

*The Homeless Others and Us: a critical discourse analysis of online news articles in three British newspapers on people experiencing street homelessness in England.*

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<p>This thesis examines one of the most visible demonstrations of social exclusion: homelessness. The aim is to critically investigate the role of newspapers in constructing the discourse of homelessness. The focus of the research is on the United Kingdom, particularly England, where 4 677 people are estimated to sleep rough. The number has increased significantly during the 2010s, and the situation is likely to get worse.</p> <p>This paradox of a society with the world's fifth largest economy as well as thousands of people without access to housing is an intriguing starting point for a critical analysis. Therefore, this master's thesis analyses the role of British newspaper media in creating power, inequality and division into 'us and them', associated with street homelessness. When addressing social issues, such as homelessness, it is necessary to examine the role of media as it is the most important source of information for most of the people. Furthermore, it plays a crucial role in framing social issues for the public and influencing their opinions.</p> <p>The data was collected from three newspapers, representing both tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. These newspapers are the Guardian, the Daily Mail and the Sun. Articles containing the search terms "homelessness-England" were searched from the newspapers' online databases from 2017–2020. A total of fifteen articles were selected for further analysis. These were considered most relevant to the topic in question; that is, they discussed the way the public interacts with and how they portray the people sleeping rough in England. The methodology applied in this thesis was Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for critical discourse analysis. These dimensions are discourse-as-text, discourse-as-discursive-practice, and discourse-as-social-practice.</p> <p>Four overlapping categories were identified based on how they portrayed homeless people. These categories are 1. homeless people as objects of charity; 2. homeless people as security threats; 3. homeless people as demonstrations of inequality and 4. homeless people as victims. The research shows that these discourses are promoted in the articles by certain choices of vocabulary and discursive practice. Furthermore, it is argued that these narratives promote the dichotomy between 'us' (the people with housing) and 'them' (the homeless people). Based on the results, spoken and emotional driven language was more evident in the articles by Daily Mail and the Sun. Emotional discourses was used to create both positive (sympathy) and negative (fear) emotions among the readers.</p> <p>Overall, the research shows that the discourse of homelessness, constructed by the British newspapers, promotes the stereotypical views of homeless people as passive objects. Indeed, the active element in the narratives was in most cases given to the other people, not the homeless person. In the news storied of people experiencing street homeless they were talked about or seen but were not given the active voice.</p>			
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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Homelessness in Britain

This master's thesis analyses the role of media in creating power, inequality and division into 'us and them', associated with one of the most difficult social issues: homelessness. The focus of the research is on British newspapers' online articles on street homelessness in England.

Homelessness is a global problem and one of the most evident demonstrations of social exclusion and poverty. Roughly defined, it means a lack of housing and it affects poorer populations in both developing and developed worlds (Busch-Geertsema et al. 2016). It is a complex phenomenon in various ways and is often connected to the lack of other basic needs, such as healthcare, food and water.

Homelessness also lacks a universal definition. Indeed, it has numerous and sometimes conflicting terminologies. Therefore, it is difficult to provide accurate statistics on global homelessness, but the UN Habitat estimates that 150 million people, or in other words 2 per cent of the world's population, experience homelessness worldwide. Furthermore, more than 1.8 billion people lack adequate housing globally (UN Habitat).

Homelessness is also very much present in Europe. In 2017, the European Commission estimated that about 4 million people experience homelessness every year in the European Union (Spinnewijn, 2017). Furthermore, there has been a continuing increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness in Europe. Indeed, it is worth pointing out that Finland and Norway are the only countries in the continent, where homelessness is on the decline (FEANTSA, 2019).

One of the countries in Europe with a large homeless population is the United Kingdom. According to a report published by a homeless and housing charity Shelter in 2019, at least 320 000 people were experiencing homelessness in Britain (Shelter 2019). This is a large number for a country listed as the world's fifth largest economy based on its GDP in 2019 (Business Insider,

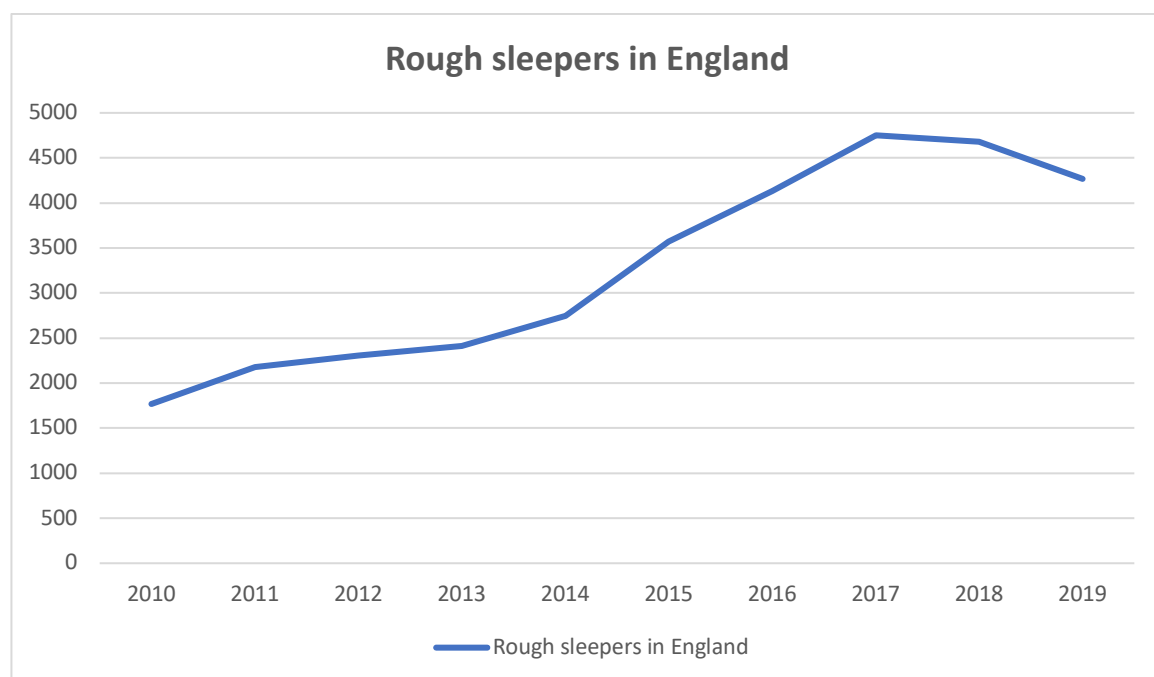
2020). The trend of increasing homelessness in Europe is very well visible also in the British society. Due to the lack of standardised measurement instruments and data collection methods, it is not possible to provide comparable data on homelessness in different European countries. However, it is still worth pointing out that from 2009 to 2016 the number of homeless people in Finland decreased by 18 per cent, whereas from 2010 to 2017 the number of rough sleepers in England increased by 169 per cent (FEANTSA, 2018). Freek Spinnewijn (2018), the director of FEANTSA (*The European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless*), has argued, that “(F)or almost all indicators the UK scores bad in a European perspective and the situation has often worsened over the last few years”.

Homelessness in Britain is undoubtedly a serious and long-term problem, which has not yet been resolved. The issue can be traced back to the 1980s and neoliberal policies, introduced by Margaret Thatcher’s conservative government. Thatcher’s political program included the promotion of home ownership and the sale of social housing stock. This aim to create a ‘nation of homeowners’ resulted in a shortage of affordable housing, and furthermore, the increase of homelessness in the UK from the 1980s onwards (Scott-Samuel et al, 2014). Although there have been periods during the past decades when homelessness in the British society has been on slight decline, these trends have not been sustained. Echoing the words of Victor Adebowale (2018:1): “Homelessness is not an episodic event, but something systemic. It is a neon sign that something is fundamentally wrong with policy across health and housing.”. Byrom and Peart (2017) argue that the worrying homeless statistics in the United Kingdom are a result of many years of a political and economic climate where the issue of homelessness was afforded low priority by most of the governments. They claim that most “(G)overnments have failed to address this issue with similar levels of urgency. Further, specific policies have resulted in an increase in the numbers of homeless people requiring support” (*ibid.* 25). Particularly the cuts in welfare and social security, as well as housing market pressures have had a crucial role in the increase of homelessness in the British society.

These types of policies have also affected the number of people experiencing street homelessness in England in the recent years (see table 1). In 2010, the Conservative–Liberal Democrat UK Coalition government launched a housing reform programme with an emphasis on cuts to housing allowances. Consequently, the homelessness figures escalated in England.

Fitzpatrick et al. (2020) argue that these increasing numbers are not just a result of post-2008 recession, but the outcome of deliberate policy choices. They claim that: “particularly ‘toxic’ in recent years has been the combination of an increasingly pressurised housing market in London and the South of England, and the intensification of welfare benefit restrictions” (*ibid*:545). Indeed, it can be said that homelessness in Britain is one of the most visible results of austerity.

**Table 1. The number of people (estimated) sleeping rough in England on one night in autumn 2010–2019 (Ministries of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2020)**



It is important to understand the structural reasons behind the increase. Similarly, one must also pay attention to the more individualistic explanations of the rise in homelessness. This means addressing the personal stories and attributes of the homeless people. Traditionally, these types of explanations have concentrated on mental health issues or substance abuse disorders of the homeless people. However, it can be pointed out that neither of these explanations is exhaustive. A ‘blended’ approach of taking into account both individual vulnerability of people as well as political conditions would be the most comprehensive for explaining the causes of homelessness in Britain (Bramley & Fitzpatrick, 2018).

Putting aside the different explanations of the causes, it is still undebatable that homelessness in England has worsened drastically during the 2010s. This paradox of a 21<sup>st</sup> century society with the world's fifth largest economy as well as thousands of people without access to shelter is an intriguing starting point for a critical analysis. For this reason, the subject of this thesis is homelessness in the United Kingdom, particularly England, as its figures on homelessness are particularly worrying also on the European scale. If current policy choices remain in place, the number is likely to increase even more and situation will get considerably worse (Crisis UK, 2018). Indeed, in order to the situation to improve, homelessness ought to be made an election priority (Hattenstone & Lavelle, 2019).

Therefore, it can be argued that reducing homelessness requires political will as well as changes in public attitudes. When discussing how to solve problems and advance social justice, it is necessary to examine the power of media in characterising and framing these issues. As Neil Postman (1987:7) pointed out: "(T)he information.... could not exist, in a world that lacked the media to give it expression.' Indeed, the media is the most important source of information for most of the people. Moreover, it has an important role to play in defining and constructing for example political or social issues for those who have not experienced them. Echoing the words of Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley (2005:29): "(M)edia link events in society into meaningful plotlines for public consumption".

