The Hidden Population

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A qualitative discourse analysis on media coverage of the homeless population in Ireland.

Author: Ella Kaverma

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Supervisor: Jan Mewes

Abstract

Homelessness in Europe, especially Ireland, has been a growing issue ever since the recession of 2008. In addition to struggling with finding safe spaces and everyday tasks such as access to food, showers and grooming, the homeless are met with stigma and stereotypes. This thesis aims to explore how the homeless are portrayed in the Irish Times. Twenty articles from October 2018 were chosen and analysed through two theoretical frameworks, framing theory and stigma. Previous research has identified two distinct discourses on homelessness, which were strongly present in the Irish case as well. The individual and structural blame frame were identified in the analysed articles, and used to explain the results. Individual blame focuses on the individual's potential shortcomings, such as addiction and mental health, that led them to the path of homelessness. Meanwhile the structural blame focuses on how, for instance, the market, policies and the government are lacking the will and knowledge to alleviate the homelessness crisis. The background of each frame is explored to provide an understanding of why it is a point of interest. The ultimate objective of this study is to identify the two ideal-type discourses the Irish Times uses for homelessness. This will provide better understanding of how the media works in the portrayal of the homeless, which is detrimental in influencing the public opinion of stigmatised groups of people.

Keywords: homelessness, media, stigma, housing, Ireland

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1. Introduction

Almost 11 per cent of households in the European Union are overburdened by housing costs, while nearly 17 per cent of households live in overcrowded conditions (Abbé Pierre Foundation & FEANTSA, 2018). Numbers showing households struggling with their housing situation are not hard to find, however, the exact number of the homeless population is almost impossible to estimate (Abbé Pierre Foundation & FEANTSA, 2018). This is due to varying definitions of homelessness across countries. In a 2015 report by the United Nations, the issue is explained in more depth. The issues present themselves in finding a common definition for homelessness, for instance, due to differences in language, culture, socioeconomic conditions and policy (United Nations, 2015). Official numbers often fail to include hidden homelessness, which also compromises the accuracy of the statistics. Hidden homelessness includes individuals who are not sleeping on the street or emergency accommodation. Instead they might, for instance, stay at friends or relatives.

The aim of this study is to identify the Irish discourses used on homelessness and the homeless, whether it be rough sleepers, the hidden homeless or people sleeping in emergency shelters. A total of twenty articles from the Irish Times were analysed. Throughout the analysis two major frames were established, the individual and structural blame frame. The analysis was done looking through the lenses of two main theoretical frameworks, framing theory and the theory of stigma.

The United Nations have long been working towards a common explanation of what homelessness is. In the 2015 report, the three-dimensional human rights definition of homelessness is explained. The definition emphasises the stance that homelessness is a gross violation of human rights and the social issues of homelessness. The three-dimensional approach considers the following issues; the first dimension addresses the lack of a home, both in material and immaterial aspects, such as security to raise a family or foster social relationships. The second dimension labels homelessness as "*a form of systemic discrimination and social exclusion*" (United Nations, 2015, pp. 5). In this dimension, the United Nations also emphasises the stigma surrounding the social label "homeless" is surrounded by. The third and final dimension recognises the homeless population as the central agent for the fight against homelessness. Social transformation must come through the homeless, who have a unique understanding of the situation. While there is no clear agreement on the definition of homelessness and the number affected, one could argue that homelessness is one of the big issues that need solving in the EU today. (United Nations, 2015)

Currently there are only two European countries with declining numbers in homelessness, Norway and Finland (Abbé Pierre Foundation & FEANTSA, 2018). This is due to the strong human rights approach to the issue and a devotion to *"integrated and decentralised strategies that had specific, measurable and reachable targets"* (Abbé Pierre Foundation & FEANTSA, 2018, pp. 16). Failing to implement similar policies that have been effective in Norway and Finland can be seen clearly in the mass of the homeless population. One of the countries with the fastest growing numbers of homelessness in the EU is Ireland, the country focused on in this thesis. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in Ireland releases monthly reports on homelessness. The latest figures show that 10 305 people were homeless in January 2019 (Focus Ireland, 2019a). For comparison, the corresponding numbers of July 2014 were a total of 3258 individuals living without a permanent home (Focus Ireland 2019a). A big part of this serious issue is the high numbers of family homelessness, 1614 families were registered in emergency shelters in January 2019, 3624 individuals in total (The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2019). Unfortunately, this means that a large number of children are facing homelessness, it is estimated that every third homeless person in Ireland is a child (Abbé Pierre Foundation & FEANTSA, 2018).

1.1. Research question and aim

Focus Ireland highlights two distinct factors for individuals ending up on the path of homelessness, structural and individual factors. Structural factors leading to homelessness highlights inadequate policies and welfare systems that do not have the capability to tackle the issue. Family homelessness is usually contributed to structural factors, such as high rent and shortage of properties to let (Focus Ireland, 2019b). The other explanations for the loss of home are contributed to the individual. Such explanations include addiction, mental health, issues with family relationships et cetera. However, while these two reasons for homelessness are commonly used, it is important not to boil down the complex issue into two contradicting discourses (Cork Simon Community, 2019). The Cork Simon Community remind that there are usually several overlapping reasons for an individual's homeless status. The two factors intertwine and affect each other in ways that should not be oversimplified (Cork Simon Community, 2019).

The aim of this research is to identify the two ideal-type discourses on homelessness, structural and individual, in the Irish news. The study was done through a qualitative, critical discourse analysis, which is believed to give the best insight into the question of media representation. Previous

research has found that media, as well as individuals, favour proximate causes (individual behaviour) to explain why homelessness is still such a big problem in developed countries (Glover, 2010). Theories on framing, as well as stigma will be applied to the analysis, which will be looking at the national broadsheet, the Irish Times. The objective of this thesis is to contribute to the discussion on which discourses news use when framing current and pressing issues surrounding homelessness. Therefore the research question will be the following:

How does the media represent homelessness in Ireland?

