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Ignorance is Bliss: The Construction of Homelessness in Online News Media in
Aotearoa/New Zealand

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Abstract

As an entity central to our society the news media provides us with narratives that we access as resources in order to construct our understanding of individual and global people, groups, organisations, and phenomenon (Silverstone, 2007). This thesis explores the news media's construction of homelessness in Aotearoa/New Zealand based on articles sourced from online news media provider stuff.co.nz. The dominant narrative presented through the analysed articles is one that promotes a construction of homelessness that identifies this phenomenon as an issue resulting from individual deficits and personal failings. The narrative of individual deficit is supported through the use of ignorant framings of homelessness that are filled with hegemonic silences. These silences allow for a notable absence of narrative regarding the structural causes of homelessness as a social problem. Through predominantly constructing homelessness as a phenomenon linked to individual deficit the narrative allows for a construction of homelessness that supports the neoliberal ideals of New Zealand's current right wing government and its use of a penal based welfare system.

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