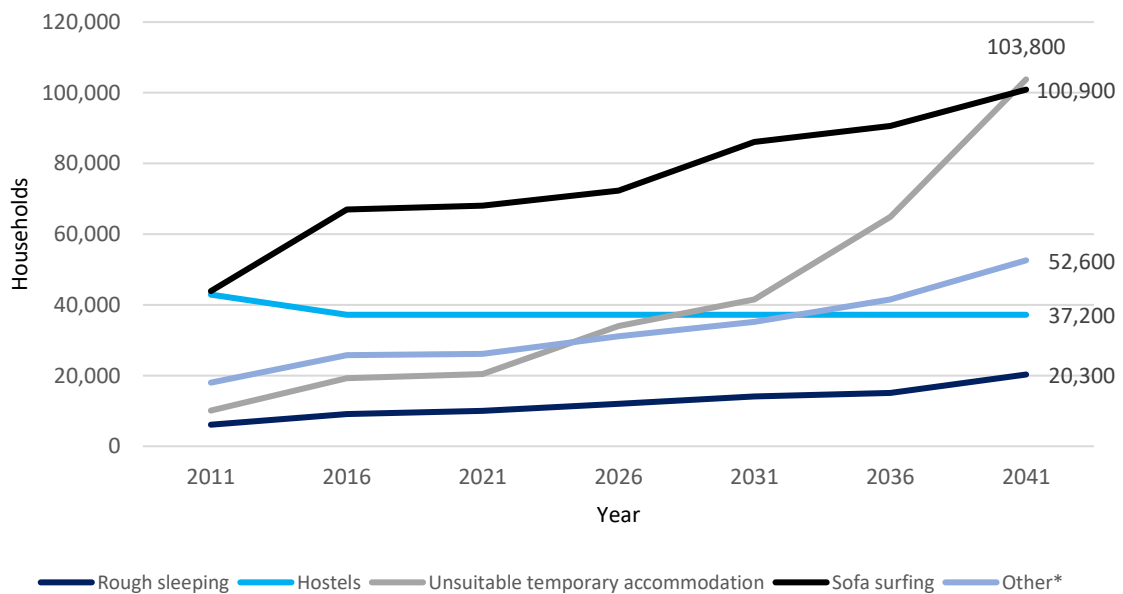


Figure 1.6. Forecast of core homelessness in the UK (Crisis, 2018).

* Other includes forms of homelessness such as sleeping in tents, cars or public transport, squatting, unsuitable non-residential accommodation, and users of night/winter shelters.

To end homelessness, a range of solutions from national and local homeless charities have been suggested through research, extensive planning and policy reports. However, legislation alone will not prevent homelessness. Assisting with the plight of homelessness requires leadership and commitment from housing associations working in collaboration with

local authorities, the government and homelessness charities (Bogle, 2019). Crisis's (2018) report on 'How to End Homelessness' seeks to advise government policymaking. The report suggests methods that will enable homelessness in the UK to rarely occur and, in cases when it does, appropriate solutions will *already* be in place. The report outlines four primary areas to end homelessness: ending rough sleeping, getting everyone housed, preventing homelessness, and wider reforms to legislation and policy.

Housing associations and local authorities must identify those sleeping rough, provide a support framework for as long as is needed, and enable them to both find *and* keep a home. Those with complex needs will be able to move into permanent housing while maintaining long-term, personalised and robust support over time. For those with immediate needs, emergency accommodation must also always be available. Getting everybody housed means building over 100,000 new social homes for the next 15 years which will assist the plight of those at risk of or those experiencing homelessness. With most people experiencing homelessness in temporary accommodation, ensuring that these groups are quickly re-housed will also limit the frequent use of ephemeral, unsuitable forms of accommodation.

Those at risk of homelessness need to be able to access immediate support which requires more funding for councils, local authorities and other public bodies to provide aid. This funding will support individuals to continue with existing tenancies and reduce the likelihood of homelessness being a persistent issue for many. A stronger legal safety net for people experiencing homelessness underlines an effective solution to ending homelessness. Those at risk of homelessness need access to support systems while ensuring that a lack of local connection does not act as a barrier to support. Allowing everyone to access this support also means abolishing the priority need category.

Ending homelessness is not only reliant on having enough housing options, but for individuals to have the *means* to keep their homes. More homes need to be built. This is especially true for social housing which has decreased in the last decade. Greater protection

needs to be provided for those renting from the social or private sectors. The government need to work in unison across both national and local departments, with housing associations and homeless charities, to promote a long-term vision to lessen the shocking levels of homelessness in the UK. Until these solutions are implemented and until society is able to perceive homelessness as a systemic issue that arises as a result of deliberate government policy choices and destigmatise those who experience it, then homelessness is unlikely to decline in the UK any time soon.

1.5. Studying homelessness discourses

News coverage surrounding homelessness is *not* objective. Media coverage represents homelessness and other social issues in such a way as to secure a universal image of the issue. Journalists do *far* more than to present an objective description of the facts of homelessness. Instead, they interpret and construct 'facts' in order to influence audiences to respond in a particular way (Fairclough, 1995). Audiences gain knowledge and understandings of homelessness from mainstream news media rather than from first-hand interactions with people experiencing homelessness (Pascale, 2005). The general public only have intermittent contact with people experiencing homelessness and thus have a limited knowledge of homelessness (Schneider, 2014). Attitudes about social issues, as well as understandings of appropriate solutions about homelessness, are constructed and shaped by mainstream news media (Schneider, 2013). Media constructions of homelessness are diverse in their nature and are often contradictory in their attitudes about those experiencing homelessness, even sometimes within the same article. This means that mainstream news media can separate the public's experiences and understandings of homelessness by 'imposing their own meaning on the phenomena' (Beresford, 1979: 146).

Media representations of social issues have an influence on debates regarding policymaking (Greenberg et al, 2006). However, the nature of this link, while pervasive, is

complex and questionable (Negrine, 1994). The link between media and policymaking decisions is bi-directional because while policy can be shaped by opinion, opinion is also shaped by policy (Liddiard, 1999). An increase in press coverage can be vital for informing subsequent policy responses to social issues (Hutson and Liddiard, 1998 - see *Chapter 7*). Politicians and policymakers often rely on media coverage to assess public attitudes surrounding social issues such as homelessness (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). Alternatively, a decrease in media coverage means that policy responses which may be harmful to homelessness may be more protected against negative public opinion (Buckner et al, 1993). Despite this, while this media impact is important to 'set the parameters for policy debates about homelessness' (Liddiard, 1999: 85), media attention is not solely enough to produce changes in policy (Somerville, 1994).

Media constructions of homelessness influence the perspectives of those with political power (McKendrick et al, 2008; Devereux, 2015). This bi-directional link between media and policymaking decisions means that both policymakers *and* politicians have significant power to inform and manipulate mainstream news media (Liddiard, 1999). These policy responses are not entirely concerned with public opinion and media coverage. Rather, policy is informed predominantly by existing wider ideologies and agendas (Liddiard, 1999). Media power operates precisely because the power lies in the hands of those who use it for their own needs while oppressing and excluding those without power, i.e., people experiencing homelessness (Watson, 1999). Media agendas on homelessness are centred on this notion of power.

1.6. The current study

The current study uses corpus linguistics methods to discover and produce new knowledge of the way in which homelessness has been constructed in UK media, charity and government discourses from 2010-2018. This project combines a range of sociological, socio-political and linguistic analysis to examine how homelessness has been constructed

over the last decade. The study places a focus on homelessness in three cities in the UK: Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool. These cities have high levels of homelessness and Manchester is significantly affected by issues with visible homelessness (*see Chapter 3*) and the 'spice' epidemic (*see Chapter 4*). The emphasis on these three cities allowed for an analysis of the disparities between national and regional representations of homelessness and whether localness had a significant impact on the construction of homelessness. The study addresses the politics of homelessness, ideological prejudices of news media, charity and government, variations between national and local representations of homelessness, the construction of homeless identities, the social functions of language in homelessness discourses, the importance of homeless social networks and how government policy has resulted in an increase in all enumerated forms of homelessness over the previous decade.

The project seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What types of ideologies are perpetuated across local and national mainstream print news media, homelessness charities and the UK government in relation to homelessness?
- Are the distribution of these ideologies affected by the political stance of the press?
- Are the representations of homelessness affected by different national and regional news values?
- Do discourses surrounding homelessness reproduce existing social relations of inequality, exclusion and 'otherness'?
- Does language impact on and shape homeless narratives and identities constructed within media, charity and government discourses on homelessness?

Chapter 2 – Methodology

2.1. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can be defined as a ‘sociological and political approach to the study of discourse’ (McEnery and Hardie, 2012: 242). This form of analysis examines discourse to unearth theoretical concepts such as power and ideology (Baker et al, 2008) and serves as a framework for linguistic social research. CDA focuses on the close examination of language within texts to show how linguistic elements (i.e. choice of lexis, sentence structure, rhetorical devices, syntax etc.) can be used to create a certain evaluation of discourses, fields, and topics.

CDA is a multi-disciplinary method which focuses on linguistic analysis through a multitude of social, historical and political contexts to critically observe productions and reflections of ideology and unequal power relations in society (Baker et al, 2013). CDA perceives linguistic and discursive data as a social practice (Baker et al, 2008). This enables researchers to uncover the reasons and implications behind the perpetuation of inequality and disadvantage within forms of discourse (Hunston, 2002). CDA researchers undertake ‘action research’ (Baker et al, 2013: 22) to unearth the structural and linguistic inequalities or biases that are prevalent within certain discourses. CDA not only analyses the way in which linguistic forms and expressions are used to signal power (Chilton, 2004) but how dominance over the genre, or access to the discourse, can exacerbate the exercise of control by powerfully vested social groups (Baker et al, 2008).

Discourse can be defined in many ways. Stubbs (1983: 1) claims that discourse is ‘language above the sentence or above the clause’, while Parker (1992: 5) suggests that discourses can be conceptualised as a ‘system of statements which construct an object’. Fairclough (1992: 8) defines discourse primarily through its ability to be ‘shaped by relations of power and [is] invested within ideologies’. This was the definition of discourse that was adopted for the present study because of its focus on the maintenance of power relations between different social actors and institutions.

CDA practitioners view ideology as a basis for establishing and maintaining unequal power relations (Weiss and Wodak, 2003). These power relations are constructed within discourses because they produce a 'set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements [...] that produce a particular version of events' (Burr, 1995: 48). Discourses not only frame the way the world is discussed but become a way of *shaping* and *thinking* about the world. Foucauldian perspectives of discourse are centred on the notion that discourses are complex, interrelated networks of relations which are replete with competing ideologies and values (Jacobs, 2006). These are the foundations from which we come to understand the social world around us. The establishment and preservation of these power relations exists through the recursive relationship of language and power. Language, however, is not merely a reflection of power. Instead, linguistic practices simultaneously shape, and are shaped by, these power relations in operation (Jacobs, 2006).

CDA practitioners aim to disentangle these interconnected networks of discourses by analysing the structure of the relationships between power, inequality, bias, dominance and control and, ultimately, how they are manifested within language (Baker et al, 2008). CDA researchers uncover dominant ideologies and the political hegemony imposed by powerful social groups through an analysis of real-life language in discourses. Researchers look at how linguistic forms demonstrate the exercise of power by dominant social institutions to both constitute and transmit knowledge on social groups (Wodak, 2004). CDA analysts point out that language is not important in isolation. Language gains power precisely through those who make use of the access to the discourse that they control. Power is based on this privileged access. Social power is organised to provide dominant groups with special access to public discourses. This exclusive access influences the structures of text in such a way that the knowledge, values, ideologies and belief systems held by the recipients of the discourses are affected and manipulated for the benefit of the dominant group (van Dijk, 1996).

Elites who have access to control dominant discourses also have the power to reproduce dominant knowledge and ideologies within society (van Dijk, 2005). This symbolic resource demonstrates the crucial constituents of the potential for social power within discourse (van Dijk, 2001). Members of dominant groups and institutions – that is, those *already* with power, including elite social actors such as politicians, journalists, scholars and writers (van Dijk, 2005) - have exclusive access to several types of public discourse. Those who have control over significant forms of discourse, such as mainstream print news media discourse, as well as influence over the intrinsic properties of the discourse, sustain their power due to their dominance over both the construction *and* dissemination of knowledge and information (van Dijk, 2001). This access to discourse is of intrinsic importance because of its power as an ideological tool. Van Dijk (1996: 102) has demonstrated that preferential access also allows access to ‘the control mechanisms of the mind’. If powerful social groups can construct and circulate dominant ideologies, and thus influence people’s own ideologies and beliefs, then these groups can indirectly affect and control the actions of others.

2.2. Corpus linguistics

Corpus linguistics enables the use of computational-oriented methods to aid the analysis of millions of words of real-life language use (McEnery and Wilson, 1996) and allows for both the quantitative and qualitative analysis of a range of discourses. This method of linguistics pinpoints specific areas of interest within a chosen discourse (Mautner, 2007) and provides the researcher with the opportunity to discover ‘naturally occurring examples of language’ (Hunston, 2002: 2) that have been compiled for further analysis. Corpus linguistics can be approached in a multitude of ways and there is no uniform technique to complete these computational analyses. As a methodology, corpus linguistics can be used to either generate or test theories on language (McEnery and Wilson, 2001). The flexibility within this approach allows for researchers to utilise a variety of analytical techniques that are combined for particular foci, as determined by research questions (McEnery and Gabrielatos, 2006). This

flexibility allows corpus linguistics to be used for a range of inquiries but is also criticised because analyses may be driven more by software capabilities than research questions (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001).

Patterns are at the crux of corpus linguistics analysis. Pattern analysis enables the researcher to study aspects of language in specific texts, discourses and contexts such as meaning, use, evaluation and ideology. This approach focuses on lexical patterns (rather than on categories) and also involves a variety of analytical methods without a universal methodological protocol (Pollach, 2012). These analytical methods include word dispersion measures, corpus comparison and keywords, and collocations. The examination of large bodies (coming from Latin, a corpus is, literally, a body) of texts enables the close analysis of emerging patterns such as collocations and keywords which inspires further examination of concordance lines, whole texts, and even entire forms of discourse (Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008). The corpus does not show 'more than its contents' (Hunston, 2002: 22). Rather, it is the linguist who must interrogate, interpret and manipulate the corpus in linguistically sound ways to uncover the underlying patterns of meaning and their significance. This critical interpretation necessitates historical knowledge which can be possessed by human beings, but *not* by machines (Fowler, 1991).

2.2.1. Word dispersion

While statistical frequency can be useful to demonstrate a word's importance within a corpus, words may have anomalous or misleading distributions across a variety of texts (Egbert, 2018). Lexical dispersion allows researchers to measure words' homogeneity across the parts of a corpus (Burch et al, 2016). The spread or range of a word can be found, which is the percentage of texts that contain specific lexis regardless of how often it is used within these texts (Leech et al, 2001; Gabrielatos et al, 2010). However, Juilland's *D* offers a more accurate coefficient. This is a ratio between 0 and 1, with 0 representing extremely uneven dispersion and 1 perfectly even dispersion (Leech et al, 2001). This

method does not indicate exactly *where* a word clusters, but to what *extent* the word clusters.

2.2.2. Corpus comparison and Keywords

Frequency information is used by researchers to compare corpora from different sources or different time periods (Hunston, 2006). Keyword lists are created by making a wordlist from the corpus, as well as a wordlist from a secondary corpus, before comparing the frequency of lexis between these two lists. Keywords are lexis which occurs significantly more frequently within a corpus when compared against another corpus (Scott, 1999). Positive keywords occur statistically more frequently while negative keywords appear less frequently in one corpus when compared to the secondary corpus. This secondary corpus acts as a reference corpus and the creation of a keyword list reveals lexis based on statistical saliency rather than frequency.

Keywords can represent the saliency of specific textual elements such as 'aboutness' (Scott, 1999), stylistic features, or descriptors of text genres (Pollach, 2012). Keywords analysis allows the researcher to attempt to approach the data with no explicit preconceptions of the patterns that will emerge from the data (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). Keywords are not arbitrarily or subjectively chosen but are identified through statistical significance and frequency (Sinclair, 1991). This means that a word must occur a predetermined amount of times relative to its frequency when compared to a reference corpus for it to be perceived as a keyword (Scott, 1999).

This approach directs researchers towards positive and negative keyness, which helps to remove researcher bias (Baker, 2004). However, an issue with this methodology is that these observations provide only one initial step of analysis, that is, the interdictors of patterns (Pollach, 2012). Keywords analysis requires conjunction with other analytical methods to uncover complex and underlying linguistic information. A further issue for the

researcher involves defining the relative frequency for keywords. As keywords require cut-off points, they necessitate that the researcher specify the predetermined statistical criteria to an effective level for analysis. While too low a cut-off point may result in a substantial amount of data, conversely, too high a statistical threshold means that selectivity and subjectivity can become an issue for the researcher (Baker, 2004).

2.2.3. Collocations

Collocation is the 'tendency of words to be *biased* in the way they co-occur' (Hunston, 2002: 68 – my italics). Collocates of words contribute to their meaning and are used to gain an indication of the semantic field of a word (Hunston, 2002: 78). Collocation analysis follows the creation of frequency lists because collocations represent multiword clusters rather than individual lexis. The meaning of a word's collocates provides suggestions of that word's function within specific discourses. Patterns of association, or how lexis frequently co-occur, are 'built up over large amounts of text and are often unavailable to intuition or conscious awareness' (Hunston, 2002: 109). Collocation analysis enables the researcher to be assertive in their arguments about dominant discourses precisely through these patterns. Words that regularly and meaningfully co-occur in collocations demonstrate not only the connotations underlying them but also the assumptions and ideological evaluation(s) which they embody (Stubbs, 1996).

Regular collocations lead to established expressions in language that are often chosen by language users rather than creating their own expressions and combinations of lexis (Sinclair, 1991). Collocations can succinctly package information in such a way that the assertion behind the collocation becomes less open to question than a less fixed expression would (Hunston, 2002). This means that the frequency of collocations can become a powerful ideological tool as words which are recurrently associated with one another can result in a relationship where they become 'reified and unquestioned' (Stubbs, 1996: 95). As a result of this repeated use, strong collocations become conventionalised fixed phrases.

When these phrases are continually used, especially in common discourses, it is plausible that audiences will come to think about things in these terms (Stubbs, 1996).

Collocation analysis and lists of significant collocates allow the researcher to gain a better understanding of the semantic, connotative and prosodic meanings of a word (Orpin, 2005). This idea links not only to Leech's (1974) concept of collocative meaning – i.e. words which acquire meaning from their frequent collocates – but also refers to Sinclair (1991) and Louw's (1993) notion of semantic prosody. Louw (1993: 157) defines semantic prosody as 'the consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates'. The habitual collocates of a form can become so entrenched that it cannot 'be seen in isolation from its semantic prosody' (Louw, 1993: 159). Semantic prosody is an expressive concept which allows the author to provide meanings of assessment and evaluation in implicit ways (Baker et al, 2008).

Semantic prosody can be differentiated from semantic preference. Stubbs (2001: 65) defines semantic preference as 'the relation, not between individual words, but between a lemma or word-form and a set of semantically related words'. Collocations may represent a semantic preference for specific discursive constructions and can indicate the meaning imbued in lexis directly through the lexis they collocate with (Stubbs, 2001). Semantic preference is the *semantic extension* of collocation. Where semantic prosody refers to the evaluative aspect of the speaker, semantic preference is concerned with the semantic elements of word-forms (Baker et al, 2008). While semantic prosody may be neutral, it is conventionally related to either a positive or negative stance and may not be a single word. Conversely, semantic preference links nodes to words drawn from a particular semantic field and is therefore in favour of a definable semantic field (McEnery and Hardie, 2012: 138).

Louw (1993) argues that semantic prosodies can *only* be discovered through concordance analysis. Expressive and evaluative connotations associated with a word and its collocates are far from peripheral (Partington, 2004) because frequent combined prosodies and patterns are able to help construct particular worldviews. Semantic prosody

allows for biased realities to be created because regular collocates can represent covert messages and implicit meanings (Hunston, 2002). These collocates can also contribute to the maintenance of dominant discourses because they trigger unconscious associations between co-occurring lexical items (Baker, 2006).

There exists a significant ideological potential behind frequent collocation and biased semantic prosodies. If co-occurring lexis is regularly repeated then they are 'likely to become fixed in the minds of speakers' (Stubbs, 1996: 95) which means that people are prone to unconsciously using these prosodies in similar manners (Baker and McEnery, 2015). However, recipients are *not* expected to remember the verbatim collocations (Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008). Instead, it is our interpretations of the propositions – that is, the notions evaluated and represented within the prosodies – which are remembered long after texts have been read (Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008). Readers' interpretations are influenced by the frequency of these collocates because the underlying ideas within the propositions become difficult to challenge. This can be especially problematic because the prosodies can be represented in a myriad of collocation patterns (Stubbs, 1996; Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008). Recurrent relationships between collocates across different texts and registers can allow authors of texts to produce biased representations of meaning that 'coalesce into discourses and habitual ways of thinking about areas of life' (Baker and McEnery, 2015: 70).

2.3. The Corpus

To ensure that the corpus allowed for an analysis of constructions of homelessness within UK local and national mainstream print news media, it was essential to compile a range of varying discourses on the subject. The approach was to create a specialised corpus (Hunston, 2002) which represented a multiplicity of perspectives and would encapsulate the way competing types of discourses construct and frame homelessness. The corpus consisted of texts that were representative of homelessness in order to deconstruct the

linguistic and discursive strategies employed when discussing the issue. This approach was more effective than the sample corpus approach (Biber, 1993) which makes it much more difficult to interpret the dominant/minority discourses involved within the corpus (Baker and McEnery, 2005).

The corpus was representative of UK constructions of homelessness because it covers nine years' (2010-2018) and includes three main types of discourse surrounding the social issue: local and national mainstream print news media discourse, charity discourse and governmental (Hansard) discourse. These discourses were chosen to continue the selection of three key stakeholders that have the power to define homelessness for public audiences. Mainstream news media discourses have significant power to influence public opinion on homelessness. Charity discourses provide a counter-perspective to mainstream print news media and offer a large amount of statistics, reports, studies and annual findings on homelessness. Hansard is the verbatim reports for all parliamentary debates in the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Governmental discourses from Hansard establish how homelessness is discussed and constructed by those with the power to implement and reform policy that directly affects levels of homelessness in the UK. The corpus ensured that cumulative and discursive patterns within constructions of homelessness would arise in the investigation.

	Articles		Words	
	Number	% of corpus	Number	% of words
News	36,123	95%	24,743,018	78%
Charities	1,516	4%	5,302,546	16%
Hansard	225	1%	1,236,502	6%
Total	37,864	100%	31,282,066	100%

Table 2.1. Number of words and articles in news media, charity and Hansard discourses in the corpus.

2.3.1. The British Press

The British press have been distinguished (Baker et al, 2013) according to four main categories: frequency of appearance (daily, Sunday, weekly), style (broadsheet, tabloid),

political orientation (left-leaning, right-leaning, centrist, independent) and coverage (national, regional). Mainstream print news media reveal their evaluation towards a multitude of issues through both explicit means – i.e. news selection processes – or in more subtle ways, such as collocations and linguistic/grammatical structures (Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008). *Figure 2.1* represents where the newspapers included within the corpus are situated in terms of their format and political orientation.

	Left-leaning	Right-leaning
Tabloid	<i>Daily Mirror and Sunday Mirror</i> <i>The Guardian</i>	<i>Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday</i> <i>The Sun</i>
Broadsheet	<i>The Independent</i>	<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>
Local	<i>Yorkshire Evening Post</i> <i>Manchester Evening News</i> <i>Liverpool Echo</i>	<i>Yorkshire Post</i>

Figure 2.1. The British Press (adapted from Baker et al, 2013: 9).

Broadsheet and tabloid newspapers address different readerships. Tunstall (1996, cited in Bednarek, 2006) indicated that broadsheets draw around 80-90% of readers from the middle classes compared to around 30% with the tabloids. Those who read broadsheet newspapers are typically better educated (Bednarek, 2006). Broadsheet newspapers are also seen to be proficient in their ability to support controversial social opinions (van Dijk, 1987). Stylistic policies of broadsheet newspapers allow them to construct social issues in more sophisticated and less explicit ways (than tabloids) in order to control the information they disseminate (Martín-Rojo, 1995). The distinction between tabloid and broadsheet has been made primarily based on Bednarek’s (2006) analysis of newspaper print media discourse and is represented in *Figure 2.2*. These categories are, however, flexible and are prone to change over time. For example, *The Guardian* relaunched in a tabloid format in 2018 as part of its digital redesign in order to cut printing costs (BBC, 2018), but according to Bednarek’s (2006) distinction between broadsheet and tabloid (see *Figure 2.2*) would best be considered a broadsheet format.

Tabloid	Broadsheet
'Popular press' Smaller in size Shorter articles Use puns in headlines Focus on national stories Populist and informal writing style Focus on 'human interest' stories	'Quality press' Larger in size Longer articles Serious, focused headlines Focus on international political analysis Formal writing style

Figure 2.2. *Broadsheet vs. tabloid (adapted from Bednarek, 2006).*

The relationship between the British press and its audiences is bidirectional (Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008). Individual newspapers report on issues within their readers' concerns and reflect their readership's views and attitudes (Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008). Readers are also more likely to choose newspapers that align with their own opinions and worldviews. This means that the British press have considerable power to influence public opinion. This social power is asymmetrical (Fowler, 1991) because the press has the authority to influence and control the public's perspective on social issues such as homelessness. However, this imbalance of power results in partiality. Mainstream print media discourse exercises a powerful influence in social reproduction because of 'the exposure of whole populations to a relatively homogeneous output' (Fairclough, 1989: 45). The reciprocity of influence between media institutions and their audiences, alongside newspapers' power over the selection, frequency and framing of reporting makes media discourse an important source of data to analyse the construction of social issues such as homelessness.

2.3.2. News texts

The data for all media texts were collected from LexisNexis which enabled access to the text (though not the images) of a large archive of newspapers and periodicals. The initial search query included the wildcard character '!' in order to maximise the search results and search for variable endings of the root words.

homeless! OR rough sleeper! OR beggar! OR tramp! OR vagran! OR squatt!

These search terms are replete with presuppositional ideological stances and provide an evaluation of people experiencing homelessness. There were some spurious results in my search that needed to be narrowed in order to maintain my research focus on homelessness. This meant that these search terms were simplified to enable a more pragmatic analysis. Within LexisNexis, any search of the word 'homeless' also elicited searches of poverty. This software indexes both 'poverty' and 'homelessness' as a singular category which explains the more anomalous results in the search. Some articles did not make specific reference to homelessness but featured discussions of poverty instead. While poverty is a significant precursor to homelessness (*see section 4.2.3*), it was not *the* primary focus of this research.

The search terms were therefore simplified to include the query 'homeless*'. This decision was undertaken as it provided a significant range of discourses surrounding homelessness and simplified the range of search terms. The data were then required to be manually refined to ensure that *all* news items included the lemma 'homeless'. This meant that every newspaper article, column, letter to the editor and feature story including the lemma 'homeless' that was published between 2010-2018 was added to the corpus. This means that, for many of the texts, homeless[ness] was not the *main* topic. Instead, articles may concern slightly different topics but still made reference to 'homeless[ness]'. However, public knowledge of homelessness derives from a range of sources, even if most are tangential to the social issue (Huckin, 2002). Following Baker et al's (2013) approach on a corpus linguistic analysis of Islam in the British Press, it was decided that fleeting mentions of homelessness would be included as they impact and contribute to overall constructions of homelessness.

Data were collected from ten different UK newspapers and all articles were sourced from 11th May 2010 (the date the Coalition government was formed) to the 31st December 2018. These included four tabloids with two of their Sunday editions (*Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday*, *Daily Mirror* and *Sunday Mirror*, *The Guardian* and *The Sun*), two daily broadsheets

(*The Independent* and *The Daily Telegraph*), and four regional newspapers (*Yorkshire Post*, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, *Manchester Evening News* and *Liverpool Echo*). These newspapers were the most readily accessible on LexisNexis and were selected to include a variety of broadsheet and tabloid newspapers ranging across the political spectrum to provide a multiplicity of ideological perspectives. Other newspapers, such as *The Times*, were excluded because they were not archived in the same manner as the other selected newspapers within LexisNexis. Regional newspapers were included (see section 1.6. for the research focus on national/regional ideologies) to ascertain whether there were disparities between the local/national media, if certain regions perpetuated varying ideologies on homelessness, and if localness and proximity (Bednarek and Caple, 2014) affected the construction of issues surrounding homelessness. Table 2.2 demonstrates the number of words and articles included in the news texts corpus.

	Articles		Words	
	Number	% of corpus	Number	% of words
Broadsheet	8,772	23%	6,804,928	27%
Tabloids	22,282	62%	12,989,363	63%
Regionals	5,069	15%	2,478,102	10%
Total	36,123	100%	24,743,018	100%

Table 2.2. Number of words and articles in the news corpus and sub-corpora.

The breakdown of the corpus by individual newspaper in the corpus is represented below.