As the already high number of the homeless population in Ireland is continuously rising, the question of media representation becomes relevant. Themes that will arise throughout the thesis in connection to the individual and structure are stigma and trust in government. On one hand, when structure is discussed in the analysed articles, issues with low levels of trust present themselves. On the other hand, there is a higher risk for the rest of the population to stigmatise the homeless population when homelessness is represented as mainly an individual's own shortcoming .

There is an important disclaimer to be made at this stage. It is important to keep in mind that while looking into this subject that it is not possible to know if the (positive or negative) media coverage is due to the size of the homeless population, or if it can be credited to other reasons. Hence the research question is formulated in a way that is not misleading (an example would be 'How does the size of homeless population affect media representation of homelessness in Ireland?'). The purpose is also not to discover whether the Irish Times emphasise individual or structural factors to explain homelessness, it is merely to identify the two discourses.

1.2. Significance of study

As previously explained, there are two, often interconnected, causes to homelessness. A person usually ends up homeless due to a combination of structural factors and individual circumstances (United Nations, 2015). These two factors are reflected in the media, as the discourse surrounding homelessness use these factors to frame the crisis. Furthermore, the question of media representation is relevant in Ireland, as homelessness in the nation is currently such a pressing issue. This due to media playing an important role in shaping public opinion on complex social issues, which previous research has found to be true also in the case of homelessness. The consensus

surrounding homelessness in the West is often that homelessness is caused by an individual's personal circumstances. For instance, unexpected job loss, addiction and mental health are commonly connected with the major reasons for a person's loss of home (Phelan, Link, Moore & Steve, 1997). However, crediting the loss of home solely to the individual is a dangerous misconception, as it may lower the levels of sympathy felt towards the homeless (Belcher & DeForge, 2012; Harper, 1987). There are several structural and institutional causes for homelessness, including domestic policies, legislation as well as international financial and development agreements (United Nations, 2015). Media, such as news, has a crucial role in moulding these opinions, which in turn can and will turn public opinion into a more empathetic direction (Ramasubrarnanian, 2007).

As previously discussed, statistics on the total population of homelessness is unclear. Yet what is certain, is that homelessness in Ireland is an ever-growing issue (FEANTSA, 2018). Development and growth has left the homeless behind. While the problem is vast and while the individualist and capitalist society in the West often view it as a necessary evil of the modern society, it is solvable with the right strategies and policies (Beck, 2012; FEANTSA, 2018). However, the need for ending homelessness, both in the developing and developed world, is now starting to be recognised on a larger scale. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development strives to provide a blueprint for peace and prosperity for all (The United Nations, 2019). The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are at the heart of the project, and are an urgent call for action by both developed and developing countries (The United Nations, 2019). The SDGs recognise the homeless in several of their goals, especially in goals number 1 (end poverty in all its forms), 3 (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all), 10 (reduce inequality within and among countries) and 11 (make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable). Furthermore, housing exclusion is deemed a gross human rights violation and should be treated as such (United Nations, 2015). However, differences in policies and social protection systems make some homeless populations more vulnerable than others. The lack of social housing in Ireland, combined with the economic crash of 2008, left the homeless people of Ireland especially vulnerable to the rough housing market, which prioritises land and property ownership (Norris & Fahey, 2011).

1.3. Disposition of thesis

The next chapter of this thesis will dive deeper into the background of Irish homelessness, and what the context behind the issue is. Topics such as the 2008 economic crisis, the Irish housing market, policies and family homelessness will be discussed. Previous research on the topic will be explored afterwards, which is focused around individuality and structure. Additionally, existing work by Ramasubrarnanian will be presented, which discusses the use of media-based strategies for lowering stigma surrounding certain groups of people, such as the homeless. Two theoretical frameworks will be presented thereafter, framing theory and the theory of stigma as formulated by Goffman. Following previous research is a description of methodology, sources and data management used in the analysis. The analysis will focus on a number of articles taken from the Irish Times, and will explore how the news paper frames homelessness. The main discourses found in the analysis are the structural blame frame and the individual blame frame.

2. Background

2.1. The 2008 economic crisis

In early 2008 much of the world was shaken by a severe economic crisis, which had an extra destructive effect on Ireland (Honohan, 2009). The country enjoyed almost two decades of sustainable growth prior to the recession, with practically zero unemployment by the end of the 2000s. This led to curiosity and admiration all over the world, as well as Ireland earning the nickname 'The Celtic Tiger'. This period of extraordinary growth ended in 2000, followed by the crash of the economy in 2008. According to Honohan, the reason for the devastation in Ireland can be traced back to the dependence on export. The value of the pound declined significantly in mid-2008, causing a specifically weakened trade with the United Kingdom, Ireland's most important trade partner (Honohan, 2009). The economic crisis hit the same time as Ireland's own national banking crisis, further aggravating the situation in the country. Other domestic issues leading to the crisis includes a trend loss in wage competitiveness and a system of taxing that was dependent on further growth (Honohan, 2009). Recovering from the depression took a long time for the Irish economy, but signs of healing can for instance be seen in the GDP and the unemployment rates. The nation has even been the fastest growing European Union for five consecutive years (Businessworld.ie., 2019). Yet there is one issue that has not showed any signs of recovery. The

scale and increase of homelessness in Ireland is seen as one of the most devastating and persistent issues stemming from the 2008 economic crisis (FEANTSA, 2017).

