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

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Celia A. Mandeno

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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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Chapter One

The news media provides us with pictures and commentary of objects, events, and individuals that we may not otherwise be able to access in our daily life. Through these pictures and commentary news media provide us with the resources we need to construct our understanding of individual and global images (Silverstone, 2007). It is for this reason that society tends to regard the news media as being of great importance; the news media provides a key source of information upon which many audience members develop their own understandings of social issues such as homelessness (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2012).

Through looking at the United States news media Bagdikian (1985) argued that the commercialisation of the news media has resulted in a shift in the content it provides. He found that content moved away from challenging injustice and became predominantly 'entertainment' based. Consequently news media content became increasingly homogenised and the diversity of the voices present in the news media decreased (Bagdikian, 1985). Brants and Voltmer (2011) state that with the commercialisation of the news media came an increase in competition. The result, they argue, is that the news media have needed to place greater consideration on the 'needs' and interests of their audience. In relation to political stories it is argued that, as a consequence of commercialisation, there has been a loss in politicisation of political news stories. Effectively 'hard news' has given way to "a style of political reporting that is guided by political personal and celebrity culture" (Brants & Voltmer, 2011, p. 7), a style of news that mixes political information and entertainment. In 1985 Bagdikain argued that the only way to combat this form of 'journalism' and develop a media diverse in its content would be through diverse ownership of media outlets (Bagdikian, 1985). Since this time, with notable exceptions such as the BBC, the news media has become increasingly dominated by only a few commercial operators worldwide (Arsenault & Castells, 2008).

The above is of concern given that with commercialised operation comes a need to sell news media. As a result the news media often use sensationalist narratives that seek to engage, please, and shock the audience (Silverstone, 2007). The use of sensationalist narratives often results in a lack of the contextual explanation needed for a balanced depiction of the given topic (Bullock, Fraser Wyche, & Williams, 2001). This is a significant issue as the news media provides us with much of society's shared

understandings of our social order (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). Understanding is granted through the provisions of national, global, and cultural frameworks. Through these frameworks the media offers a connection to the 'other' that may not otherwise occur in daily life due to geographical, historical, or sociological distance (Silverstone, 2007).

Homeless people are a group of 'others' that society 'connects' with through the news media. In the instance of homelessness, research shows us that this connection contributes to homeless people experiencing greater levels of disconnection with society (Hodgetts et al., 2011; Knecht & Martinez, 2009). Despite being geographically close and living in present day society, homeless people as a group, often experience high levels of social distancing. Hodgetts et al. (2011) indicate that social distancing of homeless people is a fluid concept affected by multiple factors. These include, but are not limited to, the domiciled person's experience with homeless people, the domiciled person's personal ethics, as well as their use of urban spaces, their cultural background, and their political beliefs. In addition to this, research shows us that the role of the news media in the social distancing of the homeless is a significant issue (Klodawsky, 2006; Martin, 2011; Schneider, Chamberlain, & Hodgetts, 2010)

Given this knowledge the following research explores current news media texts sourced from stuff.co.nz (STUFF) to determine the narratives used when constructing the social issue of homelessness and characterising homeless people. The term narrative is used in the context of this research to define the stories and/or constructions of homelessness as depicted across the empirical sample. To explore these narratives I draw on social constructionism, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and news media analysis (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014) . Under the facade of social constructionism I have approached this research project using the assumption that people derive meaning from the world through language, images, taken-for-granted knowledge, and through material interactions in the world.

Meaning is not dictated by cause and effect relationships between the objects we encounter but through the way in which these encounters are interpreted by people as social agents within the social systems in which we exist (Gergen, 1985). Berger and Luckmann (1966) identify that such objects, encounters, and social systems exist within the everyday. The everyday day is important as it is located within a temporal structure meaning that the

objects we encounter have historicity. Berger and Luckmann (1966) outline that due to historicity the objects within our everyday have already been deemed objects prior to our encounter with them. Although it is possible to change the current meaning of an object through social interaction it is not possible to change the historical meaning. As a result they argue that the specific temporal structure in which we exist imposes prearranged understandings and structures upon our current systems of meaning making.

Blumer's theory on the development of 'social problems' is a good example of social systems defining the objects we encounter. Blumer (1971) outlines that a phenomenon, such as homelessness, must be defined as problematic by society before it is recognised as a social problem. Social recognition, he argues, occurs when the phenomenon acquires a level of attention, within society, that leads it to become the object of discussion within public institutions such as the government, educational organisations, and the media. It is how the phenomenon is then defined within these discussions that determines its recognition by society as a social problem (Blumer, 1971). As such not all harmful or challenging social conditions are defined as social problems nor are all phenomenon defined as 'social problems' intrinsically problematic (Blumer, 1971). Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that an object/phenomenon is defined as a problem when it falls outside of the routine of the everyday and cannot be dealt with through common-sense knowledge.

Blumer's (1971) theory of social problems is consistent with the development of dominant narratives within the theory of social constructionism. Under social constructionism it could be argued that a narrative is developed within the wider society. However for the narrative to become dominant it must be supported by a dominant group (Gergen, 2009). The result of this is that the commonly held construction of objects is determined by the reality and values of dominant groups. This occurs despite the object having a reality of its own. Objects are therefore often defined in a manner that serves the rules of the dominant group (Gergen, 2009). The problem with this is that it breeds the potential for dominant narratives that constrict and oppress those that fall outside of the rules and agendas of the dominant group, such as homeless people.

Through applying the concepts of social constructionism to current news media items on homelessness, this research aims to identify and evaluate how homeless people are constructed within this context. Through the analysis of news media texts we gain the ability to shift and dissolve dominant narratives and address the 'problem' (Gergen, 1985).

Klodawsky et al. (2002) highlight that through examining the construction of homelessness we gain insight into the ideological pressures that exclude this group from society.

The following section of this chapter will define homelessness within the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand before drawing on existing literature to outline the consequences of categorising this group of people under the homogeneous label of 'the homeless'. In conceptualising the consequences of the stereotypes associated with this label I will touch on Simmel's (1921) historical literature of 'the stranger' and will use current literature to explain how this theory is applicable to those experiencing homelessness within the current day. In doing so I will address the concept of the homeless 'other' and will discuss how this places homeless people as socially distanced within society.

Having conceptualised the homeless other I will draw on the theory of social constructionism to show the role narratives play in this construction of homeless people. I will then return to a discussion of the news media. Specifically this will focus on the news media as a site for dominant narratives and will outline the role the news media plays in shaping society and political response to social issues such as homelessness. In doing so, I will briefly touch on the relationship between the news media, political institutions, and society as consumers of the news media. Finally this chapter will conclude by tying these points together to support the undertakings of this research project and outline its main aims.

Homelessness, Stereotypes, and Social Distance

Homelessness and responses in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The term "homeless" is commonly used to categorise people who are experiencing a lack of housing (McCarthy, 2013). This group of people are heterogeneous by nature (Amore, Viggers, Baker, & Howden-Chapman, 2013; Leggatt-Cook, C, 2007) and prior to becoming homeless have, at some point, existed as a domiciled member of society . Those who move from a domiciled existence into the world of homelessness do so due to a variety of reasons (Johnson, Gronda, & Coutts, 2008). Homelessness occurs within a complex system of structural and individual factors such as a lack of affordable housing, unemployment, limited social supports, the loss of a loved one, substance misuse, mental illness, and deinstitutionalisation (Hodgetts, Stolte, Waimarie Nikora, & Groot, 2012; Laurenson & Collins, 2007; Neale, 1997; Toohey, Shinn, & Weitzman, 2004).

Homelessness is a significant problem within New Zealand that affects as many, or as little, as 33,946 people (Amore et al., 2013). The definition of homelessness in

Aotearoa/New Zealand encompasses one's social, physical, and legal domains at the point where they intercept with housing (Statistics New Zealand, 2009). Through including these domains the definition recognises that homelessness is not just a lack of shelter; it is an absence of safe, secure, and habitable housing. Through the inclusion of these domains the definition acknowledges that personal space, privacy, safety, secure tenure, and a physically habitable house are all basic elements for adequate housing.

In order to address the variability of homelessness, and one's ability to move between situations whilst experiencing homelessness, the definition is broken down into four categories; living without shelter, on the streets or inhabiting improvised dwellings; living in temporary accommodation, such as hostels for homeless people, transitional supported accommodation for the homeless, women's refuge, or motor-camps and boarding houses; sharing accommodation with a household, that is temporary accommodation in another's private dwelling; and living in uninhabitable housing, such as a dilapidated dwelling (Statistics New Zealand, 2009).

Defining homelessness is a necessity. It is through definition that government and community organisations are able to assess the level and nature of the problem, assess possible interventions, and allocate resources accordingly (Hodgetts, Stolte, & Groot, 2014). Despite having created a national definition of homelessness in 2009 (Statistics New Zealand, 2009) New Zealand currently has no national overview or plan aimed at addressing the issue of homelessness. In 2009 Richards released a report, commissioned by the New Zealand Coalition to End Homelessness (NZCEH), on issues and recommendations for homelessness in New Zealand. This report identified that although homeless people are clients of individual government services such as Corrections and Child Youth and Family Services there is no single overarching government body addressing homelessness. It was outlined that as a result of this homelessness services in New Zealand rely heavily on fundraising and the renewal of individual service contracts to provide support. The report highlights that outside of Auckland and Wellington little is being done to address homelessness at the council level, meaning that there is a significant lack of services in New Zealand and rural New Zealand in particular; an area where citizens are suffering due to limited access to employment and transport, as well as housing assistance (Richards, 2009). The report also identified that, throughout the range of community organisations providing service delivery, there is a lack of culturally appropriate long-term solutions for Maori clients

(Richards, 2009), a group of clients that are over represented in the homeless population of New Zealand (Groot, Hodgetts, Nikora, & Leggat-Cook, 2011).

As an organisation the NZCEH are actively seeking to change the absence of a national commitment to ending homelessness. This is being done through promoting the need for a strategic, collaborative, inter-agency, approach to addressing homelessness. To assist with this the NZCEH have developed a Homelessness Strategy Tool Kit that identifies the following seven areas as key components needed in the fight to end homelessness; policy, planning, data collection, emergency prevention, systems prevention, service delivery, and long term solutions (Richards, 2009).

Homelessness, stereotyping, and the other. When we categorise all people without a home as 'the homeless' we ignore the heterogeneous pathways that lead to homelessness (Clapham, 2003; Fitzpatrick, Bramley, & Johnsen, 2012) as well as the personal narratives that make up the people experiencing homelessness (Horsell, 2006). A relevant example of this is the application of eurocentric definitions (United Nations, 2009) of homelessness in societies such as Australia and New Zealand where indigenious cultures are over represented in the homeless community (Groot et al., 2011; Hodgetts et al., 2014; Memmott, Long, & Chambers, 2003).

The problem with Eurocentric definitions for indigenous homeless people is that such definitions place an emphasis on physical dwellings and overlook the concept of spiritual homelessness (Memmott et al., 2003). In looking at the Aboriginal population of Australia Memmott et al. (2003) argue that prior to colonialisation this population associated the concept of 'home' to cultural and spiritual land connections and to belonging within a specific group rather than to the presence of a residtential dwelling. Under current eurocentric definitions of homelessness, such as the one in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2009), an indigenous person's loss of culture, group membership, and spiritual connection to land, whilst living in a residential dwelling, is not enough to have them classed as homeless despite the very real negative consequences such loss can have on the person (Memmott et al., 2003). Nor do these definitions allow for an indigenous person to be classed as 'with home' should they find spiritual connection, group membership, and a sense of 'home' whilst living on the street; a reality we know to be true (Groot et al., 2011; Hodgetts et al., 2011).

In addition to this we know that the use of categorical definitions, such as 'the homeless' are problematic within the social domain as they are frequently associated

with stereotypes and homogeneity (Hugenberg & Sacco, 2008). This is problematic as the categorical definition of a phenomenon is not always relevant to the breadth of people that it encompasses. Tomas and Dittmar (1995) go as far as arguing that the term 'homeless', as in its literal meaning 'without home', lacks relevance. They argue, from the perspective of homeless women, for whom in many instances the loss of a residential dwelling does not equate to the loss of a 'home'. This argument is made on the premise that for many women experiencing homelessness, that despite having been housed, the reality of a safe and secure 'home' has always been far from their lived experience. A notion, it could be argued, that is also relevant to a number of homeless drifters (Hodgetts et al., 2012).

In the instance of homeless people, stereotyping most often occurs under the binary categorisation of the deserving and underserving (Zufferey, 2014). The use of these binary categories can be linked to the *Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834* (Eyre & Spotiswoode, 1835). This act was developed in England as a means of reducing the 'burden' that the poor had on middle and upperclass people through restricting the poor's access to assistance to that of the facilities of a workhouse. Those who were considered deserving, such as those who were of ill-health or respectable working men seeking employment, were given access to the workhouse. Whilst those considered to be undeserving, such as those who 'chose' a life of casual labour, were denied access (Vorspan, 1977). In his study on the United States of America (US) homeless population, and their representation within US society, Rosenthal (2000) found that the categories of the deserving/undeserving homeless were identified in three groups of recurrently used stereotypes. These were; "Slackers", those that are seen as being incompetent or not wanting to assist themselves out of homelessness due to laziness, irresponsibility, or substance misuse; "Lackers", those who lack the skills needed to successfully assist themselves such as children and the physically or mentally ill; and the "unwilling victims", those who are homeless as a result of factors outside of their control such as a loss of employment or victimisation.

In determining these categories, Rosenthal (2000) found that the stereotype under which the homeless person was viewed determined the level of stigmatisation and discrimination they experienced within society. For example, images of the underserving homeless were shown to support higher levels of negative stigmatisation. The research showed that the people within this group were viewed by society as being

less entitled to assistance in comparison to the deserving homeless. In addition to this it was noted that, despite societies distinction between deserving and undeserving homeless, it was the attributes of the undeserving homeless that were most often generalised across the homeless population as a whole (Rosenthal, 2000). These findings fit with the phenomenon known as 'homeless identity' (McCarthy, 2013)

At this point I would like to acknowledge the reasonably high frequency in which research from the US will be cited. Although we are not able to make direct inferences from this research to the New Zealand population it is still considered relevant to the overall argument. This is due to the reasonably high frequency in which we see the images of American homeless people presented within our society via news and popular culture. However it must also be noted that US research has historically tended to favour individualistic explanations for homelessness such as personal choice and personal deficiencies such as mental illness (Hodgetts et al., 2014).

Research by Phillips (2015) on perceived causes of homelessness showed that a sample group of 115 US college students had a clear understanding of the multiple factors involved in someone becoming homeless. What was interesting, and relevant here, is that when these students accessed stereotypes in their evaluation of the cause of homelessness, they tended to fail to in acknowledge that homeless people have individual characteristics. McCarthy (2013) argues that in accessing a myriad of stereotypes in describing homeless people we overlook the individual characteristics of the person and allow homelessness to become their 'identity'. This idea of a 'homeless identity' occurs due to the socially constructed image of the homeless person through commonly used narratives that are based on a variety of stereotypes (McCarthy, 2013). The result of the homeless identity is that the person's current lack of housing becomes an all-encompassing characteristic and their individual characteristics are overlooked (Parsell, 2011). This has severe implications for the homeless person within society as they become bound to this misconceived reality. Society locks the person into this identity and in the process limits their opportunities for being or doing something different (McCarthy, 2013). In addition to this the application of the homeless identity emphasises a differences between the homeless person and society. It highlights an absence of shared characteristics and, in the process of this, the person becomes classed as a problematic 'other' (Albrecht, Walker, & Levy, 1982; Crane et al., 2005; Feldman, 2004; Horsell, 2006; Pascale, 2005a).

In many respects, the contemporary concept of the 'other' comes from Simmel's (1921) work on 'the stranger'. The stranger is a person who exists within society but whose position is determined by the fact that they do not belong. Simmel's (1921) notion is, in part, informed by an understanding of society as existing as a production aimed at meeting the needs of individuals. Broadly then it could be stated that our place within society is determined by what we are able to offer the individual needs of others. When a person is perceived by their society, in accordance to the dominant moral code, as not being able to offer anything in return for their citizenship then their existence within society is more likely to be brought into question. Should this person then 'choose' to remain within the society, whilst continuing to offer nothing, their lack of participation becomes magnified in society's perception of them (Simmel, 1921). As a result of this the person exists on the outskirts, as a stranger that society cannot relate to. The stranger is denied access to society causing them to become socially distant from the group.

The former is a very sweeping application of Simmel's (1921) work and it is used simply as a means of outlining how the process of estrangement can occur for groups of people, such as those experiencing a lack of housing, within society. It should also be noted at this time that Simmel (1921) developed the concept of the other in reference to Jewish people living in Germany, a group to which he himself belonged. This is mentioned as it could be argued that his experience led to him overstating the universal applicability of the argument. However I will argue that its application to homeless people is relevant in the context of this research.

Homelessness and social distancing. As 'others', homeless people experience social distancing (Albrecht et al., 1982; Hodgetts et al., 2011; Horsell, 2006). Simmel (1921) conceptualises social distancing between us and the stranger as a dynamic process that sets levels of proximity between social groups. The stranger is near to us in the fact that we share a close physical proximity as well as similarities of general human nature, culture, and personal characteristics. However, they are also far from us as they are perceived as being fundamentally different from us (Hodgetts et al., 2011).