	Articles		Words	
	Number	% of corpus	Number	% of words
Daily Mail	2,006	5%	1,808,044	7%
Telegraph	2,318	6%	1,554,358	6%
Mirror	5,536	15%	2,470,626	10%
Guardian	8,644	24%	8,682,780	34%
Independent	6,454	17%	5,250,570	20%
The Sun	6,096	16%	2,498,539	10%
Yorkshire P	806	2%	544,383	2%
Yorkshire EP	856	2%	485,837	1%
Manchester EN	3,266	8%	1,607,803	6%
Liverpool Echo	2,164	5%	1,084,146	4%

Table 2.3. Number of words and articles by national/local newspaper in the news corpus and sub-corpora.

Hunston (2002: 28) indicates that an important element of the corpus creation process is to break the corpus down and aim to ‘include an equal amount of data from each of the parts’. The corpus does, however, maintain its balance and representativeness as a result of the research focus. News texts are difficult to balance. Hunston (2002) highlights that broadsheet newspapers contain more words than tabloids and that the researcher may decide to include more data from the broadsheets than tabloids within the corpus. Conversely, the tabloids have a larger readership than broadsheets (see Figure 2.3) and it is ultimately the researcher’s choice of how to balance the competing elements of the data.

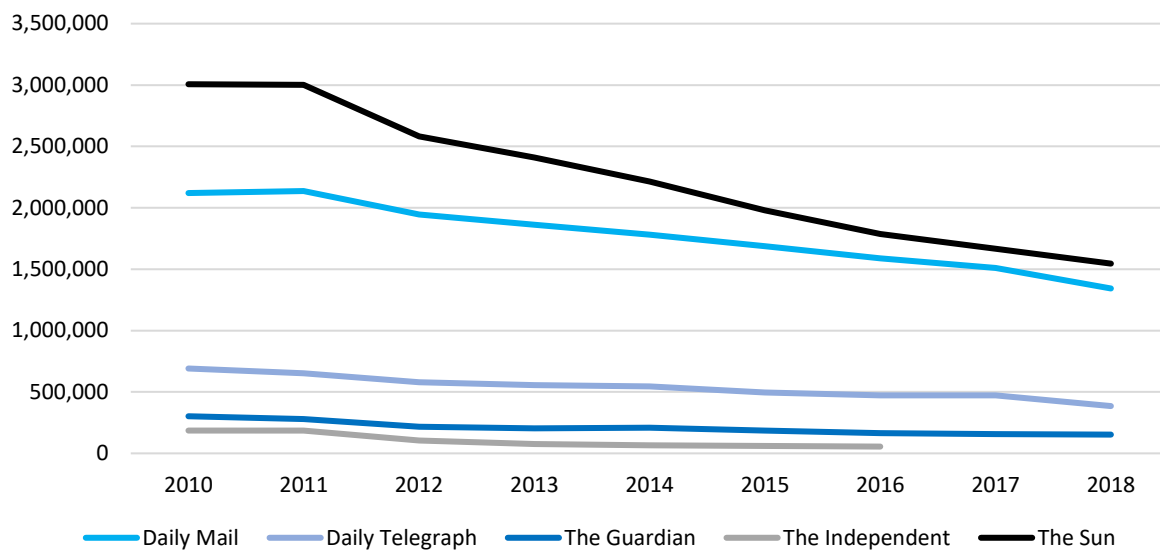


Figure 2.3. Circulation of newspapers in the UK from 2010-2018 (adapted from Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2019)*
 *The Independent does not have circulation data beyond 27th March 2016 due to its alteration to an online-only format.

This study focused on the types of ideologies surrounding homelessness that were perpetuated across local and national mainstream print news media and how the distribution of these ideologies were affected by political stance (see section 1.6 for research questions). It was important to maintain a balance between both left and right-leaning (Baker et al, 2013) newspapers to uphold the heuristic notion of representativeness (McEnery and Hardie, 2012). This enabled both the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the representation of homelessness across different news companies with different ideologies in mind (Partington in Baker and McEnery, 2015).

2.3.3. Charity texts

Homeless charity discourse was added to the corpus to increase the overall range of perspectives on homelessness and to offer a different genre of text with different ideologies and intentions from news texts and political debates (see section 2.3.4). Data from four of the most prominent national homelessness charities' websites, Crisis, Shelter, St. Mungo's and Centrepoint were collected. Additionally, charity discourse was also added from six local homelessness charities in Leeds (*Emmaus, Simon on the Streets*), Manchester (*Big Change MCR, Mustard Tree*) and Liverpool (*The Basement, Whitechapel*) to gauge whether the 'geographical closeness' (Bednarek, 2006: 16) of homelessness had an effect on its construction within discourse.

Homeless charity discourses were often split into a range of sections. National homeless charities often produce a myriad of policy research in a range of areas surrounding homelessness. These involve lengthy, detailed documents that look at the causes, effects and outcomes for homelessness issues. National homeless charity discourse also looks specifically at the effects of government policy on homelessness and addresses these issues through briefings, policy updates and reports. Both national and local charities include personal stories from individuals who have experienced or are experiencing homelessness. These stories were added to the corpus to facilitate a narrative analysis of how individuals' stories are constructed by homeless charities in comparison to media narratives of people experiencing homelessness. It is important to note that these stories are socially constructed texts that are developed within ideological frameworks. These discourses provide those experiencing homelessness with a voice but are also created with the purpose of indicating the effectiveness of the homelessness charities themselves (see Chapter 6). Table 2.4 shows the distribution of national/local charity discourses and stories added into this corpus.

	Articles		Words	
	Number	% of corpus	Number	% of words
Nationals	827	54%	4,888,668	92%
Locals	689	46%	413,878	8%
Stories*	200	13%	104,667	2%
Total	1,516	100%	5,302,546	100%

Table 2.4. Number of words and articles in the charity corpus and sub-corpora.

* Stories formed part of the national and local charity discourse and were taken from both to form a sub-corpus.

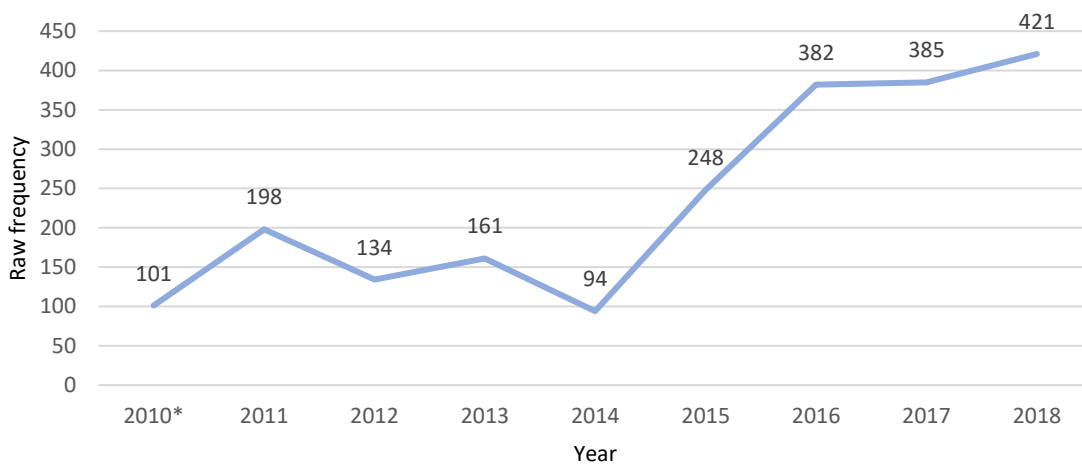
2.3.4. Hansard discourse

To balance the representativeness of the entire corpus and to include a variety of discourses on homelessness from different sectors of society, verbatim discourse on homelessness was added from Hansard. Hansard is the official edited report of proceedings within the House of Commons and the House of Lords. This was the final text type included within the corpus and provided a range of text types to look at how different social actors discussed, constructed and represented homelessness. Political discourse is publicised through Hansard which makes it easily accessible for corpus analysis of issues such as homelessness.

Political discourse can be defined as ‘any discourse or part of a discourse which happens to be on a political topic’ (Ädel, 2010: 591). This means that any of the previous text types discussed can be considered as political discourse through their representations and discussions on the social issue of homelessness. However, verbatim Hansard discourses mean that homelessness is being constructed through specifically *political actors*. These political actors create policy that has a direct impact on the lives of those experiencing homelessness and those who *could* experience homelessness.

The search results were filtered by including the words ‘homeless’ and ‘homelessness’ and looking at debates both within the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Again, most of these discourses were not exclusively about homelessness. Discussions would range from issues such as government funding which would touch upon homelessness but did not revolve around the topic of homelessness. Therefore, the

discourses were manually narrowed to include the sections of these debates that involve topics on homelessness. This meant that several areas that would not have been productive to CDA analysis of constructions of homelessness were omitted from the corpus. The Hansard discourse was compiled by narrowing the search results by the search term ('homeless[ness]') and by year. The number of reports on homeless[ness] in Hansard debates has fluctuated from my chosen time period (see *Figure 2.4*) which meant that the corpus needed to be constructed in a balanced manner.



*Figure 2.4. References to 'homeless' in Hansard debates from 2010-2018**
 * Corpus only includes references from May 2010 onwards.

The decision taken was to ensure that the corpus included 25 different verbatim reports annually. These reports included both a political discussion of homelessness and areas *surrounding* the topic of homelessness. While the same number of texts was added annually in this part of the corpus, many of the debates vary in word length. This was unavoidable because some debates, simply put, were longer or shorter than others. *Table 2.5* represents the total number of debates and words included in the Hansard corpus.

	Transcripts		Words	
	Number	% of corpus	Number	% of words
Total	225	100%	1,236,502	100%

Table 2.5. Number of texts and words in Hansard corpus.

Chapter 3 - Homelessness definitions

3.1. UK definitions of homelessness

Across the UK, there are a plethora of definitions applied to homelessness. Without a recognised and universally accepted definition of homelessness, there can also be no consistent definition of what an *end* to homelessness means (Crisis, 2018). The primary categories and sub-categories concerning homelessness definitions include homelessness, statutory homelessness, rough sleeping and hidden homelessness. The definitions of 'homelessness' across all text types demonstrate the importance of conceptions of 'home'. Indeed, it is important that the social problem is framed and constructed specifically as 'homelessness' rather than 'houselessness'.

3.1.1. Statutory homelessness

Statutory homelessness defines those who legitimately qualify for assistance (Pleace et al, 1997). This means that cohorts of people are established according to the legal duties owed (or not owed) to them. Homelessness charities have questioned labels and definitions such as 'priority homeless' because their definition is founded on an 'arbitrary set of legal tests' in England (Crisis, 2018: 49). These definitions discriminate between two conceptual groups of people experiencing homelessness: people who *deserve* homelessness (the category, rather than of the state) and those *undeserving* of homelessness (Dodson, 2007; Toft, 2014). The differentiation of these groups has subsequent impacts on the resources and services provided for them (Upton, 2016).

3.1.2. Rough sleeping

Rough sleeping is defined as the most visible form of homelessness (Shelter, 2018). Most public perceptions of homelessness focus on those sleeping on the streets. Both homeless charities and government definitions of homelessness focus on individuals who have no

home and are forced to sleep in public areas (such as streets, tents, doorways, bus shelters, encampments). Rough sleepers are those who are forced to sleep in extremely unsuitable accommodation not designed for habitation. This can include other areas such as cars, stairwells, sheds etc. Those involved in episodes of rough sleeping are much more likely to suffer from a range of physical and mental health conditions (see *section 4.2.2*) and are also prone to a greater level of violence than other homeless populations (Shelter, 2018).

3.1.3. Hidden homelessness

Hidden homelessness represents people who do not have a permanent fixed abode but whose situation is not visible (in the same way as rough sleepers). Those experiencing hidden homelessness are concealed from official data on homelessness (Homeless Link, 2018). This group encompasses those who become homeless but find ephemeral, short-term solutions to their homelessness. These solutions include staying with family or friends, living in squats or in other unsuitable, insecure and temporary forms of accommodation. These people may have a *house* through sofa-surfing, but they do not have a *home*. Many hidden homeless people do *not* receive support because they are concealed and prevented from accessing effective service interventions.

3.2. Looking towards a new definition of homelessness

A universal definition is essential in the quest to end homelessness. It would allow the homelessness sector, homelessness charities and all social actors involved in the social issue to have a shared definition (Crisis, 2018). While a shared definition may not be a shared vision, a consistent definition adopted and promoted by the government *would* enable political and systemic changes to be made in order to assist the problem, existing policy to be scrutinised, and new policies to be developed in conjunction with wider government initiatives (Crisis, 2018). Without a collaborative, well-established and agreed

definition, policy makers, service providers and all parties involved risk conflicting and contrasting ambitions.

Definitions of homelessness are crucial because of the effects that they have on individuals. Definitions are a site of political and ideological struggle because they serve as expressions of power in 'dominating conceptions regarding homelessness' (Schiff, 2003: 505). The definitions of homelessness affect public understandings of homelessness, the subsequent reactions that other individuals are likely to take to ameliorate the problem (Glanz et al, 2002), the level of attention given to the problem by different social actors (Mao et al, 2012) and, ultimately, the knowledge that these social actors acquire (Schneider et al, 2012). Furthermore, definitions of homelessness contribute towards policymaking and resource distribution, which has an effect on the underlying and surrounding causes and results of homelessness (Schiff, 2003). This lack of regular agreement and application of a consistently shared definition is 'a fundamental problem in the fight to end homelessness' (Crisis, 2018: 46)

There are, however, a plethora of difficulties with defining homelessness. The complexities behind the social issue have meant that for many scholars, homelessness has been almost impossible to define (Watson, 1984; Pleace et al, 1997; Chamberlain and Johnson, 2001). The heterogeneity of homelessness, when combined with individual differences in vulnerability and susceptibility to a diverse range of other social problems (Klee and Reid, 1998), means that defining and theorising homelessness becomes a difficult task. It is also problematic to define homelessness due to the myriad of perspectives over exactly *who* is homeless and *who should* be included within the definition.

3.2.1. Homelessness as 'houselessness'

Most attempts to define homelessness do not identify the social issue as ideologically and socially constructed. Instead, especially within mainstream print news media and the political

spectrum, homelessness is defined and represented as 'houselessness' (see section 3.3.3). This minimal definition of homelessness has been equated as 'literal homelessness' (Cohen and Wagner, 1992: 27) and is explained as the ineffective nature of housing demand or the lack of housing supply to fit the demand (Somerville, 1992: 531). This definition is dominant due to both its prevalence in the mass media and its conception as the primary form of homelessness which is deserving of government assistance (Randall and Brown, 1993). Homelessness as houselessness, and the focus on rough sleeping rather than the various other complex forms of homelessness, means that the narrow political meaning of homelessness comes to define homelessness as a social issue. People experiencing homelessness who are not sleeping rough are excluded from discourses surrounding homelessness because of commonly circulated definitions of homelessness. It is important to note that 'being homeless' depends on *who* is doing the defining (Klodawsky, 2006: 366).

3.2.2. Definitions of 'home'

Homelessness escapes exact and precise definitions because no definition of 'home' can be considered absolute (Watson and Austerberry, 1986). To begin with, home is perceived as a place of sustenance (Nash, 1993). Home typically connotes a particular social and moral order; it is a place in which one is cared for and, also, cared about (Pascale, 2005). In this sense, to be homeless means to be *outside* of the social and moral order. Definitions of home and homelessness are thus intrinsically linked with processes of inclusion and exclusion. To be without a home indicates not only a 'profound cultural rejection' (Pascale, 2005: 259) but also signifies alienation and 'otherness' in comparison to those who are homed (see sections 3.3.1 and 5.1.2 for further effects of 'othering').

Definitions of home revolve around the notion of good material conditions and standards, privacy and security, emotional and physical wellbeing, self-expression and ultimately a living and sleeping space (Watson and Austerberry, 1986; Somerville, 1992).

Home is laden with emotional significance because it is not only the roots of one's being, but also offers the 'security of a private enclave where one can be free and in control of one's life' (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981: 121). Home is perceived as a stable geographical space which involves the power to define and control one's own boundaries (Ryan, 1983; cited in Somerville, 1992). Moreover, home provides individuals with a 'predicable recognisable context' (Tomas and Dittmar, 1995: 496) to come to an understanding of self and others over time.

However, these definitions are problematic because they conflate the idea of house and home. While homelessness occurs due to one not having access to permanent housing of their own, popular wisdom also tells us that 'a house is not a home' (Wardhaugh, 1999). Home does not only involve a physical arrangement of space. Instead, home is an expression of social meanings and identities (Wardhaugh, 1999). Home is not anchored in physical space, but does, however, remain at least a partially physical place. As a result, rather than relying on typical images such as a room, a house or a city (Wardhaugh, 1999), home becomes a state of being, something which 'lies outside and beyond that which is defined as home' (Wardhaugh, 1999).

These philosophical conceptions of home demonstrate that spaces which come to be defined as home are much more than simply physical shelter (Tomas and Dittmar, 1995). Some argue that people experiencing homelessness do, in fact, have a home. Gurney (1990: 23) contends that for those sleeping rough 'the cultural milieu of life on the street became a means of redefining home'. Previous research has demonstrated potential issues with this notion. While rough sleepers can gain a *sense* of home through their time on the streets and their ability to negotiate their way through life without a physical abode, it is unlikely that they believe that they have a 'real' home (Somerville, 1992: 530). This 'sense' of home exists because home is an expression of self and identity. It is here that Gurney's (1990) claims regarding home are more accurate. Home is seen as an ideological construct because it is constructed from an individual's emotionally charged experiences of where they

live (Gurney, 1990 – see *Chapter 5*). Somerville (1992: 530) follows this by indicating that the distinction that people make ‘between home as ideal and home as experienced in actuality is itself socially constructed through ideological forms’. It is impossible to know what ‘home’ is outside of these ideological constructions.

3.2.3. Definitions and power

Definitions of homelessness are tied to the ability to control the field. Those with power to construct homeless definitions have the power not only to shape the types of provisions which receive funding (or lack thereof), but also the people who receive these services (Schiff, 2003). These definitions have significant implications for the development of interventions and the resources required to sustain them (Klee and Reid, 1998). As Schiff (2003: 505) notes, definitions, at the most straightforward level, become ‘expressions of real power’.

This power to define homelessness is inextricably linked to economic and social privilege (Hodgetts et al, 2005). People experiencing homelessness are not only alienated and polarised from general society but are also socially excluded by their inability to define their *own* issues. Within policymaking, the meanings attached to definitions are ‘continually contested, formed and reformed in the context of political, social, cultural and economic struggles’ (Watson, 1999: 160). People experiencing homelessness do *not* have a legitimate voice when defining homelessness. In fact, those who become homeless lose both their material surroundings and, additionally, their legitimate place in society (Sibley, 1995).

Groups such as politicians, homelessness charities and celebrities can access mainstream print news media discourses in order to define homelessness (Hodgetts et al, 2005; Schneider, 2012). Experts and dominant figures in discourses surrounding homelessness ‘know more’ about homelessness and are easier to contact (Schneider, 2013: 53). Journalists achieve the legitimacy which people experiencing homelessness cannot

through the use of powerful, authoritative sources to define homelessness (Schneider, 2013). These primary sources consist of those associated with society's dominant political, economic, intellectual and control institutions and are the primary definers of topics (Martin, 1997). These powerful social actors within homelessness discourses define the most ideologically important elements of homelessness. Therefore, ideological formations and definitions of homelessness produce 'particular ways of organising thinking, talking and doing' (McMullan, 2005: 18) about the social problem. In doing so, powerful political and ideological interests are maintained.

People experiencing homelessness, however, are excluded from participation and citizenship in society not only as a result of their homelessness but by their inability to find a voice in mainstream print news media (Schneider, 2012). This power to access mainstream news media and define the social issue represents the nature of power relations against the stigmatised homeless. Power operates systematically to the disadvantage of the marginalised group as this incapacity to access dominant discourses is yet another 'indication of citizenship asymmetry' (Carlen, 1996: 115). By stigmatising those who are homeless and then limiting access to define their own social issue, people experiencing homelessness are doubly marginalised. Stigmatisation is dependent on access to social, economic and political power (Link and Phelan, 2001), which indicates that stigma serves to limit access directly to this power (Belcher and DeForge, 2012). Discourses surrounding homelessness do not attend to homeless people's own conceptions of definitions precisely because these voices are difficult to hear (Champaign, 1999).

3.2.4. A new definition of homelessness

A comprehensive definition of homelessness should be wide-ranging to include people who have no reasonable form of accommodation in which to live as well as individuals who are at immediate threat of episodes of homelessness. This homelessness definition needs to be

designed to reflect the realities of people experiencing homelessness in a specific jurisdiction. In the UK, a universal definition of homelessness would encompass wholesale approaches in which the 'priority need' homelessness is abolished (*see section 3.1.1.*). This category is founded on arbitrary tests that create and establish deserving and undeserving levels of homelessness. A well-established definition of homelessness in the UK would mean that those who have experienced (or are experiencing) episodes of all types of homelessness, along with those in temporary or overcrowded forms of accommodation, have their experiences reflected precisely *through* this definition. This overall definition needs to be built around improving existing homelessness interventions by increasing efficiency and gaining consensus across the political audience (Crisis, 2018). In doing so, the collaboration between all stakeholders involved in homelessness will allow further government ownership to ultimately *end* homelessness in the UK.

3.3. Labelling strategies in discourses surrounding homelessness

Discursive labelling practices contribute to ideologies and public understandings surrounding the issue of homelessness. It is not only the material practices that are important - that is, the actual treatment of people experiencing homelessness - but also how discourses contribute directly to these outcomes for those who are homeless (Watson, 1999).

Therefore, what is significant is the notion of discursive practices and what they reveal about attitudes towards homelessness and those experiencing homelessness.

3.3.1. 'Homeless people' vs. 'the homeless'

There are two primary labelling strategies which are used to describe those who are homeless. The first is 'homeless people' and the second is 'the homeless'. Different discursive practices are adopted depending on the text type and the specific discourses surrounding homelessness have an impact on the way in which people experiencing

homelessness are described. Mainstream print news media are more likely to refer to those experiencing homeless as ‘the homeless’ in comparison to both charity discourse and Hansard discourse (see *Figure 3.1*).

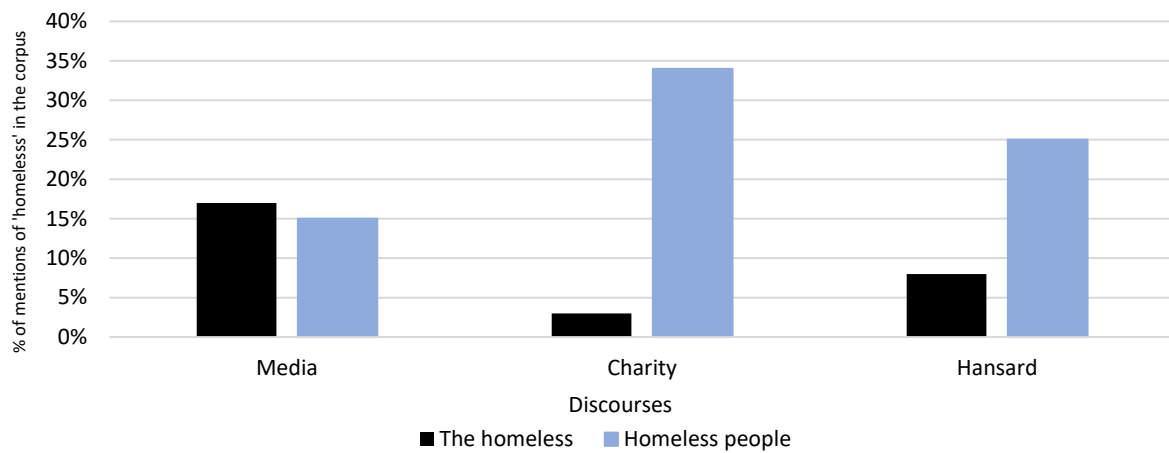


Figure 3.1. Labelling strategies by sub-corpora.

While the use of ‘the homeless’ is much more common in mainstream print news media discourses surrounding homelessness in comparison to other homelessness discourses, the popularity of the phrase is diminishing. Between 2010 and 2016, the most popular collocate and discursive label to represent those experiencing homelessness was ‘the homeless’. However, from 2017 onwards, ‘homeless people’ became the most popular discursive label to reference those who are homeless. *Figure 3.2* represents the usage of labelling strategies over time in print news media discourses.

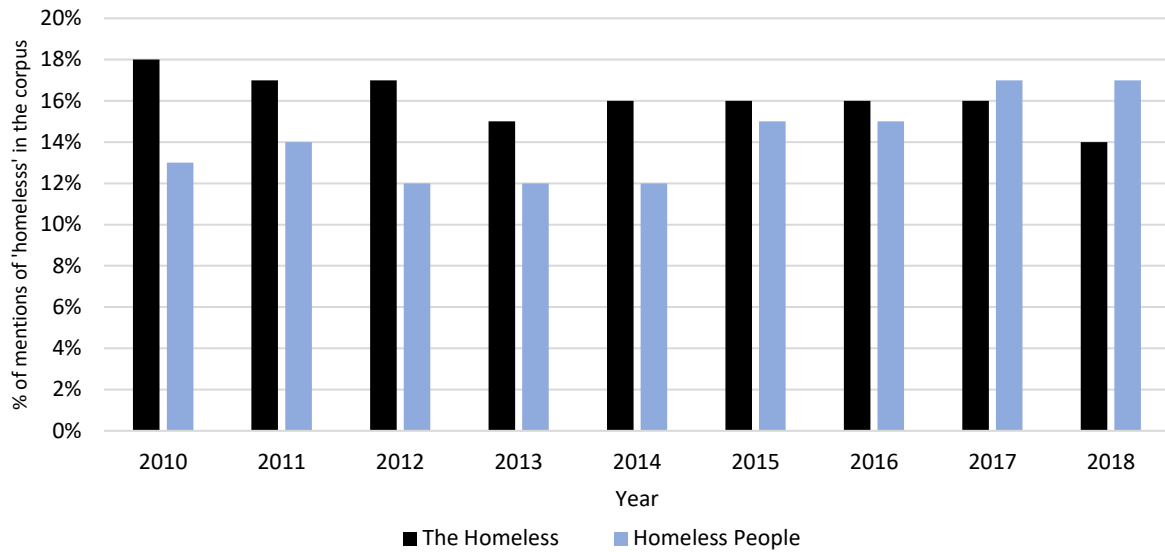


Figure 3.2. Most popular homeless labelling terms in all news texts by year.

Mainstream print news media use the discursive label ‘the homeless’ more frequently than its most common counterpart, ‘homeless people’. ‘The homeless’ uses distal deixis to locate people experiencing homelessness as remote and reveals the spatial context between those experiencing homelessness and the general public (Glover, 2000). This discursive labelling strategy has a plethora of negative consequences for people experiencing homelessness and scholars (Campbell and Reeves, 1999; Whang and Min, 1999; May, 2000) have demonstrated the underlying ideological nature of this common discursive practice.

The construction of people experiencing homelessness does, however, vary depending on the *political stance* of the newspaper (see Figure 3.3). Left-leaning news texts, primarily *The Guardian* and *The Independent*, are more likely to provide those who are homeless with an essence of humanity by using the label ‘homeless people’.

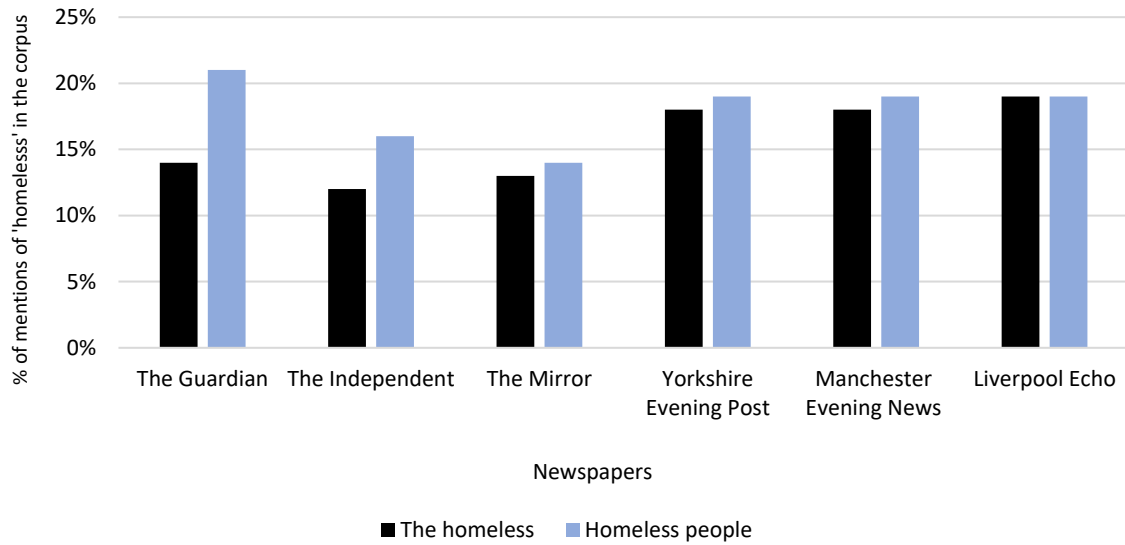


Figure 3.3. Most popular homeless labelling terms in all news texts by left-leaning newspapers.