2.2. The Irish housing market and homelessness

The Irish housing market is dominated by home ownership, as home ownership reached levels of 80 per cent in the early 90s, which backfired during the economic crash in 2008 (FEANTSA, 2017). Since the recession, the construction of houses has also been stagnating, especially the provision of social housing. Much of the current research on Irish homelessness focuses on the lack of social housing in the country. To understand the issue, social housing needs to be defined. Cambridge Dictionary defines it as "*houses and flats that are owned by local government or by other organizations that do not make a profit, and that are rented to people who have low incomes*" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). A 2017 FEANTSA report points out that this focus on the lack of social housing in the discourse of homelessness in Ireland is justified, as levels of social housing remain under 10 per cent and only 8.4 per cent of households are living in this type of arrangement. Meanwhile there are nearly 72 000 households registered as in need for social housing. Social housing plays an important part in the housing market, as it provides affordable housing for many who cannot afford the rental prices of the private sector.

Yet the Irish society is to this day heavily encouraging property ownership, which is the most important aspect of the country's housing policy. According to Norris and Fahey, the private housing market has been historically important to the Irish economy and state building, ever since the country's independence from the United Kingdom in 1922. Their housing policies had much more in common with the south-east Asian 'asset based welfare' system than the rest of north-western Europe. Norris and Fahey explain in their article that subsidisation and supporting owner occupied housing is a cornerstone of asset based welfare, and has had an important role in the socio-economic development of Asia and the early days of an independent Ireland. The rest of Europe, especially northern and western Europe, had much higher levels of social housing and was generally more closely based on social democratic politics and labour movements. While the system and needs of the people have changed, it seems that the Irish policies and decision makers have not been able to keep up with this evolution. (Norris & Fahey, 2011)

2.3. Irish policies fighting homelessness

'*The Way Home*' strategy was implemented in 2008 and had the goal of addressing adult homelessness until the year 2013 (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008). The vision was to eliminate long term homelessness and rough sleeping by 2010. Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness and entails individuals who are sleeping in public spaces. This form of homelessness is most commonly associated with the term homeless. This was to be done by focusing on six strategic aims, preventing homelessness, eliminate long term homelessness and the need for rough sleeping, meet long term housing needs, ensure effective services for homeless people and better co-ordinate funding arrangements (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008). At the time roughly 80 per cent of homeless households consisted of only one person, showing how much the profile of homelessness in Ireland has changed in ten years. The difference can also be reflected in the focus of the strategy, which has seen some major changes in the past ten years.

The prevention of further homelessness is heavily emphasised, making it a central component of the 2008 strategy (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008). The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government list a range of measures taken to prevent homelessness in the future, such as education, employment, addiction treatment and much more. Education and training is argued in the strategy document to lead to self sufficiency and independence through empowerment. Substance abuse is mentioned as one of the big contributors to homelessness, making treatment of addiction one of the cornerstones of the strategy. '*The Way Home'* also proposes more concrete measures to prevent homelessness, most of which are based on mapping vulnerable households and providing information to 'at risk' tenants.

The dire need for housing, accessible both in price and terms of special needs, for the homeless is discussed in strategic aim number four of '*The Way Home'* plan. The need for social housing and new developments is acknowledged, under '*the National Development Plan*' an investment of 18 billion euros was made to increase social housing by 60 000 units, as well as affordable housing by 40 000 units by the year 2009 (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008). '*Towards 2016*' promised to meet the desperate need for housing of roughly 60 000 households and 140 000 households' needs were going to be alleviated by '*the National Development Plan*' (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008). But

what went wrong? Homelessness has seen unprecedented increases since the strategy was laid out and social housing saw no significant increase. The demands of the growing economy, increasing population and employment were never met.

A new action plan was presented by the Irish government in 2016. '*Rebuilding Ireland*' heavily emphasises housing as a foundation for eradicating homelessness, making the action plan's main objective to create a more vibrant and responsive private rented sector. '*Construction 2020*', a strategy to renew the construction sector, and '*Social Housing Strategy 2020*', both presented in 2014, have shown great promise in the provision of social housing, but are not meeting the current demand in the market (Department for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, 2016). The common consensus, discovered in the analysis later on, within the Irish society seems to be that the government lacks both will, determination and knowledge to actually tackle the issue of homelessness.

2.4. Family and youth homelessness in Ireland

Ireland currently struggles with high and growing numbers of family and youth homelessness. Nearly 4000 children in the country were homeless in February 2018 and roughly 1000 people between the ages of 18 to 24 are in the same situation (Focus Ireland, 2019a). It has been proven that youth experiencing poverty and homelessness are more susceptible to be the victims of, among other things, violence, sexual harassment, robbery, physical and verbal abuse (Mayock, Corr & O'Sullivan, 2011). Mayock et al. also emphasises that the homeless youth are more prone to issues related to physical and mental health. According to research done in the UK, the US and Australia, the reason for youth homelessness often lie in unstable family networks and homes in which they experience various forms of abuse and neglect. Childhood trauma, often caused by conflict and/or substance abuse of parents, is also a leading factor for high levels of youth homelessness (Mayock et al., 2011).

When looking at statistics on family homelessness in Ireland, one can see the consistency in the patterns, as well as a steady increase of homeless families each year (FEANTSA, 2017). According to FEANTSA, such consistency implies that the reasons behind family homelessness are mostly structural. Focus Ireland's analysis and surveys show that a majority of the families entering homelessness do so because of inability to afford rent. The '*No Child 2020*' initiative by the Irish

Times is focused on highlighting the issue of child homelessness. The initiative's main goal is to provide solutions to enhance child welfare in Ireland. The pledge can be summarised in five main rights no child should ever go without; food, shelter, health, education and participation, which means that no child should be excluded from society (Mac Cormaic, 2019). Mac Cormaic argues in the Irish Times article that nearly 4000 children in Ireland are living without a stable home and are instead placed in various kinds of emergency accommodations. High levels of anxiety and withdrawal is recorded from these children and placement in family hubs does not seem to be any better (Mac Cormaic, 2019). Child testimonies reveal that living in family hubs restricts them from social interactions with friends, that the rules of the hubs are unfair and that they feel trapped, some were even quoted saying that "*it's like a prison*" (Holland, 2019). Holland explains that children as young as five years old have tried to escape family hubs, for instance, by sneaking out windows or simply running away. When discussing the issue of child homelessness, the Irish Times emphasise the government's lack of action, and describe that the only way to alleviate the problem is by shifting and focusing policies.