Indeed, the media plays an important role in informing the people about issues like homelessness. Therefore, the aim of this research is to examine how homelessness is discussed in the British newspaper media. This issue is extremely topical as the rough sleeping figures in England have skyrocketed in the 2010s and the trend is likely to continue, unless the problem is taken seriously by the voters and decision-makers. For that reason, it is necessary to examine the information sources of the British people. How does the media frame the issue of homelessness? In a society characterised by inequality, does the language used by the media enhance it more? Furthermore, does it imply a dichotomy between 'us' (the people with housing) and 'them' (the people experiencing homelessness)?

## 1.2. The research questions

As mentioned earlier, this master's thesis examines homelessness in England and the social construction of the problem. The main focus is placed on how media coverage of homelessness has created power relations and inequality. Furthermore, this thesis aims to identify how the concept of the constitutive other is used in the language of media identify the people experiencing homelessness as 'the other' compared to the rest of the people with housing.

This thesis looks into online newspaper articles, that address homelessness in England. The research questions guiding the analysis are:

- Does the media designate certain roles to the people experiencing homelessness? If yes, how can they be identified?
- How are newspapers promoting the 'us vs. them' –categorisation in their language?
- To what extent does the political bias of the newspapers affect the language used in their articles?

The theoretical background of this master's thesis is rooted in the tradition of social constructionism and critical discourse analysis. Social constructionist theory is concerned with 'the social processes by which the people come to describe, explain and account for their world' (Franklin, 1995:397). Critical discourse analysis has been theorised by Fairclough (1992), who introduced three-dimensional framework for analysing discourse. These three dimensions are discourse-as-text, discourse-as-discursive-practice, and discourse-as-social-practice. This framework serves as a guideline for the analysis of this master's thesis.

The data analysed in this master's thesis are online newspaper articles, selected from both tabloids and broadsheets and on papers from the different ends of the political spectrum. It is argued that each newspaper's ideology and news values have an effect on how they portray homelessness in the UK and what kinds of narratives they do use. The newspapers and tabloids selected are *the Daily Mail*, *The Sun* and *the Guardian*. These newspapers were selected based on categorisation of British newspapers by Juncker's (1992) and Baker's et al. (2013) in order to obtain as versatile as possible data for the analysis. Furthermore, based on the analysis of the



data, British newspapers offer significantly different perspectives on homelessness and portrays the people experiencing it differently.

This master's thesis is structured as follows. Firstly, a literature review is provided. Previous research on homelessness and media addressed. Secondly, a theoretical background of this thesis is introduced. This master's thesis uses *ETHOS* categorisation as a starting point for defining homelessness. In addition, the phenomenon of homelessness is discussed broader from the British society's perspective. The qualities of British press are also examined and categorisations by Juncker (1992) and Baker et al. (2013) are introduced as a starting point for data collection. Social constructivism is also discussed further. Thirdly, the methodology of this master's thesis is further elaborated. Critical discourse analysis as well as the process of data collection is explained. In addition to these, "us vs. them" –ideology is also discussed. The fifth chapter of this thesis provides a critical discourse analysis of the articles and examines inequality, power relations and "us vs. them" –categorisation within them. Based on the analysis, four different narratives are identified. According to this categorisation it is argued that the British newspaper analysed tend to portray the homeless people as passive objects of charitable action; security threats; demonstrations of inequality or victims of abuse.

Finally, this thesis concludes and argues that the British newspapers use certain choices of vocabulary and images, which are causing inequality and power relations. It is also stated that the text has patterns that support the stereotypic view of the homeless people in negative terms as dangerous threats to security as well as passive receivers of help. Most importantly, the narrative used in the newspapers maintains the oppositions between "those" homeless people and the rest of "us", the housed public.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. The study of homelessness in Britain

Homelessness is experienced by individuals, but it is also imagined by journalists, general public as well as academics. As mentioned earlier in chapter 1, homelessness is a global problem, and it is studied by several scholars. The topic is genuinely cross-disciplinary as it can be analysed from, for example, medical, sociological, economical or geographical point of view. Due to the large volume of the material available, a very broad overview of the existing literature on homelessness and media coverage of it will be provided in the following chapter.

Homelessness is a complex social issue, and it can be studied from various different perspectives. Indeed, in his research Somerville (2013:384) emphasizes the complexity and multidimensionality of homelessness and argues that “(H)omelessness is not just a matter of lack of shelter or lack of abode, a lack of a roof over one’s head. It involves deprivation across a number of different dimensions – physiological (lack of bodily comfort or warmth), emotional (lack of love or joy), territorial (lack of privacy), ontological (lack of rootedness in the world, anomie) and spiritual (lack of hope, lack of purpose).” Therefore, it can be stated that homelessness is truly an interdisciplinary problem.

Many academics have analysed the phenomenon of homelessness in Britain from a social and political perspective. In her book Alma Blackman (2014) provides enlightening background information on government policy on tackling homelessness and preventing it in the United Kingdom. Government policy responses to homelessness are also addressed by Loveland (1991), who studies the topic from a legal and political perspective. British housing policy and its effect on homelessness have been widely examined by scholars (see, for example, Anderson,1993; Somerville,1994; Niner,1989; Burrows, Pleace and Quilqars,1997; and Byrom & Peart 2017).

These studies provide important insight on the topic from political and social perspective and explain how structural factors, such as policies and governments affect homelessness in the

British society. However, it can be argued that this type of research approach examines the phenomenon insufficiently as it interprets causes of homelessness resulting solely from policy making. A more comprehensive picture of the issue can be introduced by looking at media's coverage of homelessness. It is important as it allows one to examine how the social problem is portrayed to the public (Buck, Toro & Ramos, 2004).

## 2.2. Homelessness and the media

Media coverage of homelessness has broadly been recognised as an intriguing topic for scholars. Existing research has addressed the topic by examining the volume and content of coverage over decades (for example Buck, Toro & Ramos, 2004 and Hodgetts, Cullen and Radley, 2005). These studies have examined the media coverage of homelessness and how different policies have had an effect on it. In their research, Buck, Toro and Ramos (2004) provide a quantitative analysis of homelessness and media. By examining both newspaper and professional journal articles they demonstrate how the coverage of homelessness has varied from 1974 until 2004. They point out an increase in the media coverage in mid-1980s, followed by a steady decline. Buck, Toro and Ramos and argue that the relationship between the politics and media coverage of homelessness is complex: on the other hand, the public opinion on the topic might influence the media coverage of the topic but at the same time it can be the other way around. In any case, the public opinion of the topic does have policy implications.

Specifically, the newspaper coverage of homelessness has previously been studied by several scholars, for example Richeter, Kovacs Burns et al. (2012) who provide an examination of media coverage of homelessness over a period of 20 years between 1987 and 2007 in Canada. Based on their research, they point out that cold winters are an important factor in producing more articles about the people experiencing homelessness. Likewise, Bunis, Yanick et al. (1996) have studied the newspaper coverage of homelessness over decades and demonstrated how the sympathy for the people experiencing homelessness tended to increase over the holidays, like during Christmas and Thanksgiving.

Mao, Richter et al. (2011) study newspaper coverage of homelessness from the Canadian perspective and analyse how homelessness is framed by the Canadian newspaper media. By

applying a quantitative study method, they look at a large number of newspaper articles on homelessness. Interestingly, they also examine the ownership of the newspapers and how it has an effect on the coverage of the topic. This thesis will also take this into account and analyse how the ownership of British newspapers has an effect on media coverage of homelessness.

Compared to the previously mentioned quantitative studies, Forte (2000), takes a different approach to the topic. He applies a social constructivist approach and looks at the newspaper campaigns and how they have cast the people experiencing homelessness in negative terms and thus justify a closing of a shelter. By looking at the newspaper articles as well as the attitudes of social workers, Forte's social constructivist approach provides an intriguing starting point for the study of homelessness as it acknowledges the fact that homelessness, like other social issues are social constructions. Indeed, in his text, he points out the fact, that "(H)uman understandings of troublesome conditions and public problems....are also social constructions, "products of claims making, labeling, and other constitutive definitional processes" "(Franklin, quoted in Forte, 2000: 136). Forte's social constructivist research understands that the phenomenon of homelessness needs to be understood as a process of attaching "to important elements of social reality-selves, others, places, and physical objects-are collective creations, and meaning assignment varies by culture, historical period, and location in the social structure" (*ibid.*).

Echoing this argument about the importance of social construction of issues, this master's thesis seeks to take this analysis forward and use social constructivist approach in analysing how newspapers from different ends of the political spectrum are discussing about homelessness in the Britain. Particular emphasis is placed on the examination of the 'us vs. them' –discourse.

These previously mentioned studies provide interesting examinations of the media's interest in homelessness. However, it can be argued that they do not provide an in-depth study of the topic nor they have not accounted for British newspaper coverage of the topic recently. Indeed, they contribute to the research by providing quantitative study of the topic from various other perspectives, such as from Canada. However, it can be stated that there is a need for a

comprehensive study of the newspaper coverage of homelessness particularly in the Britain as the number of people experiencing homelessness have significantly increased during the past decade. It is argued that a critical examination of the sets of assumptions underlying the discourse of homelessness is needed. In order to analyse the topic thoroughly, one must also examine the 'us vs. them' –discourse.

This master's thesis would like to move the analysis forward and analyse the topic more deeply by looking at the 'us vs. them' –framework as well as the political bias of the news media in Britain. It also fills an existing research gap by providing a critical discourse analysis of recent newspaper articles, affected by the dramatic increase in the number of rough sleepers in the recent years England in the 2010s.

### 3. Conceptual and theoretical framework

#### 3.1. The definition of homelessness: rough sleepers

As mentioned earlier, homelessness does not have a universal definition, which makes it a difficult topic to study as well as measure. Indeed, MacKenzie (2012:25) argues that different: “(D)efinitions of homelessness have implications for who is classified as ‘homeless’, thus determining the size of the homeless population, and whether homelessness can be argued to be a ‘big’ problem deserving of a high public policy priority or not.”.

Defining homelessness has been a topic of debate for a long time. The most prominent endeavour to define and classify homelessness is arguably the European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS), developed by FEANTSA (European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless) and the European Observatory on Homelessness in 2005. This typology (table 2.), classifies living situations that constitute homelessness. ETHOS identifies four main categories of living situation: inadequate, insecure, houseless and roofless.