The national left-leaning newspapers are also more likely to humanise people experiencing homelessness in comparison to their right-leaning counterparts.

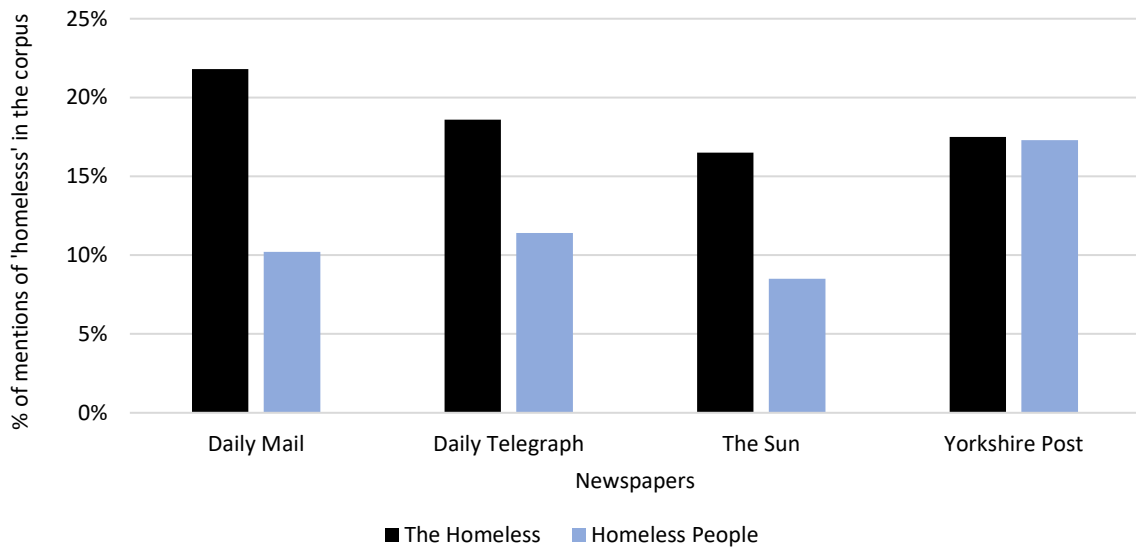


Figure 3.4. Most popular homeless labelling terms in all news texts by right-leaning newspapers.

Charity discourses and Hansard discourses label and construct people experiencing homelessness differently compared with mainstream print news media (see Figure 3.1). In contrast to the print news media corpus, charity and Hansard discourses surrounding homelessness use the discursive label 'homeless people' much more than the dehumanising

label 'the homeless'. The charity and Hansard texts construct those who are homeless in terms of their humanity by using 'homeless' as a pre-modifying attributive adjective to the collective noun 'people'. While mainstream print news media construct 'the homeless' collectively, charity and Hansard texts prefer to cluster the same group according to the fact that they are 'people'. The use of the phrase 'the homeless' represents the polarisation of two social groups, 'people' and 'the homeless'. By using two labels with one concerning humanity and the other essentially removing any element of humanity, mainstream print news media creates a divide. The use of this label not only takes away homeless people's humanity by grouping and then dividing them from the rest of society, but also reinforces the image of people experiencing homelessness as 'other'. Labels such as 'the homeless' demonstrate that a homeless individual's status as homeless precedes all other information about them' (Pascale, 2005: 257). These terms can contribute to people experiencing homelessness being stripped of their humanity because it is their homelessness that becomes the overshadowing, all-encompassing characteristic by which they come to be defined (Pascale, 2005). This labelling term serves the purpose of alienating and homogenising *all* people experiencing homelessness into a collective mass (Widdowfield, 2001). The frequent use of this term reinforces and perpetuates the notion that people experiencing homelessness are *different* from the general public.

The use of the prepositional phrase 'of no fixed abode' within the mainstream print media corpus also demonstrates this focus on homelessness as the dominant characteristic by which people experiencing homelessness are defined. When individuals are singled out for their involvement in a range of criminality, it is their *status* as a homeless individual without a permanent address which is immediately located. This legal term becomes part of the general derogation whereby people experiencing homelessness are labelled and targeted directly by their homelessness.

1. A man, 42, also of no fixed abode, has been arrested on suspicion of burglary.
2. Mr Goldsmith, of no fixed abode, was released on conditional bail.
3. Steward, of no fixed abode, was remanded in custody by magistrates on Friday.
4. Thames Valley Police said a woman, 29, of no fixed abode, has been held on suspicion of conspiracy to burgle and possessing Class A drugs.

Excerpt 3.1. Concordance lines of 'no fixed abode' in national news media texts.

People experiencing homelessness are not only dehumanised in discourses surrounding homelessness but are constructed and labelled as part of a larger whole in labelling practices such as 'the homeless' (May, 2000: 33). When those experiencing homelessness are grouped, they are collectively seen to possess characteristics not in alignment with the general public (Crocker and Major, 1989). Individual homeless people's identities are devalued as discursively labelling those experiencing homelessness as 'the homeless' imbues the whole group with the same negative characteristics. This stigma serves to disqualify people experiencing homelessness from full social acceptance (Goffman, 1963). This labelling strategy marginalises people experiencing homelessness because it is easier to stigmatise and exclude people, address their threats (Toft, 2014), and regulate their actions when they are constructed as groups rather than individuals (Belcher and DeForge, 2012).

This discursive strategy removes any essence of homeless people's individual humanity while demonstrating their 'otherness' by alienating them from the public (see *section 5.1.2 for the effects of 'othering' on homeless identities*). 'Otherness' by its definition indicates not only difference, but inferiority (Kramer and Lee, 1999). When those experiencing homelessness are defined by their 'otherness', they are represented as beyond societal norms. 'The homeless' are projected as against the social and moral order which subsequently makes them a threat to this order (Shields, 1999). When those experiencing homelessness are categorised, grouped and labelled as 'other' they are excluded from space but do *not* cease to exist. Their visible status on the margins of society serves as a

reminder of the power that those experiencing homelessness, as 'other', do have: the power to inspire fear (Sibley, 1995).

These subtle ideological strategies indicate the differences between people experiencing homelessness and the general domiciled public. The labelling strategies become a simple, yet effective way of pathologising a group which is already on the periphery of society as a result of social exclusion. Collective labels that stigmatise people experiencing homelessness have an effect not only on these people but on public reactions towards those who are homeless. Phelan et al (1997) underline the way in which labels surrounding homelessness have a direct impact on public attitudes about not only the social issue but also those experiencing homelessness. These popular media representations of homelessness and frequent discursive strategies mean that stigma and social distance are subsequently increased (Phelan et al, 1997) and the perpetuation of negative attitudes towards people experiencing homelessness is maintained. By constructing the social issue in a collective sense, and by targeting the 'condition' of homelessness (Meert et al, 2006: 14), people experiencing homelessness face dominant representations of themselves as passive, deviant and socially threatening (Toft, 2014).

3.3.2. 'Tramps', 'vagrants' and 'drifters'

There is also a plethora of other labelling terms for those experiencing homelessness which are used across mainstream national print media discourses. There are a number of labelling terms used which are replete with presuppositional ideological stance and suggest an immediate evaluation of people experiencing homelessness. Many synonyms or similar terms referring to those who are homeless include: rough sleeper(s), beggar(s), squatter(s), tramp(s), vagrant(s), drifter(s), hobo(s), dosser(s), vagabond(s), street people etc. Some of these terms, especially labels like 'vagrant(s)' and 'vagabond(s)', are not common across the corpora despite the fact that the Vagrancy Act 1824 remains active in current UK legislation. It is interesting that Liberty is calling for the abolition of this Act by its 200th anniversary

(Crisis, 2021) which may eradicate the low frequencies of these terms within the corpus.

Figure 3.5 indicates the frequency of other labels used by national news texts.

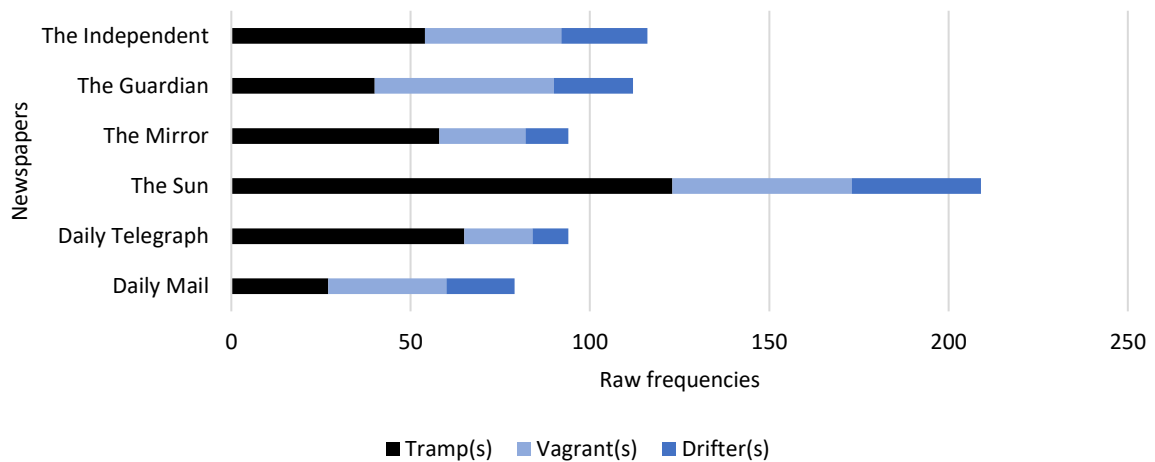


Figure 3.5. Homeless labelling terms in national news texts.

Labelling terms like 'tramp' are clearly imbued with a negative semantic prosody and demonstrate a negative stance towards people experiencing homelessness. The national right-leaning newspaper *The Sun* uses 'tramp' much more than any other news text and 36% of these instances appear within article headlines. These derogatory ideologically biased labels are not commonplace in any other newspaper aside from *The Sun*. Excerpts 3.1 and 3.2 indicate *The Sun*'s use of headlines involving the label 'tramp'.

1. **Tramp** should lose his benefits
2. Fire **tramp** teen jailed
3. Forrest **tramp** – marathon cheat is homeless stan
4. Leigh jibe at **tramp**
5. Is **Macaulay** [Culkin] poorly? Fears as he is mistaken for **tramp**

Excerpt 3.2. Negative headlines including 'tramp' from *The Sun*.

6. Movie of **tramp** who became rich from squatting
7. Guard set up **tramp** killing

Excerpt 3.3. Positive headlines including 'tramp' from The Sun.

These labels highlight the notion of the deserving and undeserving homeless. Labels such as 'tramp' signify that 'individuals are considered responsible for their homelessness and are guilty and blameworthy' for their issues (Neale, 1997: 39). Example 1) uses deontic modality to locate this blame and the fact that a 'tramp should' have their benefits taken away from them. Constructing people experiencing homelessness as a 'tramp' pathologises them, demonstrates that they are undeserving of assistance, and indicates that they must be differentiated from those who *are* deserving (Seal, 2007). Example 5) contrasts 'Macaulay' Culkin from the negative category of 'tramp' to signify social distance with the fact that Culkin, as an elite social actor, is more deserving of sympathy and assistance (*see Chapters 6 and 7*). As a result of the labelling term representing a homeless person as a 'tramp', and the myriad of negative connotations that come with this discursive strategy, it is difficult to represent these people as deserving of charity.

The contradictory nature of this deserving and undeserving dichotomy within homelessness discourses is clear within these headlines. Media evaluations of those experiencing homelessness through labelling terms such as 'tramp' are selective and paradoxical, as these people experiencing homelessness are 'ambiguously portrayed as both victims and victimisers' (Hutson and Liddiard, 1998: 85). These discursive practices within *The Sun* signify that 'tramp' can be used to demonise people that beg, arsonists and famous people who are struggling with health issues (*see Excerpt 3.1*). Simultaneously, the same headlines indicate that 'tramp' is used to indicate remorse for an individual who has tragically died, and for a person who has escaped homelessness (*see Excerpt 3.2*). Labelling terms assigned to those experiencing homelessness indicate competing perceptions of homelessness. While mainstream print news media wish for the social issue of homelessness to be addressed (Link et al, 1995), they concurrently construct negative

perceptions and perpetuate stereotypes regarding people experiencing homelessness which reinforces the stigma they receive (Belcher and DeForge, 2012).

3.3.3. Locality and visible homelessness labels

Local newspapers place emphasis on the construction of visible homelessness. Visible homelessness refers to the presence of people experiencing homelessness in public spaces that are not for habitation. The most common form of visible homelessness is rough sleeping. Most local news texts use discursive labels referring to visible people experiencing homelessness more than most national news texts. The most popular visible homelessness labels include 'beggar(s)' and 'rough sleeper(s)'. These labels signify the most publicly observable forms of homelessness. However, not all people that beg are homeless, and not all people experiencing homelessness beg. This has a direct impact on local representations of homelessness due to the easily discernible nature of people experiencing homelessness in these local areas. *Figure 3.6* indicates that local newspapers use labelling terms that refer to the visible nature of homelessness more often when compared with national newspapers.

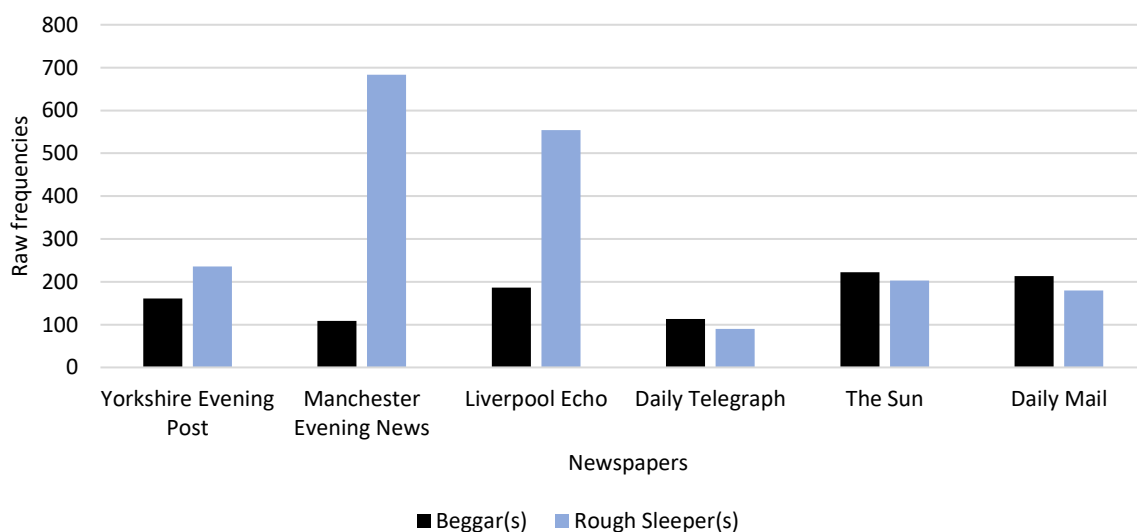


Figure 3.6. Usage of 'beggar(s)' and 'rough sleeper(s)' in news texts.

These constructions contribute to problematic public perceptions surrounding people experiencing homelessness because homelessness has only been 'defined mainly in terms of a lack of physical housing' (Tomas and Dittmar, 1995: 493). Presenting homelessness as houselessness is an issue because it means that all other forms of homelessness become obscured from media coverage. Dominant portrayals of homelessness as houselessness conceal these hidden forms of homelessness such as staying with friends, sleeping in temporary accommodation and sofa-surfing. This minimalistic stereotype of homelessness as houselessness – most often demonstrated in mainstream print news media through the regular portrayal of rough sleepers – serves to de-politicise the issue of homelessness. Stereotypical views of homelessness minimise the complexity and extent of the social issue of homelessness while further marginalising those experiencing homelessness (Hutson and Liddiard, 1998).

The pervasiveness of these stereotypes is explained because the public can engage and understand these simplistic forms of homelessness, as a result of the visibility of people sleeping on the streets (Hutson and Liddiard, 1998). Rough sleeping is a prevalent issue, especially in areas such as Manchester, where there has been a 1750% increase of rough sleepers since 2010 (Office for National Statistics, 2019 – see *Figure 3.7*). However, these pervasive stereotypes contribute to the perpetuation of public misconceptions surrounding those experiencing homelessness. This 'deceptive miasma' (Swain, 2011: 5) of homelessness as houselessness only raises questions about the public's determination to *really* look at the root causes of homelessness in order to end rough sleeping in all its forms.

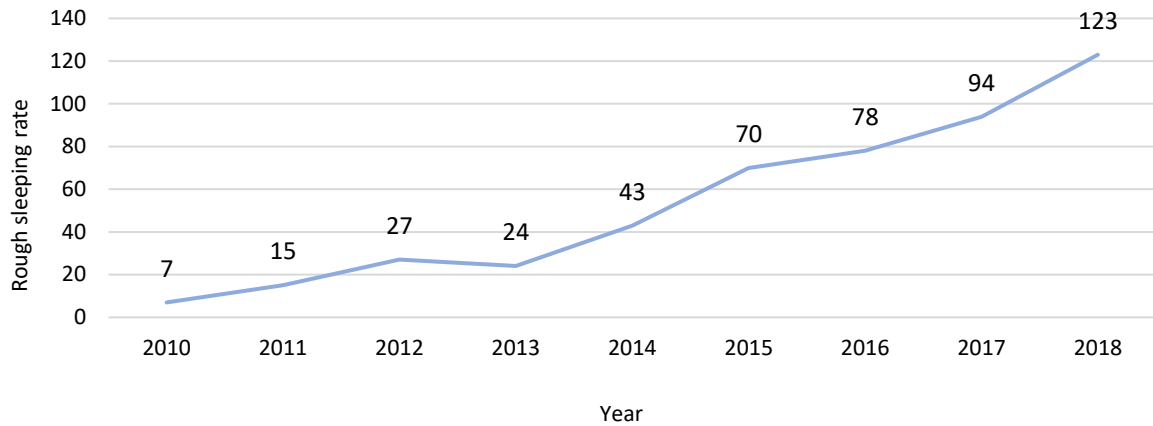


Figure 3.7. Levels of rough sleeping in Manchester from 2010-2018 (Homeless Link, 2019).

Local charity texts also stress the importance of visible homelessness in the same way in which local news texts emphasise the labelling terms of rough sleepers. Local charity discourses construct those experiencing visible forms of homelessness ('rough sleepers') more frequently than the social issue ('rough sleeping') that these homeless individuals face.

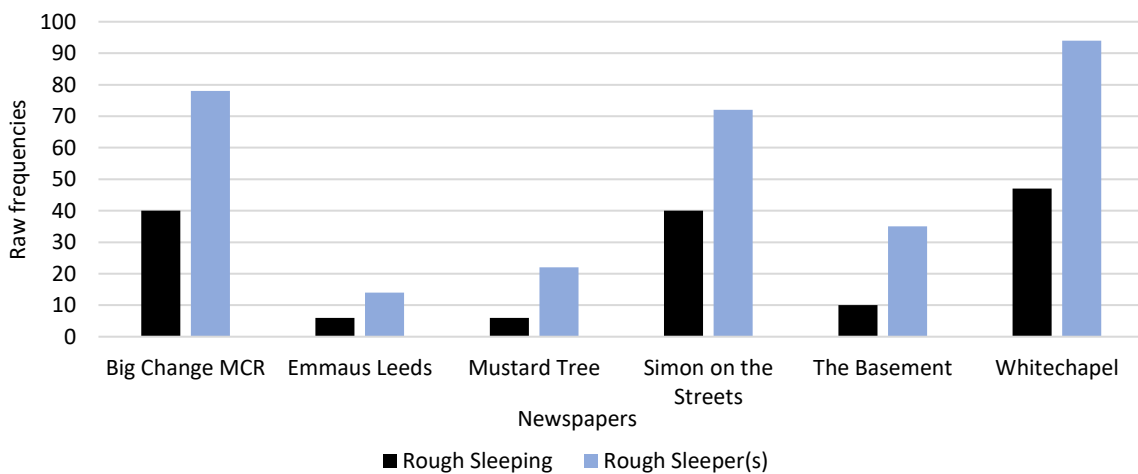


Figure 3.8. Usage of 'rough sleeping' vs. 'rough sleeper(s)' in local charity texts.

The frequency of visible homeless labels in local news and charity texts represents the pressing issue of rough sleepers in local areas. Local constructions of homelessness as a problem mainly in terms of rough sleeping highlight the newsworthiness of localness and proximity (Galtung and Ruge, 1973; Bednarek, 2006). The large frequencies of homelessness labels such as 'rough sleeper(s)' and 'beggar(s)' signify that these local

discourses have been shaped by proximity. This demonstrates the urgency to control a social issue that is an uncomfortably visible, *local* problem. Not only are rough sleepers a visible problem, but they are a *negative* problem. News values dictate that ‘the more negative the event in its consequences, the more probable that it will become a news item’ (Galtung and Ruge, 1973: 66). Rough sleepers occupy local public spaces and may not only cause more disruption than other marginalised people but can also be ‘aesthetically unappealing’ (Phelan et al, 1997: 325). This means that local news texts are keen to define people experiencing homelessness as houseless, visible individuals. The emphasis on rough sleepers in local news and charity texts appears to exacerbate the ‘threat that people sleeping rough pose to *local* inhabitants, and more especially to the *local* economy’ (May, 2003: 30 – my italics).

The labelling strategies used across mainstream print media, charity and Hansard discourses have a significant effect on people experiencing homelessness and how the public perceive those experiencing homelessness. While many national media practices continue to attribute blame for individuals’ homelessness, and local discourses locate homelessness as a visible social issue, charity and Hansard discourses are more humanising in their discussion of people experiencing homelessness. This approach needs to be represented in mainstream print news media along with less stereotypical representations of homelessness in order to portray the issue in a more effective light to encourage systemic change.

Chapter 4 - Homelessness and causation

4.1. The homelessness causation dichotomy

Discussions regarding homelessness are shaped by a range of discourses concerning causation. These discourses are often separated into a dichotomy which indicates that the social issue is either a cause of *individual* or *systemic* failures in society (Wright, 1993; Tomas and Dittmar, 1995; Neale, 1997; Seal, 2007). This dichotomy supports two broad explanations of homelessness. The first is associated with structural economic and political policy conditions such as a lack of affordable housing, subsidised rental housing, welfare reforms, mass unemployment and poverty (Warnes and Crane, 2006). The second looks at the characteristics of individual people experiencing homelessness and includes personal behaviours, vulnerabilities and incapacities (Warnes and Crane, 2006).

Discourses about the causes of homelessness have resulted in public perceptions regarding homelessness to follow a dichotomy based on either individual or social structural blame attribution (Wright, 1993). Homelessness has been constructed along 'conflicting ideological lines' (Seal, 2007: 112) because of the polarising approaches to homelessness pathways. Carlen (1996) describes these dichotomous positions as either empiricist or social structuralist. The empiricist perceives the characteristics of people experiencing homelessness before producing a teleological explanation based from those attributes, while social structuralists analyse the nature of economic, political and ideological cultures which have an impact on the number of people becoming homeless (Carlen, 1996).

4.1.1. Issues with the dichotomy

Homelessness has too often been explained simplistically and atheoretically as a problem caused by either structural or individual factors (Johnson et al, 1991). This individual/structural dichotomy has been met with disapproval (Neale, 1997; Fitzpatrick, 2005) primarily due to the issue of individual attribution of blame. Individualistic explanations

for causes of homelessness focus on personal culpability which, by extension, places an emphasis on people being responsible for their homelessness (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018). Moreover, this dichotomy does not take into account that there is a myriad of personal circumstances which can leave individuals far more susceptible and vulnerable to causes of homelessness over which they do not have control (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018).

There are a range of problems with blaming either individual or structural factors for homelessness. While there are commonalities among homeless individuals who may be, in part, to blame for their homelessness, they are *not* the source of the social issue (Buckner, 1991). Individual factors may account for those *who* become homeless, but they cannot take into account *why* homelessness exists as a social problem (Buckner et al, 1993). This causation dichotomy means that homelessness is perceived as either an unavoidable consequence of one's structural position or one's specific vulnerabilities (Jones, 1993). Homelessness pathways are complex and are rarely triggered by singular events. Instead, causes of homelessness result from a plethora of susceptibilities and negative life events that have accumulated and developed over time, and have subsequently resulted in a gradual increase of housing instability (Warnes and Crane, 2006).

It is doubtful that there is a direct either/or between individualist and structuralist explanations for causes of homelessness. Rather, there is a 'complex interplay' between the two (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018: 98). This causation argument must be reconceptualised to take into account the multifaceted and blended approaches which cite the nature of individual *and* structural factors. Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2018) demonstrate that poverty and homelessness result in the depletion of both material and social capital which, in turn, lead to increased vulnerability to further personal circumstances that lead to pathways of homelessness. This indicates the complex interconnectivity between the structural and individual causes of homelessness by considering how these pathways simultaneously interact and impact on one another.

4.1.2. Structuration

Giddens (1979, 1984) proposed the concept of 'structuration' in order to break down the structuralist/individualist dichotomy. Structuration focuses on the notion that society does not determine individual behaviour, but nor do individuals create society. Structure and agency are inextricably bound, intimately related and cannot exist independently of the other.

Giddens (1984) explains that while structures make social action possible, it is social action that creates these structures initially.

Power, then, is seen as a two-way process. Even homeless individuals who appear to be without control and authority have at least some potential to resist these structures (Giddens, 1979). These power structures operate not by controlling people experiencing homelessness, but by placing limitations on the options available to the individual. Therefore, structuration means that people experiencing homelessness *cannot* be defined as entirely responsible for their problems, nor as victims of structural factors outside of their control (Neale, 1997). By extension, this means that individuals' homelessness cannot be defined in terms of deserving/undeserving because their homelessness cannot be reduced to structural or individual factors alone. Giddens (1979, 1984) perceives that people experiencing homelessness are thinking, feeling social agents and thus resist this simplistic dichotomy, but that because they are socially constituted, they remain constrained and limited in many ways.

4.1.3. 'New orthodoxy' and positivist notions of causation

The 'new orthodoxy' blended approach acknowledges susceptible people with complex needs within the homeless population but explains this in terms of their 'heightened vulnerability to adverse social and economic conditions' (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018: 100). Rather than looking at causation as a dichotomy, this approach provides a more complex and whole explanation for pathways into homelessness. This model theorises

homelessness by combining the notions of structure and agency. These structural factors create the social conditions through which homelessness will occur. This means that individuals with personal issues are more 'vulnerable to these adverse social and economic trends than others' (Fitzpatrick, 2005: 4). The high level of people experiencing homelessness with individual issues is explained because of their vulnerability to these macro-structural forces, rather than merely individual explanations of their homelessness (Fitzpatrick, 2005).

There are, however, issues with the 'new orthodoxy' approach. While this blended approach to causation is more adequate than the individualist/structuralist dichotomy, it remains atheoretical. This approach limits structural factors to macro-level social and economic forces while simultaneously restricting individual factors to merely personal behaviours of the homeless person (Fitzpatrick, 2005). The conceptualisation of causation also remains insufficient in this approach. Social causation, in this model, requires both *necessity* – in that homelessness cannot occur unless there is a present cause – and *sufficiency*, meaning that this cause must lead to homelessness (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018).

This positivist notion of causation (Pleace, 1998) focuses on the idea that supposed 'causes' of homelessness – such as housing shortages, unemployment and poverty, as well as individual difficulties such as mental health, substance addiction and relationship breakdowns – are not sufficient enough to specifically cause rough sleeping. Pleace (1998: 52) notes that these supposed causes do not demonstrate 'patterns, clear relationships and shared characteristics' and, instead, provide the impression of complexity and variation in homelessness pathways. This positivist conception of causation demonstrates that these multifaceted elements may exacerbate the likelihood of becoming homeless and contribute towards increased *risks* of homelessness, rather than *causing* homelessness (Fitzpatrick, 2005).

4.1.4. Realist approaches to causation

Realist approaches highlight that there are four main strata within homelessness causation: economic structures, housing structures, patriarchal and interpersonal structures and individual attributes (Fitzpatrick, 2005). Economic structures involve the interaction of one's social class with other stratification processes to generate poverty and 'determine individuals' access to material resources such as housing, income and employment' (Fitzpatrick, 2005: 13). Housing structures focus on insufficient housing supply and how a decline in affordability can affect those with lower incomes. Patriarchal and interpersonal structures relate to family breakdown, neglect, domestic violence and poor social support structures. Finally, individual attributes relate to the nature of personal problems such as substance addiction, mental health issues and lack of self-esteem (Fitzpatrick, 2005). These causal mechanisms are part of a 'multiple set of nested systems' (Byrne, 1999: 79) and this complex interweaving of factors can demonstrate the probability of particular outcomes leading towards homelessness. These realist explanations are multifaceted, inter-related and multi-directional. They serve to identify frequent patterns occurring across ranges of people experiencing homelessness by discovering what it specifically is about these factors which tend to cause homelessness (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018).