The level of social distance one experiences alters the level of trust one receives (Binzel & Fehr, 2013), the extent to which one is seen as dangerous (Corrigan, Kuwabara, & O'Shaughnessy, 2009), and the level of altruism one is attributed (Buchan, Johnson, & Croson, 2006). In the instance of homeless people, social

distancing has led to the stigmatisation and discriminatation of the group well beyond the social domain (Albrecht et al., 1982; Corrigan et al., 2009; Phelan, Link, Moore, & Stueve, 1997). High levels of social distancing, between 'the homeless' and 'the domiciled', has resulted in the erosion of society's sense of responsibility towards the needs of homeless people (Corrigan et al., 2009; Horsell, 2006; Klodawsky et al., 2002; Mitchell & Heynen, 2009; Schneider et al., 2010). It could therefore be argued that social distancing of homeless people in New Zealand (Hodgetts et al., 2011) has resulted in the creation, evaluation, and maintenance of interventions, and the development of policy aimed at addressing homelessness, becoming a low priority for New Zealand's government (Richards, 2009)

Social distance is not a fixed concept. Hodgetts et al. (2011) identify a shift in the distancing between housed and homeless people dependent on the social repertoires housed people draw on in evaluating homeless people; the characteristics they associate with homeless people; their experience with homeless people; and whether homeless people are viewed in the context of an individual or a group. Through the accounts of domiciled people, Hodgetts et al. (2011) found that a decrease in social distancing was seen when domiciled people were referring to individual homeless people or if they had experienced positive interactions with homeless people and were not reliant solely on mediated images for their understandings of homelessness. Groups of homeless people on the other hand were shown to be viewed with higher levels of social distance and were often described as being dangerous, defective, and/or substance users.

Through the findings of Hodgetts et al. (2011) it can be argued that homeless people experience social distancing within New Zealand and consequent negative effects because of a tendency in our society to group 'the homeless' into categories that sit within negative stereotypes. In doing so society removes homeless people from society's moral universe and casts them as un-relatable 'others'. The social repertoires that society uses to define this group, as well as the more favourable words we use to describe the characteristics of homeless people, derive from dominant narratives (Hodgetts et al., 2011; Knecht & Martinez, 2009). This implies that it is the narratives that are used when discussing and constructing homeless people that alter the social distancing of a homeless person; rather than the latter being a result of the characteristics of the homeless person themselves. This means that through changing the narratives used in depicting homeless people it should be possible to decrease social

distancing, discrimination, and stigmatisation of this group. To understand how dominant narratives can shape the psychological phenomenon of social distancing we will turn to the theory of social constructionism. Within the following discussion the term 'discourse' will be used in place of the term 'narrative'. I have privileged the term 'discourse' in the examination of how dominant narratives, within the framework of social constructionism, have the ability to shape society. Within the context of this research the term 'discourse' is used to refer to *the conceptual characterisation of written or spoken communication.*

Discourse Under the Lens of Social Constructionism

Discourse as a concept has been defined by a number of people (Parker, 1990; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). However the definition used here is that from Burr (2003). A discourse is a system of words, images, statements, metaphors, and embodied and material practices that, when together, produce an understanding and representation of the objects and events we encounter. It is the discourses we utilise that shape the rules, knowledge, and views of the world within which we exist (Gergen, 1985). As discourse is reproduced through the social practice of dialogue, a single object, phenomenon, or event may draw on a range of diverse discourses dependent on the language, culture, and/or history of the people holding the dialogue. These characterisations then have varying effects depending on the manner and context they are utilised in.

Objects, as defined under the lens of social constructionism, are inclusive of people (Parker, 1990). Foucault (1982) argues that the status of a person moves from a subject to an object when we divide people into categories, for example when referring to the 'mad' or the 'sane', the 'sick' or the 'healthy', 'criminals' or 'good boys'. Similarly, we have the objectification of people dependent on their housing situation through the divide of the 'housed' and the 'homeless'.

It is through this shared understanding of objects and events that we base our social practices and actions (Burr, 2003). As a society we are governed by dominant discourses that make acceptable the actions we wish to take. A discourse becomes dominant when it is the narrative that is used most frequently within society or when it is the chosen narrative of dominant groups. To demonstrate the manner in which discourses restrict the actions that are legitimately open to us we will return to Rosenthal's (2000) work on the deserving and undeserving homeless. Specifically this example is used to illustrate the impact of discourses on support services when

advocating for the future allocation of resource for homeless people. Rosenthal (2000) outlines that when homeless services were advocating for a group of homeless people, such as women and children, who fell under the deserving category, they believed that advocacy was justified through discourses of reason and morality. The advocates' expectation was that the government would 'do the right thing' because dominant discourses tell us that this group of people are morally deserving of resources. The process of advocacy was driven by this simple understanding. On the other hand, when advocating for the 'undeserving', in this instance rough sleeping males, advocates saw their only viable action as outlining that an absence of resource provision would further increase the social turmoil that already existed. This group of advocates did not see it as possible to make a moral claim for the resources as, in accordance with dominant discourses, this group of men held very little moral standing in society. Instead their only perceived form of action was to advocate for the allocation of resources as a means of protecting the 'moral' society from this group of undeserving people. Understanding that the discourses we use determine the actions that we can and cannot undertake shows us that the discourses we collectively construct have practical consequences for us as members of society. Discourses therefore hold power (Foucault, 2002).

Foucault (1982) outlines that it is the way we conceptualise the object through discourses that makes the object subject to power relations. To understand the power relation behind an object Foucault (1982) outlines that we must understand the historical conditions which motivate said conceptualisation. Foucault (2002) outlines that power is evident in the categorisation of people. When we categorise the person we encapsulate them within a set of truths and automatically assigning them with an 'identity'. In doing so the person becomes subject to the control of this identity, both by others and by the knowledge of self it engages them in(Foucault, 1982; Hodgetts, Hodgetts, & Radley, 2006)**.** It is through this process that we invite particular practices and ways of acting whilst at the same time marginalising alternative forms of action. Foucault (1982) defines this as governance.

In most cases dominant discourses reflect the ideologies of those within society who hold positions of power. Such positions are most often held by those with hierarchical status, money, group membership, or the majority (Foucault, 2002). What this means is that dominant discourses are put to work to serve the development of the already powerful. Thus, for example, when a group of others exist within society but are

seen by the dominant group to interfere with their development the dominant group defines them as a problem (Gergen, 1985). Those who exist within the context of the 'problem' have access to discourses regarding their own reality, however it is the dominant discourses, constructed through the reality and values of those in society who exercise symbolic power (power to name and define others on one's own terms), that profoundly determines the nature of their existence within society (Gergen, 2009). History shows us that such discourses constrict and oppress those who fall outside of the rules and agendas of the dominant group (Gergen, 1985). As a group the homeless fall outside of the rules and agendas of our contemporary society (Horsell, 2006).

Through addressing the 'problem' of homelessness from a social constructionism approach we are able to move away from homelessness as the doings of the individual and place emphasis on the role of the social actions of society. In order to seek understanding and explanations of this 'problem' we must look to the linguistic spaces in which it is constructed (Burr, 2003). In doing so we create the potential for positive change; each time we engage in discourse we create the possibility for new or amended utilisations of the given discourse to emerge, thus providing us with an alternative stand point for viewing the objects in our world and therefore alternative possibilities for action. The potential for alternative views arises as discourses occur within our material reality. Within these realities, people either accommodate or resist the characterisation of the discourses presented. It is through the process of social resistance that we see change occurring in discourses (Burr, 2003). We know this because the development of meaning through discourse entails that as we partake in social dialogue we allow ourselves the opportunity to develop new, or cement old, views, knowledges, and rules (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Armed with the knowledge that social practices are greatly influenced by dominant discourses we now turn to the media.

The Media and the Framing of Social Problems within the Context of Homelessness

The media has long been a central component in the culture and structure of our everyday life (Silverstone, 2007). With the development of online media has come an increased level of accessibility to, and dependency on, news media as an entity (Couldry, 2012; Silverstone, 2007). This dependency, Couldry (2012) argues, is a result of the myth of centralisation. Centralisation is the belief that there is a core to society; a

single truth or natural centre that we should aspire to and base our values and way of living on. In society, many people perceive the media to hold a privileged relationship with this centre. People therefore assume that what is in the media is of greater importance than what is not in the media. Many of us believe that the topics we are presented with are of current relevance to us and that media shares all that is important enough to warrant sharing (Couldry, 2012). Couldry (2012) goes on to say that it is because of this that the media has come to act as a centre point in society and is viewed as necessary for the functioning of our organised existence. As such we use the narratives and imagery presented in the media as a resource for engaging in social dialogue. The media, in this sense, has become a primary story telling institution through which the discursive constructs of society are shared. This implies that the news media has a key function within the broader infrastructure of society, and within the conduct of social, political and economic life.

Silverstone (2007) conceptualises the centralisation of the media within society under the term mediapolis. This concept draws from the historical Greek phenomenon of the polis; a public space for face to face communication. In drawing the link between the media and the polis Silverstone (2007) locates this historical place of shared communication as a space dominated by the elite; highlighting that within the polis the capacity for debate is often dependent on the exclusion of large portions of society. In doing so Silverstone (2007) reconstitutes the media from an entity of value to a tool used for control. Silverstone (2007) is thus able to acknowledge that the provision of a public space intrinsically provides an opportunity for the participation of all; indicating that within the media exists a space in which minorities are able to engage and have their 'voice' heard throughout the greater society. Although this argument is relevant, the ability for minority voices to be heard in the news media does not come without barriers. In the instance of homelessness, Wright (2000) outlines that the voice of the homeless person is rarely heard in news media as journalists are seen to favour the voice of the expert as one of authoritative knowledge when it comes to reporting on homelessness. Klodawsky et al. (2002) argue that, as a result, the journalist is directed away from the voice of the homeless person who has a first-hand understanding of what it is to be homeless. A content analysis by Schneider et al. (2010), of four Canadian newspapers, shows that 70.7% of quotes directly related to homelessness were from 'experts' (a term inclusive of celebrities), whilst the voices of homeless or formerly

homeless people only made up 18.7% of the quotes. Important to note here is that without having any direct contact with the homeless person the journalist is more likely to view homelessness from a distance through the eyes of the non-stranger (Klodawsky et al., 2002).

The issue of accessibility to news media is not an issue specific to homelessness. In general those who are able to utilise news media and have their voice heard tend to be those from more affluent groups within society such as; politicians, health professionals, business people, and charitable groups (Hodgetts et al., 2006). The dominant presence of these groups within news media indicates that like all public spaces news media operates under an order of hierarchy (Couldry, 2012; Klodawsky et al., 2002) and as with most orders of hierarchy it is vulnerable to a misuse of power to which, Silverstone (2007) argues, it has succumb.

News media as an entity is presented to society as a neutral space free of judgement. However, as argued by Fairclough (1995), news media does more than simply present facts. It provides interpretation and judgement on issues. With interpretation and judgement comes influence and with the ability to influence comes power. Power therefore exists within the news media for the very same reason that the news media is of value; it is able to connect us with objects of geographical, economical, and sociological distance. This becomes a relevant point when we are talking about homeless people; a group of people we know are sociologically distant (Hodgetts et al., 2011; Horsell, 2006). The media's power exists in their ability to interpret and judge these objects in the process of offering us (dis)connection with them. The result of this is that the media's narratives influence the way in which the world appears to us (Silverstone, 2007).

News media and the media in general present multiple narratives however, as indicated; some of these narratives are more dominant than others. For example, in the instance of homelessness Hodgetts et al. (2006) outline that one of the dominant narratives, within news media's coverage of homelessness in the United Kingdom (UK) portrays homeless people as one-dimensional people of great social disadvantage whose problems are outside of the control of the regular domiciled person. What is depicted is a problem that is to be analysed, prevented, and solved by those within the health profession, charitable organisations, and the government. These findings are relevant to the UK, Canada, and Australia (Hodgetts et al., 2006; Schneider et al., 2010; Zufferey,

2014). Zufferey (2014) highlights that in Australia there are additional narratives that emphasise the need for this 'problem' to be urgently addressed.

Further to this, and potentially damaging, are findings regarding dominant narratives presented by news media regarding homelessness and its causes. Klowdawsky's (2002) analysis of the portrayal of homelessness in Ottawa Canada found that the news media depicted homelessness as affecting a particular group of problem-ridden others. Klowdawsky (2002) reports that the overall representation was of a group of people who are fundamentally different from the domiciled and in particular hold characteristics of haplessness that lead to an inability to look after themselves. In addressing the causes of homelessness the examined media articles over represented the presence of substance use among homeless people, to the point where Klodawsky (2002) states that the given portrayal implies substance abuse as a typical part of the homeless person's life. Through this portrayal, the media reinforces the stereotype of homelessness as being the result of a group of people who have made poor life choices. This narrative is dominant in the news media despite research illustrating that the majority of homeless people are not personally inadequate (Fiske, 1991) and despite the visibility of economical strain as a cause of homelessness (Pascale, 2005).

An understanding of the influence of dominant societal narratives on news media coverage of homelessness can be further developed in relation to the concept of framing. Framing occurs when the media selects only some aspects of a perceived reality to share with the public and then makes these aspects more prominent in their commentary of that reality. The process of framing can occur within a single sentence or over the course of a single media item. The power of framing, however, is that it occurs continuously across multiple media items on a single topic (Entman, 1995). In analysing research articles addressing the construction of homelessness in Canadian print news media, Calder, Richter, Burns, and Yuping (2011) identified that homelessness was represented under an episodic framework in 80% of newspaper articles. The episodic framework was shown to focus on the individual, assigning responsibility to them for being homeless and encouraging blame by the general public. Homeless people were found to be described as deviant, dependent, conflictual, and as having attributions that were not consistent with society.

A frame becomes dominant when a key event or narrative receives large amounts of attention from the media. The frame is reinforced because every time an

event or new piece of information, that supports the initial narrative, comes to light it is given preferential treatment over the events and information that do not support the initial narrative (Vasterman, 2005). Research by Vasterman (2005), conducted on the Dutch news media, shows that new media items echo more closely the previous coverage of the given topic than they mirror current aspects of the topic. In this sense the frame becomes a form of template that is used by journalists, and the public alike, to make sense of new stories and information (Kitzinger, 2000). This implies that once a frame becomes the dominantly accepted 'truth' within society it becomes very hard to shift (Tuchman, 1978).

The binary categorisation of homeless people as deserving and undeserving is a strong example of this. The categorisation first appearedin news media text in 1849-1850 in a series of articles written by Henry Mayhew for the *Morning Chronical* (Mayhew, 1862). In 1862 these articles were compiled into three volumes and published as the book '*London Labour and The London Poor'*. In this text people experiencing homelessness are referred to as 'vagrants', 'tramps', 'beggars', 'casuals' and 'the houseless' with each term representing a different class of homeless person. The narrative around each group being distinctly different however combines to create a meta-narrative that works to distance homeless people and support existing power structures. The underlying themes of these narratives fall into one of two groups; the homeless that deserve assistance and the homeless that are undeserving. The deserving are seen to be those who are 'temporarily destitute' such as unemployed men looking for labour, their wives and children, and the infirmed or elderly. These people are spoken about as being "the better class of casual and those for whom [assistance is] expressly designed" (Mayhew, 1862, p. 374). Whereas the vagrants and beggars are viewed as undeserving of help as "[they] are most distinguished by their aversion to continuous labour of any kind…[despite] belong[ing] expressly to the able-bodied class" (Mayhew, 1862, p. 369-370) and are considered to be "one of the most restless, disconnected, vicious, and dangerous elements of society" (Mayhew, 1862, p. 373). Such binary categorisation of homeless people continues to occur in current day news media (Zufferey, 2014) despite the widely accepted knowledge that homelessness occurs through a complex combination of individual circumstance and broad social and economic factors (Anderson & Christian, 2003; Crane et al., 2005; Ji, 2006; McNaughton, 2008; Nicholls, 2009).

Through choosing to call attention to specific aspects of a topic, whilst overlooking others, the media exercise considerable symbolic power in how a social problem, such as homelessness, is viewed by society (Blumer, 1971). Framing influences the problem's definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993). A key example of this, in relation to the current study, is shown by Martin (2011) who found that over time the US news media's construction of "affordable housing" changed from a narrative about the difficulty of the poor to secure permanent accommodation, to a discussion regarding the ability of the middle-class to purchase property. The concept "affordable housing" therefore became less about meeting the housing needs of the poor and more about the private home ownership market. Martin (2011) goes on to state that this change in narrative resulted in reduced political and social attention on the housing needs of the poor. Thus that which becomes invisible and unnoticed in the dominant narratives of the media loses support in the policies and practices of the public.

Through the process of framing the media provides us with positions in which to locate ourselves and/or the other. Positioning, as outlined by Burr (2003), is the discursive practice that bring discourses, and therefore their power, to life. It is important to note that a single news media item will offer the reader multiple positions and that the position the reader takes up is dependent on them as a social subject (Fiske, 1987). The consumption of media is therefore a negotiated process that occurs between the media item and its reader (S Hall, 1980). What this implies is that meaning is not simply garnered from a text as it is read by the person but that meaning is determined at the point where the person's social history meets the social structure of the text thus acknowledging that the reader comes to the text with a history, socio-economic status, gender, age, religion, and so forth (Fiske, 1987). Here the word 'determine' is not intended to imply an automatically given meaning. Rather it is used as a reference to the process of delimiting, or setting the boundaries, from which the reader is able to build their understanding (Fiske, 1987). The consumption of media as a negotiated process between text and reader therefore outlines that the positions taken from a text are determined by both the position of the text and the position of the reader (Fiske, 1987). This enables us to acknowledge the role of the reader without undermining the concept of media texts holding symbolic power.