Widely used in the European countries, the ETHOS definition and classification has provided a useful tool for highlighting the fact that homelessness is not limited to people living on the street, i.e. rough sleepers. In addition, the ETHOS draws attention to groups of people at risk of homelessness. Busch-Geertsema (2010:21) argues that the ETHOS is “widely accepted and frequently quoted in almost all European countries”.

By dividing the homeless population into subgroups, the ETHOS sheds light on the heterogeneity of homeless people and the fact that not all people experiencing homelessness are visible. In consequence, it is necessary to define the concept of homelessness used in this study. This master’s thesis uses the ETHOS categorisation as a starting point because the objective of the analysis is in the Europe, particularly in Britain. The definition of homelessness used in this thesis is based on ETHOS’s category 1: ‘People living rough’, meaning the people, whose living situation is ‘public space or external space’ without a shelter (table 1). This

definition of homelessness as rough sleepers is chosen, because the rough sleepers' physical presence on the streets and in the parks has made the problem of homelessness very visible in the British society. When looking at the newspaper articles on homelessness, it can be argued that the people sleeping on the streets are the most visible form of homelessness in Britain and therefore this type of homelessness also is also the most the most common in the media discourse.

**Table 2: ETHOS European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (source: FEANTSA, 2005)**

<b>OPERATIONAL CATEGORY</b>	<b>LIVING SITUATION</b>	<b>GENERIC DEFINITION</b>
<b>1. People living rough</b> <i>Roofless</i>	1.1. Public or external space	Living in the streets or public spaces.
<b>2. People in emergency accommodation</b> <i>Roofless</i>	2.1. Night shelter	People who use of overnight shelter.
<b>3. People in accommodation for the homeless</b> <i>Houseless</i>	3.1. Homeless hostel 3.2. Temporary accommodation 3.3. Transitional supported accommodation	Accommodation where the period of stay is intended short term.
<b>4. People in Women's shelter</b> <i>Houseless</i>	4.1. Women's shelter accommodation	Short-term accommodation for women who are victims of domestic violence.
<b>5. People in accommodation for immigrants</b> <i>Houseless</i>	5.1. Temporary accommodation/reception centers 5.2. Migrant workers accommodation	Immigrants in reception or short-term accommodation due to their immigrant status.
<b>6. People due to be released from institutions</b> <i>Houseless</i>	6.1. Penal institutions 6.2. Medical institutions (including drug rehabilitation institutions, psychiatric hospitals) 6.3. Children's institutions or home	No housing available prior to release. Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing. No housing identified by the age of 18.
<b>7. People receiving longer-term support</b> <i>Insecure</i>	7.1. Residential care for older homeless people 7.2. Supported accommodation for the former homeless people	Long term accommodation with support for former homeless people.
<b>8. People living in secure accommodation</b> <i>Insecure</i>	8.1. Temporarily with family or friends. 8.2. No legal (sub)tenancy 8.3. Illegal occupation of land	Living in conventional housing but not the usual place of residence due to lack of housing. Occupation of dwelling with no legal tenancy or illegal occupation of a dwelling. Occupation of land with no legal rights.



<b>9. People living under threat of eviction</b> <i>Insecure</i>	9.1. Legal orders enforced (rented) 9.2. Re-possession orders (owned)	Where orders for eviction are operative. Where mortgagee has legal order to re-possess.
<b>10. People living under threat of violence</b> <i>Insecure</i>	10.1. Police recorded incidents	Where police action is taken to ensure place of safety for victims of domestic violence.
<b>11. People living in temporary or non-conventional structures</b> <i>Inadequate</i>	11.1. Mobile homes 11.2. Non-conventional building 11.3. Temporary structure	Not intended as place of usual residence. Makeshift shelter, shack or shanty. Semi-permanent structure hut or cabin.
<b>12. People living in unfit housing</b> <i>Inadequate</i>	12.1. Occupied dwellings unfit for habitation	Defined as unfit for habitation by national legislation or building regulations.
<b>13. People living in extreme over-crowding</b> <i>Inadequate</i>	13.1. Highest national form of over-crowding.	Defined as exceeding national density standard for floor-space or unusable rooms.

*Note: Short stay defined normally as less than one year; long stay more than one year.*

### 3.2. Homelessness in England: statistics

As mentioned in chapter 1, homelessness can be a result of a series of different and complex societal factors as well as personal circumstances. Indeed, it can happen to anybody. However, it can be stated that not all countries and societies are equally vulnerable. When looking at the issue on a global scale, certain patterns of homelessness emerge along lines of specific criteria, such as class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, disability, and age. One must also point out that in addition, there is a complex relationship between homelessness and conflict, which can create populations of people who are displaced or stateless, while climate change has increasingly prompted higher migration rates from vulnerable areas (Institute of Global Homelessness, 2017).

Indeed, homelessness is a serious problem and a feature of severe poverty in societies in the Global South, which are characterised by underdevelopment. However, as mentioned earlier, it

does also exist across the developed Western world or in so-called Global North. It is a paradox: in the most advanced economies some people are still sleeping on the streets. The phenomenon is not by all means new and unfortunately homelessness has increased dramatically over the past decades. One cannot point out only one reason for that. Indeed, several societal factors contributing to the increased rate of homelessness can be identified. These are, for example, the lack of affordable housing, unemployment, cutbacks in public welfare programs and substance abuse. In addition to the factors in the society, increase of the number of people experiencing homelessness can also be explained by looking at one's personal circumstances. These types of circumstances can be, for example, personal crises (domestic violence, divorce etc.) or very low income (Mao, Richet et al, 2012).

This thesis concentrates on the phenomenon of homelessness from a Global North perspective and particularly on Britain. As mentioned earlier in chapter 1, Britain has a very large homeless population which has peaked in the 2010 as a result of austerity measures. There is no national figure on how many people are experiencing homelessness in the United Kingdom (Britain and Northern Ireland). This is due to the fact that homelessness is measured and recorded differently in each nation.

Homeless charity Shelter estimates that in 2019, 280 000 people were recorded homeless in England, with no equivalent number for Scotland and Wales. From this number it is estimated that 4 677 are sleeping rough in England at a given night. The number of rough sleepers has increased by 169 % since 2010. The report also identifies the local areas across the country where homelessness is the most acute. The statistics show that the situation is worst in London: 1 in 52 people are experiencing homelessness in the capital. Outside London, homeless top rates can be found in, for example, Luton where 1 in 46 are homeless; Birmingham (1 in 66 homeless), Brighton and Hove (1 in 75) and Manchester (1 in 102) (Shelter, 2019).

These statistics can be said to be the most comprehensive overview of homelessness in the country. However, it is necessary to point out that they are only estimates. As mentioned, homelessness is very difficult to measure and a lot of homelessness stays undocumented. This type of undocumented homelessness includes sofa surfers as well as rough sleepers. Indeed,

one can say that the true level of homelessness is considerably higher than the statistics show (Shelter, 2019).

Chapter 4 of this master's thesis discusses the collection of the data. Based on the data collection of the newspaper articles on homelessness, it was evident that the cities with the largest homelessness population in England are also the most frequently mentioned in the media. This is especially the case with London, which has the largest rough sleepers' population in the United Kingdom (Homeless Link, 2019). In deciding which nation to focus on, this was a crucial factor. For this reason and analytical purposes, this master's thesis concentrates on homelessness in England.

### 3.3. 'Us vs. them' -dichotomy

This master's thesis seeks to study how British newspaper media talks about homelessness in England and to what extent does it imply the 'us vs. them' –dichotomy in their articles. In this research, the 'us vs. them' –ideology is used to describe the division of the British people into 'us' (the people with housing) and 'them' (the people experiencing homelessness).

The 'us vs. them' –discourse is based on the process of identification. Identifying or being identified with particular group has implications on everyday lives as well as politics. The process of identification places individuals inside a particular group but simultaneously they also place them outside another one. It can be argued, that identifying oneself as something is based on the dichotomy between 'us and them'. Or in other words, when I am identifying myself as 'X', I am also excluding myself from being 'Y'. One of the most prominent examples of the 'us vs. them' –dichotomy is Edward Said's text 'Orientalism' (1979), where introduces a division between 'us' (the West) and 'them' (the Orient). He argues, that the West identified itself as something fundamentally different from the Orient. Echoing Said's idea of orientalism, several scholars have argued that 'the constitutive other' is required in order identify itself with something, or in other words, being something requires not being something else or placing itself outside another group (Wibben, 2014). The concept of 'other' is also famously examined by psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (2006). He argues that a crucial part of the self's identification process is the recognition of the 'rival other'. Indeed, 'it is the other which constructs and

controls a human being's external world, and which regulates his or her assumption of a 'self-image.' (Nobus, 2016:113).

The idea of a 'constitutive other' can also be applied to the study of homelessness. Hodgetts et al. (2006) argue that the people experiencing homelessness tend to be characterised as 'diseased, passive, voiceless and overly reliant upon charitable assistance and management' (*ibid.* 498). Compared to these features, the rest of the people are commonly seen as the opposite: active citizens who participate in making decisions about their lives. According to them, the media is responsible for these shallow characterisations of homeless people and thus promotes the oppositional relationships between 'us' and 'them'.

This process of identification and the social positioning of the self are formed 'through a series of cultural representations of people' (Sibley, 1995:10). Indeed, the media's representations of people do play an important role in the process. The role of media in promoting oppositional characterisations between 'us' and 'them' is further discussed in chapter 5.

#### 3.4. Social constructionism

As mentioned in chapter 1, this master's thesis' theoretical framework is rooted on the tradition of social constructionism. From the social constructionist perspective, knowledge is always constructed in a social context. Social constructionism does not have a commonly accepted definition, but it can be said to be a broad theoretical orientation, which comprehends several approaches, such as discourse analysis, post-structuralism and deconstruction (Burr, 2015).

From the social constructionist point of view, one can argue that the language is not independent of the real world, but instead it shapes it. The process of verbalising thoughts, transmitting ideas and choosing the words involves the simultaneous signalling of purposes, wishes and aims along with the message (Edkins, 2014). Therefore, it is argued that it is necessary to examine the discourse of homelessness critically.

Crucial in the social constructionist thinking is the critic towards taken-for-granted knowledge, or in other words, empiricism and positivism. Indeed, from the social constructionist point of view, there is no such thing as unbiased observation of the reality. Indeed, every understanding and perceiving of the world is a result of a social process. An important part of this process is the use of language. According to social constructionists, language is not just a simple way of expressing oneself. Instead, using language also constructs words. This means that language can be understood as a form of action. Knowledge and understandings of the reality are created by people using language, they do not exist independently of it (Burr, 2015). Language is used to 'produce and reproduce knowledge as we enact various roles within various contexts' (Allen, 2004: 37). As poststructuralist Michel Foucault famously argued, power is constructed through language discourses. The way things are discussed gives them meaning and determines power relations. Indeed, language is not a politically neutral medium of communication but a social practice. Language discourses do not exist independently from reality: instead, they formulate and shape it (Foucault, 1972). The study of language and the ways it creates power relations and inequality is intriguing when addressing political or social issues. This is particularly interesting in the case of the media, as it is the most important source of information for most of the people.