4.2. Analysing causation within discourses surrounding homelessness

This analysis will primarily use a blend of positivist and realist approaches to causation. Combining these approaches means that homelessness is not viewed as a simplistic dichotomy but can instead be considered in terms of complex, multifaceted pathways into homelessness. In this positivist *and* realist approach, structural factors such as economic structures, housing structures and patriarchal and interpersonal structures are considered alongside individual attributes but with a focus that these factors surrounding homelessness, taken in isolation, do not *cause* episodes of homelessness. These individual attributes that

relate to personal issues are analysed but are viewed as part of an overall causal mechanism which weaves these multi-directional factors together to try and understand precisely what it is about the coalescence of these factors that results in people becoming homeless.

Homeless charities include a significant range of homeless people's narratives on their websites. The narratives include individual stories that are constructed to indicate the individual's circumstances and the reason(s) behind their homelessness, the hardships of an individual's life during their episode(s) of homelessness, and then represent that they have turned their life around and escaped their homelessness (*see Chapter 6 for a full discussion of homeless narrative structures*). This emphasis on personal narratives means that systemic factors are often omitted from these discourses because the focus is on their life trajectory rather than looking at deeper root causes of homelessness. Homelessness is commonly attributed to factors that responsabilise (that is, imbuing people with responsibility – see Dej, 2016 for use of this term) the individual for falling into their homelessness. While these areas may not be as prevalent within these personal narratives, homeless charities produce a substantial amount of work on the systemic causes of homelessness. Crisis (2018) have indicated that these systemic causes (and solutions) are largely absent from mainstream news media discourses surrounding homelessness (*see Figure 4.1*). Media stories typically emphasise homeless individuals' living conditions and then *individual-level* circumstances (i.e. substance addiction issues) which may result in unintentionally leading audiences to question whether people experiencing homelessness deserve public assistance.

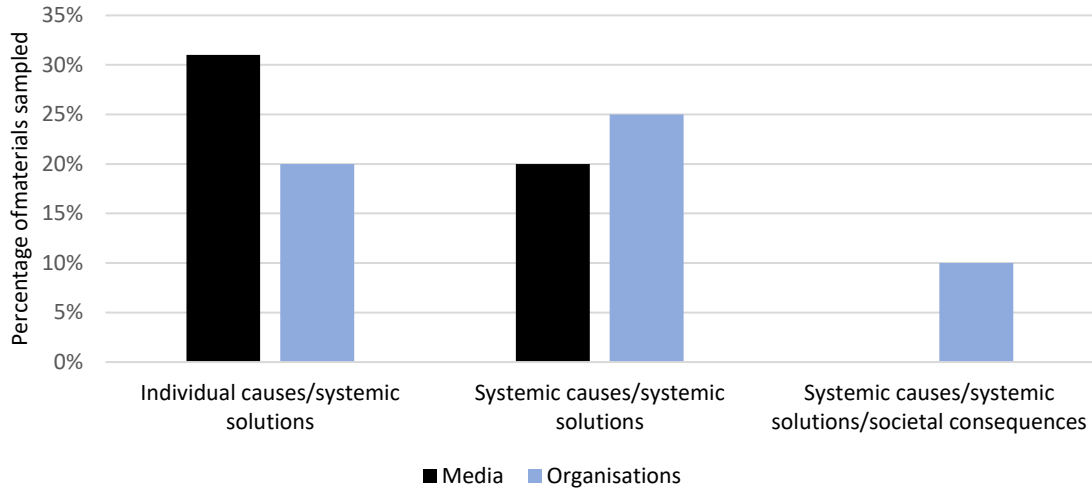


Figure 4.1. Narrative types in media and third-sector materials (Crisis, 2018).

This section outlines the most common causes or factors leading to homelessness within charity narratives which are substance/alcohol addiction and mental health, as well as three systemic factors including poverty, the private rental sector and welfare reform. These elements have a significantly detrimental impact on individuals and often cause episodes of homelessness. It is key to note that these areas are not independent from one another. Instead, they are interrelated elements of causation (see Figure 4.2) that demonstrate why people become *and* remain homeless.

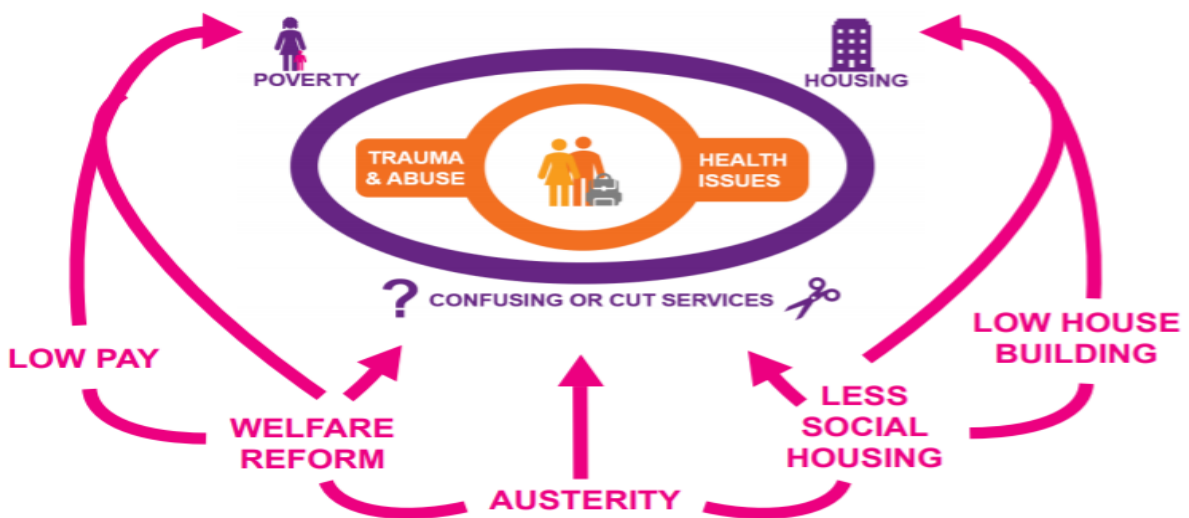


Figure 4.2. A systemic view of why people become and remain homeless (NPC, 2018).

The most common causes or factors leading to homelessness in within charity narratives are highlighted in *Figure 4.3*. This analysis used manual concordance analysis to look at individuals' personal narratives within homelessness charity discourse. These 'causes' of homelessness were discussed within the personal narratives and the most common factors that were cited as part of their pathway to homelessness have been included in *Figure 4.3*. Many of these factors cited are not direct causes of homelessness. Rather, these elements are risks which are frequent within many homeless people's narratives regarding their own homelessness and provide a clear image of how one can end up homeless.

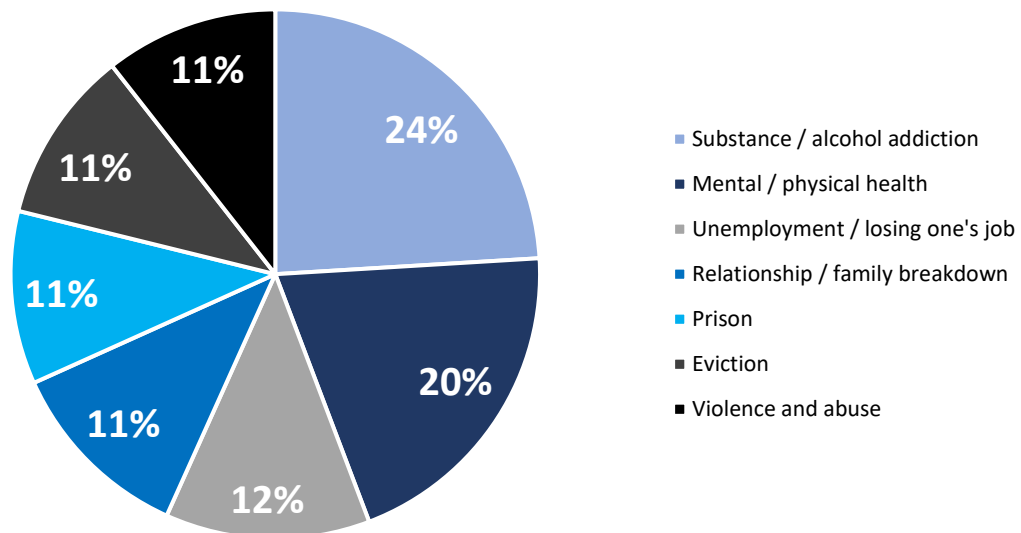


Figure 4.3. Most common homelessness causes cited in homeless charity personal narratives.

Not all personal narratives provide a full explanation of how an individual ends up homeless. A homeless person may cite factors such as substance addiction or mental health issues, for example, but may not explicitly link how this factor has caused them to become homeless. The plethora of factors that are mentioned within these narratives should not be understood as isolated, separate events. Instead, they should be considered as occurring not only simultaneously but also during different episodes and periods of one's life. These various life

problems are numerous, complex and *must* be explained and understood in terms of wider social forces (Somerville, 1992).

4.2.1. Substance/alcohol addiction

Almost 25% of individuals within homeless charity narratives indicated that substance/alcohol addiction had impacted on their lives and had an effect on their decline into homelessness. Substance addiction has been generally analysed, from a theoretical point of view, through the use of two models: the social selection model and the social causation model. The social selection model demonstrates that substance addiction is one of many complex and alternative pathways to homelessness (Johnson et al, 1997). This model holds that homelessness is the result of a prolonged process during which one's social and economic resources are depleted through substance addiction and other personal susceptibilities (Baum and Barnes, 1993). Substance addiction, then, is viewed as a precursor to homelessness. The social causation model, on the other hand, attempts to prove that substance addiction is more likely to be a result, or a consequence, of homelessness (Johnson et al, 1997). This model is supported by the fact that homelessness regularly exacerbates substance addiction as people experiencing homelessness 'self-medicate' (Fitzpatrick et al, 2013: 162) in order to cope with their difficult circumstances. For any stigmatised groups faced with a plethora of issues over which they have little control, it is likely that the use of substances becomes a method of survival (Khantzian, 1985). These models are, however, not mutually exclusive; neither perspective can account for the bi-directional and dynamic relationship between homelessness and substance addiction (Pleace, 2008). Scholars have rightfully argued that establishing the chronology of homelessness and substance addiction is not only too reductive and unhelpful, but it is not sufficient to establish the complex causal links of these problems (Klee and Reid, 1998; Johnson and Chamberlain, 2008).

4.2.1.1. The rise of 'spice' in Manchester

The rise in homelessness coincides with the 'spice' epidemic occurring in Manchester. There has been a spate in cases of people experiencing homelessness in Manchester abusing the now regulated psychoactive substance. Research has shown that between 95% and 98% of people experiencing homelessness in Manchester have either taken or regularly take 'spice' (Lifeshare, 2017; cited in BBC, 2017). Greater Manchester Police have indicated that since January 2017 they have received over 1,300 calls specifically related to incidents involving people experiencing homelessness and spice (ONS, 2018). References to 'spice' are linked to the news value of proximity or, on a further level, localisation. Localisation indicates the extent to which an event has meaning for the local community (Devereux, 2007). The increasing epidemic and the visibility of people experiencing homelessness taking psychoactive substances in local communities such as Manchester explains why coverage of 'spice' is *far* higher in Manchester than other local and national newspapers.

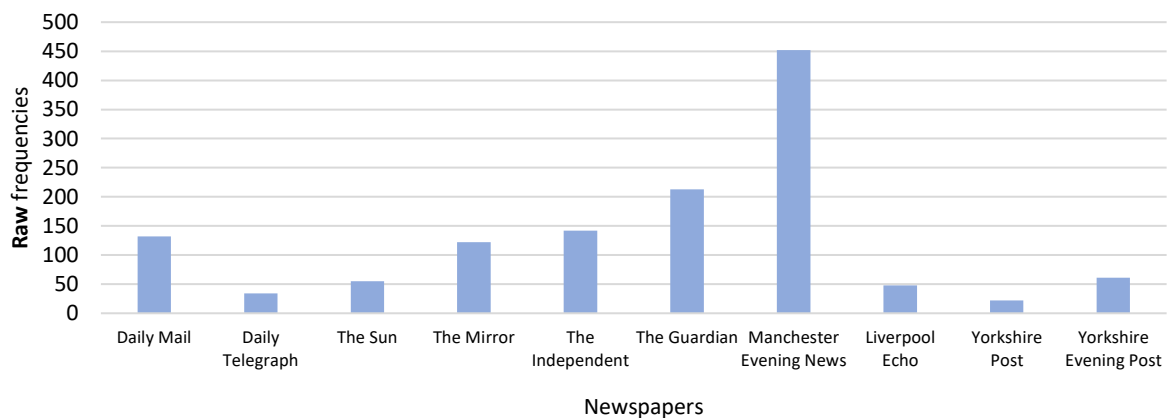


Figure 4.4. References to 'spice' in all news texts.

The severity of the issue in Manchester means that public audiences frequently encounter those experiencing homelessness on the drug. 'Spice' frequently collocates with the word 'zombie'. The collocation of 'spice' with the lemma 'zombie' imbues the word with a further negative semantic prosody, especially when the effects of the drug are cited as 'zombie-like' and 63% of the national, right-leaning *Daily Mail's* use of the phrase 'zombie drug' occurred

in article headlines. This indicates typical immediate public reactions to users experiencing the effects of the drug. The phrase ‘zombie’ within the headline abstracts and summarises the drug without further explanation needed (Bell, 1991). This continued stigmatisation, along with the long-term harms of ‘spice’ mean that there is significant potential for long-term stigma towards people experiencing homelessness alongside health, social and community issues (Homeless Link, 2018).

Prior to the introduction of the Psychoactive Substances Act in May 2016, shops sold ‘legal highs’ – an umbrella term used to refer to psychoactive substances that were not illegal. These packets of ‘spice’ were far cheaper than purchasing cannabis through street sales (Gray et al, 2020). Not only is the potency of psychoactive substances much higher but users have also reported that they can use much smaller amounts of ‘spice’, meaning they can extend it over a longer time, giving them more value for money (Gray et al, 2020). Synthetic cannabinoids are, however, highly addictive substances and their effects extend to physical, mental and societal consequences for regular users. The risks of repeated usage can be fatal. The number of deaths related to synthetic cannabinoids more than doubled between 2017 and 2018.

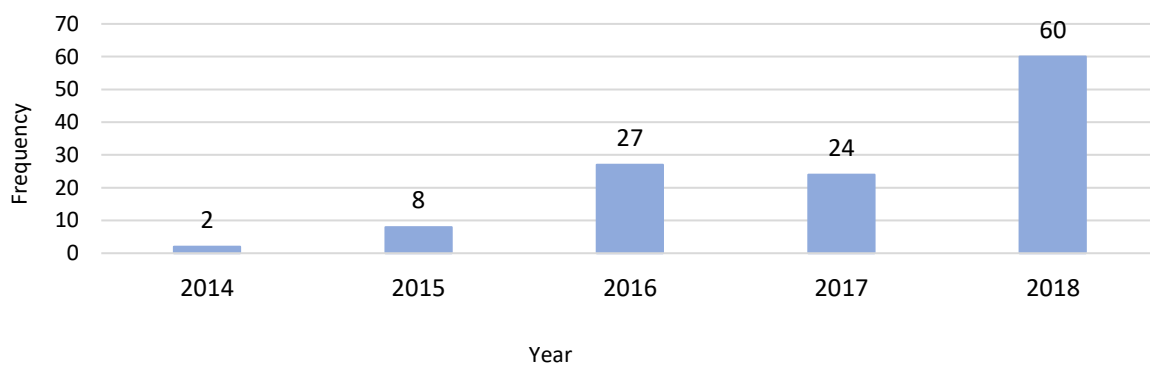


Figure 4.5. Deaths related to synthetic cannabinoids in England and Wales from 2014-2018 (ONS, 2018).

While ‘spice’ may not be a direct precursor to homelessness, regular usage causes people experiencing homelessness to extend their episode(s) of homelessness for a longer duration. The bi-directional causal relationship between substance addiction and homelessness means that whether psychoactive substances are taken prior to or during

episodes of homelessness that it correlates with extended periods of homelessness, incarceration or even *death*.

4.2.1.2. Substance addiction and quantification

Within homeless personal narratives, the collocation of substance addiction with quantifiers is particularly significant. Those said to have drug and alcohol problems frequently discussed their addictions with reference to either the *age* at which they began taking drugs/alcohol or the *duration* of the time in which they have been an addict.

1. I was a **heroin** addict for **20 years**.
2. She was a **heroin** addict for **17 years**.
3. He became addicted to **heroin** at **the age of 14**.
4. It started with smoking **weed at 13**, then going onto **amphetamines, acid** and **ecstasy**.
5. From **15 til I was 40**, I used **addictive substances**.

Excerpt 4.1. Quantification with reference to substances in homeless charity personal narratives.

These constructions regarding a homeless person's substance addiction are concerned with quantification. Examples 1) – 5) follow Bednarek's (2006: 17) news value of superlativeness, which is described as 'the more X ... the better'. These narratives adhere to this news value by referring to the severity of drug addictions, labelling the specific drugs involved and then using quantification. This indicates that the *younger* the homeless person began the addiction, or the *longer* the duration of the addiction continued, the more *shocking* that the nature of substance addiction is. In doing so, the homeless charities emphasise these sensational aspects of homelessness. This justifies their intervention, underlines the immediate and important nature of their services and, ultimately, enables the charity to attract more funding and resources (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994).

4.2.2. Mental health

The second most cited element in homeless charity narratives that had causal impact on individuals' fall into homelessness included mental health. These factors typically involve other negative elements in individuals' lives such as the breakdown of social networks (see *Chapter 7*), poor economic situations and family problems that have exacerbated debilitating mental health issues.

6. Sam's relationship with his family was poor and he was not in a position to receive or ask for support from them. The combination of these factors had also had an impact on his mental health and Sam suffered with severe depression, anxiety and insomnia.
7. He was being financially exploited via an unnecessary insurance scheme as was continuing to pay rent for the property he was forced to leave. This was somebody who worked but was also vulnerable due to his age as well as a deterioration in his mental health.
8. John and his partner started having problems with their relationship which eventually came to an end. This had a big effect on John and his mental health.
9. Despite struggling with her mental health, Norma was told in late 2017 she did not qualify for ESA (the benefit for people who are unable to work due to ill health) and became homeless.
10. My mum was diagnosed with mental health problems when I was 16. I found it hard to cope and would leave home to stay with friends or sleep rough.

Excerpt 4.2. Mental health issues leading to homelessness.

The term 'mental health' encompasses a wide range in both type and severity of disorders. Mental health can impact on thought, cognition and mood. Mental disorders such as panic disorder may be disruptive but may not be chronically debilitating (Buckner et al, 1993). More severe psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia, however, have a more significant impact on individuals' social and occupational functioning. Major affective disorders, including severe depression (as in example 6) or bipolar disorder (BPD) among many

others, are chronic and incapacitating. Those experiencing mental health problems are vulnerable to episodes of homelessness and mental illness is more prevalent in people experiencing homelessness compared with the general population (Greenberg and Rosenheck, 2008). People experiencing homelessness with severe mental health are less likely to be able to cope with the day-to-day hardships of homelessness.

11. I had mental health issues before, but they got so much worse when I got on the streets.
12. His physical and mental health was seriously affected by his poor and chaotic living environment.
13. During that time, I had been getting more and more depressed and I needed to break that cycle. Up until early last year, I was still planning suicide and things were pretty bleak.
14. The streets are a scary space. All our tents would get slashed and our stuff stolen. The streets are not safe, mentally and physically it drains you.
15. Since being on the streets my depression has definitely got worse. And I've developed anxiety, emotional issues, abandonment issues and I'm now deemed mentally unfit to work.

Excerpt 4.3. Mental health as exacerbating issues with homelessness.

Mental health disorders impact on individuals' emotional and cognitive abilities which affect their capacity to compete for housing, apply for benefits and income supplements and generate social support (Buckner et al, 1993). Debilitating mental health issues also make accessing vital services such as homeless shelters far more challenging which can prolong episodes of homelessness (see *Excerpt 4.4*). Mental health can exacerbate further issues with physical health. Complications with mental health and forms of psychotic behaviour, including trauma can also aggravate co-morbidity (Buckner et al, 1993).

16. Due to language difficulties, lack of financial resources, positive friendships, daily mental health struggles and low cognitive ability Geery was unable to navigate the system.

17. Lighthouse, a Charity and an Expression of Church for people on the margins, tried to link Geery up with a residential Christian community (Betel) but due to his mental health condition this didn't work out.

18. John was left with no home, no job, plunged into a benefit system which was increasingly difficult to navigate because his mental health was getting worse.

Excerpt 4.4. Mental health as making services difficult to access.

Many people experiencing homelessness have issues with co-morbidity and are diagnosed with issues of substance addiction alongside their mental illness (Klee and Reid, 1998; see *Excerpt 4.5*). These issues include those who are debilitated through mental illness and dependent on substances. This is challenging because mental illness, substance addiction, social dysfunction and homelessness are issues that interact and exacerbate one another (Bhugra, 1996).

19. This had a bad impact on David's mental health, and he ended up turning to alcohol to try to deal with the stress. David soon became alcohol dependent and his physical and mental health started to deteriorate.

20. John's mental health was at a real low and in an attempt to escape from the stress, he began binge drinking alcohol.

21. It seemed like the only escape for him was to spend what little money he had on alcohol and fall into a vicious circle of low mood, anxiety and depression.

22. They think they're not going to get the help because of their issues, like the drugs and mental health problems that are holding them back.

Excerpt 4.5. Mental health and substance addiction issues.

While mental health formerly elicited a much stronger negative public reaction such as social distance (Link and Cullen, 1983), discrimination in housing, and strong feelings of aversion

(Ungerleider et al, 1992), public attitudes and beliefs related to mental health are gradually improving (Mind, 2014). However, while public perceptions may be changing, and mental health is discussed more now than ever before, mental health among the public is also gradually worsening. Statistics represent that 1 in 4 people experience mental health issues each year (Mind, 2020).

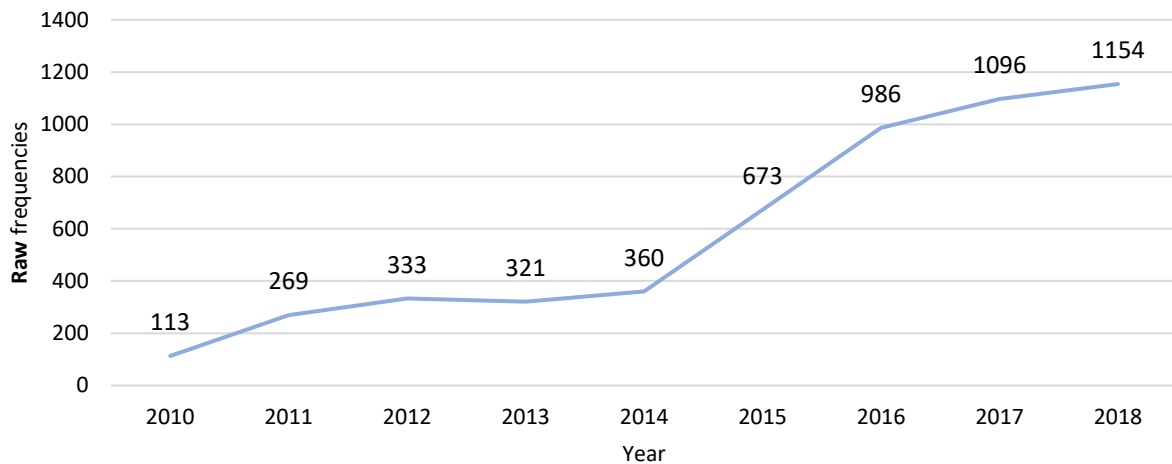


Figure 4.6. References to 'mental health' in news texts by year.

Stigma surrounding mental health problems still exists, especially in comparison to physical health issues (Mind, 2017). Individuals with extreme mental health issues are disadvantaged not only by issues with accessing and maintaining employment but are affected negatively by the stigma that surrounds mental health issues (Kingdon, 1996). This stigma is particularly damaging for people experiencing homelessness because they are more likely to face public attitudes that make them responsible for their social problems and perceive them as accountable for improving their lives (Buckner et al, 1993). This has been previously been referred to as the 'individual-responsibility conception' (Schiff, 2003: 492) which discusses the notion that individual people experiencing homelessness are responsible for their social issues. Stigma behind mental illness serves as a comparison for the stigma of homelessness. There are issues behind repeated constructions of 'the homeless' as

mentally ill. Continually identifying and labelling mental health issues among people experiencing homelessness contributes towards a victim-blaming agenda.

23. The failure to deal with those psychological issues is what's keeping people on the street. They're always trying to categorise us and put us into boxes with labels.

Excerpt 4.6. Homeless person discussing negative impacts of 'mental health' label.

If mental health is seen as the *sole* cause of issues like homelessness, then government policy surrounding the social problem need not be changed (Shields, 2001). Mentally ill people experiencing homelessness are overrepresented in discourses surrounding homelessness (Dej, 2016). These diagnoses of people experiencing homelessness as mentally ill can form a method of social control (Bresson, 2003; cited in Dej, 2016).

Discourses that frequently correlate mental illness with homelessness can responsabilise individuals for their fragility and vulnerability (Dej, 2016). This shifts responsibility away from governmental policymaking and conceals systemic problems and policies such as austerity measures, benefit reforms, reduction in public services and cuts to local authority budgets which may have contributed to the exacerbation of the mental health crisis.

4.2.3. Poverty

Poverty, especially poverty during childhood, is *the* most common predictor of homelessness. Longitudinal data evidences that poverty accounts for up to 50% of the explanation behind whether an individual had experienced homelessness (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2017). Certain groups, including young people, single parents and BAME people are more susceptible to homelessness precisely because these groups are more likely to be poor (NPC, 2018). This systemic link is a far stronger link than that of substance addiction or mental health problems. The number of children in the UK in poverty has increased since 2013 (NPC, 2018). With levels of employment mitigated by low pay, benefit reforms reducing support for low-income families, rising rent prices and decreasing levels of home ownership,

more people in the UK are falling into poverty (Shelter, 2018). While individual health and behavioural issues can be an indicator of homelessness pathways and contribute to episodes of homelessness, these factors are inextricable from economic circumstances (NPC, 2018).

The personal narratives within homeless charity discourse provides individuals with the opportunity to express the multifaceted nature of their pathways into homelessness. However, these narratives do *not* fully explain the causes of homelessness. Rather, the stories explain the risks and specific pathways which each individual person has gone through and which has rendered them homeless at some point in time. Within these narratives, factors that consider how structural inefficiencies have subsequently impacted on individual susceptibilities to homelessness are not present. As shown in *Figure 4.7*, the only risk/cause of homelessness which is statistically salient enough to become a keyword in almost all text types, is poverty. Poverty appears as the sole keyword surrounding causes and risks of homelessness within both national and local mainstream news media discourses and local charity discourse. These categories were informed by CDA theory but primarily emerged from the examination of keywords in context through concordance analysis. It is only within Hansard, that the keyness of ‘poverty’ is not frequent enough to appear when compared to the British National Corpus.

Categories*	National media keywords	Local media keywords	National charity keywords	Local charity keywords	Hansard keywords
Risks/causes of homelessness	Poverty	Poverty	Eviction, unemployment, employment, poverty, housebuilding, supply, rent, universal, credit, arrears, costs, welfare, benefits	Poverty	Eviction, housebuilding, evictions, overcrowded, evicted, building, built, bedroom, tax, universal, credit, welfare, benefits

Figure 4.7. CDA-informed categories used in grouping Keywords.
* selected CDA category only.

The keyness of 'poverty' is significant because it signifies the 'aboutness' (Scott, 1999) of the different discourses concerning homelessness, especially when looking at causation.

Poverty is only referenced fleetingly within homeless charity narratives and is mentioned without any indication of causation. Rather, the focus lies on their practical charitable work as they seek donations and potential funding.

24. The charity helps people who find themselves **homeless** or in food **poverty**.
25. Please click here to **donate** today and do something amazing – combat **poverty**.
26. To build a future away from **homelessness** and **poverty**, please go to our **donate** page.
27. Find ourselves in changed circumstances, **homeless** and living in **poverty**.

Excerpt 4.7. Concordance lines using 'poverty' in homeless charity personal narratives.

The use of imperative clauses seeking audiences to donate to the charities is softened with 'please', a polite discourse marker to create a rapport between both reader and audience. This, however, does not establish any sort of explanation for causal links between poverty and homelessness. Instead, it merely draws attention to the fact that poverty and homelessness are linked and that *you* can help these issues by donating to homeless charities themselves.

4.2.4. The private rental sector and eviction from private tenancies

Decreasing welfare provision and a weakened safety net, along with a lack of affordable social housing mean there is an increased likelihood of evictions that lead to episodes of homelessness. A lack of affordable social housing makes it challenging for people experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness to access social housing. This inability to access housing also increases the risk of rent arrears and eviction. Unaffordable rent levels in the private rented sector, alongside up-front deposits and rent

demands months in advance make it difficult for people to find new accommodation *after* eviction (Crisis, 2018). Eviction from a private tenancy accounts for 78% of the rise of homelessness between 2011 and 2017 (Shelter, 2017).