3. Previous research

3.1. Framing of homelessness in previous studies

The previously mentioned stigma surrounding the homeless can also be seen in the debate between whether homelessness is caused by individual or structural reasons. Much of the existing research on public perception of homelessness focuses on this differentiation and often emphasises that individual circumstances are credited for a person's lack of a home or housing. This was illustrated in a 1975 survey conducted in the United States, which showed that individual reasons for homelessness, such as loose morals, addiction and lack of talent and effort were viewed as the primary reasons for issues with high levels of homelessness (Phelan et al., 1997). Over 50 per cent of participants answered that these personal reasons were "very important" reasons for poverty (Phelan et al., 1997). While the aforementioned survey is old, the newer research confirms the conclusion it came to. Glover's (2010) findings suggest that media in the metropolitan area of Vancouver credits in 54 per cent of homeless cases to proximate causes. This entails individual behaviour which directly causes homelessness. The general public still seem to, quite strongly, associate homelessness with individual shortcomings and therefore the homeless population is met

with stigma. However, there are a few strategies that can be used to reduce stigma, bias and stereotypes. The strategies will be discussed in the next section.

3.2. Media's role in reducing stigma and stereotype

Much of the current research focuses on how media can contribute to the harm caused to stigmatised groups. However, there is some research done on stereotype, and therefore, stigma reduction through media. Ramasubrarnanian (2007) explores the way media can reduce harmful racial stereotypes, and therefore lower stigma. While the research and strategies were initially guided towards racial stereotypes, there is reason to believe that such strategies could also be applied to stigma reduction of the homeless. Two media based strategies to diminish the harmful effects of negative media content, '*audience centred approach to stereotype reduction*' and '*message centred approach to stereotype reduction*' are explained in the article (Ramasubrarnanian, 2007, pp. 252 & 253). Ramasubrarnanian explains that audience centred approaches are focusing on the consumers of media material. The goal of the approach is to lead the audience to consciously work on reducing stereotyping while reading biased material (Ramasubrarnanian, 2007). In other words, media literacy and critical thinking is of high importance. According to Ramasubrarnanian, understanding the role of media in shaping and framing reality will cause the individual to be less influenced by it. The idea of audience centred approaches to bias reduction is based on Fiske and Neuberg continuum model. The model argues that when provided with cognitive resources, in addition to having the motivation, individuals will likely use the information in a constructive way and therefore, to a certain degree, overcome implicit biases (Ramasubrarnanian, 2007).

The second strategy explained in the article is message entered approaches to stereotype reduction. According to Ramasubrarnanian, this approach is focused on how media can lower levels of stereotyping, therefore stigma, through media content that contradicts existing stereotypes. Positive exposure of a stigmatised groups help with stigma and stereotype reduction (Ramasubrarnanian, 2007). Especially exposure to positive media content of an admirable member of a stigmatised group has been proven to increase empathy towards the group. Ramasubrarnanian's study found that implicit stereotypes decreased when exposed to stereotype discrediting media content, as well as when individuals were taught media literacy. A combination of both approaches proved to be the most effective, as when exposed to audience centred strategies, such as critical thinking and media

literacy, the individuals seemed more receptive to non-biased and stereotype nonconforming content (Ramasubrarnanian, 2007).

4. Theoretical framework

Theory is a crucial tool to understand the social world and to frame social research. Social theory explains how societies change, as well as the functions of human behaviour, power and social structures, class and other concepts that are included in the social science spectrum (Harrington, 2005). This thesis will make use of two different theories, framing theory and the theory of stigma. These two theories will be further explained in this section.

4.1. Framing Theory

The first theory used in this thesis is framing theory. Framing theory was first introduced in the field of research on mass media communication by Gregory Bateson in 1972. It focuses on how media outlets frame certain issues and groups of people, as well as the effects it have on popular opinion. According to Chong and Druckman (2007), the "framing effect" has puzzled scholars ever since the inception of public opinion research. Subtle changes in the way issues are presented affects opinion of the target group. An example the two scholars supply is that when researchers provided respondents with the question of whether a hate group should be allowed to hold a political rally, the answer depended mostly on one important distinction. 85 per cent of respondents answered favourably if the right for free speech was emphasised, while only 65 per cent were in favour if the risk for violence was emphasised (Chong & Druckman, 2007). The same effect has been noticed by scholars researching public opinion on the homeless and poor, only 20 per cent of the public in the U.S. agreed that welfare programs should be implemented more widely, whereas 65 per cent supported more capital used toward assistance to the poor (Phelan et al., 1997). Framing theory essentially suggests that communication and the way a discourse is presented "*organizes everyday reality*" (Tuchman, 1978, pp. 193; referred in Chong & Druckman, 2007, pp. 106).

This thesis will pay attention to two ideal-type frames regarding media coverage on homelessness, one highlighting individual blame and another highlighting structural blame. The strong focus on individual blame in the West can be rooted back to the birth of entrepreneurial capitalism, which portrays the individual as a free entity, who represents their own "*enlightened self-interest*" (Beck,

2012, pp. 1). The so-called individualism is deeply rooted in the Western institutional system and should therefore be clearly distinguished from egoism, which is understood more of as a personal attitude (Beck, 2012). While the individual is credited for their success and hard work, they are also mostly held solely responsible for personal failure. Due to the individualist culture in western Europe, therefore Ireland, proximate (individual) causes are often viewed as the traditional route to homelessness. Individual causes are strongly connected to the stigmatisation of the homeless population, as it shifts blame to the individual (Harper, 1987). The structuralist blame frame highlights weak governance and the lack of satisfactory welfare programs. The frame emphasises issues like poor governance, inadequate policies and services, the labour market and inequality. When the government is perceived to lack determination and fairness in their decision making, the issue of trust is presented (OECD, 2013). The absence of trust in the government matters, since trust contributes to a smoothly functioning society and "*it affects governments' ability to govern and enables them to act without having to resort to coercion*" (OECD, 2013, pp. 22).