Social constructivist approach to studying newspaper coverage of homelessness is useful as it allows one to pay attention to the social construction of the phenomenon of homelessness. This idea will be further elaborated in the following chapter.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Qualitative study

The method used in this research is qualitative, as it will rely upon the examination and collection of non-numeric data. This master's thesis can thus be characterised as more interpretative than empirical research. Qualitative analysis is selected due to its ability to allow researcher to focus and do in-depth analysis on meanings and processes presented in the form of written or spoken language (Lamont, 2015:78). By using qualitative analysis, this thesis concentrates on the interpretation of linguistic forms of communication.

### 4.2. Critical Discourse Analysis

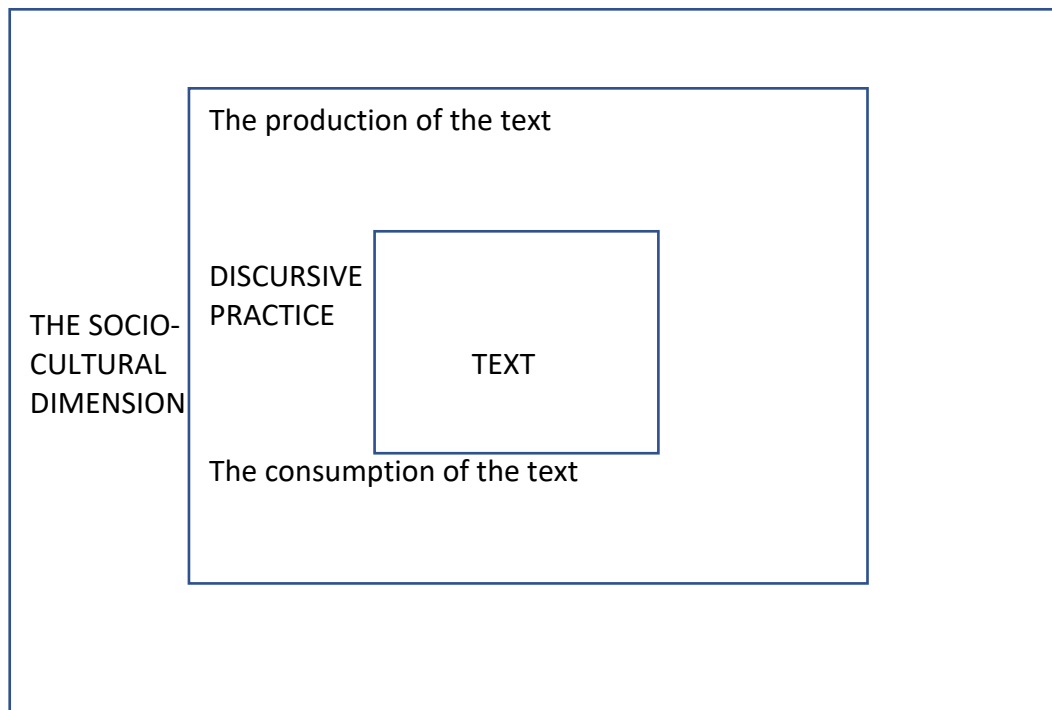
This study applies critical discourse analysis (hereafter referred as CDA) approach to selected newspaper texts of street homelessness in England. Critical discourse analysis is concerned with inequality and relations of power in language. It is aimed at studying 'opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language' (Wodak 1995:204). It is useful in this research as it "is distinctive in its view of (a) the relationship between language and society, and (b) the relationship between analysis and the practices analysed" (Wodak quoted in Blommaert & Bulcacean, 2000:448).

As mentioned in chapter 1, CDA has been theorised by Fairclough (1992), who introduced three-dimensional framework for analysing and conceiving discourse. These three dimensions are:

1. Discourse as text
2. Discourse as discursive practice
3. Discourse as social practice

Based on these three dimensions, Fairclough (1992) proposes a guideline for conducting critical discourse analysis. This guideline will also serve as a framework for analysis in the following chapter.

**Table 3. Critical Discourse Analysis Framework by Norman Fairclough (1997:82).**



The first dimension is concerned with description, i.e. the “linguistic features and organization of concrete instances of discourse”, such as choices and patterns in vocabulary as well as grammar and text structure (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000:448). The second dimension of CDA focuses on discourse as interpretation. This means discourse as something that is circulated, consumed as well as distributed in a society and looks at the interaction and how the discourse is produced. The third dimension looks at discourse as a social practice. Or in other words, it examines the process of hegemony and ideological effects where discourse is a feature. It concentrates on discourse as a part of broader social context and process (Fairclough, 2001).

CDA understands discourse as a language, either in written or spoken, and identifies as a form of social practice. From Fairclough’s perspective, discourse can be the study of language with a particular emphasis on the social practice. Sympathetic towards the social constructionist point

of view, CDA claims that ‘discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned –it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people’ (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997:258). This is particularly important when looking at homelessness because discursive practices can create unequal power relations. Indeed, by presenting things and positioning people they can create inequalities between groups of people, for example between the people experiencing homelessness and people with housing.

Echoing the words of Fairclough himself (2001:25), CDA is concerned with ‘how language and/or semiosis interconnect with other elements of social life, and especially a concern with how language and/or semiosis figure in unequal relation of power in processes of exploitation and domination of some people by others’. The research focus of CDA is on texts and interactions, but it does not take these at its starting point. Instead, it starts from social problems and issues, and seeks to look at these in terms of their semiotic dimensions. Indeed, CDA is interested in having an effect on the society in some way. It aims to do so by ‘empowering the powerless, giving voice to the voiceless, or exposing abuses of power’ (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000: 449). In this master’s thesis, the starting point for the CDA is a social problem: homelessness.

Although CDA is a widely utilised research method, it is not completely problematic. Indeed, the researcher’s own normative viewpoint needs to be taken into consideration. From the social constructionist perspective it can be argued that it is impossible “to argue without adopting a normative stance” (Herzog, 2016:280).

#### 4.3. The British press

The media is never neutral. Instead, the media expressions are biased, and they tend to ‘lean towards a particular view of a given issue’ (Burton, 1997:226). This means that the representations of the world, proposed by the media, always advocate a biased picture of it. This also applies to the media in Britain, in particularly to British newspapers. Indeed, it is generally argued that the newspapers in Britain can be classified along a range of distinctions regarding, for example, their political stance (conservative vs. liberal) or their format and style



(broadsheets vs. tabloids). Furthermore, the British newspapers can also generally be divided between quality-press and popular press. The former is said to cover the most important news both in national and international context and employ a “sober tone and a formal language”, whereas the latter tends to give “more coverage to entertainment, gossip, sensational stories and less in-depth news, employing a causal, informal language with slang and an irreverent and provoking tone” (Nisco, 2016:33).

The British press is composed of various types of newspapers, which all appear to be relatively partial. As mentioned earlier, the newspapers in Britain can be classified along a range of distinctions regarding, for example, their political stance (conservative vs. liberal) as well as their format and style (broadsheets vs. tabloids). Furthermore, the British newspapers can also generally be divided between “quality-press” and “popular press”, based on their style and stories (Nisco, 2016:32). When classifying British newspapers, it is also crucial to pay attention to their readers, as their socio-economic status is not homogenous. By looking at these socio-economic statuses and based on the idea of Henry (1983) claims that British newspapers can further be categorised into ‘downmarket’, ‘middle market’ and ‘upmarket’. Juncker (1992) further elaborates the idea and divides British daily newspapers into these three categories (table 2). Furthermore, he classifies ‘upmarket’ newspapers as ‘broadsheet papers’ and ‘midmarket’ as well as ‘downmarket’ newspaper as ‘tabloid papers’. These newspapers have an important role in providing commentaries on social issues and characterising marginalised groups, like the people experiencing homelessness.

Juncker’s categorisation is chosen as one of the guidelines in collecting the data from the newspapers. When examining the news coverage of homelessness in England, it is crucial to also pay attention to the different backgrounds of the newspapers and the people reading it. Therefore, the analysis will concentrate on newspapers from every category mentioned below.

**Table 4. Categorisation of British daily newspapers by Juncker (1992:48).**

<b>Upmarket newspapers</b> <i>Broadsheet papers</i>	<b>Midmarket newspapers</b> <i>Tabloid papers</i>	<b>Downmarket newspapers</b> <i>Tabloid papers</i>
The Times, The Independent, The Guardian, Financial Times, The Daily Telegraph	Today, Daily Mail, Daily Express	The Sun, The Star, Daily Mirror

As mentioned earlier, language is not a politically neutral medium of communication but a social practice. Indeed, language and style are: ‘(A)bout more than the medium that transmits them: they are closely related to the question of ‘content’’ (Schlesinger, 2000:104). Media can be seen as t as ‘the dominating presenters of language in society, in that they generate most of the language that is actually heard in society’ (Nisco, 2016:27). Because there is no neutral language, the media, transmitting the information to the audience, is by no means a neutral vehicle for information. This is due to the fact that the people constructing the media stories cannot escape their situated-ness and bias. They operate in with established pictures of the reality, which excludes some policies, people and groups, and on the other hand, privileges others. From the media’s perspective this means that: ‘(T)here is no possibility of representing the world in a way that does not also advocate a particular – and necessarily biased – picture of the world’, (Lisle, 2014:157).

Baring this in mind, one can also easily make the argument that the British press media are not neutral means of communication. Instead, their stories are inevitably biased. Indeed, it can be argued that even a commonly quoted as neutral news source, the BBC (British Broadcasting Company), has biases within its reporting because it prioritises certain stories over others. It is commonly acknowledged that the British newspapers are usually loyal to particular political parties and thus urge their readers to vote according this political view. However, as Baker et al. (2013) correctly point out, it would be misleading to claim that the newspapers are blindly loyal to the parties. Instead, it can be said that the terms ‘left’ or ‘right’, associated with the newspapers, are quire relative. Indeed, they can be used ‘to indicate a broad overall stance’ (Baker et al., 2013:9). Therefore, Baker et al. introduce a division of British newspapers into

'left-leaning' and 'right-leaning'. This categorisation (table 3) demonstrates newspaper's preference towards either the left or the right.