In discussing the news media as a site for the promotion of dominant narratives it is important to acknowledge that news media outlets are more than sites of narrative distribution. They are material institutions involving the work of humans and all the associated power relations and complexities that come with that. In addition to this media institutions, and therefore media items, are subject to the complexities of cultural, economic, and political pressures (Fairclough, 1995).

News Media, Dominant Narratives, and the Promotion of Political Contestation

The (mis)representation of homeless people through the given dominant narratives used by the media and as outlined above matters on a number of levels (McCarthy, 2013). The news media's representation of homelessness holds implications for how homeless people are received in public, it impacts on the progress made towards ending homelessness, and it shapes the way homeless people see themselves (Hodgetts et al., 2011; McCarthy, 2013). Mediated identities of homeless people, like all people, are strongly connected to how homeless people are seen by others (Goffman, 2012). As McCarthy (2013) outlines, one's identity is dependent on the recognition and acceptance of the identity within the wider community. McCarthy (2013) also shows that homeless people draw on dominant narratives of homelessness when shaping their own identities. In addition to these findings Hodgetts et al. (2006) identify that, like the domiciled, homeless people draw upon the media for their understanding of social concerns, inclusive of homelessness. In talking with a group of homeless people, through the use of narrative interviews and photo-based discussion, Hodgetts et al. (2006) found that media portrayals of homeless people were often used by homeless people themselves as a reference point in conceptualising their own situation. These homeless people were seen to accept some aspects of the media's portrayal of homelessness, whilst contesting others, specifically as a means of reducing the social distance between themselves and the domiciled. Findings that were echoed in a New Zealand study (Hodgetts et al., 2008). The participants of a 2008 study showed a strong understanding of how the portrayal of homelessness within the media influenced their lives. In particular they articulated a sense of being persecuted and lacking belonging with their community. An important point of interest is that the homeless participants of the study were equally as likely as the domiciled to use media characterisations as a point of differentiation between themselves and 'other' homeless people. Thus it could

be argued that, like domiciled people, homeless people are also subject to defining those experiencing a lack of housing as 'others'.

A lack of context is evident in the news media's depiction of homelessness (Hodgetts et al., 2006; Huckin, 2002; Pascale, 2005; Zufferey, 2014). At its most basic Pascale (2005) identifies a lack of given context through the news media using the term 'the homeless' in reference to any person without a house. Referring to the US news media Pascale (2005) states that in most instances this term is used as the first defining characteristic of the person, or group of people, being discussed. Pascale (2005) argues that, in many instances, the media's use of the term 'the homeless' appears to be a sufficient enough description for them to warrant a lack of any other personal details of the person such as gender, age, and nationality. Without definitions of gender or race Pascale (2005) outlines that the subject brought forward through using the term 'the homeless' is that of the white male. Such findings are also supported by Klodawsky et al. (2002) and Lee, Link, and Toro (1991). More boldly, Pascale (2005) states that the media's use of the term 'the homeless', in the absence of any further personal characteristics, is in line with a racial slur used to dehumanise the person to whom it is referring.

Again in a research project addressing the US news media, Huckin (2002) identified that a lack of context or 'silences' (omissions of information pertinent to the topic at hand) within the news media lead to a depiction of homeless people that failed to reference 60% of the factors related to the cause of, effects of, public response to, and demographic data of homelessness. As Silverstone (2007) highlights the provision of narratives without context removes the complex realities from the object that is being presented. The result of this he argues is that the consumer is absolved of any moral responsibility toward the object (Silverstone, 2007). What this identifies is that narratives regarding homelessness are as much about what *is not* presented in the news media as they are about what *is* presented in the news media (Huckin, 2002).

Proctor (2008) outlines the importance of questioning the conscious, unconscious, and structural production of textual silences such as these and identifying whether they are brought about by neglect, forgetfulness, secrecy, or suppression. Regardless of cause Proctor (2008) outlines that textual silences should be viewed as active constructs that are made, maintained, and manipulated by people and organisations. Under this framework textual silences are labelled as ignorant and it is

argued that textual silences are used as a specific tool to encourage ignorance in the wider population. In labelling textual silences as ignorant Proctor (2008) specifically aims to position news media silences within the political landscape and to encourage researchers to question the naturalness, cause, and distribution of textual silences. Under the political sphere textual silences are more accurately referred to as hegemonic silences.

Slater (2014) takes this argument further outlining that the ignorant framing of social problems such as poverty and homelessness must be viewed as a strategic ploy by right wing governments in a bid to manufacture doubt regarding the structural causes associated with these problems. Specifically Slater (2014) ties the production of ignorance and hegemonic silences to neoliberal governments. It is argued that hegemonic silences promote ignorant framings of social issues that minimise the role of government failings in the creation of these issues. The ignorant framing of social issues such as the framings of homelessness shown above (Calder et al., 2011; Fiske, 1991; Klodawsky et al., 2002; Zufferey, 2014) are said to be promoted by neoliberal governments as a means of promoting public doubt regarding the structural causes of said issues. More specifically Slater (2014) argues that neoliberal governments use hegemonic silences to produce an ignorant framing that reduces and simplifies social issues to phenomenon that occur due to the behaviours and choices of individual people. In doing so, it is argued that neoliberal right-wing governments are able to divert attention away from the nature and extent of inequality caused through the complex historical and political failings of the neoliberal political structure (Slater, 2014). In the process of doing so the government places emphasis on the individual specifically in the form of 'celebrating' individual responsibility. As a result the government is able to justify reductions in welfare funding whilst increasing measures of control, brought down on only those who 'lack' individual responsibility, as an effective means of addressing the social issues caused through inequality (Wacquant, 2001b). Such governance is identified by Wacquant (2001b) as liberal-paternalism as it is ultimately liberal towards those at the 'top' such as businesses and the privileged class and paternalist towards those at the 'bottom' within the underclass. This paternal treatment of the underclass is known as penal welfare (Wacquant, 2008).

The relationship between the news media and politics is of particular interest to this study given that there is no national government policy addressing homelessness in

New Zealand and the knowledge that the media and government "are constantly involved in negotiations over the political agenda that is publically communicated and the frames in which contested issues and political realities are defined" (Brants & Voltmer, 2011, p. 4). Brants and Voltmer (2011) state that both the government and the media rely on each other to achieve their objectives; politicians need the media to gain publicity, and the media needs politicians as sources of authoritative information. Brants and Voltmer (2011) argue that news media outlets have transitioned from organisations of *mediation*; the straight transmission of messages through media technologies, to organisations that participate in mediatisation; the occurrence of political organisations becoming dependent on, and shaped by, mass media. A theory that they support through the research of Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) and Stromback (2008).

The concept of mediatisation acknowledges that political institutions are organisations that function under their own rules and objectives however it also outlines political institutions as having a level of dependence on the media which ultimately affects their operation, practices, and political decision making (Brants & Voltmer, 2011). Brants and Voltmer (2011) outline that this dependency has occurred due to the commercialisation of the media and the need that this brings for media organisations to respond to their market audience. It is argued that through placing emphasis on the needs and interests of the audience in covering political news, political news has become de-politicised. The result of this is a society that has shifted away from ideologies that value policies as a coherent package towards a society that looks for pragmatic, single use solutions (Brants & Voltmer, 2011); a society to whom political institutions must still respond to.

Conclusion

Despite high levels of public and academic interest in homelessness, most domiciled people live a life far removed from this social issue. As a result the domiciled often hold misconceptions, or single sided stories, regarding 'the homeless' (Johnson et al., 2008). Assumptions are often made regarding homeless people as having personal inadequacies such as substance use issues, mental illness, or a lack of character (Klodawsky et al., 2002; Pascale, 2005; Schneider et al., 2010). Under this construction the blame for poverty is removed from possible systemic failures and instead is placed with the failings of the individual (Pascale, 2005; Zufferey, 2014). The construction of homelessness under this framework removes the domiciled person's sense of need for social action (Schneider

et al., 2010). As a result, society's sense of responsibility toward creating meaningful interventions and policies that sufficiently addresses homelessness is eroded (Bullock et al., 2001; Greenberg, May, & Elliott, 2006; Klodawsky et al., 2002; Schneider et al., 2010; Zufferey, 2014).

As indicated above, Aotearoa/New Zealand currently has no national overview or plan to address homelessness and the issue remains low priority in regard to national policy (Richards, 2009). As a social issue we know that the more social recognition homelessness receives the more likely it is to be the subject of discussion and political action within the government (Blumer, 1971; Buck, Toro, & Ramos, 2004). Hodgetts and Chamberlain (2014) outline that as an entity central to society news media can play a significant role in fostering understanding, support, ignorance, discrimination, and dominance in areas of social inequality. In doing so the news media has the ability to maintain or weaken intergroup relations, political structures and social policies (Hodgetts et al., 2010; Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014). Under the framework of social constructionism Burr (2003) argues that as language is the place where identities are built, maintained and challenged, then it is also the place from which we should drive change. This reference to Burr (2003) is not intended to imply that the process of change is easy, nor that it will occur from the findings of a single thesis but rather it is used to validate the relevance of this thesis in questioning the representation of homelessness as it currently exists in the language of New Zealand's news media.

In seeking to identify the construction of homelessness in news media the research will ask what is the construction of homelessness in Aotearoa/New Zealand online news media? In doing so this research aims to gain an understanding of the symbolic power that current news media narratives hold over homelessness; identify alternative and marginalised narratives; and contribute to a discussion for disrupting and challenging current dominant constructions.

Through examining homelessness under the qualitative epistemology of social constructionism this thesis removes homelessness from the data-driven or cognitive necessitated domains of quantitative research and places it within the context of people and their relationships. In doing so it makes homelessness the responsibility of all persons within our society who are engaging in active communal interchange (Gergen, 1985).

The remainder of this thesis will be presented in four chapters. The following chapter (Chapter 2) deals with methodical issues. In this chapter I have included the ethical proceedings I undertook prior to conducting this research, the analytic methods used in producing this research, as well as the limitations associated with this thesis. In addition to this I have outlined my position as the researcher and sole reader of the empirical material analysed. Chapter three outlines the plot synopsis of the empirical material. The aim of this chapter is to provide an outline of the overall trajectory/news story of the news media items captured within the empirical material. Through the provision of this trajectory the plot synopsis highlights the key developments of the overall news story of homelessness, identifies the main characters of the news story, and outlines the key sources used throughout the news story. Chapter four consists of the analysis which outlines dominant and marginalised themes identified within the empirical material and uses relevant extracts to demonstrate and support these themes. The final chapter involves the research discussion. This section speaks to the main findings of the research within the context of the existing literature. In discussing the main findings in relation to existing literature I theorise what these findings mean for the public construction of homelessness in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and those people experiencing it.

Chapter Two: Method

This chapter outlines the methods used to conduct the current study and is divided into six sections. Section one is a brief introduction that conceptualises the role of analysing news media in the context of social science and society. In addition to this it offers a brief theorisation of the thematic and media analysis techniques employed in this project and outlines how these techniques sit within the epistemology of social constructionism. Section two outlines the ethics process undertaken prior to commencing the current study. The third section outlines the details of the empirical material used to conduct the current research. This section outlines where the empirical material was sourced from, the reason for doing this, and the steps under which the material was gathered. Section four outlines the steps taken in conducting the research analysis. In section five I outline my personal position as the researcher of this project in acknowledgment of the role of reflexivity in analysing news media. Lastly section six outlines the limitations associated with the current research project.

Analysing News Media

News media as an entity articulates and spreads the events, identities, culture, and political spheres of national, international, and global society to the majority of society's margins (Silverstone, 2007). People use news media to access information, stay informed, maintain their sense of position within society, as well as for entertainment (Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2008). This makes the news media a component that is central to the structure of our everyday life. As a result the news media plays a significant role in shaping the political, social, and economic boundaries in which our society exists (Couldry, 2012; Silverstone, 2007). With the internet has come an increased breadth of news media. It has become common place for people to consume, and share, news stories via social media, internet websites, and personal devices (Silverstone, 2007). As a result the media continues to gain traction as an entity central to the construction of society's moral order and everyday life.

Due to this, the exploration of online news media as empirical material has the potential to provide an understanding of the ongoing social problems of society. Through examining news media we are able to gain understanding of the taken-for-granted frameworks that legitimise and maintain social issues, such as homelessness, and the approaches 'we' use when addressing them (Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2008).

News media, and its construction of the world and the world's people, provides relevant material to assess when wanting to create a level of change within society (Silverstone, 2007). This is so as the news media does more than simply mimic what it is they are (re)presenting. Through the process of mediation the news media cannot avoid contributing to the embodying principles of the events, identities, culture, and political spheres that it is (re)presenting (Coleman, 2011). As a result the news media holds the ability to influence society's understanding and support as well as ignorance and discrimination of social events and groups (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014). What this indicates is that the news media holds a significant level of symbolic power. As originally stated by Lefort (1986) and outlined by Coleman (2011, p. 40) "power belongs to the individual or individuals who speak in the name of the people and give them their name".

The benefit of examining the news media's construction of social issues lies in the opportunity it creates for social scientists to question society's existing dialogues, highlight whose perspectives are advantaged, whose perspectives are disadvantaged, and how this may sustain or undermine intergroup relations (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014). In addition to this examining news media creates opportunities for social scientists to collaborate with journalists and change the representation of issues, such as homelessness, within the media that may be perceived as problematic for the group that is being represented (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014). Such collaborations in regard to the news media's representation of homelessness have been undertaken previously and proven to be successful (Hodgetts et al., 2008). It must be noted that the above is stated, and the current research was conducted, under the caution that researchers must be careful to not be overly deterministic regarding the news media's power and its influence on society's understanding and social practices (Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2008; Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014). This is so as research (e.g., Hodgetts, Hodgetts, & Radley, 2006) shows us that news items are interpreted differently by different consumers.

The method used in this thesis was informed by thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and news media analysis (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014). Thematic analysis was chosen as it is not wedded to a specific theoretical framework and can, therefore, be used under a myriad of epistemologies. Applied under the framework of social constructionism thematic analysis allows for the theorisation of the sociocultural

contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the narratives evident within a given text (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The epistemology of social constructionism is applied very broadly in the context of this research. Emphasis is placed on social constructionism as a tool for allowing the exploration of language as something that positions people within power structures (Parker, 2005). In addition to this social constructionism is used as it moves the psychological focus away from the person as a single entity and instead focuses on the social structures of society (Burr, 2003). It is through this shift in focus that I examine the narratives of the news media as they relate to homelessness.

News media analysis, as presented by Hodgetts and Chamberlain (2014), was chosen as it allows for analysis to look beyond the empirical material to locate the meaning of the given news items as they exist within the socio-political contexts and practices of society. Under this framework emphasis is placed on the importance of conducting the analysis in a manner that makes links to these social practices. This move from the focus on the 'individual', albeit the individual news item, to a focus on the social structures of society in which the individual news items exist fits well with the epistemology of social constructionism.

News media analysis conducted in this manner allows for the researcher to look at how social issues such as homelessness are played out in the public arena, who are produced by the media as the key characters involved in the social issue, and how these characters roles are constructed. To the same extent analysis conducted in this manner allows for the identification of the key characters that remain absent in the news media's construction of the social issue. In identifying such absences this model of news media analysis summons analytic thinking that allows the researcher to challenge discriminatory news media practices and the resulting symbolic power (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014).

Ethics

In line with Massey University's Code of Ethical Conduct the current research project was deemed low risk as it is a textual analysis of publically available information and does not require the use of participants. As a result a Low Risk Notification form was submitted to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee for approval. Approval was subsequently provided on the 3rd of March 2015 and the research project was recorded on the Low Risk Database held by Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

Media Materials

The empirical material analysed for the current research project was gathered from stuff.co.nz. Stuff.co.nz is a New Zealand news website published by Fairfax Digital. The website hosts news articles printed from all Fairfax New Zealand news media publications inclusive of The Dominion Post, The Press, and the news tabloid The Sunday Star-Times, as well as articles specifically published for STUFF as an online news website. At the time of conducting this research, STUFF held an Alexa ranking of six in New Zealand's top websites. New Zealand's main alternative news website, nzherald.co.nz, was ranked at number seven (Alexa Internet, 2015). It must however be noted that exact figures for the number of visits to each site per day, month, and year were not available.

I chose to analyse data from STUFF due to online news media consumption being significantly more popular than the medium of print newspapers (Newman, Levy, & Kleis Nielsen, 2015). However Fairfax's use of media convergence, as noted by the publication of articles across both their online and offline news platforms, makes the distinction between these two mediums difficult to ascertain.