4.2. Stigma

As previously mentioned, there is a lot of stigma surrounding the 'homeless' label, which involves extreme negative perceptions towards the marked individual, often leading to social exclusion (Phelan, Link, Moore & Steve, 1997). Phelan et al. discuss in their article the stigmatisation of poor people, which has been prevalent in the West since the Middle Ages. Specific policies to target the poor and mark them visibly as 'outsiders' was commonplace. Today policies deliberately labelling and keeping parts of the population poor are no longer existing in Ireland. However, the stigmatisation of the homeless prevails. Blame is shifted to the homeless individual, and crediting their situation to personal shortcomings (Phelan et al., 1997). The homeless are cast out of society and viewed as outsiders, as well as dangerous, non-productive and personally liable (Belcher & DeForge, 2012). According to Belcher and DeForge, stigmatisation causes very few to recognise that the homeless have a sense of responsibility, as well as ties to work, family and community.

Therefore the second theory used in this thesis is the theory of stigma. The theory will contribute in giving a holistic picture of the individual blame frame, as individual blame is often more stigmatising. Goffman argues that stigma is a special type of relationship between attribute and stigma. The theory of stigma builds on the often unconscious labelling of people. Goffman explains in his acclaimed book, that this labelling is happening on a basis of what feels like natural attributes

to a certain group of people. Individuals tend to quickly classify new people in a 'social' group based on appearance and demeanour. Stigma arises when a person who does not fit into the traditional division, as the stigmatised might possess one or several attributes that can be interpreted as dangerous or weak. These attributes are deeply discrediting as they, represent personal shortcomings and failings, sigmatising characteristics in a person can be discrediting to the level that they are not even viewed as quite human by the majority of stigmatisers. Goffman also emphasises the fact that stigmatised individuals are usually aware of the view others have of them, especially in social situations where both groups are interacting, the stigmatised might feel ashamed and embarrassed of their social identity. (Goffman, 1963)

In his book, Goffman mentions three distinctive types of stigma, the first one entailing bodily differences, such as various disabilities. Goffman's second type of stigma includes individuals who are perceived as weak willed, as well as individuals who assume authority and individuals with unconventional passions. This category entails, for instance, mental illness, imprisonment, addiction and sexualities which are by some people perceived as 'atypical', such as homosexuality. Homelessness belongs in the second type of stigma. The third type of stigma is based on qualities like race, nationality and religion (Goffman, 1963).

Phelan et al. argue in their article that there is more stigma and prejudice surrounding the homeless than any other poor people, which can be explained by the six dimensions of stigma (concealability, course, disruptiveness, aesthetic qualities, origin and peril). The six dimensions were first introduced by Jones, Hastorf, Marks, Miller, Scott and French in 1984 (Harper, 1987). The dimensions affect the strength of stigma connected with a group, as well as the response of the stigmatiser (Harper, 1987). Concealability refers to how visible a stigmatising 'condition' is. Even though rough sleepers make up only a small portion of the homeless population, homelessness is still in many cases more visible than other forms of poverty and therefore viewed as more disruptive. Aesthetic qualities refer to the appearance of the stigmatised individual. Limited access to facilities for cleaning and grooming themselves might result in a harsh appearance, which further increases negative perceptions from the public (Phelan et al., 1997; Harper, 1987). According to Harper, origin refers to how the stigmatising condition developed. Whether the condition is something that the individual was born with or whether it is the individual's 'own fault' that they ended up with the stigmatising condition (Harper, 1987). If an individual is viewed as personally responsible for their condition, the stigma surrounding them tends to be deeper and empathy to be

less present. Origin is of special interest in this thesis, as the origin of homelessness can be framed in different ways by the media. If the origin of homelessness is framed as individual fault, stigma is more likely to be present. Stigmatisation of the homeless population does also make it easier for the public to accept why certain individuals are excluded from the healthy and normally functioning society. This acceptance is one of the factors that allows homelessness to prevail (Belcher & DeForge, 2012).

5. Methodology

The analysis in this thesis will be done through critical discourse analysis (CDA). In an article on critical discourse analysis, the author, Mullet (2018), explains that the method deals with, among others, discourses of power abuse, injustice and inequality. Stereotypes and oppression are reinforced through political and media discourses, which critical discourse analysis aims to expose and therefore encourage people to reflect on their own thoughts and behaviour (Mullet, 2018). To fully understand the concept, a definition is needed. The Cambridge Dictionary defines a discourse as "*a speech or piece of writing about a particular, usually serious, subject*" (The Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). Much like traditional discourse analysis, CDA is a qualitative method that examines language as a "*topic rather than as a resource*" (Bryman 2012, pp. 522). The difference is that CDA explicitly emphasises the role of language in the use of power (Mullet, 2018). Pressing social issues are at the main interest of a CDA analyst, who also believes that the way power is exercised influences knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, norms and many more aspects of human life (Mullet, 2018).

5.1. Sources and data management

This thesis will be focusing on articles written around the time of the 'Raise the Roof' housing rally in October 2018. The exact timeframe of the analysed articles is from October 1st to the 31st and will be taken from the website of the Irish Times, a newspaper trusted across the country, whose values heavily emphasise responsibility, impartiality and an understanding of other people coexisting with you (The Irish Times, 2019). All the articles were found with the search word "homeless" and the selected articles had to fit a few important criteria. Firstly, they had to focus on Ireland, meaning that only articles presenting a certain case involving the homeless or discussing the overall situation in Ireland were chosen. Moreover, the chosen articles had to be in the '*News*'

section, which includes for instance news on '*Politics*', '*Social affairs*', '*Criminal court*' and more. Articles in the '*Culture*' and '*Life & Lifestyle*' sections were not chosen due to the content not discussing homelessness on a deeper and relevant level. Articles needed to have enough relevance to the topic of homelessness. The selected quotes did not need to specifically mention words directly implicating "the homeless", as long as the discussed issues were relevant to the frame, they were highlighted. For instance, quotes explaining the housing market in Ireland in connection to homelessness were acceptable.