This categorisation by Baker et al. is also utilised in this master's thesis, as it highlights the political affiliations of British newspapers. By looking also at the political biases of the newspaper, one can analyse whether they have an effect on the discourse of homelessness produced in the stories. Therefore, the analysis will focus on both left- and right-leaning newspapers.

**Table 5. The British national press, categorisation by Baker et al., (2013:9)**

	<b>Left leaning</b>	<b>Right leaning</b>
<b>Tabloid</b>	Daily Mirror, Sunday Mirror	The Sun, News of the World, Daily Star, Daily Star Sunday, Daily Express, Sunday Express, Daily Mail, Mail on Sunday, The People
<b>Broadsheet</b>	The Guardian, The Observer, The Independent, Independent on Sunday	The Daily Telegraph, The Sunday Telegraph, The Times, The Sunday Times, The Business

#### 4.4. Collection of the data

By applying the characterisation by Baker et al. (2013) shown in table 3, the three newspapers used in the analysis were selected for their range in ideology – from the more 'right-leaning' *the Daily Mail* and *the Sun*, to the more 'left-leaning' *the Guardian*. Previously mentioned categorisation by Juncker (1992) was also used. The three newspapers were chosen from each category: *the Sun* representing a 'downmarket newspaper'; *the Daily Mail* from the 'midmarket

newspaper' category and *the Guardian* representing a 'upmarket newspaper'. These different newspapers were chosen in order to provide a broad spectrum of tone, style and ideological perspective for the study. It is also worth pointing out that all of these three newspapers are among the most circulated ones in the United Kingdom when looking at both online and printed versions (Statista, 2019).

Newspaper coverage was examined during the period of 2017-2020, a time when the rates of rough sleepers peaked in England. The number of rough sleepers in England increased by 169% since 2010 (see chapter 1) and for this reason, the period of time has been characterised as the 'decade of disaster' (Fitzpatrick, et al. 2020). The statistics of 2020 were not available when the research was conducted.

The research was conducted from Finland where physical copies of the newspapers were not available. Therefore, the strategy for collecting data for was Internet-based, which means that the newspapers used in the research had to be available online. Articles containing the search terms "homelessness-England" were searched from the newspapers' online databases: [www.dailymail.co.uk/](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/), <https://www.thesun.co.uk/> and [www.theguardian.com/uk](http://www.theguardian.com/uk). Thousands of hits were created, by using these keyword combinations (see table 5). A great amount of the articles did not relate directly to the topic of people experiencing street homelessness in England and were not considered relevant for the study. These articles included, for example, stories with main focus on homelessness in another country with comparisons to England, housing crisis, interviews of former homeless people, rents and charity appeals. Editorials and opinion pieces were excluded, and therefore the emphasis was purposely restricted to the narrative presented in the news itself.

Newspaper articles discussing homelessness as a general phenomenon, from the statistical point of view or from the political perspective were also excluded as the focus of the study. After retrieving the data, dozens of articles were considered useful to the research question; that is their main focus was specifically on the people sleeping rough in England and they described a particular news story related to the rough sleepers. From these articles, a total of fifteen articles were selected for deeper analysis. These were considered the most relevant to the topic in question; that is, they discussed the way the public interacts with and how they

portray the people sleeping rough in England. From these fifteen articles, five were from *the Sun*, four from *the Guardian* and six from *the Daily Mail*. These articles were published in 2017-2020.

**Table 6. The number of online news stories on people experiencing street homelessness in England published in 2017–2020.** The first number is the number of articles with main focus on people sleeping rough in England. The number in brackets is the total number of hits created by using the keywords “homelessness-england”.

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
<i>The Sun</i>	6 (12)	9 (27)	5 (23)	3 (23)
<i>The Daily Mail</i>	8 (241)	18 (460)	16 (430)	18 (439)
<i>The Guardian</i>	11 (424)	14 (363)	8 (305)	12 (221)

## 5. Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the data analysed in this master's thesis are online newspaper articles from both British tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. The aim of the research is to examine the discourse of street homelessness represented by the newspaper media. The following chapter will discuss the material from the perspective of Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework.

The articles will be analysed by looking at three different dimensions: discourse as text, discourse as discursive practice and discourse as social practice (Fairclough, 1997). The articles are divided, based on how they discuss street homelessness into four overlapping categories (see table 6). This categorisation was developed analytically parallel to the readings of the text.

**Table 7: Categorisation of the articles based on how they portray rough sleepers**

Category	Number of articles
Homeless people as passive objects of charity	4
Homeless people as threats to security	5
Homeless people as demonstrations of inequality	3+1
Homeless people as victims of abuse	3

### 5.1. Critical discourse analysis: discourses as text and discursive practice

As mentioned in chapter 4, the first dimension of the CDA framework is concerned with language. It is concerned with the 'linguistic features and organization of concrete instances of discourse', such as choices and patterns in vocabulary (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000:448). It is necessary to first examine the newspaper articles by looking at these linguistic as well as discursive aspects of the texts. How does the use of certain words of language help to constitute the discourse of homelessness? How are the texts produced and consumed (Fairclough 1997)?

### 5.1.1. The homeless people as passive objects of charity

When analysing the articles, the discourse of receiving help became evident in four of the articles. This meant that the narrative suggested by these stories characterised homeless people as objects of charity or good deeds. This discourse was built by using certain language as well as means of producing the text.

Intriguing choice of vocabulary, supporting the previously mentioned argument can be pointed out by looking at the articles from *the Daily Mail* (12/2018 and 10/2020) and *The Sun* (12/2017 and 10/2020), which discuss events concerning rough sleeper(s). These articles adopt a more emotional approach, which can be acknowledged by examining the choices of vocabulary mentioned in these articles. The first article, titled 'Bin men save woman's life when they find her sleeping in a recycling bin moments before it's emptied into rubbish truck' (*the Daily Mail*, 12/2018) use vocabulary, such as: 'save woman's life', 'shocking moment', 'heart-breaking footage of the incident', 'sweetie', 'we saved a life' and 'so sad'. The article also included quotes, such as, "She is someone's daughter, imagine if that was your child. Government should be ashamed." The article also describes homeless person and how she was discovered as "The rough sleeper - who appeared to be no older than a teenager - was discovered sheltering under a heap of cardboard in the 1100-litre bin while the crew did its rounds in Brixton". These quotes emphasize the age of the homeless person and particularly how young she was. Referring to a family discourse is aimed at arousing compassion among readers who are parents (Fairclough, 1997). Furthermore, the article describes the homeless girl as "sheltering under a heap of cardboard in the 1100-litre bin". One can argue that this type of detailed description of her accommodation is used to create sympathy among the readers. By describing a bin van, which is a basic everyday necessity for most of the people, helps the readers to imagine the shocking situation of the woman.

Similar rhetoric is used by *the Daily Mail* in another article titled: 'Heartwarming moment father takes off his jeans and hands them to a homeless man wearing shorts after he spotted him shivering in the cold' (10/2020). This article uses emotional words, like: 'heartwarming', 'act-of-kindness', 'moved to tears', 'unbelievably proud of him', 'role model'. The event is pictured as

“This is the moment a selfless father was pictured taking off his jeans and giving them to a shivering rough sleeper after spotting him wearing shorts outside a petrol station.” The article also creates sympathy towards the homeless man by saying that “the man had been 'so grateful' to receive the pair of jeans”. This enhances the discourse of homeless people as humble and grateful receivers of help.

This type of emotional vocabulary is also evident in the Sun’s article (12/2017) titled ‘HELPING HAND Girl, 9, spends her birthday money buying soup and hot drinks for the homeless this Christmas’. The article uses emotional-driven language like ‘big-hearted’. By referring to schoolgirls age (9 years), the article creates positive emotions amongst the readers.

The same narrative repeats in the Sun’s article (10/2020) titled ‘In from the cold: scared elderly woman saved from the streets after heartwarming pic highlights UK’s homeless crisis’, where vocabulary, such as ‘heartbreaking picture’, ‘found shivering’, ‘scared’, and ‘Armageddon’ is used.

This type of emotional vocabulary used in the articles can be used to create sympathy amongst the readers (Schreider, 2014). Quotes, like the one from the 9-year-old girl "It’s sad in winter, it’s really cold. Today my mum told me to get a coat and I didn’t and now I’m freezing and I had to go and buy a hat but some people can’t do that." (*The Sun*, 12/2017) are used to describe desperate circumstances of the people sleeping on the streets to the public reading the newspapers. This, in turn, creates sympathy and in a way connects the fortunate with the unfortunate (Clark, 1997). The vocabulary choices can be said to be emotive, because they trigger emotions amongst the readers and thus affect the decisions concerning the homeless. Indeed, describing the situation of the homeless people like “It’s been so cold my socks have gone hard." (*The Sun*, 12/2017), trigger the readers to feel pity for the people experiencing homelessness. Echoing the words of Tsitsanoudis-Mallidis and Derveni (2018:10): “(T)he emotive power of these words can make them extremely effective instruments to direct and encourage certain attitudes and choices.”

However, when examining these three articles, the sympathy created towards the homeless is only one aspect. One can argue that it is only secondary or a means to highlight the importance



of the acts done by other people. Indeed, the main focus in these three articles is to highlight the good and heroic deeds of other people towards the person(s) experiencing homelessness. For example, *the Daily Mail* article (10/2020) emphasizes the role of 'a selfless father....taking off his jeans and giving them to a shivering rough sleeper after spotting him wearing shorts outside a petrol station'. Words like 'selfless', 'kindness', 'role model' and 'proud' are used to highlight the good deed performed by a random bystander, in this case a father from Manchester called Johny Hindle. Moreover, the discourse of a heroic dad is supported in the text by including quotes from his fiancée, saying "I am extremely proud of him and the selfless act he's done," she said. 'He made sure someone was that little bit warmer on a freezing cold night.". This is further emphasized by saying that "she and her eldest daughter, Lola, were welling up with tears."

Similar rhetoric is evident in *the Daily Mail's* article (12/2018) describing an event in London, where bin men save rough sleeper's life by founding her sleeping in a recycling bin. The bin men are called 'quick-thinking employee' and the fact they saved the woman's life is repeated several times in the text. Furthermore, certain choices of vocabulary are used to describe the misfortunate situation of the woman, referred only as 'the rough sleeper – who appeared to be no older than a teenager'. The actors of the 'heroic deeds' in this article are clearly the bin men, whereas the homeless woman is the receiver of the help. The discourse of a noble and kind lifesaver helping a homeless person is further emphasized by including a quote from the bin man saying "Come on, you can't stay in the bin, sweetie. It's dangerous in there. Very dangerous, please."