28. He had been made redundant a few months before, paid his rent until his savings ran out, and was then evicted.
29. I was renting a room from this guy for five months and then got a letter through the door saying no rent had been paid and I was to be evicted.
30. I couldn't pay my rent so my landlord evicted me. I went to seek help for housing but no one was willing to help.
31. An elderly male was living in dire conditions and, after being handed an eviction notice due to the landlord wanting to sell the house, was left living on the streets.
32. The real landlord started changing agreements, requesting an additional deposit and the rent that I had paid to the other guy. I couldn't afford to pay what he was asking for, so I had to make myself homeless again.

Excerpt 4.8. References to eviction from private rented accommodation leading to homelessness.

Example 28) passivises both the redundancy *and* eviction while using active voice when referring to the individual paying rent. This shifts the focus from the subject to the object and locates the individual as powerless to both the fact that he had been 'made redundant' and 'was then evicted'. This clause does, however, give the subject agency by using the active voice to portray him as taking responsibility to pay 'his rent' until he was no longer able to do so because of processes outside of his control. Examples 30) and 32) use dynamic modality ('couldn't') to represent the inability of the subject to *do* anything about their situation. Example 32) then also uses deontic modality ('had to make myself homeless') to portray that the subject was *required* to become homeless as a direct result of their unavoidable circumstances.

The private rented sector typically involves short-term contracts of just six to twelve months (Crisis, 2018). Short-term tenancies do *not* offer people experiencing homelessness

the protection and security (values conventionally associated with 'home' – see *Chapter 3*) that individuals need to help restore their lives. This issue is compounded by government legislation. Where social housing tenants can typically only be evicted for either rent arrears or a breach of tenancy, tenants in the private rental sector can have their tenancies ended (after the end of the initial fixed term) *without reason* (JRF, 2017). Landlords can evict tenants by issuing a Section 21 'no-fault' notice which can require tenants to leave within two months. Landlords do not need to evidence rent arrears or damage to force a tenant to leave the property. Statistics show that 94% of evictions that led to homelessness between 2009 and 2017 were 'no-fault' evictions (Generation Rent, 2018).

Housing that is offered to those at risk of homelessness is often unsuitable and unaffordable. Those dependent on welfare are affected negatively because their benefits do not cover these exorbitant rent costs (Crisis, Groundswell and Uscreates, 2018). Tenants on low incomes also struggle to afford alternative accommodation within the private rental sector and cannot access social housing (JRF, 2017). Losing one's home is a traumatic experience and for those with limited financial resources, this can add to other co-existing challenges. These factors make homelessness more likely for many individuals.

4.2.5. Welfare reforms and conditionality

In 2012, the Coalition government brought in substantial austerity measures and a programme of welfare reform that was centred on intensified notions of conditionality and responsibility. This overhaul included the harshest benefits sanctions in the history of the system (Reeve, 2017). Policy was underpinned by the perspective that individual's rights are required to be balanced with personal responsibilities. The government justified these reforms by indicating that sanctions would promote positive individual behaviour by incentivising those on benefits into work and to engage with the system of support (Reeve, 2017). The reforms sought to challenge issues with benefit dependency for those not in

employment. However, housing benefits do not cover rents in 95% of the country (NPC, 2018).

Conditionality focuses on the idea that access and eligibility to state support is entirely dependent on an individual adhering to regulations laid out by the government. The reforms represented a change in ideology surrounding welfare. Rather than individuals being entitled to forms of state support, the system shifted towards the ideals of responsabilisation, reward and punishment. The severity and duration of sanctions for failing to adhere to these conditions were enhanced with some claimants able to be sanctioned for up to three years (Watts et al, 2015). Young people experiencing homelessness and other vulnerable groups in society have also been evidenced to be disproportionately affected by these sanctions (Homeless Link, 2013).

These increasingly punitive measures shifted the government's welfare ideals and represent a deeper shift towards *neoliberalism*. This ideology focuses on individual responsabilisation and perceives socially and economically isolated people for their issues (Chunn and Gavigan, 2004). Individual issues such as benefit dependency and cultures of worklessness are seen to cause larger social problems such as unemployment, poverty, inequality and social exclusion (Reeve, 2017). These social factors are also significant precursors to episodes of homelessness. The shift towards a punitive ideology locates and responsabilises social issues in the individual while simultaneously concealing the political and systemic factors that have led to more people in the UK becoming homeless. This ideology and emphasis on adhering to conditionality redefines many individuals as *undeserving* of state assistance. In doing so, the government moralise social problems such as homelessness. This both allows and justifies their decision to take punitive action against individuals who fail to address their dependency problems (Chunn and Gavigan, 2004).

Social problems such as homelessness have become a moral identifier of individuals who have *failed* the system and subsequently need rectifying. The threat of those experiencing homelessness as 'other' and deviant is furthered through this narrative. When

people experiencing homelessness are seen to fail or cheat this system, it further legitimises the need to regulate the problem (Upton, 2016). The welfare system then becomes the method by which the government control social order and moral standards which are justified by disciplining individuals who transgress the conditions set out by these reforms (Reeve, 2017).

Chapter 5 – Homelessness, identity and social networks

5.1. Homeless identity

The nature of the 'homeless identity' is paramount to constructions of homelessness, self-evaluations of people experiencing homelessness, existing perceptions of homelessness and also has severe implications for those who are homeless (McCarthy, 2013). Definitions surrounding identity are contested (Parsell, 2010) but it is generally agreed that an individual's identity comprises of an individual's experiences, perspectives, ambitions and things of integral, personal importance to them (Parsell, 2010).

Frequently circulated mediated images of homelessness have the potential to impact on and shape homeless identities. Goffman (1959) found that the sense of self is inextricably bound to the social, which involves how we are seen not only by others, but also *made* to be seen by others. It is not merely these images which impact on people experiencing homelessness, but it is also the subsequent reactions that people experiencing homelessness receive from the public (Seal, 2007). As Southard (1997) suggested, public reaction has a discernible impact on individuals' self-concepts, especially within people experiencing homelessness. In addition, Casey et al (2008: 915) noted that, specifically for homeless women, identity and autonomy as a homeless person are 'shaped by significant others'.

Despite this, studies have also demonstrated that homeless people's identities – although affected by socially constructed and mediated images – are not entirely bound by them. Social identities that others ascribe towards people experiencing homelessness (or, any actor) may *not* be identical to the identity that one ascribes to oneself (Boydell et al, 2000). Identity negotiation – that is, the processes individuals enact to establish themselves - provides people experiencing homelessness with agency (Seal, 2007). However, this emphasis on personal responsibility may result in self-blame and attributing one's homelessness to personal factors that are, conversely, as a result of uncontrollable structural processes (see *Chapter 4*).

5.1.1. Snow and Anderson's (1987) identity study

The most important study of homeless identities is Snow and Anderson's (1987) ethnographic study concerning identity talk. This study set the foundations for the way in which people experiencing homelessness negotiate their identities and has been replicated, developed and advanced by future scholars in academic work on homelessness (Farrington, 1999; Rowe and Wolch, 1990; Boydell, 2000; Casey et al, 2008). This research demonstrated that identity talk was the primary way in which people experiencing homelessness constructed, asserted and sustained their personal identities. It is key to note that these identities frequently differed from mediated representations and conceptions of people experiencing homelessness (Boydell et al, 2000).

Snow and Anderson (1987) differentiate three main elements of identity: social identities, personal identities, and self-concept. Social identities refer to identities that have been attributed by others (Goffman, 1963: 12) and render one as a social object. Personal identities, or 'felt identities', cover self-attributed and subjective perceptions of one's own identities (Goffman, 1963). Finally, the self-concept concerns one's image of oneself as a 'physical, social, spiritual, or moral being' (Gecas, 1982; cited in Snow and Anderson, 1987). Snow and Anderson (1987) concluded that there are three stages of identification for people experiencing homelessness: distancing, embracement and fictive storytelling.

Distancing focuses on the need for those experiencing homelessness to disassociate themselves due to inconsistencies between social identities and their actual or desired self-conceptions (Goffman, 1961; cited in Snow and Anderson, 1987). Distancing requires people experiencing homelessness to distinguish themselves from specific groups of other people experiencing homelessness in order to assert a contrary identity (Snow and Anderson, 1987). Distancing can occur by stating what one is not (Parsell, 2010), by stigmatising other people experiencing homelessness (Hodgetts et al, 2005; Butchinsky, 2007), by making intra-group comparisons (Crocker and Major, 1989), by deflecting blame

onto other individuals or groups (Rayburn and Guittar, 2013) and by omitting one's own homeless status (Farrington and Robinson, 1999).

Within distancing there are sub-categorisations which include categorical associational distancing, role distancing and institutional distancing. Categorical associational distancing hinges on one's 'ability to manage his image by drawing distinctions between himself and others he does not want to be associated with' (Anderson, 1976: 214). This group either distance through disassociation from 'the homeless' as a social category or distance from groups of homeless individuals (Snow and Anderson, 1987: 1349). This form of distancing creates hierarchies of homelessness (Rayburn and Guittar, 2013) because some individuals make a sharp distinction between those who are individually to blame for their homelessness and others who have been affected by structural inequities (Cohen and Wagner, 1992).

Role distancing involves a self-conscious attempt to *not* commit to a particular role in order to 'deny the virtual self implied' (Snow and Anderson, 1987: 1350). When the social identity is incompatible with one's desired self-conception, role distancing may occur. Role distancing, similarly to categorical associational distancing, establishes itself in two ways: disassociating from the general homeless person and distancing from specific occupational roles (Snow and Anderson, 1987). Institutional distancing, on the other hand, is a form of disassociation used by long-term people experiencing homelessness (Snow and Anderson, 1987: 1353) and involves a negative stance towards institutions that attend to the needs of homeless populations. This type of distancing seeks to salvage self-worth and assert positive personal identities in response to the impersonal, dehumanising and poorly disseminated services of institutions (Snow and Anderson, 1987).

Embracement refers to the acceptance of attachment to the social identity associated to a specific role (Snow and Anderson, 1987). This means that there is a consistency between an individual's self-concept and social identity. Embracement is the direct antithesis

to distancing. There are three primary types of embracement found in this study: role embracement, associational embracement and ideological embracement.

Role embracement manifests itself in the avowal of street role identities such as 'tramp' or 'bum' (Snow and Anderson, 1987). This visible form of embracement results in individuals adopting names and roles congruent with implied social identities and demonstrates a separation with the past in favour of an acceptance of present homelessness (Snow and Anderson, 1987). Associational embracement is linked to notions of community and positive social networks amongst people experiencing homelessness (see *section 5.2.6.3*). This category consists of those who assert identity through reference to one as a good friend and one who takes pride in social relationships (Snow and Anderson, 1987). This form of embracement signifies the strength of social networks and a cemented tie to the homeless community, which is most evident with people experiencing homelessness who are willing to share limited resources in order to 'look out for each other' (Snow and Anderson, 1987: 1356). However, becoming entrenched in a homeless community can result not only in the declining use of available services (Osborne, 2002) but also can facilitate socialisation into an alcohol or substance-abusing community (Snow and Anderson, 1993). Ideological embracement involves 'the avowal of a cognitively congruent personal identity' (Snow and Anderson, 1987: 1357). This type necessitates the acceptance of a set of ideologies and worldviews and is most prevalently linked to the idea of finding religion as a form of embracement (Rayburn and Guittar, 2013: 169).

The last form of identity talk outlined is fictive storytelling. This entails the narration of stories about one's past, present or future, and 'fictive' is used to demonstrate the range of mere claims to complete fabrications of the truth (Snow and Anderson, 1987). Snow and Anderson (1987) establish two forms of fictive storytelling: embellishment of the past and present, and fantasising about the future. Embellishment occurs when people experiencing homelessness are prone to exaggeration, or, in Goffman's (1974: 14) terms, a 'lamination' of the truth. These fictitious and hyperbolised stories assert a positive personal identity

although there is an incoherence between these assertions of identity and reality itself (Snow and Anderson, 1987).

Fantatising, in contrast to embellishment, does not focus on the past and the present. Instead, this form of identity talk is concerned with 'future-oriented fabrications about oneself' (Snow and Anderson, 1987: 1361). These positive constructions of reality are based on the idea of myths. Individuals who are more recently homeless tend to engage in fantasising because they are more connected to their former identities, rather than those who have acclimatised to life on the streets and have embraced other homeless identities (Snow and Anderson, 1987). Other studies have signified the importance of fictive storytelling as many people experiencing homelessness wish not only to address a future that involved a non-homeless identity but, additionally, create a myth of the self that sustains them and which is oriented to the future (Boydell et al, 2000).

5.1.2. Threats to identity

Homelessness is more than simply the loss of a home (*see Chapter 3*). Homeless people's self-worth, self-efficacy and human dignity are at risk alongside the immediate threat of not having a home (Buckner et al, 1993). Individuals struggle to define themselves (Boydell et al, 2000) and are faced with the dilemma of 'acting in accordance with their self-values or in accordance with the expectations of powerful others' (Erickson, 1995: 130). People experiencing homelessness have to decide on their newfound identity and those who are homeless for longer are more prone to embrace a 'homeless identity'. They can accept a homeless identity or can disavow this and maintain their former identity. The acceptance of a homeless identity can prevent people experiencing homelessness from accessing services which enable them to escape their episode(s) of homelessness and, subsequently, prohibits their chances of transitioning away from life on the streets (Osborne, 2002: 50).

This threat to identity is encompassed in the notion of the homeless 'other'. In shaping their identities, people experiencing homelessness draw on mediated images and meanings of homelessness as 'otherness' and are forced to 'draw on the same discourses which define homelessness as 'other' or as moral failing' (McCarthy, 2013: 54). Pathologised individuals experiencing homelessness find themselves outside of a social and moral order through the stigma attached to the social issue that they face. People experiencing homelessness are a superfluous population who are defined specifically by their 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1963: 6), which is their inability to conform to social standards. They are disqualified from social acceptance due to their lack of positive utility and moral worth (Goffman, 1963).

The effect of stigmatisation and 'othering' has a profound effect on one's identity. One of the most concerning elements of stigma is that people are acutely aware that they are being stigmatised (Crocker et al, 1989). A prevailing issue for people experiencing homelessness, primarily those who are rough sleepers, is their visibility. For example, rough sleepers are visible with their association with dirtiness (Toft, 2014) and uniform of soiled clothes (Snow and Anderson, 1987: 1340). They are prone to stigmatisation through this 'stigma symbol' (Goffman, 1963) which results in a myriad of harmful social and psychological consequences, such as extreme social exclusion and further devalued self-esteem. Once a person's self-esteem is lowered that they may internalise this stigma and begin to self-stigmatise (Rowe and Wolch, 1990; Belcher and DeForge, 2012). Public reactions to this stigma, combined with self-stigma, can result in more experiences of depersonalisation and dehumanisation (Casey et al, 2008). This means that one's own homelessness comes to be understood as a stigmatised difference and personal failing (Farrugia, 2011: 763).

5.2. Social networks and communities

Social networks are an important aspect of explaining how those experiencing homelessness negotiate their identities in day-to-day life. They are also important factors for explaining risk factors for those experiencing homelessness. Homeless individuals are forced to create or re-establish social networks in order to rebuild their lives and adapt to their new surroundings. However, these social networks can also make it more difficult for homeless individuals to escape their episode(s) of homelessness on a permanent basis.

5.2.1. The formation of social networks and communities of practice

Milroy (2002: 550) defined an individual's social network as the 'aggregate of relationships contracted with others'. These social networks are a 'boundless web of ties' (Milroy, 2002: 550) that link social actors to one another. Social networks can be defined as a map of repeated social interactions and these interactions both shape, and are shaped by, the social network that the individual is embedded within (Rowe and Wolch, 1990). The strength of a link within a social network is measured by factors such as duration, emotional intensity, intimacy, trust, solidarity, and the reciprocity of the relationship (Granovetter, 1973). Social network analysis focuses on characterising the ties between social actors, their network structures, and positions within the network (Barman-Adhikari and Rice, 2014). This analysis observes the variety of these structures and the properties of the relationships (Milroy, 2002).

Communities of practice are not only founded on an aggregate of relationships but are also centred on the practices that emerge as a result of the mutual endeavour that all members are involved in (Eckert and McConnel-Ginet, 2009). It is the common endeavour of the members of the community, as well as the differentiated activities of the group, that define and structure the community socially (Eckert and McConnel-Ginet, 2009). For individuals within these networks, individual identity is located within the 'multiplicity of this

participation' (Eckert and McConnel-Ginet, 2009: 34). Therefore, while the identity of the individual and the community of practice may be persistent, memberships are frequently negotiated and structural relationships between members are subject to constant change (Moore, 2010).

5.2.2. Homeless social networks and communities

Homeless communities are defined by social engagement and individuals engage with a number of social networks and communities on the streets. Many of these networks are created as a result of the shared experience of homelessness. Homeless people's legitimacy within a social network or community is unstable because their membership within these groups is frequently at risk due the transient, ephemeral nature of homelessness. Analysing the social networks of those experiencing homelessness allows for a conceptualisation of how this marginalised group immerse and position themselves into new networks or communities involving many other people experiencing homelessness.

Homelessness is a process of social disaffiliation and alienation from the status quo of society. Those experiencing homelessness are continually defined as socially abnormal not only through the stigma attached to them but also due to attenuated social network ties (Cohen and Wagner, 1992). These networks include the breakdown of family (or caregiver) ties (*see Excerpt 5.1*), relationship breakdown, (*see Excerpt 5.2*), along with the erosion of friend networks and institutional ties (*see Excerpt 5.3*).

1. Sam's relationship with his family was poor and he was not in a position to receive or ask for support from them.
2. I lived alone, I had no social network, I was cut off from all my family and I was working too hard. I worked every hour I could to help fight the loneliness I was feeling. I ended up having a breakdown.

3. When I was 17 years old, I became homeless as a result of a breakdown in the relationship with my family.
4. David was living with his family and had done various types of employment until he suffered a family breakdown. He was suffering from depression and this breakdown had a big impact on him.
5. He has always lived with his mum in the family home in Liverpool, but they had a family argument and Anthony was asked to leave.

Excerpt 5.1. Concordance lines linking to family social network breakdown.

6. When the relationship broke down, he found himself in a cycle of drug dependency and alcoholism and had not kept in contact with his family in Merseyside. He did not feel he could access services.
7. Two years ago, Simon was living with his girlfriend in her house. When the relationship ended Simon found himself out on the street with a bag of belongings and nowhere to go.
8. John and his partner started having problems with their relationship which eventually came to an end. This had a big effect on John and his mental health.
9. Peter is 55 and was born and raised in Merseyside, 5 years ago he moved down south to live with a girlfriend. When the relationship broke down he found himself in a cycle of drug dependency and alcoholism.

Excerpt 5.2. Concordance lines of 'relationship' linking to relationship breakdown.

10. Carrie then found herself in The Elm's Children's home, and after issues with drugs being found on the premises she was moved.
11. Before I got addicted I used to work as a restaurant manager for McDonald's [sic], I had a good career before I got sacked because of my drug addiction.
12. It wasn't long before we were found out and we were all asked to leave. Emmaus has a strict no drugs policy.

Excerpt 5.3. Concordance lines of 'drug(s)' linking to drug-taking and removal from accommodation.

The erosion of previously supportive social networks can contribute to episode(s) of homelessness. If those experiencing homelessness become disconnected from these networks, then they are left without a support network which could offer a way to escape episodes of homelessness. As social networks are eroded, so is the potential safety net for those who are homeless. Supportive social networks, relationships and communities are of paramount importance in *preventing* homelessness (Toohey et al, 2004). However, while those experiencing homelessness may be marginalised, stigmatised and polarised from society, they are not without social support and at least *some* social networks (Wagner, 1993). The paradox is that while homelessness results in the breakdown of social relationships that homelessness can also enable integration into new social networks.

5.2.3. Peer and homed networks

Homeless social networks are comprised of individuals who are both homeless and *not* homeless. These networks are heterogenous as they encompass a plethora of individuals of a different age, gender and background. However, despite the diverse nature of these groups, they are often smaller than the networks of homed peers (Cairns et al, 1995). Rowe and Wolch (1990) indicated that there are two primary types of homeless social networks. The basic elements of these networks have been termed *peer* networks and *homed* networks (see *Figure 5.1*). This chapter will focus primarily on peer networks. However, it is important to look at the distinction between the communities in which people experiencing homelessness can be involved within.

Peer network	Homed network
Spouse/lover/family Homeless friends Members of informal homeless communities	Remnants of former networks Homeless institutions Social workers / service providers

Figure 5.1. Peer and homed networks (adapted from Rowe and Wolch, 1990).

Peer networks involve groups such as friends or family experiencing episode(s) of homelessness, homeless relationships (lovers/spouses) and other homeless individuals living on the streets (Rowe and Wolch, 1990). These are the social networks created as a direct consequence of one's episodes of homelessness. Conversely, homed networks include the social links between someone *without* a home and a person *with* a home. These networks include social networks that individuals belonged to prior to their episode(s) of homelessness (Rowe and Wolch, 1990).

5.2.4. Homeless social network formation

The most common way homeless peer social networks are formed is meeting through shared circumstances. It is the commonality of homeless people's experience that establishes new social networks. Most of the social interactions that occur between members of a homeless social network involve people in the same plight as themselves. For many people experiencing homelessness, social interaction with those in the same situation is the only source of communication where they can interact with others on 'equal terms' (McNaughton, 2008: 179). These relationships are increasingly important, especially when alternative homed networks, such as family, have already frayed.

The formation of homeless social networks occurs in a multitude of ways. Networks can be formed by meeting other network members through other existing networks, in social situations or by initiating contact with others in order to seek membership or allow membership into existing communities (Tyler and Melander, 2011). These networks can vary between weak ties, such as peripheral and fleeting relationships or extremely strong ties in which intimate partnerships and relationships are established and sustained (Tyler and Melander, 2011). Strong peer networks allow those experiencing episodes of homelessness to adapt to homeless life and to organise and structure their lives by adopting the 'self-as-homeless' identity (Rowe and Wolch, 1990: 202). Some people experiencing homelessness

have no option but to accept this identity. This process is known as 'anticipatory socialisation' (Merton and Rossi, 1957; cited in Osborne, 2002: 48) and refers to acquiring the values, attitudes and behaviours that are part of the group one wishes to join. Homeless individuals engage in anticipatory socialisation by taking on the values and standards of those in existing homeless social networks to facilitate their integration into these groups. The aim is to be accepted and considered a legitimate member of this new social network.

5.2.5. Who belongs to homeless social networks?

Homeless network members are varied according to age and role relationships. As homeless individuals share and occupy similar types of space, it facilitates the formation of diverse peer networks. This reinforces the heterogeneity that encompasses most homeless social communities. These groups are typically grouped into four primary subthemes: current or former partner(s), family, friends and a category known as 'other' (Tyler and Melander, 2011).

5.2.5.1. Current or former partner(s)

Many homeless peer networks comprise a range of relationships which can vary from strong ties (committed, long-term relationships), to average ties (casual, sexual relationships) or non-existent ties such as former relationships (Tyler and Melander, 2011). Homeless social networks that include strong ties to one's partner typically revolve around protection from those not part of a homeless person's network. These relationships can promote support, confidence and self-esteem (Dodson, 2007) which can form a valued sense of one's identity. However, these ties are frequently eroded because institutional links act as a barrier to these relationships. Dodson (2007) has demonstrated that institutional discrimination in homeless accommodation occurs. Couples can find themselves separated and cannot occupy the same spaces together within hostels and are discouraged from forming these types of strong

network ties. Separating homeless couples from each other is an inhumane act that appears to contravene their basic rights. By separating people experiencing homelessness from such important strong social networks, the institutions are essentially indicating that they do not *deserve* these relationships.

5.2.5.2. Family

These homeless social networks are conventionally homed networks (*see Excerpt 5.5*), but on occasions families can form homeless peer social networks (*see Excerpt 5.6*). Family members often listed within one's social network do not, however, include one's parents but tend to be a brother or sister (Tyler and Melander, 2011). The realities of street life mean that those experiencing homelessness (primarily homeless youth) tend to create fictive kin (Tyler and Melander, 2011). Friends with strong network ties regularly list others as families due to the roles they fulfil in daily life. Whether these groups are biologically related or not is irrelevant. Instead, the *role* the member plays in the community network is perceived as far more important.

13. In terms of my family, things are going OK. We're in touch, they know where I am, and I love getting birthday messages.
14. Also, my family. I didn't want them to see me like this. When I found a regular spot for begging, I told my brother not to go down that street.
15. I mean, my family took me in after I came out of Meadowbrook and if they hadn't, I'd have been on the streets.

Excerpt 5.4. Concordance lines of 'family' in homed networks in local charity personal narratives.

16. Being at Emmaus has made me feel part of a family again. I was with these people 24-7 and if I wanted any support it was always there.
17. Living in a community of 26 people is like being part of a really big family.

18. Since I came here, I am treated as part of the family.
19. I had never felt part of a team or family before. I am no longer on my own trying to fight the world. I have a network of support to cheer me on and make me feel I can achieve anything.
20. When I get up in the morning, I feel like I'm going to my family.

Excerpt 5.5. Concordance lines of 'family' in peer networks in local charity personal narratives.

5.2.5.3. Friends

Most homeless peer network members occupy the role of friend (Tyler and Melander, 2011). While those experiencing homelessness require their short-term physiological needs to be met, they also require companionship, friendship and community. These aspects of social life are particularly important for marginalised groups who have been socially isolated. Having strong ties to other friends within a social network provides a common ground for the social interaction that people experiencing homelessness have (Hodgetts et al, 2006). This goes some way towards rehumanising those experiencing homelessness (see *Excerpt 5.6*). However, the instability of these network ties is apparent, as while these strong network ties may be categorised as 'friend', these relationships can overlap and may not be entirely platonic (Tyler and Melander, 2011).

21. I have formed new friends with people who have helped me keep away from bad habits.
22. You get genuine friends who love you for you and you meet so many amazing people.
23. They say in times like this you find out who your true friends are, and I found out big time.
24. From there I was like sofa surfing with a few friends that were still in halls.
25. My life involved staying at friends' houses, travelling up and down the country.

Excerpt 5.6. Concordance lines of 'friends' in local homeless charity personal narratives.

5.2.5.4. Other

This role category encompasses the relationships in homeless social networks that are difficult to define. These networks can facilitate a community but without the formal tie of friendship (Tyler and Melander, 2011). Categories within this role include relationships that have been eroded or dissolved due to personal circumstances. The transitory nature of homelessness means that these networks may be destroyed because these people no longer have access to one another. Former friends within these networks may be incarcerated, institutionalised or escape their episode(s) or homelessness (Rowe and Wolch, 1990). This group can also involve fleeting networks which involve homeless individuals who structure their days in order to converse with the general homed public (*see Excerpt 5.7*). Seeking out conversation with these people constitutes not only an effort to maintain one's dignity but, additionally, provides a sense of normality to one's life and indicates that there is more to one's identity to their homelessness (Hodgetts et al, 2006).

26. I interact with everyone, children, old people, I try put a smile on their face. You wave to kids and say, 'Hello small person!' You get a wave, the kids are buzzing, the parents are smiling, it's small interaction. Just to make them know it's another human being that they're talking to.
27. I'd head to a coffee house where I could find someone to talk with.

Excerpt 5.7. Concordance lines showing fleeting social networks.

5.2.6. The characteristics of homeless social networks

Homeless social networks provide a source of protection, security, support, health, well-being and a sense of belonging (Rowe and Wolch, 1990 – *see section 3.2.2*). These notions indicate that these social networks provide a metaphysical sense of home even when a person has no permanent housing. Being a member of a community in which the social experience of the individual is shared by the other network members provides the homeless person's life with a sense of meaning (Radley et al, 2006). This strong group allegiance and

protection from out-group victimisation means that the individual gains legitimacy in a reality where people experiencing homelessness are 'othered' and delegitimised by society.

Many people experiencing homelessness seek to sustain both peer and homed networks because these relationships provide simultaneously the material, emotional and logistical resources that are vital to maintain one's self-worth, positive identity and physiological health. Material support encompasses access to vital services and resources, emotional support includes networks that offer empathy, compassion and companionship, whereas negative support represents networks that are detrimental such as drug-taking communities or abusive relationships (Golembiewski et al, 2017). However, social networks can also safeguard against these risky behaviours. For example, having a family member as a strong homed tie within a homeless person's social network acts as a buffer against drug consumption and/or risky sexual activity (Ennett et al, 1999).

5.2.6.1. Selfhood and positive identity

Recovering one's selfhood involves the coalescence of the structural (the real, surrounding world), the social (the networks, communities and interactions with other individuals) and the individual, which involves their own sense of agency and identity (McNaughton, 2008).

These levels of the social world need to be recovered and social networks provide the foundation for these conditions to be improved. People experiencing homelessness seek to reclaim a sense of their identity, or a sense of who they once were. They must enter and develop into new social networks with people in order to construct a role for themselves within a community and avoid the isolation that results from a lack of social networks.

Studies have indicated that not only did almost two-thirds of people experiencing homelessness feel there was a sense of community within homeless social networks but that over half of those experiencing homeless felt part of these communities (Klee and Reid, 1998). Those without social networks or those with severely weak ties in their existing communities can become increasingly socially isolated. This can lead to further issues of

loneliness and an inability to access vital services for one's immediate physiological needs as one becomes disembedded from social interactions (McNaughton, 2008).