When reading through previous studies and the analysed articles for this thesis, two contradicting reasons for homelessness and the inability to solve the situation often seem to be put in the limelight. As previously discussed, there are both structural and individual reasons for homelessness, in individual cases the cause for the loss of home is usually a combination of both. However, as apparent from existing research from across several countries, individual reasons are overrepresented in media and public opinion. The stigma surrounding homelessness and poverty is causing harm to the victims on a daily basis. Therefore this thesis will focus on identifying the two discourses the Irish Times highlight in their articles.

The selected articles were analysed and coded through NVivo 12. The two frames were represented by two separate nodes, marked as individual and structural. The main nodes were divided into smaller 'sub-nodes'. Afterwards the structural blame frame was broken down into the following categories; the failure of authority, the housing market, inadequate services, welfare and inequality. The individual blame frame was divided into addiction, crime, unstable environment and mental health. Lastly there will be an overlapping discussion on individuality and structure.

5.2. Ethical concerns and biases

Some scholars like Trywhitt-Drake point out that critical discourse analysis is under the danger of "*adopting some of the practices it identifies as being manipulative*" (Graham 2018, pp. 186). Further critique by Trywhitt-Drake is that critical discourse analysts' moral involvement causes the design to lose its interest in finding the truth. Instead, the interest lies in proclaiming their own truth (Graham 2018). However, Graham argues that ideas like these are misinformed and to avoid these traps researchers need to understand that when using critical discourse analysis, the importance lies on making the analysis clear. It is important for the reader to fully comprehend what is being

analysed, as well as why, how and to what end (Graham 2018). He also explains that critical discourse analysts should never hide the fact that the discourse is "a*nything other than a moral pursuit*" (Graham 2018, pp. 201), since that would be dishonest.

There is some criticism directed toward the coding process. According to Bryman, one of the main concerns is the loss of context, as fragmentation of data imposes trouble on researchers. Often 'the narrative flow' of what is said is lost, for example, many themes can frequently be tied together in one story, which makes them difficult to code (Bryman 2012, pp. 575). When coming to a result or final conclusion based on the data, Bryman (pp. 578) warns not to leave coded data unanalysed and theorised, as it is the only way to add significance to it. However, researchers have to be careful while analysing so that their own biases do not manipulate the result. This is one of the biggest risks of this thesis. It is vital to be aware of possible biases, like personal values, to be able to avoid them.

Risks like accessibility and harm to participants are not an issue for this thesis, as the empirical material is taken from a public news website and there are no sensitive interviews involved.

6. Analysis

This section will present the findings of the empirical data collected from the Irish Times. As previously explained, the analysis will be divided into two sections. The first section will look at the structural blame frame. This includes, for instance, political and economic shortcomings of the government, such as lack of social housing. Thereafter the individual blame frame will be analysed, which includes personal shortcomings that are associated with the homeless, such as substance abuse, mental illness, lack of ability, poor personal economy management, et cetera.

6.1. The structural blame frame

This part of the analysis will look into the discourse of homelessness as a structural issue, more specifically the discourse that portrays homelessness as an issue that is enabled by society and the structures surrounding an individual. The poor situation of social housing in Ireland is strongly reflected in the discussion surrounding homelessness, especially in the structural discourse. Other topics that are frequently visited in the empirical data include, for instance, experience of failed authority, inadequate services, policies and inequalities. The next part of the analysis will highlight

selected quotes from the Irish Times, which emphasise some of the structural aspects of the Irish society that allow homelessness to persist.

6.1.1. Failure of authority

> He [Sinn Féin finance spokesman Pearse Doherty] described it [the 2019 Budget] as a "betrayal of the people in emergency accommodation and those who cannot afford the rental prices", and those who have to live with their parents because they cannot afford a home.
>
> *Article 7*

> "To spend €300,000 on a logo is insulting to those families in social housing who badly need repairs made, for damp proofing and insulation. There seems to be an attitude in City Hall which finds money for such costly non-essential schemes but claims to be hands-tied when delivering services to people."
>
> *Article 14*

The former quote is taken from an article discussing the Irish Government's budget for 2019. In the article, Pearse Doherty, the finance spokesman of Sinn Féin (leading left wing, Irish republican party), takes a strong stance against the new budget, accusing the government for failing the ones most vulnerable in the Irish society. The second quote is taken on an article written on the arrest of three housing activists. They were arrested due to a protest against an expensive project to rebrand the marketing logo for Cork city. The two quotes above summarise the disappointment many of the articles express, as well as the frustration they feel toward the failures of the government to act in appropriate ways. Efforts are focused on the wrong things, such as financing emergency solutions that do not have a long term effect. Alternatively, as in Article 14, the local government is accused of fully ignoring the issue at hand and superficially spending on non-essential projects instead of prioritising the poor. Furthermore, the two quotes above illustrate the range of citizens that are disappointed in the actions taken to solve the homelessness crisis. On one hand, politicians, such as Doherty, and parties, like Sinn Féin, openly condemn the government's greed, claiming that they choose "*banks over people*" (Article 7, 2018). On the other hand, there is a mass of regular citizens that feel just as frustrated in the situation. The 'Raise the Roof' housing rally highlights the disappointment and resentment a large number of Irish citizens feel towards the current government, as illustrated in the immediate quote below. Belief in the current policies seems to be non-existent, as well as hope for change initiated by the current government.