The research corpus consisted of 103 newspaper articles that appeared on STUFF over a two year period between 1st of June 2013 to the 1st of June 2015. Articles were sourced from the Newztext online database accessed through the Massey University Library. Newztext was used because it allowed for the filtering of articles specific to those published on STUFF. A keyword search was conducted using the terms; homeless*, homelessness, vagrant*, squat*, 'street people', panhandling, streeties, 'street life', 'window washers', squeegee, 'affordable housing', 'Housing New Zealand', 'street prostitution', and 'boarding house*'. The search was limited to articles published within the above time frame and the key words 'earthquake', 'quake', 'Vanuatu', and 'Nepal' were used to create exclusion criteria. The keywords earthquake and quake were designed to eliminate articles on homelessness that related specifically to the events of the 2009 Christchurch earthquake as well as the 2015 Nepalese earthquake. The keywords 'Vanuatu' and 'Nepal' were included to eliminate homelessness as caused by the 2015 natural disasters in these countries.

A secondary search using the above keywords was conducted on stuff.co.nz directly. This search was conducted to ensure that all articles, relevant to homelessness and published on STUFF within the given time frame, were captured in the data corpus.

This search subsequently produced articles not available through Newztext. The search capabilities of STUFF did not allow for date or keyword exclusions. As a result a manual filter was conducted to ensure that only relevant articles were selected. Articles were considered to be relevant if their main focus was on homelessness, the key person within the story was homeless, or the main issue discussed was one that related directly to homeless people such as the myriad of articles on anti-begging bylaws.

Analysis Process

An initial reading of the research corpus was conducted and a plot synopsis of the ongoing news story was outlined. The development of a plot synopsis was used as a means of understanding the overall trajectory of news coverage under the premise that each news item is an instalment in the ongoing news story of homelessness. A plot synopsis is a descriptive piece of writing that notes key developments, the introduction of new media sources, and changes in the focus of the story over the period of the empirical material (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014). The newspaper articles making up the empirical material tended to be reasonably short and brief in nature with little in depth information provided. Paragraphs often consisted of a single line of text that briefly quoted one of a number of different sources featured in each article. Direct quotes were found to be recycled across newspaper articles on a number of occasions.

A second reading of the corpus was then undertaken using a media grid. A media grid is a tool used to break open texts. Through answering specific questions developed by the researchers a media grid assists the researcher to examine the form and content of news items at a detailed level that addresses the main research goals. Gridding allows the researcher to de-familiarise news items and explore emerging news patterns. I developed a media grid that specifically focused on the following points; what is the location of the news item?; what sources are presented in the news item?; is the information provided by the source opinion, knowledge, or experience?; is the voice of 'the homeless' present?; what is the given characterisation of 'the homeless' person?; what is the nature of the presented relationship between 'the housed' and 'the homeless'?; what tone is used in depicting 'the homeless'?; are the personal characteristics of 'the homeless' person presented?; are there any notable silences within the news item?; is 'problem' ownership of homelessness acknowledged or assigned to anybody?; is homelessness depicted as an independent failing or structural

failing?; is ignorance towards homelessness present?; is a solution to homelessness discussed?

After analysing a number of articles under this framework it was determined that the addition of a column used to include any relevant data extracts would provide contextual information to the media grid. As a result all articles were then gridded with the addition of 'relevant data extracts'. Data extracts were pulled from each news item and coded using inductive and deductive coding techniques. Deductive codes were created prior to the initial reading of the data corpus and were developed from the main themes identified in existing literature. The development of deductive codes was seen as important as these codes allowed for the data to be examined at a level that addresses the broader societal process at play (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014). Deductive codes included, but were not limited to, choice, hegemonic silence, structural failings, individual deficits, and the homeless other. Inductive codes were developed post the initial reading and prior to media gridding. During the process of gridding additional codes were added as identified. Inductive codes included, but where not limited to, ignorance, system failings, lack of problem ownership, humanising, citizenship, and need for control.

The next step in the analysis process consisted of the researcher developing main themes. This was done though considering each code individually and grouping codes together. Codes were grouped according to patterns of inter-relatability. I then assigned a single theme to each code grouping, resulting in the development of nine main themes. The themes selected were deemed to capture a pattern of responses or meaning within the data corpus that was relevant to the research question and/or existing literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The nine themes developed were;

- Ignorance, the data indicates a lack of knowledge and understanding of homelessness and homeless people;
- Humanising/Citizenship, the data offers human qualities and/or citizenship to the homeless person or people;
- Homeless Other, the data positions the homeless person or people as being different from the domiciled and existing outside of 'their' society;
- Media sensationalism, the data highlights homelessness in a sensationalist manner that aims to provoke public interest or excitement;

- Structural failings, the data indicates that how we operate as a society is not structurally sound as it overlooks or fails the vulnerable or those in need;
- System Inadequacies, the data identifies current inadequacies in the Government's or Non-Government Organisation's (NGO) systems that are designed to assist homeless people;
- Individual deficits, the data indicates homelessness as a result of the person's individual failings or deficits;
- Awareness raising, the data shares or expresses a viewpoint that highlights an alternative view to the many stereotypes or misconceptions of homelessness;
- Need for control, the data depicts homeless people and homelessness as an issue that needs to be controlled, with control being specifically depicted as a solution to homelessness.

All extracts from the corpus relevant to each theme were placed together and examined to ensure themes were coherent (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014). At this time the theme 'need for control' was added to the theme 'Structural failings'. In addition to this the theme 'structural failings' was deemed too similar to 'system inadequacies' to be housed independently, but significant enough to be given independent recognition and as a result it was placed as a sub-theme under this category. These two themes may be viewed as very similar and/or interchangeable by some. However the researcher approached these codes as two separate themes. My interpretation is that "structural failings" refers to the failings of society as a whole with the idea that homelessness is everyone's problem and the blame cannot simply sit with a single entity. 'System inadequacies' on the other hand is seen to be the specific lack of or failings of services that are currently in place, i.e., the lack of government housing, the failing of social services, and a general lack of funding.

Through examining the extracts from the corpus in relation to their given theme the researcher was able to identify three themes (individual deficit, system inadequacies, and humanising/citizenship) for analysis. These themes were selected for further analysis due to the consistency, strength and cohesion of the relevant data extracts contained within them. Analysis from this point forward was conducted with the aim of creating an analytic story that provided a logical and cohesive overview of the key themes, building meaning around the data and indicating the social processes within which the media's depiction of homelessness is imbedded (Hodgetts & Chamberlain,

2014). A separate analysis was conducted for each individual theme and each theme was considered within the context of the broader research question, existing literature, and the researcher's argument. Existing literature was used to examine and integrate the current data into an analysis that was able to contribute to the current understandings of homelessness and the media's role in its standing within society (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014).

Reflexivity

I will briefly outline my position as the researcher of this thesis. Reflexivity is mentioned as it acknowledges the position of the researcher in the research process (Sue, 2015) and the influence this may have on the researcher's relationship with the research subject (Chavez, 2008). Prior to commencing this project my experience and understanding of homelessness was specific to my experience as a support worker in a Melbourne based drop-in day centre that catered specifically to homeless adults. I worked at this centre for a period of two years in the role of Initial Assessment and Planning. Acting in this role I was the first point of contact for anyone new to the centre and to those clients who wished to access homelessness services, emergency accommodation, state-housing, or who needed financial assistance for their current lodgings. The nature of this role required me to gather a significant amount of detail regarding the person's current circumstances including financial status, personal relationships, physical and mental health, substance use, and housing history. Through this role I gained significant insight into the heterogeneous nature of homelessness and those people experiencing homelessness. I also gained a significant understanding of the barriers homeless people face in trying to assist themselves out of their current situation. Specifically these barriers were identified as a lack of resources and funding within the NGO and government sectors. In addition to this, through repeated contact with a number of regular clients, I got to understand the varying personal stories, individual characteristics, and range of personalities of people experiencing homelessness.

Research limitations

The current research analyses news items regarding homelessness as located in STUFF with the aim of revealing the socio-political context in which homelessness is represented, whose perspectives of homelessness are supported, and whose perspectives are marginalised. Such analysis is valuable in its ability to indicate the broader societal and political processes at play; however, is limited in its ability to measure the effects

these have on attitudes towards and treatment of homeless people within broader society. In addition to this, the nature of media consumption means that each individual audience member brings with them their own interpretation and meaning of the text with which they are engaging. Media consumption is a negotiated process between the reader and the media item. What this means, in the context of the current research project, is that the current findings must be viewed as my personal interpretation of the empirical material and the application of the given findings to broader society should not be assumed. However in stating this it should also be noted that the resources I have drawn upon to interpret the given texts are social in origin. As a result of this it is advised that this statement should not be read in a manner that assumes a high level of idiosyncrasy.

Further to this it is acknowledged that STUFF is a single news media outlet sitting amongst multiple national and international news media providers available to New Zealand society. The current research project was limited to STUFF due to the practical considerations of time and access to empirical material. It is however acknowledged that, as a national society, we have ever increasing access to international news media and the constructions of homelessness that come with these.

To be able to draw links between the construction of homelessness as presented within the empirical narrative and the social processes under which the public's understanding of homelessness is negotiated this research project would have needed to engage in an analysis of all three levels of mass communication; production, representation, and audience reception (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014). Engaging all three levels of mass communication would provide findings of greater depth and would enable the development of knowledge regarding the organisational and professional practices at play in the production of the given construction and how this affects the attitudes and treatment of homeless people within our society (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014). The analysis of STUFF's circuit of mass communication was not undertaken for the current research project due to the time restrictions in which completion of the project was required. It is however recommended that further research assessing the circuit of mass communication in relation to the news media's construction of homelessness be undertaken. In addition to this and given the expanding nature of our access to global media, and the potential this holds in altering the views of our local society, it is recommended that further research into the news media's

construction of homelessness be conducted across a range of international news sources available to New Zealand society.

Having outlined these perceived limitations I would like to note that the use of relevant international literature in support of the current interpretation of the empirical material at the level of news media representation has still enabled me to raise valid and interesting points regarding STUFF's construction of homelessness. Despite the limitations of this project these findings should not be overlooked should we wish to seek change in the way homelessness is viewed and addressed within our society.

Prior to moving on to the discussion of these points the thesis will first outline the plot synopsis and the analysis of the empirical material. These sections are situated in chapters three and four respectively. The analysis will be followed by the fifth and final chapter of the thesis which contains the discussion.

Chapter Three: Plot Synopsis

The following chapter outlines the trajectory of the overall news story of homelessness as identified from the empirical material. The aim of providing this plot synopsis is to highlight the key story lines and developments within the empirical material as it stands as an overall news story of homelessness. In addition to this the plot synopsis is used to outline the main characters presented throughout the empirical sample as well as outline the key sources used by STUFF in accessing information on homelessness.

The plot synopsis has been created in a manner that focuses on the first four news articles of the sample period. These four articles are used as a means of outlining the common characters and issues regarding STUFF's construction of homelessness that is present across the empirical material, as well as the common news items embedded in the evolving narrative. This strategy has been used, and deemed appropriate, for presenting the overall story structure of the empirical material as the news story of homelessness has been identified as highly repetitive, redundant, and reflects a well-developed media template (Kitzinger, 2000). During the process of this research it was concluded that all four of these news items accurately reflected the characters, sources, and main story lines presented within the empirical material. Further material was not deemed to be required for the plot synopsis as it would not provide any further information that is not already available through outlining these first four news items. However to finish I outline the last four articles of the empirical sample simply as a means of indicating where this research project leaves the news narrative.

The empirical material picks up the narrative of homelessness with the article *'Boss' evicted from his 'own castle'* (Ashby-Coventry, 2013). 'Boss', also known as Bruce Wilson, is a homeless man who has been squatting in an abandoned property in Temuka for the past two months. Boss has been issued with an eviction notice as the house is soon to be sold. The council have been working to sell the house as a means of reclaiming unpaid rates. Although it must be noted that the house is not actually listed on the market until six months after this article is printed as is outlined in the article *Abandoned home for sale* (Littlewood, 2013). As a result of his eviction Mr Wilson says he will move across the road to the local park where he will sleep under a park bench.

He states he does not want to live in a homeless shelter, rather Mr Wilson says he "want[s] to be the king of [his] own castle" (Ashby-Coventry, 2013, para. 4).

Other than outlining a few operational matters the council makes no comment regarding Mr Wilson and his current circumstance. An unnamed local resident, however, does speak out for Mr Wilson. The resident states that members of the community have felt safer knowing Mr Wilson is staying in the house and they have provided him with blankets and food. The local resident is angry Mr Wilson is being evicted from the house stating "it's a waste of a house" (Ashby-Coventry, 2013, para. 9).

As a single homeless male, Boss embodies a prominent character across the news narrative for the sample period. Throughout the research corpus the reader is introduced to a number of single male characters who are sleeping rough or living in squats. Like Boss, some are given personal characteristics that humanise them such as aspirations and relatable feelings. In one instance, *Homeless candidate pushes for poor* (Abadia, 2013), we are introduced to Wayne Young, a 60 year old man who is running for Auckland mayor despite living in his car. In this instance we learn of the events behind Mr Young's homelessness which occurred after the business owner became bankrupt due to a lengthy legal dispute regarding his leaky home. However, this article is not representative of the majority of news items and in most instances these men remain only known by their first name, age, and general happenings of their current day-to-day lives. In instances where this plotline is extended to include a more detailed account of the person it tends to be done in a manner that supports the current characterisation of homeless people, such as the criminal or the victim. Homelessness within the narrative of the single male is often depicted as, or implied to be, an issue associated with choice, substance use, mental health, a lack of personal character, or victimisation as a child.

Within the sample period there is one newspaper article, *Christchurch sex workers: Life on Manchester street* (Robinson, 2015a), that profiles Christchurch's female street prostitutes. The characters introduced in this story are also homeless. The issue of childhood victimisation is emphasised in this article in addition to the strong characteristics of homelessness as a choice or as an issue related to substance misuse. The depiction of these women is in line with the single homeless male and an opposing view to that of the common homeless women character featured in other articles. In

these alternative articles the common characteristic of the female homeless women is the single mother who has fallen on difficult times and from grace.

The second article in the empirical sequence, *City council acts on rise in 'opportunist' begging* (Heather, 2013a), introduces readers to coverage of street begging. Specifically, it discusses the implementation of an alternative giving campaign being rolled out in Wellington. The city council has decided to install charity boxes around the city due to the "hounding of pedestrians by beggars" (Heather, 2013, para. 1). Central city retailers advise the newspaper that there has been a rise in opportunistic beggars. These beggars are outlined as young, aggressive, and not in desperate need as evidenced by their use of tailored cigarettes and expensive energy drinks.

Local councillor Stephanie Cook supports the claims that begging is on the rise and adds that complaints from the public regarding begging have also increased. The campaign aims to direct people away from giving money to beggars and instead encourages the public to make a donation, using their cell phone, to one of six Wellington charities that support homeless people. Wellington Night Shelter (WNS) is one of the six charities that could benefit from the alternative giving campaign. Mike Leon, the WNS service manager, outlines that there is an element of opportunistic begging but that most people begging are in genuine need. In addition to this the article quotes the Downtown Community Ministry who show that there are 10-20 people begging in central Wellington. It is outlined that "about half are homeless, many are feeding addiction and a few are simply opportunist" (Heather, 2013, para. 11). The article finishes by outlining that Wellington beggars, spoken to the day prior, "all claimed to be homeless and said they used their proceeds for food and travel" (Heather, 2013, para. 17).

The plotline of street begging is a dominant narrative throughout the empirical sample. Most commonly this issue is discussed in conjunction with the development or implementation of new council bylaws across Auckland, Wellington, and Hamilton and within the context of alternative giving campaigns across Wellington and Palmerston North. The discussed bylaws are outlined as being aimed at reducing aggressive and nuisance behaviour, such as aggressive begging, intoxication, and defecating and sleeping in public. The bylaws are outlined by the council to function as a frame work under which they can target those engaging in these behaviours should they be disruptive to the public. These behaviours are framed as being on the rise in city centres.

Again the common character associated with begging is the single male. This character is presented through the journalist's use of direct quotes from beggars asking for their opinion on the implementation of the outlined bylaws. The voice of the homeless person is otherwise limited throughout the entire sample narrative and, when it is featured, does not go beyond a small quote sharing the person's opinion or small example of their experience.

Additional common characters presented across the coverage on begging are the city retailer, the city councillor, and the non-government organisation (NGO) manager. These sources become a common feature across the majority of articles within the empirical material analysed for this thesis and are often directly quoted. The use of, and heavy reliance on, direct quotes is a common feature of the news articles captured in the empirical material. Direct quotes are frequently linked together to create the bases of a single news article with limited journalistic 'voice' seen in between quotes. Although the direct voice of the journalist is notably absent across the majority of the narrative it is important to note the journalist's role as the 'ventriloquist' in constructing these news items (Coleman, 2011). Through the process of aggregating quotes the journalist determines the construction of what it is they are representing (Coleman, 2011). Ultimately the point of view, or construction of the topic, seen in the narrative is the point of view the producer of the narrative supports (Tuchman, 1972).

The quotes cited across the media corpus tend to be reflective of the source's opinion of, or experience with, the current topic and are presented in the absence of detailed or factual information regarding the given topic. With regard to the issue of begging, and the development of related bylaws, the use of direct quotes commonly constructs begging as an issue that is on the rise and is detrimental to inner city businesses.