To deal with the day-to-day hardships involved in homelessness life, individuals must find the means to cope. The deprivation that arises through one's homelessness places a greater emphasis on short-term needs. The focus on these short-term needs can lead to a devaluation of self. However, the issue also lies in that homeless people's fulfilment of long-term needs are subordinated (Rowe and Wolch, 1990). If individuals become increasingly isolated from social networks and struggle to meet these needs, then they face a crisis of selfhood. Social interaction through networks enables homeless individuals to resocialise which, in turn, can allow them to regain a sense of ontological security (Somerville, 1992).

5.2.6.2. Logistical, emotional, material and moral support

Homeless social network members are sources of logistical, emotional, material and moral support (Tyler and Melander, 2011). These networks are instrumental in survival strategies as they can provide a myriad of material resources from surrounding networks and communities (i.e. family, other friends, associates, relatives, institutions) which assist with the plight of people experiencing homelessness and their adverse life circumstances (Rowe and Wolch, 1990). These networks can also provide companionship and moral support (Tyler and Melander, 2011) which, in turn, provides emotional support that can mitigate the isolation that many people experiencing homelessness face. Normalising one's existence through social interaction as part of a homeless community also serves to challenge the distinction between 'us' and 'them' and demonstrates the human desire for companionship, support and healthy interaction (Hodgetts et al, 2006).

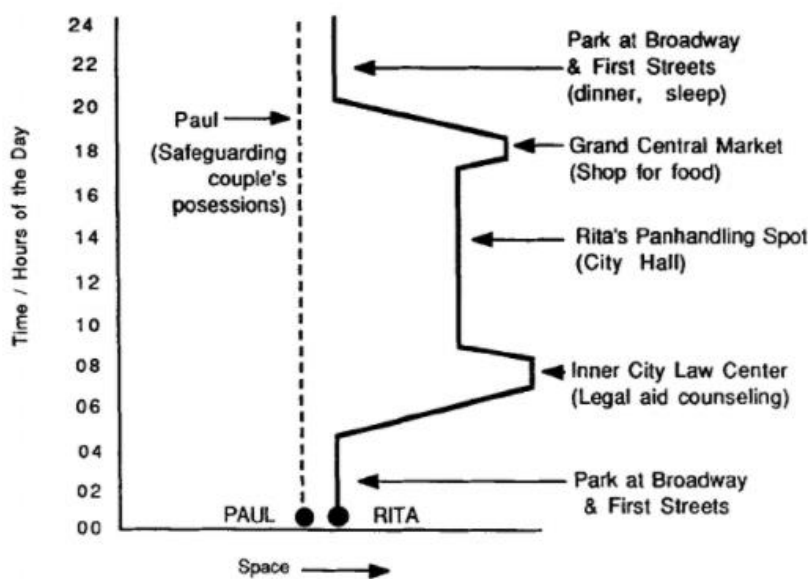
5.2.6.3. Instrumental support

Instrumental social networks include physiological needs such as shelter, food, money and clothing. These day-to-day needs, especially that of shelter, are a fundamental priority for people experiencing homelessness. This is especially due to the high levels of victimisation that rough sleepers experience on the streets. Homeless social networks demonstrate a reciprocity of friendship within their social networks as individuals notify others about available spaces in hostels or shelters in order to aid their immediate needs (Tyler and Melander, 2011). Homeless network members engage in street-level socialisation to assist one another. At times, these network ties are so strong that homeless individuals encourage other people experiencing homelessness to secure items such as food and shelter for themselves. This street-level socialisation offers a method to provide the individual with a sense of agency and independence to acquire resources essential to one's health (Hagan and McCarthy, 1997).

Homeless social networks become strong precisely through their '24/7 nature' (Dodson, 2007: 50) and the ability for members of the community to frequently collaborate. Associational embracement serves to strengthen the networks because it indicates that the members will take these relationships seriously by acknowledging and valuing reciprocity (Snow and Anderson, 1990). The strength of the network is determined by one's actions. Identifying oneself as someone who will share resources – even if they are limited – such as food, money and cigarettes indicates that there is an association between members experiencing homelessness. Therefore, despite the unstable nature of homelessness, members willing to associate with each other through these peer networks demonstrate their dependable nature and cement their place as a part of that community.

5.2.6.4. Protection

Social networks can provide protection against the hardships of homeless life, such as watching out for peers, protecting the community's belongings and collaborating in order to survive. Rowe and Wolch (1990) created a time-space model (see Figure 5.2) to demonstrate this important facet of protection within homeless social networks. This example highlights the issues with people experiencing homelessness lacking either a private or public space that they can ever call their own.



(a) Time - Space Prism

Figure 5.2. Time-space model of homeless persons' activity for one day (Rowe and Wolch, 1990).

In this example, Rita goes about homeless day-to-day life to acquire different logistical, material and emotional materials while her partner, Paul, protects and safeguards the couple's belongings. Those experiencing homelessness have argued that there is safety in numbers (Tyler and Melander, 2011) but it is also clear that there is safety in the *strength* of social network ties, even in limited members. These networks provide protection and personal safety from victimisation along with physical and emotional assault.

5.2.7. The dangers of homeless social networks

While there are numerous benefits behind homeless social networks, there are also many issues within these communities. Many of these issues arise because of the transient nature of homelessness. However, other issues arise because ties within the network are not reciprocated or members of the social networks encourage deviant behaviours (such as drug-taking) that have a plethora of detrimental consequence to homeless people's lives.

5.2.7.1. Issues with network members not helping

While there is strength in social networks, sometimes network ties are weak. Some members of homeless social networks do not fulfil their promises, offer protection, or the required forms of support as efficiently as other members of the community. While these social networks can offer supportive friendships through assisting one another to secure vital resources (such as money, food, substances etc.) they can also be volatile and 'plagued by mistrust' (Butchinsky, 2007: 12). Social networks can become frayed because they have been tested to the point of no return. This notion occurs often among those who are overly reliant on homed networks (Radley et al, 2006) in scenarios where a homeless individual will stay at a friend/family's home for too long, will be seen not to be making the required changes to their own lifestyle to alter their homelessness state, and subsequently the social network begins to dissolve (*see section 3.1.3*).

Many people experiencing homelessness are *new* to the experience of homelessness. These people attempt to join a social network but struggle with assisting day-to-day practicalities because they lack the social knowledge to circumvent the challenges of homeless life. They do not understand the experiences of others experiencing longer-term homelessness within the social network (Tyler and Melander, 2011). Housed members of social networks also struggle with this faculty because they lack this life experience and cannot be sympathetic enough towards homeless peer members' plight.

5.2.7.2. Deviant behaviours

Some individuals within homeless networks actively encourage deviant behaviours. Even within supportive peer networks, homeless adults (and predominantly, men) have been found to circulate and take illegal drugs and alcohol in order to adapt to their homeless environment (Molina, 2000). Those who experience episodes of homelessness are more likely to engage in problematic drug use and 32% of deaths among those experiencing homelessness in England in 2017 were cited as a result of drug poisoning (ONS, 2018; see sections 4.2.1 and 5.2.7.3 for a discussion of the effects of substance addiction). Substance addiction and intoxication serves the purpose of simply filling the daily void of life on the streets (see Excerpt 5.8). This exclusion from society means that people experiencing homelessness consume drugs as a way to come to terms with traumatic events within their lives, deal with the pain of being without a home and to 'block out and negate isolation' (McNaughton, 2008: 186).

28. I was using drink as a coping mechanism.
29. A lot of homeless people actually turn to drugs and alcohol after they end up on the streets either to pass the time of day or to forget about the painful and sometimes traumatic reasons that actually made them homeless in the first place.
30. I was starting to understand why so many guys on the street turn to drink and drugs, I certainly felt like I could have benefited from something to help me pass the time.
31. After living with various friends, Adam took to drugs and alcohol as a relief from his situation.

Excerpt 5.8. Concordance lines showing alcohol/substance addiction as a relief.

5.2.7.3. Communities founded on substance/alcohol addiction

Communal drug-taking or drinking also forms the function of cementing homeless individuals into a group. Self-medication with drugs in groups allows for group cohesion and enables a

method to survive the hardships not only of society, but of the streets (Khantzian, 1985). However, homelessness, marginalisation and continual substance use strengthen each other (Van der Poel and Van de Mheen, 2006) and result in further stigmatisation. These communities are drawn together through substance addiction and episode(s) of homelessness. These people experiencing homelessness become socialised into drug-taking communities by seeking membership of existing homeless cohorts and communities. Once people experiencing homelessness become integrated into this community, individuals are in frequent contact with one another for the purpose of sharing and consuming alcohol/substances. These exchanges of goods demonstrate the importance of being able to navigate the street level economy in order to survive day-to-day life (Mostowska, 2013). These communities are exemplified by their visible social activities and their public consumption of substances and alcohol (Hodgetts et al, 2006). It is these public activities that signal these groups as separate from the homed community.

Communities and social networks revolving around substance addiction may facilitate regular social interaction and reciprocity, as well as alleviating the physical and mental pain that arises as a direct result of one's homelessness (Neale, 2001). Nevertheless, these activities also aggravate the experience of homelessness. Continual substance addiction results in homeless individuals becoming, over time (especially with frequent or longer episodes of homelessness and substance addiction) prone to physical and emotional weakness, vulnerability, and the potential for incarceration (Neale, 2001).

- | |
|---|
| <p>32. Things were going well until drink took over and my life started to revolve around my drinking friends.</p> <p>33. After 30 years of marriage I left my wife, two beautiful daughters and moved in with friends, drinking and smoking weed with friends every day.</p> |
|---|

Excerpt 5.9. Concordance lines showing alcohol/substance facilitating induction into new communities.

Not only homeless peer networks operate in this manner. While drug-taking is normalised to facilitate new peer homeless social networks, this occurs in non-homeless networks as well

as those experiencing homelessness. The fundamental difference between the groups is that those who have been on the streets typically use drugs not only as a method of social survival but, indeed, as an essential activity. Conversely, those who have been on the streets for less time are more likely to integrate themselves into peer social networks and engage in drug-taking in a recreational manner with the purpose of social bonding (Klee and Reid, 1998).

Substance addiction allows many experiencing homelessness to cope with the plethora of issues that arise as a direct result of having no permanent housing. Substance addiction becomes a method of dealing with both past and present issues (albeit with potentially fatal consequences). This is particularly in the case of rough sleepers. Rough sleepers provide the clearest example of becoming trapped within this detrimental cycle of homelessness and substance addiction. Those sleeping on the streets for prolonged periods of time are more likely to suffer from addiction and mental health issues (Epel et al, 1999). The consequences of the debilitating effects not only impact on one's cognitive ability and autonomy to make decisions but also reduces the likelihood of them looking towards the future and escaping their homelessness (Watts et al, 2018).

Many of the factors that predict substance addiction also predict homelessness and they are likely to exacerbate one another, regardless of the causation pathway (*see section 4.2.1*). These factors include familial issues such as separation, rejection, childhood addiction and neglect (Forst, 1994) but also extend to further problems including attachment issues and the inability to form relationships, exclusion from school, truancy, childhood misconduct, crime and mental health issues (Lloyd, 1998). Once someone becomes homeless, the conditions they face not only can exacerbate their substance addiction, but also make it harder to address their homelessness and integrate back into society (McNaughton, 2008). This stops them from gaining stability in their lives even after their homelessness, thus often resulting in further episodes of homelessness in the future (McNaughton, 2008).

The cyclical nature of these addictions can continue with each issue exacerbating the other. Addiction becomes more serious and devastating while one's chances of leaving the streets become less likely. Most people experiencing episodes of homelessness who are abusing substances remain homeless for at least a year or more (Johnson and Chamberlain, 2008). The consequences affect not only individual people experiencing homelessness but homeless communities. Those experiencing homelessness become increasingly distanced from primary institutions such as core social networks and economic institutions. The social element refers to the eradication of prior social networks whereas the economic dimension indicates the inability to access fundamental services such as the labour and housing market (Van der Poel and Van de Mheen, 2006). These communities of people experiencing homelessness who engage in a community of drug-taking have not only their mental and personal health impacted in a negative manner but are separated from their social networks, communities and institutions. These are the very networks that could possibly offer a way out of episodes of homelessness for many individuals.

5.2.8. Issues with social networks and returning to the mainstream

While social networks are beneficial and vital for day-to-day homeless life and can protect against victimisation and the stigma of homelessness, they can make it difficult to integrate back into mainstream society. A group's solidarity and strong community ties, especially if cemented by a shared experience such as homelessness, can create an antagonistic stance towards society. If an individual within the social network gains success and escapes their episode(s) of homelessness, this can undermine the community cohesion and ties may begin to fray and dissolve (Portes, 1998; cited in Mostowska, 2013).

Those within homeless peer networks with strong social ties can also struggle even after they have escaped homelessness and regained housing. While they may physically have a fixed abode and shelter from the difficult circumstances of the streets, they can continue to be socially isolated (Toohey et al, 2004). A powerful social network can create a

world that allows for the reconstruction of a positive identity and self-worth. These peer networks have been created and sustained throughout one's homelessness and provide a positive source of instrumental, emotional and logistical support. New housing will involve a relocation, typically in an area remote from where the person experiencing homelessness previously inhabited. Homeless individuals then begin to see these vital social networks as deteriorating even though they had developed strongly over the course of their mutual homelessness and throughout their day-to-day activities (McNaughton, 2008).

Many people experiencing homelessness continue to feel like outsiders and remain socially isolated through their lack of social networks. These individuals, no longer experiencing an episode of homelessness, are in yet another transitory stage and subsequently complain of boredom, loneliness and severe isolation even after they have been rehoused (Fitzpatrick, 2000). Therefore, an individual may find themselves with a physical house, but they lack both the proximity and protection of their former social peer networks who can assist with emotional support, wellbeing and self-efficacy (Toohey et al, 2004). While social peer networks and homeless communities may offer a temporary reprieve from the punitive nature of homelessness, this may make it far more challenging to return to mainstream society (Belcher and DeForge, 2012). These peer networks become the *only* networks that some people experiencing homelessness have. A shrunken social network which has developed as a result of both homelessness - especially those centred around communal substance addiction - isolate a homeless person even further from society.

Therefore, even if one escapes their episodes of homelessness, their prior dependence and affiliation with this peer network means that their ability to survive is hindered. Even if accommodation is found, it may be too far from these support networks which have become tantamount to survival. Many who experience homelessness cannot turn to their prior homed networks as they have been eroded beyond repair and thus have nobody to help resolve their housing difficulties (May, 2000). Simply put, the benefits of

being homed may not be enough in these circumstances (Farrington and Robinson, 1999). This highlights a cruel paradox of strong social homeless networks. Those experiencing homelessness assert their positive identity through their connection with a peer homeless network and community. However, these very strategies can make it more difficult to assert a valued, positive self-identity and to escape one's episodes of homelessness on a permanent basis.

Chapter 6 - Homelessness profiles

6.1. Homelessness narratives

The way homelessness narratives and stories are framed has a direct impact on public understandings and perspectives of homelessness. These narratives are framed in different ways by different groups of social actors within homelessness discourses. Many narratives reinforce negative stereotypes and perpetuate misinformed explanations about the social problem. This makes it difficult to make audiences believe that ending homelessness is a possibility. It is therefore important that homeless narratives are constructed in such a way as to generate public support for long-term solutions (Crisis, 2018). Political changes without public support are not only harder to implement but are also less likely to succeed. On the other hand, policy decisions are much easier to introduce if there is public demand for political change (Crisis, 2018).

A narrative can be defined as a sequence of events. However, narrative theory represents that narratives are much more complex. Narratives can form a sequence of non-randomly connected events from whose experience we can learn (Toolan, 2001). Narrative can also be defined as a sequence that contains either a resolved crisis or a state of change (Toolan, 2001). This definition indicates that there is a foregrounded person experiencing the events and addresses the idea of learning from these narratives. A state of change is significant within homeless charity narratives because while homelessness is a change in housing status, its effects on day-to-day life cannot be understated. The idea of a resolved crisis is useful as narratives that discuss ending episodes of homelessness are positive for those who have experienced it and provide hope for those still experiencing homelessness. These definitions have been applied for the present study.

6.2. Analysing narrative structures in homelessness discourses

6.2.1. Homelessness charity narratives

Within homelessness charity profiles, people experiencing homelessness are given access to public discourse to discuss and explain the nature of their homelessness. However, these stories are not the experiences of people experiencing homelessness as they independently chose to portray them. Rather, they are socially constructed versions of stories by homelessness charities. These stories are often split into narratives that include individuals who were once homeless and have escaped their homelessness, and people who remain homeless. Some of these narrative structures provide the individual with space to speak about homelessness whereas others use interview questions (see *Excerpt 6.1*) as a framework to elicit responses on specific aspects of one's homeless experiences.

How did you become homeless? What were your experiences of life on the street? What helped you get off the street? What is your current living situation? What advice would you give to others? What are your aspirations for the future?
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Excerpt 6.1. Questions asked to formerly homeless individuals in homeless charity narratives.

Narratives that focus on presently homeless individuals are often included within research published by national homelessness charities. These narratives regularly appear alongside research to provide case studies and examples that illustrate the importance of different homeless individuals' experiences. These case studies humanise people experiencing homelessness by giving them a platform to explain their life circumstances and give the public information about potential solutions to homelessness. It is also easier to empathise with a person rather than statistics. These narratives emphasise the systemic issues in place that lead to episodes of homelessness and attempt to challenge public perceptions that individual motivation can solve homelessness. However, these narratives fail to link systemic solutions to systemic causes (Crisis, 2018) and perpetuate the notion that individuals are responsible for escaping their episode(s) of homelessness.

Some of the narratives are written as a pseudo first-person narrative; others are written by a narrator who has (or, had) a close relationship with the individual being discussed. These narratives within homeless charity discourse have a parallel temporal sequence. This means that these structures follow Labov and Waletzky's (1997) argument which indicates that narrative is the recapitulation of past experience by matching sequences of clauses to *real* sequences of events. These narrative structures refer to successive events regarding one's homelessness and thus map the journey of an individual's experience from beginning to end.

The emphasis of personalised stories seeks to raise awareness not only for the charity, but also to appeal to the maximum number of donors (Andersson and Valentine, 2015). Through these human-interest narratives, the charities represent their main agenda; which is demonstrating the success of their own work and progress in assisting with now homeless individuals (Hutson and Liddiard, 1998). However, discourses that tell such personalising stories run the risk of encouraging audiences to question the validity of an individual's homelessness. This rationale not only pathologises human vulnerabilities but frames individuals as responsible for socially structured inequalities (Dej, 2016). This means that audiences will question whether these individuals deserve public assistance (Crisis, 2018).

The initial element discussed within these homeless charity narratives focuses on homelessness and causation. These pathways are complex and vary between a range of systemic and individual factors that can result in homelessness (*see Chapter 4*). However, these narratives fail to *fully* address systemic explanations for homelessness and, instead, tend to construct homelessness through the lens of individualism. These narratives foreground individual homeless people's failings rather than citing political and systemic inefficiencies that lead to episode(s) of homelessness.

Systemic explanations:	Individual explanations:
Welfare reforms Benefit cuts Ineffectiveness of the system	Going into care Behavioural issues Alcohol/substance addiction Intentionally becoming homeless Being kicked out by family Being evicted by landlord Violence Domestic abuse Sexual abuse Poor decision making Losing a job Mental health issues Family death(s) Relationship breakdown LGBT status

Table 6.1. Circumstances leading to homelessness in homeless charity narratives.

Charity discourses still discuss the systemic causes of homelessness. Many of these articles are included as snippets inside policy recommendations for homelessness. These articles buttress these policy arguments by representing that those experiencing homelessness are aware of the gaps within the system. Discussions of homelessness services within these narratives focus on issues with these services and some talk about potential structural changes that would improve the system (*see example 5*).

1. When you bid, they give you three choices: one in a good area, one in a bad area and one in a high-rise. You're never going to get the good ones, it's impossible. Even the bad ones take months.
2. It takes months to go through the housing system.
3. If social services had helped me more, then I wouldn't be in the situation I am now.
4. The whole system's been set up to make it as difficult as possible.
5. It would be so much better if they had a two-tier system with specialist services for those people with high complex needs.

Excerpt 6.2. Issues and improvements cited for homelessness services in homeless charity narratives.

Individuals may cite a positive life event including help from other people or groups. While assistance is shown to come from both peer and homed social networks (*see Chapter 5*) including family, friends, homeless charities and other people experiencing homelessness, support at this stage of the narrative is often cited from the public.

6. The cleaner bought me coffee.
7. He gave me a tenner.
8. A man gave me two hundred quid.
9. Someone withdrew fifty quid and gave me that.

Excerpt 6.3. Acts of public compassion in homeless charity narratives.

These fleeting acts of public compassion are shown to be beneficial for the immediate needs of people experiencing homelessness. Public acts represent the philanthropic actions that are useful for homeless people's day-to-day needs. However, this model forms part of *individualistic* thinking in reference to homelessness. When the public are disposed to regular accounts of acts of public compassion, they are more prone to assuming that individual acts of kindness are effective in addressing social issues (Crisis, 2018). If one-off acts (*see Excerpt 6.3*) are seen as sufficient then it becomes less likely that audiences will consider systemic causes and solutions to homelessness (Crisis, 2018). While these narratives represent that this assistance provides temporary solutions to rough sleeping, they fail to fully address solutions for homelessness. A lack of explanation behind how to solve these issues is also absent from these narratives.

Homeless charity narratives then discuss further details of individuals' turmoil during homelessness experiences. Narratives often talk about both the problems that homeless life entails and how this makes the individual feel (*see Excerpt 6.4*).

10. Adam was placed into temporary accommodation but was then found to be intentionally homeless.
11. He fell through the net.

12. If your criteria doesn't match what they're asking for, you're back on the streets.
13. You never know where you're going.

Excerpt 6.4. Issues with the system cited in homeless charity narratives.

Examples 10) and 12) portray further issues with the conditionality in the homeless system. These individuals experiencing homelessness are shown to be illegitimate and are distinguished from those deserving of local authority assistance. They are not provided with long-term solutions to their housing which subsequently prolongs their homelessness episode(s). The narrative in Example 12) follows the logical sequence relation of condition and fulfilment (Winter, 1977: 21). The use of 'if' introduces the conditional clause to indicate that the person experiencing homelessness does *not* fit the conditionality of the government's homeless policy and subsequently is forced to go back to rough sleeping.

The narrative progresses as individuals discuss positive life changes that may have resulted in the end of their homelessness. Life changes vary between an improvement of living situation, new job prospects, new hobbies, going to college/university, assisting others with similar issues, expressing creativity or using time more productively.

14. I'm already a drug mentor.
15. I volunteer with them now.
16. That's my dream – to help people.
17. I'm part of an action group to help migrants.
18. I've volunteered one day a week.

Excerpt 6.5. Formerly homeless people offering charity to others in homeless charity narratives.

The most common life improvement involves the formerly homeless person offering the help and charity that they have been offered. The person experiencing homelessness once required charity but now has a home and can offer this charity themselves. The act of charity is a cyclical process; not only does the charity help others but they also help people to help others. Concluding the narrative structure in this way demonstrates the positive directionality

of the stories in homeless charity narratives. This reinforces the impact that charity has had on the individual and also indicates that there is a plethora of opportunities for individuals if they are able to escape their homelessness.

Escaping homelessness and being housed Staying clean from alcohol or substances Getting on with life after homelessness Finding new employment Indicating that their lives have been turned around Remaining resilient Mental health improvement Encouraging others to make positive decisions

Excerpt 6.6. Topics cited by individuals to feel positive about the future in homeless charity narratives.

The structures also sometimes conclude with the former homeless person encouraging others to make similar decisions to allow them to counteract all of the aforementioned issues that arise as a result of homelessness.

- | |
|--|
| 19. It'll be the best thing you ever do in your life.
20. Just plug yourself into as many things as possible.
21. Try and make negatives into positives.
22. Do the right things, do good work and show respect.
23. Keep your head going. |
|--|

Excerpt 6.7. Homeless people encouraging others to make positive decisions in homeless charity narratives.

This can be beneficial. However, this type of conclusion places a focus on individual responsibility to improve positive outcomes for one's homelessness. This fails to consider the systemic barriers that can cause homelessness and act as barriers to prevent homelessness. Instead, the focus lies on providing a positive conclusion and the idea that there is light at the end of the tunnel. If an individual remains homeless then the narratives conclude in a less positive way. The directionality is uncertain because the individual's homelessness has *not* been resolved. Discussions about the future look towards an individual being rehumanised as they seek reintegration into society by escaping their episodes of homelessness. These factors differ once again because these narratives belong

to those who are still homeless. This discussion focuses on returning to employment, remaining human, and continues to cite the pain that arises as a result of homeless life.

24. I'd love to have a cat.

25. My dream is to have a fireplace.

26. I want to be a normal functioning adult in my own safe space.

Excerpt 6.8. Aspects of life that current homeless people wish for in homeless charity narratives.

Those experiencing homelessness seek rehumanisation; they want to have things that other homed people have. The fireplace referenced in example 25) is an instance of synecdoche because the fireplace represents the notion of returning to home and escaping homelessness. The person experiencing homelessness does not just want a fireplace. Instead, they want the sense of security that a home with a fireplace would provide them. Example 26) demonstrates that homelessness is a spatial phenomenon (Wardhaugh, 2000). Those experiencing homelessness have no control over the spaces they inhabit and a lack of control over personal space displaces individuals from any type of space they can define as their own. They are denied any sense of ontological security because they are denied shelter, protection, warmth and other amenities associated with having a fixed abode (Carlen, 1996).

6.2.2. Media narratives

Media narratives conventionally appear as human-interest stories that promote narratives of sympathy for people experiencing homelessness (Wright, 1993). Human interest stories are popular within mainstream print news media discourses surrounding homelessness because audiences can identify more easily with a situation when it has been personalised (Hutson and Liddiard, 1998). Homelessness comes to be constructed as a personalised event *precisely* by using stories of victims of the social problem (Hutson and Liddiard, 1998). Human interest stories evoke empathy and compassion, but they become the prime

examples of how individuals are attributed the blame for their own homelessness. These complex narratives and discursive practices can be contradictory. Human-interest stories construct people experiencing homelessness as both deserving and undeserving of their problem (Liddiard, 1999).

Media narratives focus on the idea that regardless of one's circumstances that homelessness is *always* a possibility. Stories about elite social actors, such as celebrities who have fallen on difficult times, represent the news values of unexpectedness and negativity (Bednarek, 2006) audiences would not expect prominent social actors to end up in such negative circumstances. The article is given newsworthiness because this decline is seen as rare and its rarity becomes shocking for the audience. This idea is further established as the narrative focuses on the idea of individuals hitting their lowest and most challenging point.

27. We ended up homeless.
28. Living on the streets with nothing to her name, Kat tried to take her own life.
29. She had no home, no job and had run away from her Teesside home at the age of 17.
30. That was when we hit rock bottom.
31. I was at rock bottom.

Excerpt 6.9. Homeless people at their lowest point and hitting 'rock bottom' in media homeless narratives.

'Rock bottom' is a phrase that is inextricably tied to homelessness and, also, substance addiction issues. The phrasal verb 'ended up' in example 27) demonstrates the directionality of an individual's life. When this is combined with 'rock bottom' (examples 30 and 31), the narrative portrays that life has hit its most terrible point. The pre-modification using the circumstantial elements ('living on the streets') in example 28) also immediately locates the severity of these life issues and portray that the individual is at their lowest point. At times, these elements feature at the outset of the narrative. This is important in terms of directionality because it signifies that the only way is up and that things *can* improve.

Some of these narratives disrupt the narrative flow of the articles and flashback to an individual's life before their homelessness. This creates a temporal disjuncture (Labov and Waletzky, 1997). Not only does this section show the individual reflecting on past experiences in the face of the problems that homelessness has caused, but the narrative continues to polarise one's *former* lifestyle with their *new* homeless lifestyle.

32. In my past life, I spent a typical autumn Saturday reading the paper.
33. We would return home and I would come up with an interesting set of reasons for not working.
34. I'd pour a glass of wine or two.
35. When I think of those days now, they seem like some kind of lost paradise.

Excerpt 6.10. Reminiscence of former lifestyle before homelessness in media homeless narratives.

Mainstream print news media continually use juxtaposition in these narrative structures to represent the deviation of the individual from society. In doing so, those experiencing homelessness are further alienated from public audiences. These flashbacks demonstrate embellished storytelling (Snow and Anderson, 1987 – see *section 5.1.1*) which suggests that homeless individuals reminisce, romanticise and exaggerate the aspects of their previous lifestyle in order to assert a positive identity.

Media narratives often end in a negative sense and depict those experiencing homelessness as in a state of disequilibrium as their homelessness continues to be unresolved. They can, however, end in an optimistic sense by representing that there *is* a future for the person experiencing homelessness and the directionality looks forward in a positive sense (see *Excerpt 6.11*).

36. Overall, we have done brilliantly.
37. I now live in Berkeley, San Francisco.
38. It keeps the wolf from the door, which is good because it means I actually have a door.