Similar discourse of saving homeless person's life is repeated in the article by *The Sun* (10/2020) which discusses an event where an elderly woman is saved from the streets. In this article, a woman known only as Anne, is found sleeping rough with "just a tarpaulin between her and the cold ground" and is described as "scared" and "freezing cold". One can easily point out that as in the previous articles discussed, in this article also the person experiencing homelessness is characterised as the receiver of the help. In this case, the 'saver' is a group of volunteers from a homeless charity. This narrative is supported by vocabulary choices, such as "saved from the streets" and "thankfully she is now safe". The woman is described as having 'a few mental health problems' and being 'paranoid', 'newly homeless' and 'scared'. These types

of words highlight her role for the reader as a weak and vulnerable receiver of help. The discourse of charitable action is also evident in the article, published by *The Sun* (12/2017), which talks about a schoolgirl helping a homeless woman. The article includes quotations from the girl, saying “...we got some hot drinks and soup and food and gave it to Margaret. I did it with my birthday money and I do think everybody should do something like that to help.”

Indeed, the language used in these three articles help to create emotional discourse and sympathy. Furthermore, by using words which highlight the heroic deeds performed by other people, the articles characterise the people experiencing homelessness as vulnerable and passive receivers of help. This argument can be supported by looking at the structures of the sentences. The homeless people are rarely the subjects of the actions, but objects. Indeed, ‘..hands them to a homeless man’ (*the Daily Mail*, 10/2020), ‘save woman’s life’ (*the Daily Mail*, 12/2018) and ‘woman saved from the streets’ (*The Sun*, 10/2020). Indeed, the homeless people are being referred to but are not characterised as actors. This enhances the narrative that they are only objects: people affected by other people’s actions and good deeds (Fairclough, 1997). This argument can be supported further by analysing the articles from the discursive practice - perspective. Or in other words, by looking at how the articles have been produced and consumed.

As mentioned earlier, the full name(s) of the person(s) experiencing street homelessness are rarely mentioned in the articles. When examining the production of the texts, it is also important to pay attention to the people being interviewed for the articles. When looking at these articles from *the Daily Mail* (12/2018 and 10/2020) and *The Sun* (10/2020) which picture homeless people as receivers of help, it is necessary to point out the fact that most of these articles include interviews from the people experiencing homelessness themselves. Indeed, these articles tell stories about rough sleepers without giving them a voice. This supports the fact that not everyone is allowed to take part in the communication processes. Indeed, it can be argued that a person is more likely to be given a voice in the media if they have political, economic or cultural power (Fairclough, 1997). It can be stated that the people experiencing homeless rarely have any. The article telling the news story of a schoolgirl helping a homeless woman (*The Sun*, 12/2017) does include a quote from the homeless woman as well saying “All I

ever wanted to do was sing. If I could have anything for Christmas, it would be my family.”

However,

In these three articles, the source texts that are used as the bases for the news stories are descriptions of the events by people walking by or witnesses. This means that the source texts are interviews of the witnesses. In these three articles, the interviewees are the people ‘saving the homeless’ and bystanders who had witnessed the situation. According to Scannelli (1992), the members of the public, who are being interviewed, are usually used as an example of how people are reacting to the story. This is evident also in the three articles which picture homeless people as receivers of the help. In the article by *the Daily Mail* (10/2020), the situation is explained by the philanthropist’s fiancée Corrie, who were interviewed for the article. She explained, how his fiancé gave the homeless man his pants and calls him a ‘role model’. Her reactions to the event are also highlighted when it is said that she ‘and her eldest daughter, Lola, were welling up with tears’.

Similar reaction is pictured in *the Sun’s* article (10/2020), where volunteers and locals are called as ‘concerned’. *The Daily Mail’s* article (12/2018) shares also reactions from people who have commented the story online. Members of the public describe their reactions as ‘so sad’, ‘feeling sick’ and worried: ‘this is really bad’. The bin men are also given thanks ‘Hats off to the bin man. He noticed and saved her life.’ By including the comments and reactions of the people and including spoken language (such as ‘so sad’), the texts build connection with the public and constructs unofficial discourse of the text. Indeed, the spoken language used by the newspapers aim to create discourse of solidarity with its readers (Fairclough, 1997).

Although the unofficial discourses, i.e., the comments of the people, play an important role in the text, it can be argued that these articles are also partly based on official discourse. This means that the text also refers to comments by officials, such as a Manchester council spokesman (*The Sun* 10/2020) who expressed his/her gratitude that ‘quick action was taken to get this woman off the streets and into safe’, or Lambeth Council, who had been approached for comment (*The Daily Mail*, 10/2020). The reference to official discourses increases legitimacy and links the story to a wider political context, in this case housing policy (Fairclough, 1997).

### 5.1.2. The homeless people as threats to security

Another discourse that arose from the material analysed was the one of security, meaning particularly that the narrative talking about the people experiencing homelessness as portrays them in negative terms and threats to the security. This discourse was identified in five articles; *The Guardian* (7/2017) titled 'Homeless people in Oxford threatened with £2,500 fines'; *The Sun* (7/2018): 'Wat-er they thinking? 'Rough sleepers' use historic Hyde Park fountain to WASH themselves and their clothes', *the Daily Mail* (21/9/2019): 'Homeless camp in the heart of Mayfair: Migrants set up tents in Park Lane despite police attempts to clear the settlement amid 'daily muggins and robberies'', *the Daily Mail* (30/9/2019): 'More homeless migrants arrive at makeshift Park Lane campsite and leave Hyde Park littered with rubbish despite police and Westminster Council's attempts to clear them' and *The Sun* (7/2020): 'TENT CITY Mayfair homeless camp settles on London's Park Lane opposite five-star Hilton hotel'.

One must first look at the language used in these articles to describe the people experiencing street homelessness and the phenomena related to them. The vocabulary used in these articles includes words like: 'prosecuted', 'in breach of antisocial laws', 'detrimental effect', 'penalty fine', 'harassment', 'vulnerable people', 'a risk', 'ban' (*The Guardian*, 2017) which can be said to support the criminal discourse and emphasize the role of rough sleepers as disruptive. Homeless people are also described as "having a detrimental effect ... on the quality of life of those in the locality". Similar rhetoric is even more recognisable in articles by *the Daily Mail* (2019) which uses words like 'mugging', 'robbery', 'begging', 'pic pocketing', 'anti-social behaviour', 'crimes' and 'violent and sexual offences'. Discourses referring to drugs are also evident: "There was also a discarded box of Naloxone, an anti-overdose drug which reverses the effects of opiates including heroin and methadone". This association further promotes the public stereotype of homelessness being the result of an irresponsible lifestyle choice of substance abuse (Klodawsky et al.2002). In addition to discussing the increasing crime, the articles talk about sanitation problems. The area is described as having "Plastic bags, plastic tubs and plastic bottles litter the ground which reportedly stinks having been used as an open-air toilet".

The types of words are also used in the Sun's articles, which associates street homelessness with words like: 'shocking', 'horror' and 'invaders' (2018) and 'crime', 'perpetrators', 'anti-social behaviour' and 'danger' (2020). The situation is further described as "a woman dressed in a skirt was seen moving a mattress across the campsite, while groups of men believed to be living at the site lay on grass near the tents" (*The Sun*, 2020). The role of the homeless as passive and lazy criminals is also evident in the description that states that "many of the men spend their days necking vodka and playing dice while the women dole out food from plastic bags". The situation is pictured as "Dozens of rough sleepers have been living in a makeshift camp in Park Lane, where they can be seen sleeping on old mattresses" and "Locals are now fed-up the homeless dwellers are using water from the fountain to wash themselves and their clothes" (*The Sun*, 2018). It can be argued that this type of vocabulary is used to create emotions among the readers. If the first three articles discussed in this chapter were aiming at creating sympathy, these four articles clearly do not have the same aim. Indeed, associating people experiencing street homelessness with crime and other anti-social behaviour helps to create fear among the readers. Using this type of vocabulary represents the homeless people as the problem, and not for example as results of poor housing and immigration policies. Indeed, they support the view which claims that homelessness is the result of individualistic attributes.

This type of representation is even more visible when looking at the processes these discourses are produced. All of these four articles include interviews of people. Interestingly and as the previously analysed articles demonstrated, the homeless people are not given a voice in these texts either. Exception to this is the article by *The Sun* (2018), which includes a comment from a homeless woman. The people interviewed for the articles are concerned local people (*The Sun*, 2018), a local council representative (*The Daily Mail*, 2019 and *The Sun*, 2020) and a party representative (*The Guardian*, 2017). As mentioned earlier, the comments of the public are often used to describe their reactions to the topic. This is also the case with *The Sun's* (2018) news story where local people from Westminster are interviewed and asked how they feel about the group of homeless people using the water from the fountain to wash their clothes and themselves. The reactions are unanimous: they strongly condemn the people by saying that what they do is 'unacceptable' and that the council should 'get a grip and investigate how the fountain is being used'. The article also describes the residents and tourists as 'outraged'

and 'furious'. Indeed, the reactions of the public seem to be hostile towards the homeless people.

However, it is necessary to point out that these reactions and interviews are results of a process of selecting certain voices and discourses to be more dominant in the article. Indeed, in the process of producing this article, some views were given more significance over others (Fairclough, 1997). It can be argued that the Sun wanted the discourse to be critical towards the homeless people and therefore, it chose certain comments by certain people in order to make the story plausible in the eyes of the reader. One can say that these comments were chosen to support the narrative of homeless people as criminals.

Similarly, also official discourses are used to increase the credibility of the argument of homeless people as a threat to the security. The Guardian (2017) refers to a legal notice given by the Oxford city council, which warns rough sleepers that they could be prosecuted for being 'in breach of antisocial behaviour laws' and that they are having 'a detrimental effect...on the quality of life of those in the locality'. However, the text also gives voices to contrasting arguments by people against the council. The Guardian refers to a statement given by a health and social care spokesperson for the Green party and who criticises the council's action. Similar argument is put forward by a leader of Oxford city council's Green group who calls the city council's warning to the rough sleepers 'intimidating'. The text also includes a response to the criticism from the city council who claims to be 'committed to helping the homeless', but the warnings were issued to rough sleepers because their bags were 'left blocking the fire escapes' and thus 'posed a risk to those working inside'. By analysing the ways, the Guardian's (2017) text is being produced, one can argue that in addition to describing the homeless people as threats to some people's security, it also supports the narrative of homeless people as vulnerable and maltreated. By introducing different views on the topic, it builds a discourse of the homeless people as both harassing as well as being victims of harassment.