Unique to coverage of begging is supplementary material in the form of newspaper opinion pieces. Across the sample period seven opinion pieces regarding begging are published. These news items present strongly worded arguments for and against the implementation of anti-begging bylaws and often directly comment on previous opinion pieces. The narrative within these articles is often highly emotive, tends to rely heavily on personal experience and opinion, with the provision of facts being distinctly absent.

Common to opinion pieces, and seen elsewhere throughout the sample period, is the character strongly opposed to assisting homeless people. Most commonly this resistance comes from the perceived opinion that those who are homeless are so for personal reasons and in order to end their homelessness they must assist themselves. This narrative is associated with the opinion that in helping homeless people we only encourage the very behaviour we are trying to stop. Outside of the opinion piece columnist, this characteristic response is most commonly seen in the accounts of the inner city retailer and the city councillor.

The third article in the sampling period, *Warming people during winter chill* (Hunt, 2013) uses an expected cold snap to outline that 44 people are sleeping rough in Wellington. The Downtown City Ministry (DCM) will be handing out blankets to those in need amidst concerns that these people could catch pneumonia or experience exacerbated health issues. The article then outlines the weekend's weather pattern for Wellington, Hawkes Bay, Manawatu, and Taupo. This article is representative of an infrequent narrative within the sample that highlights the current manner in which homeless people are being assisted. Across the sample, assistance is shown to occur in two distinct categories; food, bedding, and clothing, which is provided by the domiciled volunteer and NGOs, and emergency accommodation, day centres, and social housing which are provided by NGOs, council, and government. A common issue raised across this storyline is the need for more assistance at the council and government level with domiciled volunteers and NGOs frequently highlighting a need for further resources and funding.

The final article in the initial four, *Gimme Shelter* (Coster, 2013)*,* discusses the dozens of people in New Plymouth who are relying on emergency or temporary accommodation. The article is sparked by a recent government announcement outlining that the Ministry of Social Development will be taking over state housing applications, will be implementing renewable tenancies, and income related rent subsidies will be applied to approved community housing providers. The government outline that the changes are aimed at improving the variety of social housing available and to improve system effectiveness and levels of support. However, Brain Eriksen, head of Community Housing Action Taranaki (CHAT), is concerned about the changes stating that he is fearful that people in genuine need will not meet state housing criteria based on their current income, assets, and housing. He outlines that people are finding it

increasingly difficult to find private rentals and afford higher rents despite working fulltime. Housing New Zealand is reported to have 1030 properties in the area. Forty two of these properties are sitting vacant. Of the vacant properties the reader is advised that 19 have been allocated to families and 23 will remain vacant due to the need for earthquake strengthening. The article goes on to outline that in addition to this there is no emergency housing for single women in the local area. Men on the other hand are being housed at New Plymouth Emergency Shelter, which can house men for up to four weeks, "giv[ing] residents time to get back on their feet" (Coster, 2013, para.6). The referrals for this emergency housing come from Prisoners Aid and Rehabilitation Society, Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ), Housing New Zealand (HNZ), and the Salvation Army. In the past month alone the shelter has dealt with 17 inquiries from prisoners and their families regarding a lack of accommodation options. The article explains that the shelter must run on funding grants and donations to stay in operation.

The range of issues and characters introduced in the *Gimme Shelter* (Coster, 2013) article is reflective of the broader narrative within the empirical material. Through this article, readers are introduced to issues associated with housing availability, affordability, and the range of current housing assistance available for those in need. In association with these topics readers are presented with three main characters; the NGO manager outlining concerns regarding the current level of demand and lack of services and funding able to meet this demand; the council or government representative who provides specific facts and figures and stands by the current solution; and the characters of the deserving homeless. The deserving homeless come in a number of forms including the single mother and children, the family, and those who are working fulltime but are unable to survive financially. Across these characterisations, the reader is introduced to a range of accommodation options currently being utilised by the deserving homeless such as garages, boarding houses, the houses of friends or family, and tents. These stories are shared through the use of personal accounts of past experiences by both the homeless person and the NGO employee. As this plotline continues across the sample period we learn of a number of regions, outside of New Zealand's main metropolises, that are also 'home' to a number of people experiencing homelessness. Through this plotline the articles outline the breadth of homelessness and the varying forms in which it is seen across New Zealand.

The last four news items collected for this thesis leave the news story of homelessness in a position that is reflective of how it began. The first of the last four articles, *Life among Christchurch's homeless* (Kirk-Anderson, 2015), is the personal account of a journalist who has spent a night squatting with a group of Christchurch's single homeless men. Again these men are only known by their first name and rather than the provision of details outlining their reasons for becoming homeless the reader is simply provided with a narrative of the night spent with this group of people. The given depiction is that of time spent accessing food through a local food van, using illegal substances, and sleeping in a cold abandoned building for the night.

The next article, *Ali Jones: Homelessness not Christchurch city council's problem* (Mann & Law, 2015) introduces the reader to a debate between local councillors regarding a proposed plan by Christchurch council to underwrite rent for homeless people to the tune of $400,000. This article raises a new issue in the form of council looking for alternative solutions to those already available. However, the structure of the article is typical of the common news item. The article is formatted as a series of quotes from a range of different councillors. Through the quotes, the reader is introduced to city councillors' opinions both for and against the proposed solution and the quotes appear in the absence of the specific details of the proposed plan.

From here the next instalment, *Marlborough baches burgled* (Williams, 2015) is a short article touching on the common character of the homeless person as a criminal or nuisance. This article outlines a series of instances where holiday homes have been broken into in the Marlborough region. Once inside the culprit has stolen food and has appeared to have slept in the property.

The last instalment of the news narrative for the sample period, *Derelict state house 'too hazardous' to clean* (Robinson, 2015), outlines a story of an abandoned state house being used as a squat for homeless people. Again the characterisation of the homeless people reflects the presence of substance misuse and criminal behaviour. Much like the initial article we are introduced to the character of the unnamed neighbour angry with the city council. However in this instance the neighbour's anger comes from the city council's refusal to clean the property. The council are refusing to do so as they have deemed the property too hazardous due to the high level of used needles. The property is depicted as a hazard to local animals and small children as a direct result of the homeless people's behaviour.

Having outlined the news trajectory of the empirical material used to conduct the current research project the thesis will now move on to an analysis of the empirical material. The analysis is supported through the use of direct quotes sourced from the empirical sample as well as relevant literature.

Chapter Four: Analysis

The media is a powerful translator of social issues (Richter et al., 2012) through which it is able to influence the principles and ideologies of a society by selecting the events, people, facts, and phenomena they share in their publications (Couldry, 2012). Media items reporting on homelessness have become common place and are a primary source of information regarding homelessness for many citizens (Schneider, Chamberlain, & Hodgetts, 2010). As a result, media representations are able to provide important insights into how homelessness may be viewed and approached within wider society (Buck et al., 2004; Fran Klodawsky et al., 2002).

The current analysis found homelessness to be constructed under the dominant themes of individual deficits and system inadequacies. These constructions are found to be encouraged throughout the narrative through the use of ignorance and hegemonic silences. In the following sections of this chapter I will argue that through the construction of homelessness under the themes of individual deficits and system inadequacies the media encourages the use of the historical and divisive narratives of 'us' and 'them' that allows for the increase, or at the very least the maintenance, of social distancing towards homeless people (Hodgetts et al., 2008). I will also show that ultimately, through the use of episodic framing across these two categories, STUFF creates a single meta narrative that faults the individual for their homelessness (Iyengar, 1990) and supports an understanding of homelessness that fits within the constructs of penal welfare.

Through the analysis I will also touch on the theme of citizenship/ humanisation. This theme is discussed only briefly as it is neither a dominant theme nor consistently present throughout the narrative. The discussion of the theme of humanisation/citizenship is however included within the analysis as a means of asserting the greater need for the presence of positive framing within the media's narrative of homelessness. This argument is made due to the utility of such a theme to debunk de-humanising misconceptions of homelessness and those people experiencing it (Kitzinger, 2000).

I will then return to the construction of homelessness under the themes of individual deficits and system inadequacies and discuss how these themes are supported through the media's recurrent use of wilful ignorance and hegemonic silences. I will argue that in addition to supporting the construction of homelessness under these

categories the use of ignorance and hegemonic silences allows the narrative to ignore the role of greater society in the development and maintenance of homelessness within our community. In doing so I will argue that the narrative fails to acknowledge the possibility of homelessness as a common cost of a neoliberal society (Jensen, 2014).

The Construction of Homelessness

Individual deficit. The theme of individual deficits is identified through a narrative that directly and indirectly implies that homelessness is a result of one's own personal failings. The construction of such deficits is linked with characterisations regarding substance use, criminal activity, mental health difficulties, a lack of personal integrity, poor life decisions, and/or homelessness as a personal choice. A key plotline that bundles many of these characteristics together to construct a picture of homelessness as a result of individual deficit is the story of begging and anti-begging bylaws. This plotline encourages an understanding of homelessness and begging as being a personal choice. Under this framing, the character of the beggar is identified as holding monetary support through the government system (King, 2014). The depiction of this character is someone who is homeless due to an overriding need to use this monetary support, in addition to that gained through begging, in order to feed their addictions (Heather, 2013a).

...10-20 people are begging in Wellington. Of these, about half are homeless, many are feeding addiction and a few are simply opportunists. (Heather, 2013a, para. 11)

In Britain they have a campaign to discourage begging by using the 'Kindness can kill' campaign - encouraging people not to give to beggars as it only helps them fund their addictions. (Lewis, 2014, para. 11)

"We have concerns that people are making donations, often cash, to homeless people. On a lot of occasions that money will not be used for the purpose it was donated" Mr Graham [Police Inspector] says. "Often the money is used to purchase alcohol and synthetic cannabis". (Street, 2014, para. 18)

Examples such as the previous extracts indicate a construction of homelessness that encourages an understanding of personal deficit as the primary cause of homelessness. Through implying that the homeless beggar has access to an income the coverage discourages the framing of begging as a need or last resort for an individual who has been failed by societal structures that result in entrenched poverty (Hodgetts et al., 2012).

> She [Diane Robertson, CEO of Auckland City Mission] said there was no need for anyone to be begging in New Zealand. "There are very few people who have no access to any income whatsoever". (Dastgheib, 2014, para. 15)

Instead, through linking homelessness to addictions, what is encouraged is a framing of these people as personally deficient. This person is different from 'us', their homelessness or need to beg is a result of their inability to manage their given finances and the characterisation of the beggar as an addict provides the reader with concrete examples as to the nature of the person's deficiencies.

Another example of STUFF linking homelessness and personal deficits is the plotline of criminality. This link is made through coverage that invokes an understanding of prisoners who find a lack of accommodation options upon release (Coster, 2013), through the reporting of the homeless character's involvement with petty crime (Day, 2014; Mcdougall, 2014; Robinson, 2014c), and through the direct reporting of the homeless character's criminal activity (Dennet, 2014; Dennett, 2015a, 2015b; "Homeless man guilty of murder," 2014, "Homeless man jailed," 2014). By directly linking the homeless person to the occurrence of criminal activity coverage further depicts homeless people as being personally responsible for their current circumstances due to poor character and decision making and anti-social behaviour. These are therefore threatening outcasts. For example in the story *David Dougherty Changes Theft Plea* ("David Dougherty changes theft plea," 2013) we learn of a homeless man who has stolen a wallet and cell-phone from the back of a community hall during a "drinking binge".

> A drinking binge by a homeless David Dougherty brought him to the Salvation Army, where he stole a wallet and a cell phone….The Palmerston North District Court heard today that on the afternoon on September 14,

> Dougherty went to the Salvation Army building on the corner of Church and
> Princess Streets, where an orchestra was rehearsing. While they played,
> members left personal items at the back of a hall, where Dougherty snuck a
> Samsung Galaxy cell phone out of a violin case. From a nearby jacket he
> pinched a wallet, containing $300 cash.
>
> Police caught up with him a short time later, still in possession of the phone and
> wallet. The cash had gone…He originally pleaded not guilty to two charges of
> theft, but changed his pleas today…Judge Ross sentenced him to 90 hours'
> community work, nine months' supervision and ordered him to repay the missing
> $300.
>
> Dougherty served three years in prison for raping and abducting an 11-year-old
> girl - crimes he did not commit. He was cleared at a 1997 re-trial and
> subsequently awarded $868,728 in compensation. In late 2010 and early 2011,
> Dougherty went on a mini-crime spree around Palmerston North, including the
> burglary of a Tremaine Ave house.

The focus of this story is the man's current plea in court and little detail is given
regarding his homelessness. Instead the story mentions on two occasions that the man
has been in jail for the rape of an 11 year old girl. A crime, the newspaper outlines, that
he did not commit and has subsequently been cleared of at re-trial. Regardless of this
later information the provision of these details places doubt over David's character. The
given depiction of David allows the reader to assume that he is someone whose
character has always been lacking. As a result the reader is able to justify his
homelessness as being a result of his personal inadequacies.

The dominant characterisation of homelessness as a personal choice is another key
narrative in the construction of homelessness as an individual deficit. Frequently this
story frame is encouraged through the voices of domiciled characters who construct
homelessness as a "lifestyle choice" (King, 2013, para. 12).

> The majority of those people [beggars], now about five or six regulars, had
> been offered support and housing, but for some, living on the streets was a
> "lifestyle choice". (King, 2013, para. 12)

The framing of homelessness as a choice occurs through both direct and indirect statements. Direct statements most frequently imply that the homeless person has alternative options to sleeping rough such as the following extract from the article *Porirua teens sleeping rough* (O'Neil, 2013, para. 1).

> Groups of teenage boys are sleeping rough in bushes and car parks in Porirua's CBD, drinking, tagging, and burgling shops under the canopies… The boys were not homeless, but chose to sleep rough on occasion, Mr Ryan [Porirua Community Guardians manager] said. "They have homes, but they're forsaking a bed for this."

Indirect statements on the other hand are shown through examples of single mothers sleeping in local parks who refuse to visit local shelters because they do not believe they are suitable for their children.

> Te Wani [single mother with 19 month old son]…refused to visit shelters provided by city agencies, as she believed they were not suitable for her and a child. (Stewart, 2014, para. 23)

Indirect statements are also made through coverage that outlines that the homeless man sleeping in an abandoned building is 'happy'.

> Uncle and his dog "B" are still sleeping in an abandoned building in the central city. He says he is happy. (Robinson, 2014b, para. 20)

The framing of homelessness as a choice encourages the idea that "the streets will always be home... it is where they are comfortable. They all have reasons… for choosing to sleep rough" (Robinson, 2014, para. 30). 'They', of course, being homeless people.

Through framing homelessness as a choice the narrative allows for homelessness to be viewed as something that "becomes a way of life that you can't do anything about" (Carville, 2013, para. 6). It also absolves other groups in society of any responsibility for the growing issue of homelessness that is closely linked to increased inequalities (Day, 2014). This framing is often encouraged through the use of quotes and statements from city councillors and retailers who oppose the idea of providing

assistance to homeless people. Most often the reluctance to offer assistance is framed under the belief that in helping homeless people with emergency accommodation and food etc., society has the ability to exacerbate the problem (Berwick, 2014; Leaman, 2014).

Invercargill Mayor Tim Shadbolt was approaching the idea with trepidation. A night shelter could exacerbate the situation and, for some, sleeping rough was a lifestyle decision, he said. "When you put out a helping hand, you've got to make sure you are not exacerbating the situation" [Tim Shadbolt]. (Berwick, 2014a, para. 12)

The group of 16 and 17 year-olds lived in Aotea Square were surviving by begging and stealing. There was no one who looked after them. Bevan [domiciled member of the public] was desperate to help Charlie [homeless youth] but the council and Auckland Mission told her to leave him alone. "They said whatever I did by continuing to visit him and bring him food and check up on him was only encouraging him to stay on the streets, and I didn't know what I was doing and I should just leave him alone". (Day, 2014, para. 6)

The issue of begging and homelessness was exacerbated by groups who fed vagrants, such as the Hamilton Homeless Trust, Turner [Business association manager] said. (Leaman, 2014, para. 14)

System inadequacies. The theme of system inadequacies warrants a depiction of a social system that is significantly failing to meet the needs of the growing precariat from which most homeless people originate. The framing of these systems as failing is encouraged through coverage that depicts a significant lack of funding and resources at the council and government level. This narrative is provided through the character of the NGO employee, the domiciled volunteer, and through individual stories of homeless families.

The term 'system inadequacies' was chosen over the phrase 'structural failings' due to the narrative's tendency to use examples of individual instances where people have fallen victim to inadequate resources within the current social welfare system. The term

'structural failings' is viewed by the writer as the failings of the current structure of society at multiple levels with the cost of these failings being homelessness and other social problems associated with poverty, structural divide, increased inequalities and the rise of the precariat. I did not identify any coverage of issues around the structure and functions of society in regards to homelessness within the news items collected over the sample period for this research.

Under the theme of system inadequacies the family unit is framed as a victim of an unaffordable housing market with "rent in the public sector [taking] 50 per cent of a modest earner's income" (Shaskey, 2013, para. 12). Families of the modest earner are depicted as being unable to pay rent as well as feed their children and pay their bills (Harvey, 2014). The outcome of this, warranted through the current coverage, are families who share inadequate accommodation with others in similar circumstances or families who end up homeless and living in makeshift tents after being evicted for missing a rent payment (Meadows, 2014).