39. I now have a cosy room.

Excerpt 6.11. Positive conclusions within media homeless narratives.

These messages are important because they indicate that escaping homelessness is a possibility. Example 38) uses synecdoche like example 25) as the door metaphorically stands for the associations of home such as shelter, protection and security (see section 3.2.2). The idea is portrayed that while ‘anyone can end up homeless’ that also ‘anyone can escape homelessness’. This narrative is slightly problematic because it again locates responsibility in the individual to escape their episodes of homelessness. In doing so, homelessness, as a social problem, comes to be viewed as an inevitable and unsolvable process (Devereux, 2015).

6.2.2.1. ‘Anyone can end up homeless’

Media stories emphasise the idea that ‘anyone can become homeless’. However, Crisis (2018: 62) have suggested that messages of ‘homelessness can happen to anyone’ are unproductive and do not shift public attitudes. This idea suggests fatalism rather than optimism and this perspective is damaging to the homelessness sector. If the public assume that homelessness is inevitable, then communicating the issue to the public becomes a difficult challenge. It not only becomes difficult for homeless charities to indicate when homelessness can be predicted but, also, how to establish regular causal links (Crisis, 2018 – see *Excerpt 6.12*).

40. Anyone can end up homeless.

41. Life can be thrown upside down.

42. It can happen to anyone.

43. Homelessness could happen to anyone.

44. Never thought my life would end up like this.

Excerpt 6.12. Discussion of how homelessness can affect anyone in media homeless narratives.

Examples 40) – 43) demonstrate the use of epistemic modality to represent the potential for individuals to fall into episodes of homelessness. This modal system becomes part of a narrative that attempts to connect with the public by creating empathy and concern (Crisis, 2018). By framing and reducing homelessness as an issue of individual responsibility and personal failure that can happen to anyone, the problem becomes a social problem, rather than an economic issue. These messages omit systemic factors that can result in homelessness. Systematic causes of homelessness, such as poverty, lack of available and affordable housing, unemployment, inadequate income, and inequality inherent in a capitalist economic structure, are absent. These absences constitute forms of textual silence (Huckin, 2002: 347) which is, the 'omission of some piece of information that is pertinent to the topic at hand'. These types of silence are intentional and deliberately seek to misinform or misdirect the reader by selectively leaving out information which could (or should) have been included (van Dijk, 1987). This means that while mainstream print news media appear to be covering a social problem, they can be prone to ignoring the social problem (Shields, 2001).

The conclusion of these narratives depends on individual circumstances. Sometimes individuals remain homeless and are struggling with the harshness of their homeless episode(s). At times, individuals have escaped their homelessness. However, regardless of whether someone has escaped their homelessness, the narrative culminates with the idea that the threat of homelessness is always looming. This perpetuates the idea that 'anyone can end up homeless'. These individuals appear to have reflected on their homelessness and, despite discussing that life never seems to be as positive as the narrative sets out at the outset, they remain thankful for what they *do* have.

45. I am healthy, strong and full of hope and ambition again.

46. I am close to my children, and I speak to most of them every day.

47. I have survived failure.

48. I held onto what I value more: my children's love and my ambition.

Excerpt 6.13. Positive endings to media homeless narratives.

The narratives represent that the individual *has* to make a change to their lifestyle in order to allow them to escape their homelessness (and other issues). This continues to emphasise the responsibility of people experiencing homelessness to improve their social problems, living conditions and life prospects. Responsibilising the individuals' need to make this sudden shift in their lives fails to address or consider the economic conditions that impact and potentially prohibits individuals' ability to escape their episode(s) of homelessness.

49. I kept thinking I could do more with my life.
50. But change was coming.
51. It was through her sheer will to succeed.
52. She's launched her dream career.
53. She is on course to become a lawyer.

Excerpt 6.14. Lifestyle shifts in media homeless narratives.

This shift is represented in examples 51) and 52) to demonstrate that it is the *individual* who has taken ownership and responsibility of their life to escape their episode(s) of homelessness and succeed. The negative effect of this construction of homelessness is that it creates a context in which homelessness is responsibilised and attributed to individuals. Mainstream print news media continue to responsibilise the individual for getting *into* their social issue and then responsibilise them for getting *out* of homelessness. The narrative has constructed the individual in terms of their negative past and then details how they have escaped their episodes of homelessness and are looking towards the future.

6.2.2.2. 'A day in the life of a homeless person'

The most personalising media stories surrounding homelessness involve a narrative focused on detailing a typical homeless person's day. These narratives consist of the various challenges that those experiencing homelessness face as they cope with the day-to-day hardships of homeless life. However, these stories perpetuate stereotypical and reductive

notions of homelessness and equate homelessness to an issue of rough sleeping rather than considering other forms of hidden homelessness. This means that the complex nature of homelessness is simplified. These narratives misrepresent not only the full extent of the social problem but also prohibit public understandings of other forms of homelessness (Crisis, 2018). Personalised media narratives discuss how charity and assistance can help people experiencing homelessness, but they place a fundamental emphasis on short-term interventions rather than structural causes of homelessness. This is problematic because it means that homelessness can be reduced to an issue that requires assistance rather than a systemic issue (Shields, 2001). When combined with the personalised nature of these narratives, public reactions to this discourse are more likely to be negative.

These narratives begin by outlining the specific problem to be discussed within the article. Many are typical problems of homelessness, but they are activities that pathologise these homeless individuals through their deviant, out-of-the-ordinary activities (Toft, 2014 - see *Excerpt 6.15*). The focus on these activities polarises the general public from people experiencing homelessness because homelessness is seen as a state outside of human existence (Crisis, 2018). An emphasis on these activities means that people experiencing homelessness become a social signifier of all that is considered 'other' within society (Belcher and DeForge, 2012).

54. Pulling not one but two woollen hats down over her ears.
55. Everyone ignored her pleas for a few pennies.
56. She pulled out a paper cup and shook it in the direction of a group of boisterous nightclub-bound girls.
57. He regularly saw people, including teenage girls, huddled under sleeping bags.

Excerpt 6.15. 'Out of the ordinary' activities described in media homeless narratives.

This narrative structure includes interviews with people experiencing homelessness to provide them with a voice on their social issue. More than one person is interviewed within

individual articles to not only give a range of perspective on homelessness but also to emphasise the amount of people that the problem(s) are affecting on a day-to-day basis.

58. Sarah, 35, was left homeless following a family dispute.
59. Mark, 45, became homeless due to a drug problem.
60. Anna had her daughter at 14 and moved out her parents' home two years later because of her parents' alcoholism.
61. Billy has been homeless since 2013 after the death of his mother.

Excerpt 6.16. Homeless causation pathways in media homeless narratives.

Mainstream print news media clearly distinguish between 'left homeless following...' in example 58) and 'became homeless due to addiction' in example 59). This locates blame and pathologises the individual for substance addiction issues and evidences the clear causal link between drugs and homelessness. Victim blaming occurs when social problems are ascribed as the responsibility of the individual rather than seeing them from political, sociological, historical and economic perspectives (Whang and Min, 1999). Through this ideology, homelessness no longer is the problem. Instead, people experiencing homelessness become the problem. If people experiencing homelessness are constructed and cast as blameworthy for their homelessness, then public audiences are unlikely to engage with responses and solutions to homelessness. This results in society being *less* likely to make structural changes that can address issues like homelessness (Schneider, 2014).

'A day in the life of a homeless person' narratives end in several ways. They can conclude with a further discussion of how to get in contact with homelessness services and include recommendations from these services. Most articles tend to conclude in a negative manner but can, however, end on a positive note. Negative conclusions in homeless narratives continue to exclude those experiencing homelessness from the general public. Mainstream print news media represent how the 'otherness' of homeless people's day-to-

day experiences and public responses to them have impacted on their identity and their self-worth.

62. 'The way homeless people are treated, it's not nice. There is a real issue in this country'.

63. 'Days roll into night and night rolls into day. It's horrible. Absolutely horrible'.

64. 'There is a perception that it's the individual's fault, or a lifestyle choice, but that are very, very few cases where that is true.'

65. 'People completely ignore me. They walk on by as though I don't exist'.

Excerpt 6.17. Negative endings in 'a day in the life' media homeless narratives.

Articles can end on a positive note. But this is not as common because these articles are concerned with individuals who are representing the harshness of their day-to-day endeavours. This conclusion depicts individuals who have formerly struggled and have managed to turn their life around. The idea is that individual agency and responsibilisation allows people to improve themselves so that they can escape social problems like homelessness.

Chapter 7 - Seasonal responses to homelessness

7.1. Seasonal spikes in coverage

Media coverage of homelessness is a social issue which is affected and dictated, by season (Bunis et al, 1996; Liddiard, 2000; Buck et al, 2004; Hodgetts et al, 2005; Meert et al, 2006). The volume of media articles surrounding homelessness significantly increases during the latter months of the year. Mainstream print news media in the UK therefore demonstrate a range of concerns regarding homelessness which become more newsworthy depending on the time of year. It is always the winter months that register the highest number of articles involving references to homelessness in UK media. A frequency count of the articles within national mainstream print news media corpus per month between 2010 and 2018 (see *Figure 7.1*) reveals how coverage of homelessness in winter – primarily December – increases according to seasonal media interests. Emphasising homelessness, especially at specific times of year, means that print news media influence not only the newsworthiness of specific social issues over others, but, additionally, how audiences feel about these problems (Bunis et al, 1996).

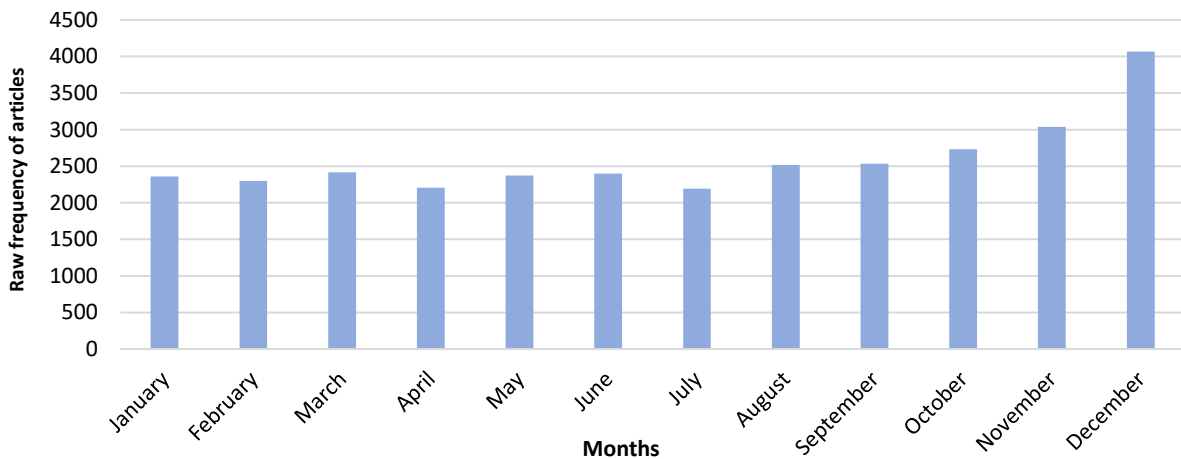


Figure 7.1. Overall volume of UK national newspaper coverage on homelessness from 2010-2018.

News coverage of homelessness runs in yearly cycles with more frequent coverage during the winter months. This spike in coverage indicates that there are ideological agendas

pursued by mainstream print news media in relation to homelessness. Media coverage on homelessness is seasonal while coverage on disadvantaged groups is far more regular, and audience interest more stimulated, during the 'holiday season' (Buck et al, 2004: 165). This increase in media articles surrounding homelessness during winter occurs due to more difficult weather conditions and is linked to sympathetic discourses being more regularly published around Christmas. Seasonal coverage *does* produce an increase in donations (Liddiard, 1999). However, the perpetuation of stereotypical images of homelessness during these seasonal spikes serves, in the long-term, to further increase the distance between audiences and people experiencing homelessness.

7.1.1. Christmas

By publishing more articles around Christmas, the mainstream news media demonstrate their homelessness agenda. The mainstream news media seek to guard not only moral order but, also, social cohesion (Gans, 1979). A cultural event such as Christmas is important because it can be viewed as a 'ritual activity that functions to maintain social order' (Bunis et al, 1996: 391). Coverage of homelessness increases according to seasonal patterns of charity and goodwill (Bunis et al, 1996). Indeed, Christmas is a time concerned with these notions of giving and goodwill. This may appear beneficial towards those experiencing homelessness because local and national mainstream print news media are using their power to 'widen the span of sympathy' towards people experiencing homelessness (Bunis et al, 1996: 391). However, this sympathy is only *temporary*. The Christmas period facilitates the temporary widening of sympathy towards homelessness and people experiencing homelessness. It is important to note that the number of news items suddenly drops drastically in January and February (*see Figure 7.1*) once the period of 'goodwill to all' is over (Hodgetts et al, 2005: 35). Once this period ends, the public span of sympathy declines and once again those experiencing homelessness become recipients of negative attention (Snow and Anderson, 1993).

Temporary, seasonal coverage allows audiences to cope with their own consciences and reassures them that those experiencing homelessness are offered help. The general public are given the opportunity to engage in a shared expression of sympathy towards those experiencing homelessness which, by extension, reaffirms the 'benevolence of self and society' (Hodgetts et al, 2005: 37). This is further extended when this coverage praises individual and temporary acts of generosity towards those experiencing homelessness rather than addressing homelessness through long-term solutions. These spikes are for the public, *not* for people experiencing homelessness.

7.1.2. Newsworthiness

Episodic spikes in coverage surrounding homelessness occurs because mainstream news media recognise the increasing newsworthiness of the social issue (Liddiard, 1999).

Coverage of homelessness during cold weather conditions, around Christmas time, focuses on the exacerbated vulnerabilities and difficulties that people experiencing homelessness face during these times. These events link to two news values: negativity and superlativeness (Bednarek, 2006) because dramatised negative news events are more consensual and unambiguous (Galtung and Ruge, 1973). These images of vulnerable rough sleepers make homelessness more newsworthy and become accentuated and distorted according to ideological interests (Galtung and Ruge, 1973). The selection and promotion of stories about people experiencing homelessness who are alone on the streets in freezing cold conditions during Christmas time are portrayed because these images elicit public reaction. It is difficult for audiences to argue against the plight of people experiencing homelessness when they are constructed in such sympathetic, vulnerable terms.

7.1.3. Weather conditions

This proliferation in coverage surrounding homelessness is also affected by adverse weather. The harsh winter conditions do make life on the streets particularly difficult for those

experiencing homelessness. Narratives during the colder months of the year demonstrate that concern for those experiencing homelessness (or, rather, those experiencing *visible* homelessness) increases as a result of difficulties that these vulnerable individuals experience during these times (Bunis et al, 1996). It could be said that these sudden 'spikes' in news coverage are a response to the greater visibility of these difficulties and needs of people experiencing homelessness. However, media constructions of homelessness do *not* have the same impact on public audiences on a summer's day in July, compared to a freezing cold day in December. The newsworthiness of an event such as homelessness is recognised by local and national mainstream print news media (Liddiard, 1999) and, as such, increases during the colder months. It is these negative news events which have the potential to influence public perceptions of sympathy with reference to homelessness.

7.2. Sympathetic discourses

While sympathetic discourses appear to be beneficial towards those experiencing homelessness, they can also have detrimental consequences. These discourses demonstrate public expressions of kindness and seek to evoke a sense of pity for people experiencing homelessness. Stories that focus on the struggles faced by those experiencing homelessness are helpful because they demonstrate the subsequent need for the public to assist them in their plight. However, efforts to create sympathy can have an adverse effect in that the focus on compassion can often result in individuals being blamed for their homelessness. The primary issue behind these discourses is that they can be paradoxically sympathising and pathologising at the same time.

7.2.1. Characteristics of sympathetic discourses

Individuals experiencing homelessness have been subject to hardships in which they are victims, either of personal circumstances or structural failings that have led to their episodes

of homelessness. It is rare, however, that people experiencing homelessness are portrayed as victims of systemic issues (see *Chapter 4*). Sympathetic discourses promote the image of a homeless person as one in need of compassion and understanding, but as primarily requiring charity, assistance and intervention from the public. These forms of discourse not only visually depict people experiencing homelessness as on the periphery of society but contribute towards a method to control, regulate and disenfranchise them (Schneider et al, 2010).

1. Having no money and no idea how to deal with this situation I went to the city centre to beg.
2. There was literally nothing I could do. I felt helpless.
3. For the homeless person needed to beg for help. It would make us feel better, but the next morning they would still be on the streets, still have other unmet needs, still die young.
4. I felt so vulnerable and scared. Every time I tried to close my eyes, I heard someone shout or heard glass being smashed.
5. These people really do need help. Not just money, not just food. The right kind of help to get them their life back.

Excerpt 7.1. Homeless people needing help from others in sympathetic discourses.

7.2.2. Benefits of sympathetic discourses

When positive *and* negative understandings are recirculated simultaneously, these sympathetic narratives and characterisations of those experiencing homelessness *do* encourage public philanthropy. The audience are more likely to feel sympathy for those who are dependent on the charity of others. Rather than offering individualised responses to homelessness, mainstream news media recirculate these sympathetic discourses which are both advantageous and prohibitive to multifaceted conceptions of homelessness. These narratives, in the form of public sympathy towards people experiencing homelessness, can

be enacted by homeless charities through government funding, donations from members of the public and private institutions (Hodgetts et al, 2005). This group are represented as a collective cohort whose personal circumstances have led them to their circumstances and can only be assisted through public, charity and governmental donations and interventions (Hodgetts et al: 2005). People experiencing homelessness do not want pity, sympathy or to be regulated. Instead, they require appropriate and contextually adapted solutions to their homelessness.

7.2.3. Issues with sympathetic discourses

While sympathetic discourses emphasise people experiencing homelessness deserving of assistance, as well as the contributions of those who assist those experiencing homelessness, these articles glorify the notion of giving. Promoting the idea of giving too readily endorses the idea that social issues can be solved through individual effort (Wright, 1993). This idea reinforces the image of people experiencing homelessness as dependent on the philanthropic acts of others. Mainstream news media celebrate these individual acts of kindness in sympathetic discourses which provides them with the appearance of discussing social issues such as homelessness while simultaneously avoiding systemic causes to the problems of homelessness (Shields, 2001). This means that 'on the surface' positive representations of homelessness are framed within larger detrimental portrayals of homelessness.

Sympathetic discourses also centred on the notion of polarisation. The discourses that appear as positive are reliant on the portrayal of those experiencing homelessness as radically different. The focus on sympathy and charitable donations depicts homeless groups as a passive 'other' and as inferior subjects (compared to the general public) of punitive control. Dominant representations of people experiencing homelessness as requiring sympathy and support are created, distributed and perpetuated by mainstream news media and homeless charities. While support and sympathy arise from the desire to assist people

experiencing homelessness in their plight, it also conversely demonstrates the basis for 'the authority and power of those who practise care' (Schneider et al, 2010: 167). This relationship positions people experiencing homelessness as socially inferior to those providing the charity. While the aim of charity is to convert people experiencing homelessness into domiciled people (Schneider et al, 2010), charity can become a form of regulation and social control for people experiencing homelessness. Charity discourses engage in these problematic representations. The focus on repeatedly portraying victims that require charity, assistance and regulation indicates the ideological focus of charities; namely, the urgent need to rehabilitate and transform these needy, passive victims into recovered social actors (Hodgetts et al, 2005). These victims, who are created through the representations in sympathetic discourses, serve to embody the success and achievement of the charitable work being undertaken (Hodgetts et al, 2005).

Narratives of control and regulation are entrenched within sympathetic discourses. The notion of people experiencing homelessness as dependent and requiring regulation in order to be integrated back into society is recirculated throughout sympathetic discourses. These discourses, while attempting to make a connection between audiences and those experiencing homelessness only simplify, reduce and avoid the complex nature of the problem. Framing homelessness in this manner implicitly attributes blame towards those experiencing homelessness for their circumstances. This focus pathologises the problematic behaviours of homeless individuals and cites the symptomatic issues that people experiencing homelessness are perceived to have. While these discourses are sympathetic, they simultaneously portray homelessness as an issue of individual responsibility rather than a systemic issue.

6. The fire brigade said it was started by an unextinguished cigarette falling on the sofa while everyone was asleep. Luckily everyone got out in time but I lost everything I owned.

7. I had a good career before I got sacked because of my drug addiction.
8. Within six years my life just fell apart due to drugs and stupid decisions.
9. My behaviour was erratic and irrational.
10. I have massive trust issues, anger management problems, abandonment issues, massive insecurities.

Excerpt 7.2. Individual issues leading to homelessness in sympathetic discourses.

There is a duality behind this pathologisation. When those experiencing homelessness are treated sympathetically, they are treated as victims, but as victims of their *own individual failings*. These are failings that can be corrected by amending one's own lifestyle choices and behaviour. This is not an effective representation of sympathy. These discourses continue to pathologise people experiencing homelessness because they are blamed for their personal situations which conceals that they could be victims of a complex social structure that has led them into their episode(s) of homelessness (Wright, 1993).

This responsibilisation of social issues such as homelessness means that the issue becomes de-politicised. These seasonal stories perpetuate reductive understandings of homelessness which does very little to assist with long-term solutions to homelessness. Sentimental and poignant images of homelessness, especially stereotypical representations elicit public sympathy and support for those experiencing homelessness. The common reductive stereotype which is perpetuated as a sympathetic discourse involves the mention of visible 'rough sleepers' – especially during the winter months.

11. It was raining that morning, and I was filled with dread at the thought that I would be spending Christmas outside, cold and alone on a park bench.
12. If you sit or lie down, you freeze so I just kept moving around until security moved me on.
13. It was freezing cold. We had three sleeping bags between four people and a dog.

14. I didn't have the nicest upbringing I suppose. So, it was nothing that different, it was just being outside, dealing with the cold, dealing with the rain, and the snow.
15. [Begging] was horrible, you were sat in the freezing cold and it was so degrading. I used to sit down for two minutes and the police would move me on straight away.

Excerpt 7.3. Sentimental images of rough sleepers in winter in sympathetic discourses.

Local newspapers generally construct homelessness most commonly as a visible issue and rough sleeping is the form of homelessness with which audiences identify the most (see *section 3.3.3*). This allows the mainstream print news media to portray further polarisations such as differences between individual rough sleepers and passers-by or, on a larger scale, contrasts between those experiencing homelessness and the general public (May, 2003). These polarisations produce practices in which those that experience homelessness are socially excluded. However, these portrayals continue to promote the idea that it is *individual* action which must be altered in order to appease one's homelessness. Presenting homelessness in this way means that the social issue remains de-politicised as the emphasis on sympathy for the individual deflects focus away from the systemic issues in place.

16. It can happen to anyone but, you can turn things round again.
17. You either keep doing what you're doing or you look to make a change.
18. I wanted to make a change. I was feeling worthless and like I was no use to anybody.
19. It's hard that I had to start it all again, but it's okay. Sometimes up, sometimes down, but I never give up.

Excerpt 7.4. Individual action in sympathetic discourses.

Systemic factors such as austerity measures, welfare and policy reforms, public expenditure reductions, a weak housing safety net, an unstable rental market, levels of social inequality, lack of adequate service interventions and fair wage employment are omitted from these discourses (see *Chapter 4*). Instead, sympathetic discourses not only de-politicise the social

issue but they avoid confronting the issue of addressing structural and societal changes that may address the underlying problems of homelessness (Schnieder, 2013).

7.2.4. The paradoxes behind sympathetic discourses

The underlying issue behind the focus on rough sleepers – whether in discourses that aim to sympathise or pathologise (or both, as commonly tends to occur) – is that people experiencing homelessness are depicted as paradoxically living in physically in the heart of cities while simultaneously, and symbolically, existing on the periphery of the boundaries of civilised society (May, 2003). Those experiencing homelessness are kept at the edge of society so that their visibility does not ‘challenge the moral certainties to which most people adhere’ (Radley et al, 2005: 287). This paradox also exists on a further level in sympathetic discourses. People experiencing homelessness are visible because they are subject to an intensified gaze by the mainstream print news media and are constructed in a sympathetic way as social victims. However, they are concurrently invisible in the denial of their victimisation and because these discourses fail to really *look* at their homelessness, even though they are seen to be everywhere (Wardhaugh, 2000).

Sympathetic narratives are a complicated, paradoxical, double-edged sword. These discourses promote assistance and charity towards those experiencing homelessness and their plight. Conversely, their focus on reductive elements of homelessness, such as regulation and the polarisation with domiciled audiences, along with their fleeting and seasonal nature demonstrates that the preoccupation of mainstream print news media lies in resolving audiences’ consciences rather than offering long-term interventions to homelessness. These narratives present people experiencing homelessness as both deserving and undeserving of their homelessness. Those experiencing homelessness are depicted as needing sympathy, help and charity yet are simultaneously portrayed in a manner that puts a focus on stereotypically negative aspects of homelessness. Indeed,

these narratives paradoxically ‘reproduce social inequalities rather than interrupt them’ (Schneider, 2014: 6).

7.2.5. Moving towards more effective discourses

Local and national mainstream print news media *need* to play a bigger part in changing these dominant representations and ideologies within homelessness discourses. Narratives centred on sympathy portray the hardships of those experiencing homelessness, but they reveal more about the institutions and their audiences. These polarising discourses encourage philanthropy and charity to ease the public conscience and circulate these sympathetic discourses but, in doing so, fail to contest the power dynamic that may ‘threaten or destabilise the status quo’ (Devereux, 2015: 267). Mainstream news media need to be more proactive in their response to homelessness by promoting more complex, nuanced understandings of homelessness and looking beyond reductive stereotypes of those who experience homelessness. This will promote not only the legitimacy of people experiencing homelessness but also demonstrates the importance of social inclusion regardless of one’s housing status (Schneider et al, 2010). While these sympathetic discourses can be beneficial, mainstream print news media are too reliant on worn-out depictions of people experiencing homelessness as rough sleepers who are utterly dependent victims requiring sympathy, regulation and control.

7.3. Homeless appeals – *The Independent’s* homeless veterans’ campaign

In late 2014, *The Independent* ran one of their most successful ever seasonal campaigns. *The Independent*, the national left-leaning newspaper, ran similar Christmas appeals in previous years, and provided help for young soldiers in Africa, promoted a conservation charity and supported UNICEF (Lebedev, 2015). The news institution, owned by Evgeny Lebedev, promoted a new campaign to raise donations to ensure that homeless veterans

got the help, protection and housing that they need. The campaign sought to promote awareness, provide solutions and prevent them from ending up in circumstances where homelessness was a possibility. *The Independent's* campaign raised over £1.3 million for veterans experiencing homelessness (Lebedev, 2015).

Within the sub-corpus were 169 articles which made reference to *The Independent's* homeless veterans' campaign. The first mention of the launch of the campaign was made on the 22nd November 2014 and the last article on the 21st February 2015 included David Cameron praising *The Independent* for such a successful and invaluable campaign. The articles within the veterans experiencing homelessness sub-corpus had a range of subject foci and included personal narratives of those who have or are experiencing homelessness, those who have escaped homelessness due to intervention, celebrities and politicians supporting the campaign, the impact of donations and how they benefitted those experiencing homelessness, further ways to raise money, stories about how effective charity work has been, and the ways in which this campaign has and will continue to make a difference to homeless veterans' lives. The sub-corpus was initially split into two categories: articles that centred around and were directly about the campaign and articles that were indirectly about the campaign. The latter category includes articles that discussed homelessness before promoting the campaign at the end as a method to draw in further donations.

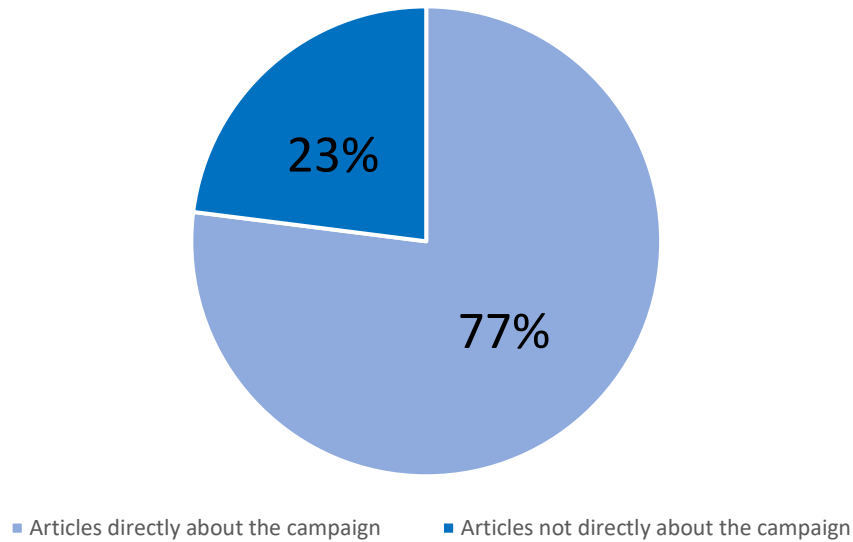


Figure 7.2. Articles directly/indirectly about the homeless veterans' campaign.