Indeed, it can be said that the *Guardian's* (2017) article creates a discourse with diverse views of the topic. Similar references to official discourses are used in the articles by *the Daily Mail* (2019) and *The Sun* (2020).

The Sun's (2020) article includes an official discourse as it includes a comment from a Conservative Councillor for Westminster, who 'warned against blaming the rough sleepers for the rise in crime'. It also uses the official discourse by referring to a statement given by the officials of Westminster council who state that: '(W)e are working with our charity partners, the police and the Home Office to find a solution.' and that '(T)he council spends more than £7million a year in helping people find a life away from the streets offering more than 500 bed spaces a night.'

One could say that in this article, although it is partly suggested that the homeless people might be the reason for increased crime, it also gives the impression that the officials are aware of the problem and there might be many reasons to it.

This relatively understanding attitude towards the homelessness does not take place in *the Daily Mail's* (2019) narrative of homeless people. In order to support the argument of the homeless people as criminals, *the Daily Mail* refers to an official discourse, namely the Metropolitan Police statistics that '872 crimes of a violent or sexual nature were reported in the 12 months of July', contrasting to another area in London these statistics are almost a twice as much. This official discourse in the form of statistical facts is used to build legitimacy for the argument that the homeless people are the reason for the risen numbers of robberies and muggings. This argument is further supported by referring to Telegraph's interview of a Romanian homeless person who was spotted carrying a large plasma TV, which he planned to sell later. This picture of a homeless Romanian man carrying the TV combined with the worrying crime statistics helps the reader to come to the conclusion that the homeless people are criminals. Indeed, by critically analysing the choices made by *the Daily Mail*, it can be argued that the aim is to emphasize the narrative of homeless people as a threat to other people's security.

Echoing the words of Fairclough, it is also important to pay attention to which discourses have been included in the text but also, which have been excluded or given lower priority in the text. Similarly, it is necessary to recognise the fact that all of these news articles seem to be disconnected from history, meaning that they do not take into account any previous events and describe the news story as independent (Fairclough, 1997). Further elaborating this idea, it is

can be pointed out that these articles concentrate on the discourse of crime and disruption. Indeed, they do not take into account, for example, the causes of homelessness of the immigrants camping in London and pay very little attention to the possible ways to solve the problem (*The Sun* 2018, 2020 & *The Daily Mail*, 2019)

### 5.1.3. The homeless people as demonstrations of inequality

The third categorisation of the articles supports the discourse of the people experiencing street homelessness as demonstrations of inequality. As mentioned earlier, emotional language can be used to create positive or negative emotions among the readers. These articles serve as an example how language is used to shed light on poverty and inequality in Britain, and thus creating sympathy in the readers. Previously analysed article by *the Sun* (2020) falls also into this category. Other articles in this category are from *the Guardian* (2019) titled 'Rough sleeper gives birth to twins outside the wealthiest Cambridge college' as well as 'Tributes paid to homeless man found dead in Manchester canal' (2018) and from *the Daily Mail* (2018) titled 'Homeless 'Romanians' bed down on makeshift mattresses and cardboard boxes outside Mercedes showroom in Park Lane after hotels housing thousands of rough sleepers during pandemic evict them as they return to business'. It is argued that these articles promote the discourse of homeless people as demonstrations how unequal the British society has become. Although the discourse of inequality is evident in all of the articles analysed, it is pointed out that it is the most prominent in articles falling into this category. The articles do this by discussing homelessness by contrasting it to extreme wealth and well-being.

When looking at the text dimension of these articles, one must point out certain choices of vocabulary that help to create the discourse of homeless people as demonstrations of inequality. *The Sun* (2020) uses vocabulary, such as 'five-star Hilton hotel', 'London's most exclusive postcode' and 'Hyde park' as well as 'set up camp', 'rough sleepers', 'mattress'. Similarly, the *Guardian* (2019) talks about 'the wealthiest college', '£1.3 billion', and also about 'sleeping rough', 'giving birth alone on the pavement', 'extraordinary inequality'. It can be argued that these words are used to describe inequality between the wealthiest of the people and poorest. Similar discourse is identifiable in *the Daily Mail's* article (2020), which describes the accommodation of the homeless people in detail "More than twenty Eastern European men



and women set up makeshift beds out of cardboard and dumped mattresses in front of luxury car showroom on Park Lane last night, metres from a string of five-star hotels.” Indeed, the contrast between cardboard beds and five-star hotels is highlighted undoubtedly.

The misfortunate lives of homeless people are also highlighted in the *The Guardian's* (2018) article, which pictures how homeless man “A “gentle giant” found dead in a canal in Manchester on Boxing Day was a known rough sleeper and had been in hospital on Christmas Day”. The poverty and inequality discourse are evident as the article mentioned that “an appeal has been set up to raise money for his funeral. The fundraising appeal says: “Tony was sadly found on Boxing Day, our gentle giant is now with the angels. Let’s try and raise funds to give him the send off he deserves. We all speak highly of the gentleman he was, so can we raise as much as possible to give to his family to help towards funeral costs.” Indeed, Tony is portrayed as a nice and kind man who will be missed. This is aimed at creating sympathy among the readers.

The Sun’s article (2020) aims to create a discourse of inequality by picturing a lavish five-star Hilton hotel in a wealthy area in London, Mayfair. This discourse of a wealth is then contrasted by describing how a group of homeless people are sleeping rough in front of it. Similar discourse of inequality is produced by the Guardian (2019) by telling a story of a rough sleeper giving birth in front of the wealthiest college in the United Kingdom. Interestingly, it also includes religious discourse by paralleling the story with a Christian Christmas story of baby Jesus being born in poverty and seeking refuge in a stable: “Whether we are religious or not, many of us will be familiar with the Christmas story of a mother who gave birth to her child in poverty, seeking refuge in a stable. This is the reality for many people living on the streets” (*The Guardian*, 2019) .It can be argued that this type of discourse is aimed at creating emotions among the readers, mainly sympathy towards the homeless people and realisation in what kind of circumstances they do live. Sympathy towards the homeless people is also It is also worth pointing out that the article was published around Christmas.

#### 5.1.4. The homeless people as victims of assault

The final category of portrayal includes articles by *the Guardian* (2018) titled: 'Group assaults homeless man with firework in Liverpool', *The Sun* (2019) titled 'NOT LOVIN' IT Homeless teenager, 19, 'soaked with a bucket of water by McDonald's worker as she slept outside' and *The Daily Mail* (2019) 'Shocking moment homeless man is repeatedly kicked in 'senseless' daylight attack by a customer queuing outside a sandwich shop in London'. This category includes newspaper articles which supports a discourse of homeless people as victims.

This discourse is evident in *the Guardian's* article, as it describes a news story where a rough sleeper suffered burns to his skin after a lit firework was placed in his pocket. Words like 'animalistic attack', 'an army veteran', 'assault', 'victim', 'not funny', 'animalistic behaviour' are used to identify the role of the homeless person as a victim. The name of the victim is not mentioned, he is only referred to as 'an army veteran' and "an established rough sleeper and well known to the homeless volunteers" (*The Guardian*, 2018). The anonymity of the homeless person helps to build identify him as a vulnerable, voiceless and insignificant. The language used in this article is mostly uses written language, but also spoken language is used to describe the words said by the group of youngsters when attacking him: ' have a sparkling good time, mate'. This quotation is chosen to be included in the text to highlight the brutality of the act and the character of the young people.

Similar discourse can be identified in *the Sun's* article which talks about an event where a young homeless woman "was sleeping outside a branch of the fast food chain in Leicester when she woke to find her sleeping bag and clothes soaked with water.". The discourse of homeless people as victims of assaults is further promoted in the article by including a comment from a witness saying "It was assault. I have reported it to the police and I have been back to see her to tell her I suggest she does the same. I understand businesses may not want rough sleepers outside their premises, but that is just not on."

An act of assault is also pictured in *the Daily Mail's* article, where homeless man is being kicked. The act is described as 'vicious' and 'senseless'. A comment from the police is also included in the text saying "This was a violent and senseless attack on a vulnerable person".

When analysing these three articles from Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA -perspective, it is necessary to also pay attention to the discourses that are excluded from the narrative (Fairclough, 1997). It can easily be pointed out that the discourse tends to emphasize the role of the victim rather than the perpetrator. Indeed, the by focusing on the discourse of homeless people, the articles take the attention away from the perpetrators. Indeed, the articles mention the perpetrators only briefly as 'group of four youths', 'a customer' or 'a McDonald's worker' whereas the victim is portrayed more in detail.

## 5.2. Critical discourse analysis: socio-cultural dimensions of the articles

After analysing the fifteen articles from linguistic as well as from the perspective of discursive practice, it is necessary to move the analysis further and also look at the socio-cultural dimension. By the socio-cultural dimension of the text, Fairclough refers to 'a sociocultural practice', meaning "the social and cultural goings-on which the communicative event is a part of" (Fairclough, 1995: 57). According to Fairclough, after analysing the linguistic (textual) and discursive practices, it is important to pay attention to the broader picture of the texts. He argues that three sociocultural aspects of the texts are important. Therefore, when analysing the articles, one must address what economic, political and cultural aspects related to them (Fairclough, 1997). Furthermore, what kind of effect do they have on people and society as a whole? As mentioned in chapter 1, the trend of increasing homelessness is likely to continue unless homelessness is taken more seriously by the voters and decision-makers. Therefore, it can be argued that this research is important as by looking at the different images of homelessness, it also identifies the ways the people experiencing homelessness are being portrayed to the public.

As mentioned, the fifteen articles were very roughly divided into four categories based on how they understood the discourse of homelessness. These categories were homeless people as objects of charity, homeless people as threat to security, homeless people as demonstrations of inequality and homeless people as victims.

Firstly, one must address these articles by looking at the economic aspects of them. As Fairclough (1997) pointed out, the media is also driven by economic interests. As an example, different newspapers compete against each other and argue which one attracts the readers the most. The competition can result in news stories becoming more 'entertaining' (Postman, 1987). It can be argued that this is the case with the articles mentioned in this analysis, which used language discourses to create emotions in readers. Indeed, the more 'shocking': a woman found sleeping in a recycling bin or more 'obnoxious': homeless people are washing their feet in fountain, the more readers the texts attract. The discourse of entertainment is also evident when examining the ways the articles picture the living conditions of the homeless people, for example "Homeless 'Romanians' bed down on makeshift mattresses and cardboard boxes outside Mercedes showroom" (*The Daily Mail*, 2020). Indeed, the detailed description of the shocking sleeping conditions can be used to gain sympathy and interest. Furthermore, this can lead to more readers.