> Carpeted garages, spare couches, port-a-cabins, caravans, makeshift tents, and even an old shipping container. This is the new reality for affordable accommodation in the country's biggest metropolis..."I've just been to a four bedroom house in Mangere - 11 children and four adults. They've got mattresses down in the lounge" Evans said. ...Another family, evicted for not paying their rent, had been found holed up in a makeshift tent under the Tuakau Bridge. (Meadows, 2014, para. 1)

Under the theme of system inadequacies coverage supports the understanding that any assistance these families are being provided with through the social welfare system is insufficient. For example, the family of five living in a West Auckland garage whilst the father finishes his studies to become a minister are depicted as receiving a total of $200 a week in income from Inland Revenue's family assistance program. Of this money $150 goes toward their rent, leaving $50 a week for all other expenses (Tischler, 2013). Like many other characters depicted through this plotline, the family earning $200 a week is not able to participate in the private rental market indicating that there is a need for government housing. This framing is congruent with related stories on public housing as a system that is also failing to meet the needs of those experiencing

homelessness. Most significant of these inadequacies is the government's initiative to sell a "surplus" of state housing (Coster, 2013) whilst some area waitlists are as long as 331 people (Priestley, 2014). The understanding of this initiative as inadequate is encouraged through the voice of the NGO employee who outlines a level of concern in the government's actions to sell state housing whilst in the same region emergency housing providers are struggling to house families in need (Coster, 2013). Through such items we also learn that many working families have been excluded from the HNZ waitlist due to not meeting HNZ criteria and despite being unable to secure permanent accommodation (Coster, 2013).

> New Plymouth emergency housing providers are puzzled with the new government initiative to sell "surplus" state houses whilst shelters are struggling to house homeless families…"none of these houses should be surplus, they should be housing some of these families that are really struggling now" Mr Eriksen [CHAT Chairman] said.
> Mr Eriksen said despite working people could still not afford to survive on what they were earning and were being pushed off the HNZ waiting list because they did not fit the criteria…He said rent in the public sector took 50 per cent of a modest earner's income and they were often evicted from their home because of lapsed rent payments. "How are they going to get out of that mess? They will just end up going to another house, getting behind on rent, then nobody will take them on and then they will be left homeless with two or three kids". (Shaskey, 2013, para. 1)

The theme of system inadequacies is frequently supported through stories that warrant a depiction of the government and their systems as being regulated in a manner that shows a lack of understanding and responsibility towards homelessness. For example, coverage highlights changes to support systems such as WINZ that have a direct negative affect on homeless people.

> Changes to the welfare system last year made it more difficult to receive the benefit without a fixed address. (Day, 2014, para. 20)

Another [emergency accommodation] resident, 44, said it was
extremely difficult to get accommodation. "It's very difficult to get
WINZ to pay for bonds. Housing New Zealand don't have any houses at
the moment. And you have to have references from landlords." (Harvey,
2014, para. 40)

Under the theme of system inadequacies the media corpus introduces a number of
the barriers faced by homeless individuals when looking to seek assistance for their
current situations. Through highlighting these barriers the narrative allows for the reader
to gain a level of awareness regarding the realities of homelessness not otherwise seen
across the empirical material. Although such coverage portrays the hardship of
individual homeless people and encourages sympathy it also typically highlights
elements of the homeless person's life that the domiciled reader either fears, disagrees
with, or is unable to relate to (Schneider, 2012). In addition to this such coverage
obscures the root causes of homelessness embedded in the inequalities of society.
Through focusing on issues of system inadequacies STUFF allows homelessness to be
constructed in a manner that implicates the homeless individual and the government, to
a degree, through coverage of a lack of housing. However homelessness is not simply a
housing issue, it is an issue of socio-economic exclusion that we all must take
responsibility for. Further to this, the use of individual stories to promote sympathetic
responses to homelessness is in fact a process by which the homeless person is
'othered'. This argument is made as the process of offering the homeless person
sympathy happens distinctly through the means of 'us', the domiciled, offering 'them',
'the homeless', sympathy. This process cannot occur in the opposing direction
(Schneider, 2012).

Humanisation and citizenship. The theme of humanisation and citizenship is
limited throughout the empirical sample. Despite this omission, I have drawn attention
to this theme as it indicates a side to journalism not present in the dominant narrative.
The limited inclusion of issues around humanisation and citizenship presented through
the news narrative provides the homeless character with human qualities and/or group
membership. Humanisation and citizenship is most often offered to the homeless
character through the character of the domiciled community member, the NGO
manager, and on occasion through the provision of the homeless person's voice. At the

most basic level the homeless character is given human qualities and citizenship through the use of nouns that allow for the identification of the homeless person in the absence of the word homeless.

> it's perfectly reasonable the people don't want people to stop giving them
> money. ("Beggars scathing of council crackdown," 2013, para. 12)

> naturally we are concerned about people sleeping in public places…we need
> to work with other agencies to make sure these kids are safe. (O'Neil, 2013, para.
> 16).

Through the use of nouns such as people and kids, the narrative removes the categorisation of the person based on a lack of housing and allows for them to be positioned as a person within wider society.

In addition to this the empirical sample allows for the humanisation of the homeless character through characteristics that depict the aspirations and feelings of homeless people. Examples of this show a homeless man who "always wanted to follow his dream and his dream was to go to Auckland to make a life for himself" (Kidd, 2013) and a single mother who expresses feelings of failure towards her kids stating "I just want a home for me and my three babies and I feel like I have failed them badly" ("Family falls through the gaps," 2013, p. 1). Through constructing the homeless person as someone with aspirations and feelings, the coverage has the ability to frame the homeless person as someone who fits with the 'us' of society opposed to the dominant construction of the homeless person as an 'other'. This characterisation is further reinforced through the domiciled citizen's positive personal experience with homeless people.

> My experience of these families is that they share the same values and
> aspirations as any other families. They want to look after their children, provide
> decent shelter and a healthy family environment, and they want to contribute to
> the communities that they live in. (Zussman, 2014, para. 7).

Through allowing the voice of the domiciled to share their experience with the homeless citizen the coverage offers a depiction of the homeless character as a human worthy of citizenship. This provision of citizenship is further supported through the local security guard who found a safe sleeping spot for a homeless man (Robinson, 2014a), the women who set up a Facebook page to gather clothing and blankets for homeless people (Robinson, 2014a) and a number of "people in the community [who take] strangers into their homes for a couple of nights" (Harvey, 2014, para.16).

Through such coverage STUFF encourages the idea of homeless people as citizens that should be considered in the same manner as any other member of society. This sits in opposition to the dominant framings of homelessness which, as outlined below, distance homeless people from society through portraying these people as de-humanised others. Under this framing the narrative depicts a need for people to be "collectively responsible, in some way, for what happen[s] in the society in which [they] choose to live" ("A hand up or handout?," 2013, para. 13) and that "to actually see these [homeless] people in our city now is something we should all be concerned about" (Carville, 2013, para. 4). It promotes the argument that "we've got to deal with the fundamental issue [of homelessness as] the problems aren't just going to go away if we push [the homeless] out" ("No quick fix to city's homeless problem," 2014, para. 15). Although it must be noted that an outline of what these "fundamental issues" are is notably absent. This indicates a significant textual silence outlining that although this theme is present within the narrative there are greater issues of hegemonic silencing at play. The topic of hegemonic silences will be addressed later in the analysis under the heading '*The role of ignorance and the use of hegemonic silences'*.

The Construction of Homelessness under an Episodic Framework

Entman (1993) defines framing as a result of the writer selecting some aspects of the perceived reality over other aspects of the perceived reality when constructing their narrative. Through the process of selection the journalist is able to highlight and make more salient certain ways of thinking about homelessness over others. STUFF's construction of the socio-economic issue of homelessness is presented under an episodic framework. This is said to be the case due to the tendency of the narrative to focus on particular instances of homelessness at the level of the individual (Iyengar, 1990). This is opposed to a thematic framework where the narrative would consist of background information, such as general trends of inequality in society and related policy issues,

regarding homelessness (Iyengar, 1990). Although the theme of system inadequacies provides some coverage of the background issues of homelessness, such as a lack of affordable housing and low wages, this coverage specifically lacks information regarding the historical, social, and economic antecedents of homelessness. For the narrative to have been classified under a thematic framework the coverage would have had to include broader information regarding the historical, social, and economic antecedents of our society that contribute to homelessness (Iyengar, 1990).

The use of episodic framing provokes a sense of responsibility for the problem at the level of the individual rather than with the greater society (Iyengar, 1990). The result of this is often an image of an issue, such as homelessness, that depicts wide spread prosperity throughout society and depicts homelessness or poverty as something that occurs only to certain individuals (Iyengar, 1990). Under the current narrative, the episodic framework and its focus on individual instances of homelessness allows the structural and economic concerns of the precariat to be marginalised. As a result, the given construction of homelessness allows for the 'celebration' of individual responsibility opposed to the collective irresponsibility of society that leads to social problems such as homelessness (Wacquant, 2001b).

The depiction of homelessness as an issue that occurs at the level of the individual is seen to occur through the narrative's heavy reliance on stories and examples of individual instances of homelessness. These stories and examples of homelessness are shared with a notable absence of coverage discussing the wider societal factors associated with this social problem. A key example of assigning the responsibility of homelessness to the individual within the media coverage analysed is material regarding the homeless character's criminal activity. For example within the theme of system inadequacies is the story *Women and children living in parks* (Stewart, 2014). This article tells of multiple instances of women and children sleeping in inadequate situations, such as the woman and her disabled son who have been sleeping in a tent, and indicates an overall failing of these women and children by the system. However within this item the reader is introduced to a single mother who is sleeping in the park with her small son as she is unable to find accommodation and feels that she has exhausted all options with friends and family. Rather than provide any information on how this woman has ended up homeless or the steps she is taking to end her

homelessness, the item outlines the details of a crime the women was involved in 10 years earlier.

> Te Wani [homeless woman] had been sleeping under play equipment in the Hampshire St park as she felt she was exhausting offers from friends and family, and did not "want to be a charity case".
> She bundles Manaaki [19-month-old son] in blankets in his pram on her nights in the park, and then lies on a blanket beside him. She tends to stay awake most nights to look out for her child, and an ex-partner visits during the night to keep an eye on the pair, she said.
> In 2004, when she was 20, Te Wani was arrested for her part in the systematic theft of 640 library books to the value of $34,000, along with Damien Keen, the father of her first child, and two members of his family. About the same time, she was arrested for forging sale receipts from The Warehouse to get illegitimate refunds.
> A colourful courtroom saga ensued, beginning when she began verbally abusing police at each of her appearances.
> Five weeks later, Te Wani played a role in Keen's attempt at a jailbreak from the van he was travelling to court in.
> She was jailed for 19 months with leave to apply for home detention on charges of burglary, fraud, obtaining by deception and disorderly behaviour for her role in the library scam. She received a further four months for stealing from her mother. (Stewart, 2014, para. 10)

Through the detailed provision of this women's criminal history the item encourages the framing of the homeless person as someone who has always been of poor character and in doing so supports common thinking that the homeless person is not like the 'us' of society (Hodgetts et al., 2011). Although the context of this story encourages the idea that the woman has been failed by the current system ultimately the depiction of her criminal past encourages a characterisation of her as lacking moral integrity. Such images reinforce negative characterisations of the homeless person , assist in distancing the homeless person from the reader (Bullock et al., 2001) and allow for the justification of a penal welfare approach in addressing homelessness (Wacquant, 2001b).

Through allowing homelessness to be viewed as something that occurs due to the individual characteristics of the person, news coverage removes the complex realities behind why someone ends up homeless (Johnson et al., 2008). Although this story speaks of system failure it fails to contextualise the structural factors associated with homelessness and inequality (Bullock et al., 2001), instead choosing to focus on individual instances and characters of the homeless population.

Identifying the framework under which the narrative of homelessness is constructed is important as it influences the way in which causal responsibility and problem solutions for an issue are assigned (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Through emphasising the responsibility of the individual, and depicting the homeless character as someone who engages in criminal activity, the current narrative supports problem solutions which focus on control. This focus on control, brought about through the criminalisation of the homeless character, allows the narrative to support the penalisation of the impoverished and therefore the constructs of penal welfare (Wacquant, 2001b, 2008). A relevant example of this is the material's coverage on street beggars and the implementation of anti-begging bylaws across a number of regions within New Zealand. As outlined earlier the coverage encourages the idea that anti-begging bylaws are needed due to an increasing number of vagrants who engage in begging due to a range of personal short comings. Conducive to a penal welfare framing, the homeless beggar is repeatedly depicted as someone who has a criminal past, substance use problems, and/or a general lack of good character.

"They are substance abusers and they are asking people for their money constantly, it's awful" she [Onehunga Business Association Manager] says. (Whittaker, 2013, para. 14)

The "streeties" as they like to be known have long been a thorn in the side of retailers and restaurateurs.... gripes include begging for money, eating scraps off used plates, drinking alcohol and verbal abuse. (Bowen, 2013, para. 3)

Small business owners are seeing a rise in shoplifting as the number of vagrants on Auckland City Streets rises. (Street, 2014, para. 1)

It should at this point be noted that the character of the beggar is not always depicted as a person experiencing homelessness. In such instances the non-homeless beggar is assumed to be an opportunistic person who has "caught on and [is] taking the piss" (Heather, 2013a, para. 13) in order to make some 'quick cash'. However, regardless of housing status, both of these characterisations discuss begging at the level of the individual conducting the begging and within the context of the implications of begging on the community. Again notably absent within the coverage is content discussing the structural factors associated with someone's need to ascertain money through these means such as rough sleeping, one's inability to access financial support, and one's inability to meet living costs through their given income (Kennedy & Fitzpatrick, 2001). Begging is therefore warranted as something that occurs due to the characteristics of the person rather than a function of a failing society (Kennedy & Fitzpatrick, 2001). By placing the cause of the problem with the characteristics of the individual, the plot-line of begging grants support for the use of anti-begging bylaws as a means of controlling the homeless beggar simply because they are undesirable. This idea of controlling the homeless beggar despite them having caused no harm supports their exclusion from society based on a characterisation of them as undesirable people. This is a key concept of penal welfare thinking known as 'imprisonment of differentiation' and again supports the social distancing, or an 'us' and 'them' framing, of homeless people within society (Wacquant, 2001b).

Through silencing the causes of homelessness at the societal level, and criminalising the homeless person at the individual level, the narrative allows for readers less familiar with homelessness to view the issue as one associated with personal character failings and life choices (Entman, 1995). In doing so the narrative allows for society to be absolved of any responsibility toward understanding or owning the reasons for these people's homelessness (Silverstone, 2007).

The Construction of Homelessness and the Role of the Journalistic Source

The episodic framing of homelessness under the themes of individual deficit and system failures, as with the majority of the coverage analysed, is presented predominantly through the use of direct quotes from a variety of media sources. As noted within the plot synopsis this use of direct quotes occurs in conjunction with a notable absence of journalistic voice throughout the coverage of homelessness. Despite frequent portrayals of sources as independent and authoritative commentators, and

journalists as simple communicators of the source's perspective, the journalist's selection of sources and quotes is in fact an active process within the production of media items (Ross, 2007). This makes the journalist's use of sources an important factor when looking at the construction and orientation of a given text (Tuchman, 1972). Through the active selection of sources and specific choice of quotes, in addition to the specific exclusion of the same, the journalist works to actively drive the representation of the given topic in a manner that suits their motivations (Silverstone, 2007). The depiction of a topic as shown through the use of selected sources is ultimately the point of view being supported by the journalist (Ross, 2007).

Who the media utilise in seeking for comment is most often an indication of the wider social processors of society and whose voices hold legitimacy and status (Ross, 2007; Schneider, 2012; Steele, 1995). In 1979 Gans identified that voices of legitimacy tended to be those with public status, such as politicians and business leaders, noting that general citizens, women, and minorities were left little room to be heard (Ross, 2007). These findings are in line with the current media narration of homelessness, which relies heavily on the use of direct quotes from a number of 'expert' sources with a notable absence in the voice of the homeless person. An 'expert' source is a journalistic source who is associated with the professional and managerial culture of society (Martin & Knight, 1997). 'Expert' sources within the given empirical material include domiciled characters such as the manager of the local business association, the city retailer, the city councillor, and on occasion the government representative.

> "[begging is] a fairly recent phenomenon in New Zealand" Mr Holmes says
> - Dominion Road Business Association manager. (Whittaker, 2013, para. 7)

> David Morrell said many of the homeless would not be on the streets if the housing shortage eased. Temporarily sleeping rough did major damage to the vulnerable. "It gets into their bloodstream and becomes a way of life that you can't do anything about" he said – David Morrell Christchurch District Health Board member. (Carville, 2013, para. 5)

It could be argued that sources such as those shown above are unlikely to hold 'expert' knowledge and understanding of homelessness. An example that supports an 'expert's'

lack of knowledge is shown in the news item *Homeless here in South* (Berwick, 2014a) when Southland District Mayor Cary Tong admits to being unaware of the 100 people sleeping rough in his region.

Although the voice of the NGO manager, and on very few occasions the homeless person, are present within the media coverage they are significantly less so than the voice of the 'expert'. As a result these alternative voices are often lost amongst the greater narrative. When these voices are present however, they are often used to support the 'expert' source's framing of homelessness.