> "The reliance on the private sector to resolve our housing crisis has been clearly a failure. We need to let [the Government] know: 'Change your policy'. We have the same mantra from the Government again and again and again 'Our homelessness policies are working'. There is no evidence that they are working...There will be an election coming...Let our politicians know: We are going to vote homelessness out."
>
> *Article 2*

> Homeless people were removed from the monthly statistics in every region except the midlands (Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath) in an exercise described by Sinn Féin housing spokesman, Eoin Ó Broin, as "blatant political manipulation".
>
> *Article 16*

By looking at the several articles from the Irish Times, due to reasons such as failure to act, inadequate policies and services, a common narrative can be identified. Trust in the Irish government seems to be low. The quote above is taken from an article explaining how 1600 homeless people are removed from the monthly figures of homelessness (Article 16, 2018). Aggravation from the population, as well as other politicians, can be sensed through the articles. The leading decision makers of the removal of statistics, like Minister Murphy (the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government), are in the quote accused of "political manipulation" and in the one point of the article accused of "corruption" by Sinn Féin's housing spokesman Eoin Ó Broin (Article 16, 2018). Both words have strong negative connotations and are especially in the world of politics, seen as immoral things to do.

6.1.2. The housing market

> The homeless agencies also believe social and affordable housing must be expedited to take pressure off emergency accommodation required for families and individuals who need it.
>
> *Article 6*

The discourse on homelessness in Ireland is dominated by the discussion on the housing market. As Ireland's social housing market is much smaller than most of other north western European countries', this media focus is expected. As previously explained, owner occupied housing historically has been important to the socio-economic development in Ireland (Norris & Fahey, 2011). According to Norris and Fahey, Ireland started changing in the same direction as the rest of

north-western Europe in the mid 1980s, yet policy makers struggled keeping up with the evolving housing market. Property ownership is to this day the cornerstone of the Irish housing policy. Today there is a consensus that creating social housing is one of the most important steps to solve the homelessness crisis. Instead the focus today lies in funding short term solutions, for instance emergency accommodation. Short term solutions ignore the complexity of homelessness, which will be explained more in dept later in the analysis. See quote above and below.

> "Yes, there may be more money for emergency accommodation, but it is homes that need to be built," he says. "There is not the will there to make sure that really happens,"he says.
>
> *Article 6*

> The capital allocation of €1.25 billion for 10,000 new social homes – through construction, acquisition and leasing – was "simply not enough" when there were 10,000 people homeless and at least 110,000 households waiting for social homes. So too was the commitment to 6,000 affordable homes over three years, given that there had been none since 2014 and the need for these homes continued to grow.
>
> *Article 10*

Disappointment in authority can also be seen throughout the discussion on social housing. There seems to be a consensus that the current Irish government does not provide enough permanent homes to those in vulnerable positions in society. The particular quote below is taken from an article discussing the 2019 budget, which according to Social Justice Ireland, "*an independent think tank and justice advocacy organisation that seeks to build a just society*" (Social Justice Ireland, 2019), will mostly just benefit high earners. The government, for several reasons, is framed as the entity to blame for homelessness, as their willingness to act does not match what is needed to be done. They are in the same article condemned for not listening to expert advice, or rather choosing to ignore it (Article 10, 2018). See quote below.

> The Government had "chosen to ignore" the call by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission that there should be time-limits on how long a family would remain in a family hub, given it had committed an extra €60 million to homeless services, including expansion of the hub scheme rather than "scaling up" initiatives to provide permanent homes.
>
> *Article 10*

6.1.3. Inadequate services

> "The other thing from the budget perspective that I couldn't really understand, or couldn't see, was the lack of commitment from health [services] to homelessness.
>
> *Article 11*

Another theme emerging from the structural blame frame are the inadequate services. There is a deficiency of accessible services for the homeless, for instance both mental and physical health are big concerns in the case of homelessness. The quote above is taken from article which describes the lack of commitment of health services. There is not enough funding and understanding of the complex issues the homeless face with their health.

> Homeless charity Inner City Helping Homeless (ICHH) said the mobile number used by families and ICHH is now disconnected with no communication as to the new process in place.
>
> He said that freephone service "is already inadequate and cannot cope with demand".
>
> *Article 13*

Services for homeless families have also been cut. According to the article, the mobile line used by families in need for housing for a night was cut, making it harder to find emergency accommodation. The fear now is that homeless families will end up falling through the cracks and that the stress from finding emergency housing for a night, on top of already being homeless, will be too much to handle for the families. Again, the welfare of the children involved is in the limelight, as the growing problem of family homelessness in Ireland is brought into the conversation.

6.1.4. Welfare and unequal society

> Homelessness; Mr Power said more than 3,000 children were homeless with many forced to make long journeys to school, arriving exhausted, without breakfast and in dirty uniforms due to inadequate washing facilities.
>
> *Article 19*

The quote above is taken from an article describing how large minorities of children are "*falling through the gaps*" (Article 19, 2018) and begin lagging behind on education. The article specifically mention children from Traveller communities, as well as immigrant and homeless children. A number of the analysed articles emphasise how the homeless are faced with inequalities that are direct causes of their lack of dwelling. A big concern with family homelessness is the academic development of the children. Homeless children, especially when they experience school mobility to a high degree, display lower levels of performance in maths and reading, as well as trouble with engagement and focus on tasks (Fantuzzo et al., 2012). According to Fantuzzo et al., homeless children tend to be absent from school more than other children. Other studies have pointed out that an unstable environment during one's childhood is a possible reason for a vicious cycle to be established, which means that an initial inequality generates more inequality in the future (Mayock et al., 2011).