The use of emotive discourse, used by *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail*, can lead to increased number of readers. This can also be pointed at by looking at the circulation rates of these newspapers (chapter 4). It can be argued that the newspapers are aiming at gaining more readers and in order to do so, they use discourses which appeal to readers' emotions, either in a positive or a negative way.

One must also examine the articles from political point of view and pay attention to the previously mentioned ideological biases of the newspapers (chapter 3). The discourses produced by the newspapers are affected by the ideological standpoints of the media.

When analysing the articles from the Sun, one can easily point out several distinctive characteristics related to the political aspects. The Sun, previously categorised as 'right leaning' tabloid paper, referred to Conservative public figures as its official discourse. On the other hand, the Guardian, referred to as the 'left leaning' newspaper, used official discourse from the Green and Labour perspective. This can be noticed by looking at the commentaries, included in the articles:

“The health and social care spokesperson for the Green party said: “In general, everybody knows that vulnerable people are not helped by fines and harassment. If anything helps, it’s thoughtful kindness.” (The Guardian, 2017)

“The council very much recognises and shares the concerns of residents and businesses ... around current levels of crime whether that is theft, robbery or other crimes.” (Westminster Conservative councillor Ian Adams, quoted in *the Daily Mail*, 2019).

Another interesting aspect worth pointing out is the differences in the discourses between the British people experiencing homelessness and the immigrants. It can be argued that the Sun’s narrative is more hostile towards foreign people experiencing homeless. This becomes evident, in the news story of rough sleepers washing their feet in the fountain, which pictures the rough sleepers as criminals and threats to the personal security of the local people living in that area (*The Sun*, 2018) as well as promoting the crime discourse when discussing about them

“Members of the group (the homeless) were ordered to move from the Transport for London private land by officers after reports of muggings and robberies” (*The Sun*, 2020). Contrasting rhetoric and narrative can be identified in the news story (10/2020) describing the saving of a scared elderly woman as ‘heart-breaking’. Furthermore, the sympathy towards non-immigrant homeless people is noticeable also in the other article by *the Sun* (2017), which describes the homeless woman as “Margaret, who has worked in the past at John Lewis, is homeless following a divorce”.

Rough sleepers with immigrant backgrounds are also treated more harshly by Daily Mail. The article describes the camp of rough immigrant sleepers as ‘the settlement amid daily muggings and robberies’ (2019). As a contrast to this is, the article calls the homeless man, ‘Vinnie’, as ‘so grateful’ for receiving help for a by-passer (10/2020).

Furthermore, both of these previously mentioned articles also discuss the current (at that time) EU policies which state that the deportation of rough sleepers are EU citizens is unlawful as it breaks the freedom of movement rules. Therefore, the immigrant rough sleepers have been able to resist deportation. Baring this in mind, these articles can be said to have a political agenda of affecting the readers. Indeed, by picturing the group of immigrant rough sleepers as

a threat to one's personal security they also linked the problem to its roots: the EU freedom of movement.

### 5.2.1. Us vs them

As mentioned earlier in chapter 3, us vs. them discourse is based on the logic of constitutive other, which the 'self' uses to identify with oneself. Fairclough (1997) points out that discourses do play an important role in constructing identities and inequalities between the people. How does the discourses of homelessness represented in these fifteen articles help to constitute the division into us vs them?

The first category of articles, which construct the discourse of homelessness as passive receivers of help clearly suggest also a dichotomy between 'us' the 'normal people with housing' and 'them' the homeless. The active actors Johnny Hindle (*the Daily Mail*, 10/2020), the bin men (*the Daily Mail*, 12/2018), nine-year-old Molly McGinley (*The Sun*, 12/2017) and the homeless charity volunteers (*The Sun*, 10/2020) are identified as something constitutively different from the rough sleepers receiving the help from them. In these cases, the dichotomy between us and them can be also identified as one between the active actors and passive objects. The active role of the former group is highlighted by the fact that they are the ones being interviewed in the article and who are also describing the feelings and attitudes of the homeless person. Furthermore, this categorisation presented in these four articles suggests roles also in a wider societal scene where the homeless people needs to be helped. Indeed, this discourse of homelessness gives them passive roles which need to be supported by people performing good deeds to them.

Us vs. them -categorisation is also evident in the second category of articles which see homeless people as security threats. Indeed, people experiencing homelessness are being identified as lazy, unactive and criminal who are conducting antisocial behaviour. This is different from 'us' trying to live normal lives peacefully without disruptions.

Not surprisingly, the us vs. them ideology is also easy to identify in the third category describing homeless people as demonstrations of inequality. By picturing a camp sleeping outside a luxury

hotel, a group of people sleeping on cardboard mattresses outside a lavish car shop, or a woman giving birth in front of a university, all of the articles highlight extreme and desperate circumstances which differ radically from 'our' lives and circumstances.

When analysing the last category of homeless people as victims of abuse, the us vs. them ideology is not as evident but still identifiable. When throwing the firework in the homeless man's pocket, the people responsible for this see the homeless man as something 'lower' from them. Not a real human, which is also implied by the Guardian (2019) calling the act 'animalistic'. Indeed, the homeless man is seen something completely de-humane that can be used for entertainment.

## 6. Conclusion

Homelessness is a global issue affecting all countries. Most of the people have not experienced homelessness but form their ideas about it by reading about the issue on the newspapers or watching it from the TV. Indeed, the media has a big role in determining our views on social issues we have not experienced ourselves.

This master's thesis has tried to examine the phenomenon of homelessness from the British society's perspective by looking at how British newspapers discuss the street homelessness in England. England was selected as the focus of the research because of its large homeless population. The situation in England is worrying also on a European scale. Indeed, the number of people experiencing homelessness has increased significantly during the 2010s and the trend is likely to continue. In order to homelessness to decrease, the problem ought to be taken more seriously by the voters as well as decision-makers. Therefore, it is important to look at how homelessness is portrayed to the public by the mass media.

Homelessness is a complex problem. Indeed, the ETHOS -categorisation, introduced in chapter 3, highlights the heterogeneity of the group of homeless people and emphasizes the fact that not all people experiencing homelessness are visible. However, the most visible in the media are the people experiencing street homelessness. Therefore, this master's thesis has used the definition of homelessness as the people sleeping rough.

By applying the three-dimensional critical discourse analysis framework, introduced by Norman Fairclough, this study has sought to understand the prevailing discourses of homelessness represented by the news media. The data for analysing was collected from three newspapers: *the Guardian*, *the Daily Mail* and *the Sun*. All of these three newspapers represented different category in terms of their ideological views as well as market characterisations.

Fifteen articles were analysed critically by looking at discourses as texts, discourses as discursive practice as well as discourses as sociocultural practices (Fairclough, 1997). The aim was to study the 'opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language' (Wodak 1995:204). By examining



these three 'dimensions', four different discursive categories of homelessness were identified. The categorisation was made based on how the homeless people was portrayed.

The categories were:

- homeless people as passive object of charity
- homeless people as threats to security
- homeless people as demonstrations of inequality
- homeless people as victims

These categorisations demonstrated how emotional discourse was used in order to create sympathy among the readers and public, and on the other hand, to create fear and other negative emotions. Spoken and emotional driven language was more evident in the articles by *the Daily Mail* and *the Sun*.

When analysing the language of the online newspapers, one could easily identify certain choices of a vocabulary regarding the naming of the people which seem to be repeated in all of the articles analysed, regardless their ideological views or political bias. As mentioned earlier, all of these articles talked about street homelessness in England and described a particular news story related to them. These are the terms the people experiencing homelessness are being called: 'rough sleepers', 'homeless man', 'a homeless woman' or referred to as 'a group of homeless' and 'a homeless camp'. Interestingly, out of fifteen articles, only five of mentioned the name of the homeless person they were talking about. Two articles mentioned first names: 'the woman, known only as Anne' (*The Sun*, 10/2020) or 'the man, called Vinnie' (*the Daily Mail*, 10/2020). It can be argued that this type of vocabulary is anonymising the people experiencing street homelessness and making them passive and incognito. Indeed, the vocabulary used by these articles to describe the homeless people inevitably supports the representation of homeless people as 'being diseased, passive, voiceless and overly reliant upon charitable assistance and management' (Hodgetts et al., 2006:498).

Political aspects were also discovered in the texts. The more 'right or centre' leaning newspapers *The Sun* and *the Daily Mail* used more negative terms to discuss immigrants

experiencing homelessness in Britain. This can be understood as a political bias towards certain policy choices.

One aim of the research was to examine to what extent did the discourses represented by the newspaper media create the dichotomy between 'us and them'. The division of 'us' people with housing and 'them' the homeless people was evident in all of the articles as they identified homeless people often as something fundamentally different from the rest of the people. These type of discourses of the homeless people pictured them as, for example passive receivers of charitable action and good deeds; foreign criminals who posed a threat to other people's security; representations of extreme poverty and disadvantage; as well as dehumanised victims of animalistic assault.

As Norman Fairclough argued, the starting point of a critical discourse analysis should a social issue, in this research it was the issue street homelessness in England. CDA allows the researcher to critically examine the social identities of the homeless people, given by the media (Fairclough, 1997).

This research has allowed to recognise hidden roles associated with the homeless by the media. It also highlighted the fact that the homeless people are very rarely given voice in the articles. Indeed, out of fifteen articles discussing street homelessness, only three included a comment given by the homeless person themselves. The active element in the narratives was in most cases given to the other people, not the homeless person. This research supports the argument that the mainstream media view homeless people as passive actors. Indeed, they are more likely to be portrayed as objects rather than subjects.

In order to solve the problem of homelessness, one must give the homeless people voice and role as active actors. Furthermore, the homeless should be seen as being able to take part in the processes affecting their lives. This could be done, by referring to them by their full names, not just as 'homeless'. Important aspect of the media produces is also to include their opinions and reactions as part of the discourse. Indeed, it can be stated that the current media coverage is harmful to them as it associates homeless people with certain identities and thus enhances the dichotomy between 'us and them'.

Although homelessness and media have been widely studied by scholars, the previous attempts to study the relationship between homelessness and British media have not focused on the recent years of increase in homelessness and have generally been more quantitative. Indeed, the 2010s, called as 'decade of disaster', provides an intriguing background for a critical discourse analysis. Therefore, by analysing newspaper articles from 2017 until 2020, this research has provided a topical examination of the discourse of homelessness portrayed by the newspaper media.

It can be said that this master's thesis has taken into account only one aspect of the problem by analysing the newspaper articles. It can be stated that further analysis is needed to study the relationship between the newspaper coverage of homelessness and the public attitudes. It can be suggested that future research could further the analysis by including also the views of the public.

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