..some people who begged were not homeless but needed extra money for their drug or alcohol addictions, he [homeless beggar] said. (Heather, 2013b, para. 17)

He [Salvation Army captain Perry Bray] admitted that some people did not want help. (Berwick, 2014b, para. 7)

In addition to this, through giving voice to homeless people in a manner that supports the dominant construction of homelessness STUFF ventriloquises the homeless character (Coleman, 2011). That is, they give voice to the homeless person but in a manner that does not disrupt the dominant narrative. As a result STUFF allows the homeless voice to support the interests, preferences, and values of 'our' society (Coleman, 2011).

In addition to this through selecting the 'expert' source as the dominant voice throughout the narrative STUFF encourages the framing of homelessness as it 'affects' the domiciled. The construction of homelessness within STUFF is therefore more about 'us', as the domiciled, than it is about homelessness and those people within society who are experiencing it. An example of this is seen under the theme of individual failings and specifically the plotlines of begging and community provided resources for homeless people. Under these themes homelessness is framed through the expert source as an issue that is problematic for the community and the issue of community safety is frequently raised. As a result homelessness is depicted as a phenomenon that reduces public safety due to offensive acts such as aggressive begging, substance use, and sleeping and urinating in public (Leaman, 2014). "Anti-social" behaviour is specifically

linked to the presence of homeless people. Under this framing homeless people are a nuisance who "lower the tone of the area" (Whittaker, 2013, para. 7). In addition to this, acts such as providing community meals and emergency accommodation are seen to "exacerbate" the problem (Berwick, 2014; Leaman, 2014) as such acts attract homeless people to community centres where they then engage in anti-social behaviour and criminal activities such as shop lifting. Through linking an increase in antisocial behaviour to the provision of charitable assistance the coverage supports penal welfare thinking that links 'undesirable' underclass behaviours to the developed dependency of the underclass on welfare provision (Morgen & Maskovsky, 2003).

Using Blumer's (1971) theory on the development of social problems the above framing indicates a dominant narrative that allows for an understanding of homelessness as a social problem, built on welfare dependency, that affects the domiciled rather than a social problem that affects those experiencing homelessness. The narrative therefore further supports the justification of penal welfare-based solutions to homelessness, such as the anti-begging bylaws outlined above, that centre around the needs of 'us' the domiciled and that encourages the use of control and punitive measures against 'them' 'the homeless'. The result is a narrative that supports the 'paternalistic' treatment of the homeless underclass and that allows for support of the withering away of government welfare systems (Wacquant, 2001b) as a justifiable means of 'helping' homeless people.

Although alternative framings of homelessness are presented through the source of the NGO manager, the above narrative is never directly challenged by these sources and at times it is even supported. The above framing is not directly challenged by the NGO source because, rather than focus on individual behaviours and actions of homeless people, the NGO source provides a narrative that accounts for homelessness at a much broader level. As a result homelessness is framed as something that occurs to individuals within the context of an affordable housing shortage (Heather, 2013b; Meadows, 2014; Priestley, 2014; Shaskey, 2013) and an underfunded social services system (Carville, 2013; Dastgheib, 2014; Lewis, 2014). Rather than attributing homelessness to a specific type of person, this narrative depicts homeless people as emerging through a range of situations. Through the NGO source we learn of families and people with mental illness who are homeless as well as the substance users and criminals presented in the dominant narrative.

Through the NGO source the narrative does not outline specific solutions to homelessness, other than a significant need for additional funding and resources, nor does it question the solutions provided through the expert sources or how they may be acting in self-interest. In addition to this it could even be argued that NGO representatives are used to support penal welfare ideals that encourage the need for increased behavioural controls of homeless people as a relevant solution. This statement is made due to instances where the NGO sources are quoted as saying things such as "our role is not law and order, but to help people" (O'Neil, 2013) and when this help is "to discourage [sleeping rough] Mr Ryan will douse cardboard box sleeping mats with water, and inform the police" (O'Neil, 2013). This action of penalising the rough sleeper by destroying their sleeping environment and 'sentencing' them to supervision through informing the police of their location fits exactly within the constructs of penal welfare. More specifically it supports the idea of government interventions at the micro-social level, opposed to the macro-social level, as a relevant means of addressing the homeless 'other' (Peck, 2003).

Who speaks within the media and the message that they provide is important because in appearing in the media the source gains access to a tool by which they can influence others (Ross, 2007). They exercise the symbolic power to contribute to the naming and defining of homelessness, increasingly from their own interests rather than those of homeless people themselves. Through providing limited access to the voice of the NGO manager and the homeless person the narrative ultimately allows for the construction of homelessness to be shaped through the subjective interpretation, experience, and opinion of 'expert' sources (Van Dijk, 1991). This occurs with apparent disregard of the 'expert's' level of knowledge regarding homelessness and, in the majority of instances, in the absence of factual information.

The use of the expert source as a key figure in shaping the construction of homelessness within the given narrative also encourages the depiction of the homeless person's voice as one that is not of equal standing within society. Through silencing the voice of homeless people and relying heavily on 'expert' sources the narrative allows for the expert source to become an intermediary between the domiciled reader and the homeless person (Rose & Baumgartner, 2013; Ross, 2007). As an intermediary the expert source encourages an ignorant framing of homelessness. Under this framing the narrative encourages the production of an 'us' and 'them' dialogue (Schneider, 2012),

filled with silences, that simply divides society into the housed and the homeless rather than choosing to examine the deeper societal problems associated with homelessness (Jensen, 2014).

The Role of Ignorance and the Use of Hegemonic Silences

In identifying a framework of ignorance within the empirical material, the focus of the analysis expands from simply focusing on how homelessness is constructed in the given text to include "knowledge that could have been but wasn't, or should be but isn't" (Proctor, 2008, p. vii) included in the text. This shift in focus is an important step in news analysis because, as outlined by Van Dijk (1986), the ideological nature of news is frequently defined by what it does not say. The relevance of identifying textual silences dates back to the works of Gramsci (1971) and Herman and Chomsky (1988) and is built on the understanding that, that which is not included in the narrative is in fact selectively left out by the journalist (Huckin, 2002). The application of this assumption to STUFF's construction of homelessness is justified through the understanding that public phenomenon, such as homelessness, have a range of relevant topics and subtopics that are openly available to journalists. Through choosing which of these topics and subtopics to include in the narrative, and which ones to exclude, STUFF is able to set the context in which they present the given topic (Huckin, 2002). The assumption that STUFF is aware of alternative frameworks is granted given the various codes of conduct that relate to the reporting of the news media and their explicit requirement for the balanced investigation of a topic (Ross, 2007).

Ignorance is identified in the empirical material through the narrative's dominant framing of homelessness as an individual deficit and through the consistent silencing of social factors associated with the development of homelessness. A key example of this is the discourse of homelessness as a choice. As outlined earlier the framing of homelessness as a choice depicts a group of people who exist in situations where they have alternative options to sleeping rough. Such options include access to emergency accommodation (Ashby-Coventry, 2013; Berwick, 2014a; King, 2013), returning to one's home environment (O'Neil, 2013), staying with family and friends (Stewart, 2014), or having access to an income (Coster, 2013; Priestley, 2014a; Yardley, 2015).

"Youth housing has always been a problem, but it's not bricks and mortar they want. They need to sort out issues, such as why they can't go home to their own bed. It's an issue throughout Taranaki. We've found a lot of them will choose to sleep on a mate's couch or sleep rough. It's their choice" – Brian Eriksen, CHAT Chairman. (Harvey, 2014, para. 18)

Some of these people are there because they want to be. But others can't or won't be helped. ("A hand up or handout?," 2013, para. 13)

...however, some people chose to sleep rough and did not want accommodation provided for them, he [Inspector Olaf Jensen] said ..."some of the people we have dealt with recently have that view". (Berwick, 2014a, para. 22).

"People still associated with him [murdered homeless man Maqbool Hussain]. He chose to live on the street" Detective Inspector Chris Cahill says. (Whittaker, 2014, para. 8)

For some homeless in the central city, the streets will always be their home. It is where they are comfortable. They all have reasons, some painful and sad, and some more simple, for choosing to live rough. (Robinson, 2014b, Para. 26)

Although these choices may exist for some people, the notion of this choice is more complex than these simplistic framings allow. As identified by Beaton et al. (2015) such choice often involves choosing between sleeping rough or remaining in an environment filled with domestic violence or sexual assault. As a result the person's 'choice' to sleep rough is more often than not a result of this being the safest or most 'secure' option (Beaton et al., 2015). Important to note here, and as outlined in the introduction chapter, for some people who have never existed in a middle class home environment the 'choice' of living on the street provides them with a greater ability to establish a 'home' (Groot & Hodgetts, 2012). However, through omitting this information the coverage fails to provide alternative framings to everyday presumptive silences (Huckin, 2002) associated with middle class ideals such as 'being housed' or 'having an income'. The idea of being housed and holding an income can have a distinctly different meaning for

people living in poverty versus people of the middle class. For example, under the assumption of the middle class ideal, the idea of a house draws upon presumptive silences of a warm, dry, and safe environment and the idea of having access to an income which implies the receipt of sufficient money to cover one's basic needs of accommodation and food. These assumptions may also be shared by many with more modest means than the middle class however it is important to note that for some living on a modest income means a damp dwelling with limited access to food and other necessities such as power (Howden-Chapman et al., 2012).

The construction of an ignorant framing of homelessness should not be viewed as occurring due to a minor omission of, or gap in, the information provided through the 'expert' source (Proctor, 2008). Rather this ignorant farming is a direct result of STUFF's bias towards a hegemonic version of society seen through the heavy reliance of the expert source (Ross, 2007) and specific use of in text silences. As a result of this I argue that STUFF actively engages in wilful ignorance regarding the construction of homelessness and the people experiencing it (Proctor, 2008). However, in proclaiming the active role of the news organisation in the ignorant framing of homelessness it is important to outline that the original production of wilful ignorance in fact sits with government bodies (Slater, 2014). This argument is made on the understanding that the production of an ignorant framework is in the interest of the current National lead coalition government as it allows for a diversion of public attention away from structural failings that contribute to the occurrence of homelessness (Johnson et al., 2008; Slater, 2014). A good example of the diversion of public attention away from structural causes of homelessness is seen in the narrative through the quotes of government and council representatives.

Frequently these sources use statements which actively encourage a depiction of homelessness as a choice made by people who exist within a society that provides alternative options through sufficient social supports. Under this framing council staff are able to safely position themselves as approaching the idea of additional assistance with trepidation (Berwick, 2014) as assisting those who choose to sleep rough is not required given that we have a welfare system (Priestley, 2014a).

The Safety Advisory Board's city safety manager Alan Nilsen said a recent

recheck of the city's regular beggars revealed that one of them owned their own

home, freehold, but chose not to live there. (King, 2014, para. 5)

… "I would be concerned if anybody was required to be living that way but

we have a welfare system and nobody needs to be living on the proceeds of street

begging." Tim Macindoe Hamilton West MP. (Priestley, 2014a, para. 8)

Through referencing social welfare as a system that provides sufficient assistance

for homeless people, the government or council representative is able to encourage

public doubt regarding the role of the council and government structures in the

development and maintenance of homelessness (Slater, 2014). A key example of this

under the current narrative is the depiction of the homeless person's behaviour as

unnecessary as "there are very few people who have no access to any income

whatsoever" (Walters, 2014, para. 16). Whether this statement is correct or incorrect is

not of specific concern here; rather it is the absence of information surrounding this

quote, and the assumption such silences imply that is of interest.

Through insinuating that homelessness is not necessary, due to the homeless

person's ability to access an income, the narrative offers a simplistic framing of

homelessness that is ignorant of the heterogeneous nature of a homeless person's

situation (Johnson et al., 2008). Such narrative encourages the idea that simply being

able to access an income is sufficient. Placing the heterogeneous nature of homelessness

aside, and assuming access to income would solve the issue of someone's

homelessness, there are a significant number of factors that remain absent from the

discourse. Notably absent is information regarding the nature of the income supplied

though WINZ and the barriers that face homeless people in accessing said income

(Beaton et al., 2015; Hodgetts, Chamberlain, Groot, & Tankel, 2014). Research shows

that those who must interact with WINZ in order to access necessary supports

experience interactions that meet criteria used to identify abusive intimate relationships

(Hodgetts et al., 2014). Drawing on the accounts of 100 Auckland families' interactions

with WINZ, Hodgetts et al. (2014) found that contact with WINZ was dominated by a

lack of sympathy, a reduction in personal autonomy, intolerance, economic control, and

personal criticism. The result of this being that the families experienced an increase in

feelings of fear, helplessness, mistrust, and a reduction in dignity. In order to access an income through WINZ a person must be able to provide photo identification, a permanent street address, maintain regular appointments, and show evidence of having actively sort employment (Ministry of Social Development, 2015b). Such requirements which are significantly hard for homeless people to meet (Beaton et al., 2015). In the instance that the homeless person is able to achieve these requirements, the narrative fails to mention that the income given to them will range from $140 - $210 per week (Ministry of Social Development, 2015a). This amount is arguably insufficient given the average rental prices across New Zealand (Tenancy Services, 2015) even when taking into consideration the potential for an additional $45 - $145 if the person is able to secure accommodation (Ministry of Social Development, 2015a).

Through reproducing state-sanctioned silences, news coverage aids in the construction of a dominant narrative of homelessness that situates this social problem as a personal issue (Slater, 2014). This is relevant because, as with the production of knowledge, the government's production of ignorance holds a political agenda (Proctor, 2008). In the current empirical material, the plotline of the beggar provides the best example of an ignorant construction being used for political gain as theorised using the historical work of 'the mugger' by Hall, Jefferson, Critcher, Clarke, and Roberts (1978). As was the case with 'the mugger', I argue that the ignorant framing of 'the beggar' is used within the current narrative as a tool for encouraging new 'common-sense' thinking needed for the successful implementation of anti-begging bylaws across a number of major cities and towns within New Zealand. As outlined earlier in this chapter, the ignorant framing of the beggar overlooks a number of structural factors associated with one's need to beg (Kennedy & Fitzpatrick, 2001) and depicts the beggar as someone of poor character who has substance use issues (Heather, 2013a). Addressing begging by tackling structural issues such as growing inequality is not desirable to a neo-liberal government who favours penal welfare constructs. Therefore through framing the beggar as someone of poor character the narrative is able to encourage public consensus that addressing the issue of 'the beggar' by means of control is the best means through which to do so. The negative characterisation of the beggar, and the hegemonic silences regarding societal failings that lead one to beg, allows coverage to encourage public support for anti-begging bylaws based on public safety as the perceived government driver. However, given the government's growing

trend towards a use of penal welfare (Hodgetts, Chamberlain, Tankel, & Groot, 2013) I would argue that the implementation of such bylaws are in fact more likely to be driven by the desire to reduce government spending on the socially undesirable as a means of meeting the key goal of 'economic growth'.

Hegemonic silences within the tropes of the beggar, and the absence of the beggar's voice, means that no alternative framing of this character is offered. As a result the coverage allows for the motives of anti-begging bylaws to go unquestioned and is able to provide additional power to the true political agenda. What this indicates is that, as a producer of dominant narrative, STUFF holds power, not just through their ability to frame the homeless beggar but through making this frame the only available story and therefore producing a narrative that allows support towards the penal welfare drivers of the government.

Silences such as those noted above work to disguise the structural causes of issues which are recognised in society, and known ostensibly, but are granted limited space in public debate (Sue, 2015). Through the production of silences within dominant discourses, the government is able to maintain their power through using the said discourse to gain or maintain the support of the populace (Gramsci, 1971). Gramsci (1971) referred to this as 'cultural hegemony'. Through allowing state-sponsored silences to shape the construction of homelessness in the current narrative, STUFF encourages society to adopt views of homelessness which are in line with hegemonic interests (Sue, 2015). In addition to this, the ignorant framing of homelessness encourages the diversion of public attention away from the structural and institutional failings that play a role in homelessness (Slater, 2014). If the media's use of an ignorant framing and hegemonic silences go unquestioned then these state-sponsored ideologies have the ability to become normalised 'worldviews' within New Zealand society (Sheriff, 2000).

Conclusion

In brief conclusion STUFF's construction of homelessness was found to be built on the dominant narratives of individual deficit and system inadequacies supported through the use of hegemonic silences and wilful ignorance. Although the presence of the theme *system inadequacies* appears to be a positive finding, the 'benefit' of this theme only exists on a superficial level to the extent that it highlights to society instances in which our welfare system is failing those in need. It is argued that the

ability of this theme to alter the construction of homelessness is limited to superficial levels as a result of the narrative's heavy reliance on episodic framing and the emphasis this places on individual instances of homelessness. As a result of this heavy reliance on episodic framing STUFF ultimately presents a construction of homelessness that overlooks the structural factors that lead to this social problem and which, places causal responsibility with the individual, thus justifying and supporting control focused solutions to homelessness.