7.3.1. Veterans experiencing homelessness

The government does *not* publish statistics on the number of homeless veterans in the UK and Freedom of Information requests on this topic have been rejected (ONS, 2019).

Statistics show that few households are recorded as having support needs as a result of serving in the forces (Wilding, 2020). Studies estimate that 3% of people sleeping rough are former ex-service personnel (Curry, 2019). However, these numbers are disputed. The Royal British Legion (2019) have suggested that there are up to 6,000 homeless veterans in the UK but indicate that this demographic is underrepresented in homelessness statistics. As housing services seek to ensure that homeless veterans are not disadvantaged, vulnerable veterans have been reconsidered to be priority need (Wilding, 2020).

7.3.2. Evoking the metaphor of being at war

While sociopolitical issues such as poverty and homelessness are frequently constructed using war metaphors (Charteris-Black, 2004; 2006), these metaphors in a campaign for homeless veterans have extra significance. The images within this campaign are

simultaneously conceptual *and* real. Homeless veterans who literally once fought for their country on the battlefield are now metaphorically ‘fighting’ the social enemy of homelessness. The fight is two-fold: the battle *was* fought on a literal level and *now* exists on a conceptual level. This double level of conflict portrays the veterans as *more* deserving of donations from the audience and *less* deserving of their homelessness. For homeless veterans, this sense of war never ceased to end. The battleground and the enemy may have shifted but, for some, the war continues.

20. For some of our veterans, the war continues.

21. Thousands have come back with physical injuries. Others' scars cannot be seen. For some of them, the war continues.

Excerpt 7.5. Metaphorical examples of 'war' in the homeless veterans' campaign.

War metaphors indicate a sense of risk and urgency. Using the threat of war on literal and conceptual levels captures people’s attention, triggers emotional responses from the audience and leads them to feel a certain way about homeless veterans (Flusberg et al, 2018). Framing social issues in this way, especially in a campaign for homeless veterans, exacerbates the threat that homelessness poses to these individuals. Enhancing the threat of homelessness as a secondary form of war seeks to motivate audiences to pay attention, change their perceptions and take action against homelessness (Flusberg et al, 2018 – see *Excerpt 7.6*).

22. Being homeless is like being in battle; if you think you are tough you should try it - the fear the violence, the stabbings. The loneliness, the tiredness and the exhaustion - its just unbearable.

23. For former servicemen, especially those who have seen combat, the gunfire may have long since ceased but, out on the streets, their battle is only just beginning.

24. But for some, life at home can be more of a battle than the one on the frontline.

25. We are so proud that the Mayor of London acknowledged our expertise and recognised the charity's battle to end homelessness among the ex-personnel community.

Excerpt 7.6. Concordances of 'battle' in the homeless veterans' campaign.

Conflict words such as 'battle' and 'fight' are metaphors because their literal sense refers to the veterans' physical combat, whereas in these instances they refer to abstract actions against a social issue (Charteris-Black, 2006). These conflict words can also be used as similes (as in example 22) which make even more explicit what a metaphor implies (Israel et al, 2004); that is, the two-fold nature of the 'battle' that people experiencing homelessness can face. These conflict metaphors are reiterated because they demonstrate the personal sacrifice and physical struggle (Charteris-Black, 2004) that these veterans have gone through and is necessary to achieve social goals, such as preventing homelessness.

26. BF and Veterans Aid have supported veterans in so many different ways: fixing boilers, helping to fight addictions, and housing veterans all over Britain.
27. Veterans Aid is on the frontline in the fight against homelessness among veterans.
28. Major General (Ret'd) Martin Rutledge, chief executive of The Soldiers' Charity, also welcomed the contribution to Veterans Aid but said the fight against homelessness among the country's ex-servicemen and women was far from over.
29. Veterans Aid, which carries out a crucial role in the front line of the fight against homelessness among the UK's ex-servicemen and women.

Excerpt 7.7. Concordances of 'fight' in the homeless veterans' campaign.

Examples 27) and 29) enhance this war imagery through the prepositional phrase 'on the front line' which locates the charity Veterans Aid at the forefront of this conceptual fight against homelessness. Homelessness becomes the personified enemy of this fight.

Examples 27) – 29) represent the use of an attack metaphor because 'fight' collocates directly with 'against', which indicates the combat against the social ill that is homelessness (Charteris-Black, 2004). This lexicon of war allows *The Independent* to arouse powerful

emotions that are commonly associated with physical combat including pride in the veterans, anger at their social situation and resentment at their downfall (Charteris-Black, 2006).

These emotions evoke antagonism towards the personified enemy of homelessness while concurrently eliciting feelings of pride towards the identifiable heroes – veterans experiencing homelessness. In doing so, *The Independent* provide the moral imperative to donate towards veterans experiencing homelessness.

7.3.3. Homeless veterans and banal nationalism

The homeless veterans' campaign, through its war imagery and patriotic sentiments, elicits notions of what Michael Billig (1995) referred to as 'banal nationalism'. This concept maintains that every day, endemic habits serve to reproduce the ideology of the established nation within discourses (Billig, 1995). Banal nationalism rests on the concept of a national identity. This is an identity that positions one as physically, socially and emotionally situated within a homeland. This idea is particularly important in a campaign for veterans who have fought for their country and yet are now homeless.

30. Back home without a home.

Excerpt 7.8. Newspaper headline in the homeless veterans' campaign.

This headline uses 'home' in a polysemous sense. While the initial 'home' implies a veteran's belonging within *their* nation, the second 'home' refers to a lack of physical abode. The lexeme 'home' is polysemous because its lexical senses relate to the same basic notion of the word (Lyons, 1977). These types of polysemy, by indicating the subtleties between the homeland and one's home, promote the idea that 'home' is more than a physical house. A veteran may have returned *home* from duty, but they have no place to literally call 'home'. 'Home' is centred on the notion of shelter, security and the ability to control and define one's boundaries and self (see section 3.2.2). These veterans exist in their homeland without the

associations that a home should provide, such as privacy and positive wellbeing and, as such, are homeless. Simply put, the veterans have been displaced from their *own* homeland.

Nationhood rests on the concept that the homeland should be imagined as a homely space, a space which is secure against the outside world (Billig, 1995). These veterans do *not* have this protection. 'We' as a collective readership, then, have a responsibility to create this homeland for these veterans who have fought for 'our' country. The way to assist with this is to donate towards the homeless veterans' campaign. In doing so, *The Independent* and the audience assert *the* national identity by renewing the idea that all should feel at home within their homeland. Essentially, not to donate to a veteran who has supported *our* country would be to contribute towards the betrayal of British sovereignty (Billig, 1995).

The campaign labels the veterans in a multitude of ways including 'armed forces', 'soldiers', 'troops', and (ex)servicemen/women. 'Veterans' was the most popular label (see *Figure 7.3*), but this was preceded by the pre-modifying attributive 'homeless' to denote their status as a former soldier without an abode. The noun phrase 'homeless veterans' was selected to represent this campaign. This was the most popular bigram to label those who have experienced homelessness and appeared 38% of the time out of the overall use of the label 'veterans'. This represents the 'collocational strength' (Baker and McEnery, 2005: 223) of this labelling strategy that *The Independent* used to define for their campaign.

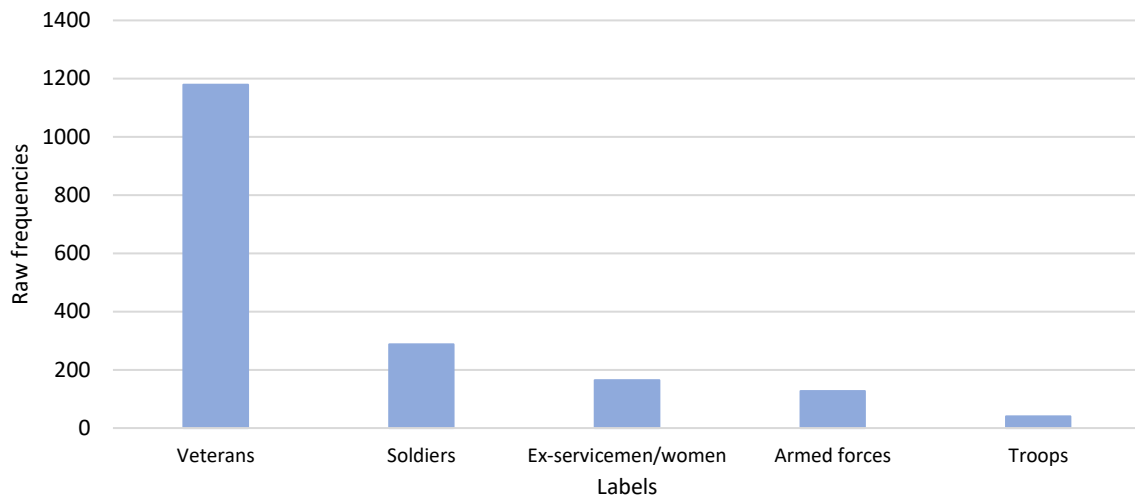


Figure 7.3. Labelling strategies for veterans within the homeless veterans' campaign.

'Veterans' is a particularly emotive term. By collocating 'homeless' and 'veterans' as one labelling phrase, *The Independent* demonstrate that this group have experienced a multitude of hardships. Veterans have not only survived the hardships of *war* but now must survive the hardships of *homeless life*. This labelling strategy is sympathetic to homeless veterans' challenging circumstances by foregrounding the challenges that they have faced throughout their life – i.e. their service *and* their homelessness. Foregrounding their status as veterans also implicitly flags their crucial service for the nationhood, represents that they are a part of 'us', and are deserving of assistance for their plight.

The formation of 'armed forces' is significant when combined with the inclusive possessive determiner 'our'. This phrase was analysed in systemic functional grammar terms to analyse words in their specific contexts (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; see *Figure 7.4*). These social actors are constructed predominantly as patients and have their agency stripped from them to demonstrate their dependency on charitable donations. However, the veterans are still depicted as agents when referring to their time spent serving their country, which seeks to invoke a nationalistic pride for their service.

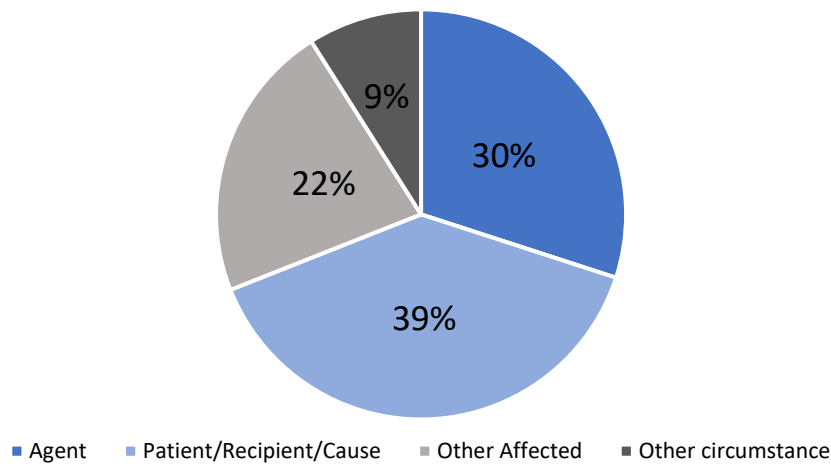


Figure 7.4. Different types of roles of the formation 'our armed forces' in the level of the clause within the homeless veterans' campaign.

The recipient(s) ('our armed forces') are an affected participant that receives something ('support', 'respect') in assistive processes. They are represented as not being in control of this and are dependent on the action of the social actor(s) providing the assistive process(es).

31. He [Stephen Fry] has now shown the country the depth of his support [for the men and women of **our armed forces**]
32. This government has put strengthening respect and increasing support [for **our armed forces** at the heart of its agenda].
33. The Soldiers' Charity is a fantastic organisation which does vital work [in supporting **our armed forces** community].
34. [The men and women of **our armed forces**] serve their country...
35. [**Our armed forces**] serve our country with bravery and distinction.
36. We are blessed to have a Royal Family whose members have served with and supported **our armed forces**.
37. This sets out our country's moral obligation to **our armed forces**.
38. *The Independent* and the *Evening Standard* are giving something back to **our Armed Forces** through this campaign.

Excerpt 7.9. Concordance lines of 'our armed forces' within the homeless veterans' campaign.

Example 31) demonstrates the agency of the elite social actor (Stephen Fry) who gives his support for homeless veterans receiving donations through the campaign. This category of recipient indicates the dependent relationship between the provider of charity and the beneficiary of the donations. Examples 31) and 32) use prepositional phrases with 'for' representing the recipients of the support from elite social actors (Fry or 'this government') who have donated to the campaign. In these instances, 'our armed forces' become the grammatical category of cause, which represents them as the reason that an assistive process is undertaken for (Matthiessen et al, 2010). The existence of the clause is predicated on 'our armed forces' because this campaign is being supported and promoted directly for their wellbeing.

The clausal relations further establish the nature of dependency between the social actors. Dependency-oriented help seeks to sustain the social and moral order by providing the dependents with a solution to their issues (Nadler, 2002). This can threaten the social identity of those receiving charity. Therefore, those who are providing the charity and assistance operate on a power dynamic in comparison to the recipient of the donation(s). Aid-givers generally prefer dependency-oriented assistance, but it also indicates that this type of charity serves to rationalise the status quo of higher status, privileged groups in society (Nadler, 2002).

Conversely, the veterans are given agency within the clause when referencing their service for their country. Examples 34) and 35) portray them as active agents while 'serv[ing]' either 'their', or, in a further extension of the nationalistic rhetoric, 'our' country. While there are references to 'our country', the most popular formation in the sub-corpus is 'their country'. This occurs because of the double reference to homeless veterans' homeland. The prominent discursive formation 'the country' uses the definite article to continually indicate the homeland (Billig, 1995). The linguistic deixis invokes the homeland which, by extension, highlights the national 'we' (or 'us') because it constructs the UK at the crux of the institution's and the audience's shared world (Billig, 1995).

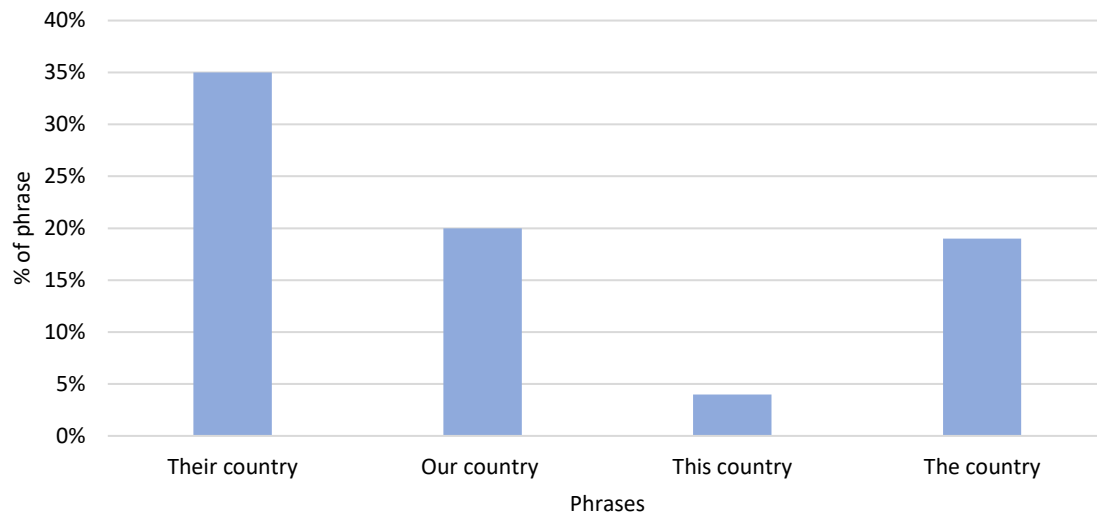


Figure 7.5. Collocates preceding 'country' within the homeless veterans' campaign.

The focus lies on charitable donations and while this country is a collective 'ours', it is the soldiers, specifically, who are homeless in their own home. By directly laying a focus on *their* ownership (i.e. the country is 'their(s), it belongs to 'them') this demonstrates their explicit right to belonging and home ownership. In doing so, *The Independent* suggest that these veterans have more of a right to a home explicitly through the nationalistic notion of this being 'their' country. On the other hand, 'our' demonstrates the most preferred of places, the homeland (Billig, 1995), which also indicates that 'our' armed forces are the most preferred of people. They are depicted as the most deserving of charity, consideration and assistance due to their circumstances. It is the veterans' status as native, rather than as homeless, which defines them and marks them out for this explicit need for our help. To not support 'our' ex-servicemen and women who have fought for 'our' country is to evoke an implicit sense of shame and represents an abandonment of our national essence (Billig, 1995).

7.3.4. The obligation to donate to veterans

The Independent, by constructing the campaign predominantly in a way that portrays the veterans as dependent on charity and support for wellbeing, invite their audience to donate. In doing so, this highlights the audience's obligation to assist with dependent others. Nadler

(2002) suggests that acts of charity towards a marginalised outgroup are motivated to boost philanthropic acts and the perceived value of the in-group. The repeated notion of obligation within this campaign is important for the purpose of charitable donations as audiences are more likely to assist others, especially marginalised groups, when they feel they have a moral imperative to do so (Horowitz, 1968).

39. We have a **duty** to help.
40. We have an **obligation** to care similarly for those who fought for us too.
41. We **need** to make sure all those who are affected are given the support they need.
42. We **must** never forget the sacrifices they make, and continue to make to keep our country safe.

Excerpt 7.10. Concordance lines of 'we' within the homeless veterans' campaign.

Examples 39) and 41) use lexical verbs such as 'have a duty' or 'need to' in order to represent the audience's direct obligation to assist with homeless veterans. Example 42) then enhances this level of responsibility. Here, the use of 'must' indicates an increasing degree of obligation. This deontic modality is used as an obligative and directive verb implying power and control on behalf of the speaker or the institution (Fairclough, 1989). When used in conjunction with the adverb 'never', the articles continually imagine and reproduce the patriotic image of homeless veterans defending what belongs to 'us'.

43. We **owe** a duty to those who serve, even if the cause is unpopular or ill-considered.
44. We **owe** an immense debt to those who served in recent wars...
45. We **owe** a great debt of gratitude to past and present servicemen and servicewomen

Excerpt 7.11. Concordances of 'owe' within the homeless veterans' campaign.

Examples 43) – 45) rely on obligation, albeit in a slightly different way. 'Owe' as a transitive verb associates with the sense of 'expressing debt' (OED, 2020) in return for a 'service'. The veterans are frequently associated with 'serving' their country and this means that 'owe' indicates the moral obligation of charitable donations from the audience in return for this

service. This construction of homeless veterans differs them from other constructions of people experiencing homelessness. While those experiencing homelessness are conventionally represented as having no sense of worth in a capitalist society (Belcher and DeForge, 2012), homeless veterans are constructed as *valuable* to society because of their moral actions and service for their country. Moral issues are frequently constructed as if they were financial issues which, by extension, conceptualises that moral actions are financial transactions (Charteris-Black, 2004). Finance metaphors such as 'owe' are grounded in the idea that as an audience we are supposed to 'repay' our debts towards homeless veterans for their service. The veterans' service is conceptualised as a financial transaction that we 'owe'. To repay them, the audience are reminded of their 'immense' and 'great' debt and are given an extra moral imperative to donate to the campaign. This means that moral justice is equated to a finance transaction in which the books are balanced (Lakoff, 2002).

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

Representations of homelessness within national and local mainstream print news media discourses, homelessness charities and governmental discourses on homelessness contribute towards ineffective public understandings of homelessness as a social problem. People experiencing homelessness continue to be dehumanised, 'othered' *and* blamed for their predicament. Mainstream print news media enhance the juxtaposition between those experiencing homelessness and the general public which signals those experiencing homelessness as 'other'. Defining people experiencing homelessness as 'other' indicates that their existence on the periphery, as a result of social exclusion, represents a threat to the public. People experiencing homelessness are not only stigmatised but are pathologised for their 'out-of-the-ordinary' activities which further distances them from society. Mainstream print news media in the UK, predominantly right-wing institutions, most commonly label people experiencing homelessness as 'the homeless' which imbues those experiencing homelessness with negative characteristics and locates this group as outside the usual social and moral order. People experiencing homelessness do not have the power to (re)define their homelessness but, instead, are defined *by* their homelessness. These institutions contribute towards an ideology where individuals that transgress the social and moral order are blamed for their social issue and are subsequently punished.

An individual's status *before* their homelessness, however, impacts on their representation *during* their homelessness. While people experiencing homelessness are often constructed as deserving of their social issue within homelessness discourses, *The Independent's* homeless veterans campaign represents that homeless veterans are *undeserving* of their homelessness and, by extension, *deserving* of public assistance. Homelessness, in this campaign, is constructed through the use of war metaphors. Homeless veterans who once *literally* fought on the battlefield are now forced to *metaphorically* fight the social ill that is homelessness. The lexicon of war on both literal and

conceptual levels frames homelessness as an issue that requires urgent attention and leads audiences to take action to ameliorate the problem through their donations.

Paradoxical discourses drawing upon notions of banal nationalism are embedded within the homeless veterans' campaign. Homeless veterans who once battled on the front line have now returned to their homeland and yet are paradoxically without a home. This draws audiences to feel sympathy for these veterans and foregrounds the fact that homeless veterans have survived the challenges of war but are forced to survive the hardships of homeless life. Nationalistic rhetoric in this campaign seeks to unite the audience and people experiencing homelessness. Those experiencing homelessness are often constructed as 'other' and as having no value in a capitalist society, while homeless veterans are constructed as part of 'our country' and are portrayed as more valuable to society precisely through their service.

Narratives around homelessness in newspapers and charity websites are frequently contradictory and paradoxical. Surface level positive representations of homelessness are subtly framed within larger pathologising discourses surrounding homelessness. Discourses passivise (in SFL terms) those experiencing homelessness to reflect their lack of power and attempt to portray them in a sympathetic manner yet simultaneously locate the agency of homeless individuals *to do something* about their social problems. While these discourses appear to portray people experiencing homelessness as victims, they are represented as victims of their *own* failings. This contributes to the ideology behind responsabilising and pathologising people experiencing homelessness while appearing to sympathise with their homelessness.

These discourses aim to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. However, media and charity discourses inadvertently focus on short-term interventions through individual acts of public compassion which forms part of the *individualistic model* on homelessness. Regular accounts of public compassion lead audiences to believe that these individual acts of kindness are effective in addressing homelessness. This, however,

simultaneously omits and conceals long-term systemic changes that *need* to be implemented in order to prevent homelessness on a permanent scale. Mainstream news media also construct homelessness through a *fatalistic* lens which is damaging to public perceptions of homelessness. If homelessness is seen as an inevitable process, then it becomes challenging for homeless charities to construct the social issue in a way that can generate public change.

Personal media and charity narratives are important because they can engender public support for long-term solutions of homelessness. However, many narratives created by national and local mainstream print news media and homelessness charities are not the experiencing of people experiencing homelessness as they chose to present them. These narratives are bound by genre-specific social constructions and continue to perpetuate outdated and reductive stereotypes surrounding homelessness which contribute to misinformed negative public attitudes of homelessness. This is ineffective to create public demand for political change. Individual causes of homelessness are overrepresented in these discourses. Human-interest stories locate homelessness as an individual issue and continue to focus on individual causes of homelessness such as substance addiction and mental health issues. The overrepresentation of substance addiction and mental health issues pathologises people experiencing homelessness for their individual life circumstances, frames individuals as responsible for social inequalities, and attributes blame for their homelessness. These issues are too often correlated with homelessness which means that discourses further responsabilise individuals for their problems.

Conversely, systemic circumstances such as social inequality, poverty, evictions from private tenancies and welfare reforms are *the* main precursor to homelessness but are never fully explained as a direct cause within these discourses. Focusing on individuals experiencing homelessness rather than homelessness as a social issue means that individuals are more likely to be responsabilised for their problems. Responsibilising individuals for their homelessness means that the public will question the

deserving/undeserving nature of individuals' homelessness and whether they deserve public assistance. Portraying homelessness as an issue that people experiencing homelessness are responsible and blameworthy for also means that public audiences will not engage with solutions to homelessness which, by extension, results in less chance of future systemic policy changes being implemented to address homelessness.

Localness and proximity affect representations of people experiencing homelessness. Both local media and charity discourses on homelessness are shaped by these news values in order to frame the need to *control* visible homelessness (i.e. rough sleepers) in local areas. In local areas such as Manchester, people experiencing homelessness are defined by their 'houselessness', 'otherness', and their visibility in local areas more than national discourses. Localness also affects the representation of causation in homelessness discourses. The 'spice' epidemic in Manchester is given far more attention in local media outlets than in national media outlets. It is the visibility of people experiencing homelessness taking these substances in local areas that explains *why* the coverage of 'spice' is much higher in local discourses. The emphasis on rough sleepers who are abusing 'spice' occurs because these issues pose a threat to both *local* people and the *local* economy.

Homeless social networks are paradoxical by nature. While homelessness results in the loss of important social networks, people experiencing homelessness create new social networks to adapt to their new surroundings. Homeless social networks are composed of partner(s), family, friends and other individuals that are difficult to define because of their ephemeral nature. These labels place an emphasis on the *role* that individuals occupy within the community. Homeless social networks provide many of the same notions that 'home' as a concept provides. These communities offer protection, security, support, well-being and a sense of belonging which is important to reclaim a positive identity, sense of selfhood, and avoiding the isolation that results from the erosion of social networks. While these individuals in a social network lack a physical 'home' to define as their own, the networks provide

sustenance and a community where individuals are cared *for* and cared *about*. Simply put, homeless communities offer the sense of 'home' that these people lack.

Homeless social networks are paradoxically beneficial and prohibitive to escaping homelessness on a permanent basis and reintegrating into mainstream society. Networks that were once tantamount to survival can create a level of dependence which means that their ability to survive in the future is hindered. Individuals may be housed but separation from strong homeless networks may lead to a devaluation of self. An individual's homeless peers may be the *only* networks they have left. The networks once provided a sense of home and now, paradoxically, an individual may have been housed, but they do *not* have a home.

Further exploration into this topic would allow for a better understanding of how people experiencing homelessness in the UK navigate between their social networks. More ethnographic studies of homeless individuals in the UK would enable clearer networks to be constructed with a focus on how individuals navigate connections between home and peer networks. Further work could be done in terms of multimodal analysis and how the construction of images in homelessness discourses contributes to public understandings of the social issue. This research could examine whether there were further paradoxes between sympathetic and pathologising images within media and charity homelessness discourses. This research would contribute to further understandings of how homelessness is constructed and framed in UK discourses and how public understandings of homelessness are affected by these representations of the social issue.

The government need to revise and shift their neoliberal ideology which places an emphasis on responsabilising individuals for their social issues. Many policy decisions implemented over the past decade have not directly intended to negatively impact on homelessness. However, the political shift towards responsabilisation, reward and punishment continues to detrimentally affect many households and vulnerable people. It is important in going forward that a more positive ideology which continues to target

prevention, rather than intervention, is implemented to decrease levels of homelessness and ultimately *end* homelessness. A shift in attention which focuses less on attributing blame to individuals for their homelessness and instead places an emphasis on helping vulnerable individuals into permanent forms of accommodation will support many at risk of homelessness.

A shift in political ideology needs to be reflected within media and charity discourses on homelessness. This will require media and charity discourses to promote more complex, nuanced understandings of homelessness that consider the systemic explanations as to *why* homelessness occurs and how to *prevent* homelessness. Discourses surrounding homelessness must also change the types of narrative that are communicated to the public. The problematic paradoxical nature of homelessness discourses points to a need for more consistent narratives that emphasise *long-term solutions* to homelessness. This will help to generate further public demand in order to encourage politicians to reconsider their stance on homelessness and will allow the government to make better decisions when it comes to tackling homelessness. As homelessness continues to increase and the number of people in temporary accommodation across the UK is at its highest level in over a decade, effective government decision-making on homelessness, constructions of homelessness across media and charity discourses, and a better public understanding of homelessness are more important *now* than ever.

As the world has been ravaged by the Covid-19 pandemic and society has experienced the unfamiliarity and isolation of several lockdowns, the government initially implemented new legislation to assist people experiencing homelessness. The Conservative government's 'Everyone In' policy demonstrated a commitment to assist rough sleepers to secure tenancies and to provide temporary accommodation. While initial responses to this policy were seen as 'extraordinary' (Crisis, 2021) and many praised the government for its 'unusually bold' (Garcia, 2021) implementation of policy, the policy was withdrawn, and funding was ultimately cut after only a *few* months (BBC, 2020). Homelessness charity Crisis

indicated that despite this short-lived policy that the pandemic has exposed the severe shortage of available, affordable homes in England (Crisis, 2021). While some have been 'housed' temporarily during the pandemic, homelessness figures are expected to rise post-lockdown due to many having no form of permanent accommodation and as a result of evictions during the pandemic. In the aftermath of Covid-19, the government need to continue with interventions to place rough sleepers into emergency accommodation. However, this lack of available, affordable housing will continue to cause significant long-term issues, further episodes of homelessness and a lack of permanent solutions for those at risk of homelessness in England.

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