Having identified the key narratives of STUFF's construction of homelessness the final chapter discusses these findings within the context of societal and socio-political practices. Specifically I will touch on how the narratives identified within STUFF's construction of homelessness fit within a neoliberal framing of poverty and how this framing ultimately limits opportunities for betterment for homeless people. The limiting of such opportunities occurs through a construction of homelessness that allows society to blame individuals for their circumstances and thus actively accept the introduction of penal welfare based reform lead by the current National Party led government.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Through an analysis of the representation of homelessness on the news site stuff.co.nz, trends in the media's representation of homelessness were identified. Through conducting this analysis under the guise of social constructionism I have worked to create a dialogue regarding the media's representation of homelessness that sits within the context of people, relationships, and society. The current research was conducted with the understanding that Aotearoa/New Zealand has no national policy aimed at specifically addressing homelessness (Richards, 2009) and under the premise that the more an issue is discussed the more likely it is to see political action (Blumer, 1971; Buck et al., 2004). Under this pretext I am not insinuating that a single thesis has the ability to drive change in the area of government policy. Rather, I am acknowledging the importance of conducting research as a means of contributing to societal deliberations regarding homelessness. My aim was also to highlight how, despite media framings to the contrary, homelessness is the responsibility of all society and that as members of society we all have the ability to contribute to the creation of new narratives regarding homelessness that will allow for society's treatment of homeless people to change.

This chapter considers the key research finding of the construction of homelessness as the result of individual deficit in relation to relevant literature. My emphasis is on what my findings mean for, and how they apply to, the public construction of homeless people and the implications of these constructions for homeless people within greater society. Through this discussion I highlight how the identity provided for homeless people through STUFF's narratives blames the individual for their homelessness and allows for their exclusion from society. In doing so I link this construction of homelessness to the neoliberal ideals of conservative right wing governments and outline how these ideals allow for society to justify this exclusion of homeless people. In addition to this I argue that through excluding homeless people from 'our' society we allow these people to become truly homeless and justify the current government's inaction regarding the development of homelessness policy. To conclude I make a number of recommendations addressing the future direction of research in the area of media and homelessness. STUFF's construction of homelessness appears to be built on the dominant narratives of individual deficit and system inadequacies supported through the use of hegemonic

silences and wilful ignorance. Central to this construction is the use of episodic framing that leads the coverage to focus on individual instances of homelessness across the narrative as a whole. Through constructing homelessness as the fault of the individual, STUFF calls on commonly held stereotypes associated with homelessness and more specifically the undeserving homeless (Zufferey, 2008). Through categorising the homeless character within a range of stereotypes STUFF overlooks the homeless person's personal characteristics, context, and history, and allows for one's homelessness to become reified onto them an identity (McCarthy, 2013).

As a public voice within society the news media must be considered representatives and as representatives the news media contribute to the identity of what they are representing (Coleman, 2011). As a result of this people experiencing homelessness are never independent, or in control, of their representation as it sits within the media (Coleman, 2011). In the instance of homelessness the ability for the media's representation to influence the homeless person's perceived identity within society is intensified given the homeless person's status within society as an 'other' (Hodgetts et al., 2011; Hodgetts, Hodgetts, & Radley, 2006). As a result, much of society views the representation of homeless people within the media as being representative of this group. This is a problem as those constructing the media, regardless of intention, can never truly embody the homeless people they are representing. However, through the simple process of portraying homeless people they are contributing to the homeless person's identity within domiciled society (Coleman, 2011). The result is a representation of homelessness that collapses onto society's reality as purer simulacra. This is concerning as it raises issues of symbolic power that impose a law of 'truth' upon the homeless individual. Through imposing an identity, the media enables the homeless person to become subject to their control as well as becoming subject to the implications of the imposed identity itself (Foucault, 1982). Under STUFF's construction of homelessness the identity given to the homeless character is one that draws on a myriad of stereotypes associated with individual deficit. Homelessness is depicted as being a lifestyle choice for people also engaged in criminal activities, having mental health difficulties, and/or engaged in substance use.

The application of homelessness as an identity emphasises the differences between the homeless person and the domiciled society within which they exist (Albrecht, Walker, & Levy, 1982; Hodgetts et al., 2011; Horsell, 2006). The problem

with this is that many domiciled members of society do not have contact with homeless people outside of the brief depictions they are exposed to through the media. In this sense the homeless person does not 'exist' in their 'world' outside of these media depictions (Silverstone, 2007). Through the domiciled member's lack of contact with homeless people, and the identification of these people as being different from the domiciled 'us' of society, homeless people are categorised within society as 'others'. As 'others' homeless people experience social distancing (Hodgetts et al., 2011; Hodgetts, Hodgetts, & Radley, 2006). When one is socially distanced from society, one experiences a loss of belonging, cultural rejection, and a lack of social supports (Hodgetts et al., 2008, 2011).

Through allowing a construction of homelessness that ultimately faults the individual for their homelessness, STUFF silences the heterogeneous nature of this social issue, ignoring the structural factors that create and maintain homelessness, and reinforcing the historical and divisive characterisation of 'us' and 'them'. Under the binary categorisation of 'us' and 'them', STUFF's narrative defines homeless people as having radically different personal characteristics, morals, and values. This allows society to view homeless people as residing outside of the norms of 'our' societal practices and relations (Hodgetts et al., 2006; Schneider, Chamberlain, & Hodgetts, 2010). This individualisation of homelessness and the stereotypes used by STUFF are consistent to those commonly applied to homeless people in the media across the globe (Hugenberg & Sacco, 2008; McCarthy, 2013; Rosenthal, 2000; Zufferey, 2014) and, in general, to those people who are perceived as 'interrupting' the neoliberal ideals of our society (Morgen & Maskovsky, 2003; Slater, 2014). Jensen (2014) identifies that this tendency to debate poverty in a negative individualistic light is common place across the developed world.

It is this focus on the individual as being to blame, opposed to structural factors, that is one of the most important elements in maintaining the general ideological governance of a neoliberal authority (Rose & Baumgartner, 2013). Under the frame work of social constructionism we are able to identify how narratives are constructed and situated within society to suit the needs and rules of the dominant group (Gergen, 2009). Through constructing and sharing individualistic narratives of poverty, conservative governments and political think tanks have actively been able to manufacture doubt regarding the structural causes of said poverty (Slater, 2014). Slater

(2014) refers to this process as the strategic deployment of institutional ignorance. Institutional ignorance is a process of cultural hegemony (Gramsci, 1971) employed by governments as a means of influencing public perception for the purpose of seeking support for state sponsored systems of belief (Sue, 2015). Silences and silencing narratives, such as the narrative of individual deficit, play a key role in the adoption and maintenance of cultural hegemony, institutional ignorance, and society's adoption of state sponsored belief systems (Sue, 2015).

Through constructing and deploying individualistic narratives of poverty neoliberal governments exploit doubt, or a lack of knowledge, that already exists within society regarding the causes of poverty and inequality. Such framing of poverty provides society with a series of easy to comprehend behavioural reasons for issues, such as homelessness, related to poverty whilst at the same time silencing narratives concerning the structural factors associated with these issues (Slater, 2014). Through the provision of behavioural reasons for poverty society is given an understanding of poverty that allows for the complex political and economic shifts, linked to its development, to be simplified and reduced within society's narratives. In adopting an individualistic framing of poverty society is provided with a means by which we are able or allowed to ignore alternative reasons for the development of poverty such as growing levels of inequality (Slater, 2014).

Through the work of Fairclough (1995), Proctor (2008), and Brants and Voltmere (2011), it is demonstrated that the news media and political organisations are in significant relationships that influence the way each entity operates. Given this link in addition to STUFF's ignorant narratives that are filled with hegemonic silences, and the focus on individual deficits as the cause of homelessness which ignore the myriad of structural factors associated with this social problem, I argue that STUFF's construction of homelessness should be viewed as a narrative significantly influenced by the rational calculations of New Zealand's right-wing government. Further to this I argue that the use of this dominant narrative by the news media allows for the neoliberal workings of our current day government to be maintained by our society.

Under the ideals of a neoliberal society, citizenship should be enabling rather than providing. The belief is that through simply being located within the framework of a neoliberal society one is given opportunities to enhance one's own welfare independent of the state (Turner, 2008). Therefore when people exist within our society,

such as those experiencing homelessness, who need or would benefit from state sponsored assistance they threaten these beliefs. In order to maintain neoliberal ideals it is 'safer' for conservative governments to construct these people as personally deficient, and therefore personally responsible for their current circumstance, than it is to allow them to 'contaminate' the fundamental beliefs upon which neoliberal society is built (Wacquant, 2001a).

Under a neoliberal framework the government and society are constructed as decent and responsible bodies that offer the poor opportunities to 'better' themselves. It therefore becomes the poor's responsibility to 'take up' these 'opportunities'. When groups such as those experiencing homelessness do not 'take up' these 'opportunities' the explanation allowed through neoliberalism is that of the irresponsible underclass choosing to do nothing to assist themselves (Bauman, 2007). STUFF's construction of homelessness is in line with these ideals.

STUFF's representation of homelessness, its heavy use of ignorance and hegemonic silences, and its reliance on the 'expert' source ventriloquizes homeless people. In doing so it provides a construction of homelessness that gels with neoliberal interests, preferences, and values (Coleman, 2011). For example, STUFF's framing of homelessness as a lifestyle choice linked to individual deficits directly links to the neoliberal framing of the 'underclass' - an aggregate of people who make no useful contributions to society (Bauman, 2007). As is the case with STUFF's construction of homelessness, the highly prejudicial and ideologically driven concept of the underclass (Somers & Block, 2005) is most frequently described in terms of their behavioural characteristics. This old fashioned way of constructing 'the poor' as deviants focuses on the perceived anti-social and immoral behaviour of the group as a whole, which allows their impoverished situations to be depicted as a status of choice. Under neoliberal ideals people are framed as existing within the underclass as a result of their choice not to attain certain goals associated with the 'normal' practices of society in favour of their choice to engage in socially unacceptable behaviour (Bauman, 2007). However what STUFF's narrative fails to mention is that under a neoliberal framework this 'choice' is predetermined for many members of the homeless population. Bauman (2007) argues that in a neoliberal world where everything and everyone is evaluated based on their commodity value those that exist within the precariat hold no value. They are uncommoditised people and as a result of this there is no value in allowing them back

'in' to our society. In fact, in a consumer based world, there is value in not letting them back in to our society. This can be claimed since under the framework of consumerism each consumer gains when another consumer is lost from the 'game' (Bauman, 2007).

STUFF's rhetoric of choice and individual deficit allows the maintenance of our neoliberal society due to their function as legitimising myths that allow society to define the attitudes, values, beliefs, and stereotypes of those people experiencing homelessness as abnormal. Such myths allow society to morally and intellectually justify the process by which homeless people are kept on the margins of society and are denied participation as worthy citizens (Schneider et al., 2010). Through constructing those individual's experiencing poverty or homelessness as abnormal we allow for the presence of poverty and homelessness to be normalised (Bauman, 2007).

Through framing homelessness as something that occurs due to the failings or fault of particular individuals, STUFF's narrative ultimately characterises homeless people as undeserving of societal assistance (Rosenthal, 2000). As a result of this STUFF's construction of homelessness is in line with 'penal welfare' based reform that places emphasis on the need for change at the level of the individual as opposed to a need for change at the structural level (Garland, 1985). As briefly touched upon in the introduction chapter the term penal welfare refers to the extension of penal system ideals into the provision of welfare services. Under a penal based narrative those people within the underclass are framed as being pathological, deviant and immoral people (Wacquant, 2001). The result is a construction of the poor which is criminalising in nature and that allows for conservative governments to respond punitively to this group's needs. Of particular importance to penal welfare is the narrative of dependency. Through constructing the underclass as a group of people dependent on the welfare system due to individual deficits conservative governments are able to justify a welfare system that forces independence and moral compliance on those in genuine need. The result is a welfare system that restricts citizen's access to benefits through making access to entitlements increasing difficult (Garland, 1985).

In faulting the individual, penal welfare based reform allows for the removal of any valid claims of the underclass to the resources and sympathies of 'our' society as well as the rights of this group to seek structural changes within society (Rosenthal, 2000). This therefore allows for the structural and economic concerns of the precariat to be downplayed and the underclass to be 'celebrated' as something that results from

one's individual responsibility opposed to resulting from society's collective irresponsibility (Wacquant, 2001b). As a result of this I argue that through constructing homelessness as an issue that exists through individual deficit STUFF's narratives gel with neoliberal thinking that allows the 'us' of society to remove ourselves from any link or likeness to people experiencing homelessness (Pascale, 2005b). As a result of this, 'we' as a society are allowed to excuse ourselves from any need for empathy or understanding of these people's circumstances as well as any moral responsibility towards people experiencing homelessness (Silverstone, 2007).

It is through excusing society from the duty of empathy or understanding that those people unable to access or afford housing become truly homeless (Pascale, 2005). This argument touches on the premise, as outlined in the introduction chapter, that homelessness is a social phenomenon that affects people in personal domains that stretch beyond the loss of a physical dwelling (Memmott et al., 2003; Pascale, 2005). The point here is not to overlook or diminish the very difficult and real struggles one experiences when living without a safe or secure physical dwelling, but instead to acknowledge that as a society 'we' add to this loss through the dominant narratives under which we construct homelessness. As outlined above the dominant narrative of individual deficit adds to the loss of homeless people through allowing those people experiencing homelessness to become marginalised 'others' who experience social distancing within society and are justifiably 'assisted' under the premise of a penal based welfare system.

If we wish to change this and work towards the inclusion of homeless people as citizens within our society, as is my aim in conducting this research, Hodgetts et. al, (2011) outline that we must work to develop ways of managing the social distancing and processes of estrangement that occur through news media reporting. As entities news media outlets have the ability to provide positive truths regarding homeless people that could assist in overcoming the negative connotations society associates with this group (Reynalds, 1999). In order for this to occur, Entman (1993) argues that journalists must be educated on the difference between including scattered oppositional narratives opposed to narratives that actively challenge the dominant framing of homelessness. This argument is made under the premise that should journalists learn to actively challenge dominant framings of homeless people then society would be better equipped to construct alternative views regarding this group of people (Entman, 1993). Hodgetts

et al. (2008) add to this by outlining that in order to educate journalists social scientists need to engage in a process of collaboration with journalists. In doing so Hodgetts et al. (2008) outline that this collaboration must be informed by the experiences of homeless people and should work as a starting point for the promotion of inclusive news media practices that work to address issues of distancing and estrangement. In order for this to be effective it is argued that social scientists must work to frame and supply information to journalists, regarding homelessness, in a manner that meets the needs of the journalist whilst actively honouring the wishes and aspirations of the homeless people being represented.

The current research findings unfortunately indicate that little has changed in the news media's representation of homelessness since these recommendations were made eight years ago. This is however no reason to stop the conversation now. Based on the works of Mayhew (1862) we are able to identify that these narratives associating the impoverished with individual deficit have become institutionalised over a period spanning at least 150 years. Over this time such narratives have attained significant symbolic power that has only increased in recent times with the investment of conservative think tanks and neoliberal governments in their bid to maintain the working ideals of neoliberalism and penal welfare whilst at the same time working to hide the structural failings associated with these frameworks (Slater, 2014). The challenge with a narrative that holds so much symbolic power is that it is difficult for alternative narratives to replace the dominant narrative and produce an argument that makes the former untenable. Again however, this is no reason to stop the conversation.

In conducting the current research project I have highlighted that dominant narratives of individual deficit, consisting of blanket stereotypes, remain common place within New Zealand news media. Through linking these findings to relevant literature (Bauman, 2007; Proctor, 2008; Slater, 2014; Wacquant, 2001b), I argue that the given narratives play a role in allowing the support and maintenance of neoliberal ideals within our society. I also wish to argue that through these narratives the news media have allowed for the development of policy specifically addressing homelessness within New Zealand to remain low priority. Although this research project, in its current form as a thesis, does not directly speak to journalists it does provide an opportunity for new conversations that have the ability to contribute to societal deliberations regarding homelessness. In order for this research project to optimise the opportunity for new

conversations it is recommended that I as the researcher actively work to seek a publishing source for the current findings that will reach both the journalist and social science communities.

In connecting this research with the journalist community my aim is to provide an opportunity for this population to connect with and understand the potential impact of constructing a dominant narrative that individualises homelessness through supporting neoliberal ideals and silencing the heterogeneous nature of this social problem. In addition to this I hope that this research will help create conversation within this community regarding the repetitive use of episodic framing as a means of inspiring journalists, and their editors, to look for a broader framework under which to construct homelessness. In seeking a broader framework under which to construct homelessness journalists have the potential to share alternative narratives of homelessness that challenge society's current construction of this problem and the people experiencing it.

In connecting with the social science community my aim is for this research to further add to conversations regarding the news media's construction of homelessness. Given the current findings I wish to recommend that further research be conducted in the area of news media and the construction of homelessness. Given that the current research found strong links between STUFF's construction of homelessness and the ideals of neoliberalism I recommend that future research consider the circuit of mass communication (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014) and the role that this plays in the news media's neoliberalisation of homelessness. Having highlighted an under whelming lack of change over the past eight years (Hodgetts et al., 2008) in the way in which New Zealand news media constructs homelessness I also recommend that further research consider the developing role of social media. This recommendation is based on the understanding that social media holds the potential as a source for the creation of alternative narratives of homelessness to that of the narratives found in mainstream news media (Fuchs, 2010). This recommendation is made as, highlighted by Fuchs (2010), social media is developing a critical role as a media product that can formulate narratives that share the voice of oppressed and dominated groups and group members in a manner that allows for the advancement of a co-operative and inclusive society.

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