> "Taxation is not intended to be a means for making the rich richer," said Bishop Doran, adding that "there is a moral obligation" on the rich to share "what is surplus to their own needs" with the less-fortunate.
>
> Safe, affordable housing is a human right, but housing supply "cannot be left solely to the market" and "should not be treated in the same way as any other commodity", they declared.
>
> *Article 1*

Ireland is traditionally a highly Catholic country and the church still has a lot of influence on the modern society. The above quotes are taken from an article discussing how bishops in Ireland argue that housing should not be left to the forces of the market. The article highlights homelessness as a violation of human rights, a theme which has been brought up in the beginning of this thesis. One of the major messages behind the article is that taxation should be used to make society more equal, and that currently money is not used for that. Instead capital is used for the good of those who already lead a prosperous life, which many of the analysed articles express frustration in. The question of morality is also brought into the conversation. In the article, Bishop Doran appeals to the "moral obligation" of the rich to share (Article 1, 2018). The quote below also expresses a belief that the current society is highly unequal. However, there is less of an expectation on taxation and fixing the issue by sharing from a moral obligation. Instead the theme of disappointment and lack of trust in the government is present again.

> Describing "entrenched inequality" as the "disease of our time" the organisation says in framing the budget the Government has avoided the politically unpopular but necessary steps to tackle the social crises of poverty, homelessness, climate change and the health service.
>
> ***Article 10***

6.2. The individual blame frame

The second discourse emerging from the articles is the discourse of individual blame. The discussion surrounding individuals is highly focused on issues of substance addiction, namely alcohol and hard drugs. Crime and violence are other frequently mentioned topics.

6.2.1. Addiction

> An 80-year-old church volunteer was kicked in the groin by a heroin addict who then stamped on his glasses and punched him in the eye.
>
> Cork Circuit Criminal Court heard that David O'Donovan, who is homeless, had previously pleaded guilty to assault causing harm to Robert Duggan.
>
> ***Article 18***

The two quotes above are describing a case of assault, where the perpetrator of the crime was a homeless man. Article 18 frames the victim as an "*80-year-old church volunteer*". The characteristics of the victim of the assault are traditionally regarded as 'good' features, such as religious devotion and volunteering, working to improve the lives of others in vulnerable situations. Additionally people tend to feel sympathy toward elders. The assailant, O'Donovan, is first and foremost described as a heroin addict. This paints immediately an image of an irrational and unpredictable individual on the readers mind, as heavy drugs like heroin are strongly associated with such behaviour. In the next sentence the reader learns that O'Donovan is also homeless. Both heroin addiction and homelessness are stigmatised characteristics and the explicit mention of both connects on the readers mind. As previously explained, the six dimensions of stigma often cause the homeless to be one of the most stigmatised individuals in society (Phelan et al., 1997). This is partly due to the connection of homelessness to other stigmatising features, as in the case of this article, drug addiction. Additionally, Article 18 is quick on connecting the violent crime to a homeless person, which further promotes stigmatising

idea of the homeless as violent individuals. The theme of crime and violence will be explored in a later section.

> "There were high levels of vulnerability among participants, particularly around lifetime heavy use of alcohol or drugs, low levels of educational attainment, high levels of social isolation, poor mental and physical health, low morale and a deep sense of there being little hope for the future."
>
> *Article 3*

Connecting homelessness with substance abuse extends beyond Article 18's case of assault. As previously explained, cultural norms and values in the Western world highly emphasise individualism, which believes that people are in charge of their own success. Therefore failure to succeed is also pinned on the individual. This is why individual explanations, such as addiction, are traditionally considered the main reasons for people becoming and staying homeless in the West. The individualistic culture in the West is one of the many possible reasons for the negative connotations words like homeless carry (Beck, 2012; Harper, 1987).

The next point of analysis is illustrated in the quote above. The section is taken from an article discussing the effects of staying in an emergency accommodation long term. The director of an emergency shelter in Cork, Dermot Kavanagh, argues that living in unstable environment, such as a homeless shelter, is ultimately hurtful in to the residents (Article 3, 2018). The article highlights that the vulnerabilities that lead people to the path of homelessness are enhanced when staying in various kinds of emergency shelters. Kavanagh explains the results of a report done on the Cork Simon's emergency shelter's residents, which show that most of the residents struggle, or have struggled, with traditional issues that are linked to the path to homelessness, such as addiction and low levels of education. Yet there are several contradicting reports in Ireland which identify the structural issues at the main reasons for growing and persisting homelessness, especially when it comes to family homelessness (Focus Ireland, 2017). Article 3 pushes the narrative of individualism and depicts homelessness as primarily the consequence of individual actions.

6.2.2. Crime

> In April 2016, he was before Galway District Court for injuring a Garda, after he was arrested during an attempt to sell heroin in the city on January

25th, 2015. Judge Aeneas McCarthy said that there were no mitigating circumstances when he imposed an 18-month term on Carroll, then 27-years-old and with an address at Fairgreen Hostel.

Galway rough sleeper who died a 'nice young lad who had gone astray'

He had become a heroin addict at the age of 18, which led him into a life of small-time crime, but had made attempts to turn his life around.

Article 12

The quotes above are taken from an article describing the death of a young homeless man, Martin Carroll, in Galway. His body was found on the grounds of Galway City Hall, the article discusses how unfortunate and unnecessary deaths like these are bound to be more common due to the homelessness crisis in Ireland (Article, 12). However, the article also brings up the background of Carroll, which reveals a past of addiction, petty crime and violence. As discussed previously in this thesis and analysis, it is not uncommon for people to view the homeless as erratic and occasionally violent. The quote above describes an incident involving Carroll. He had been arrested for selling heroin, and in the process he injured one police officer. As in the previously discussed article on the assault of the retired church volunteer, Carroll is in many parts of the article not described in a way that evokes sympathy. Yet, the article ultimately frames Carroll mostly as misunderstood, and in a way that portrays him as almost anyone else. If circumstances would have been more favourable, then his life could have been different.

Homeless man jailed after threatening staff with syringe during robberies.

Article 4

There is one common theme running through articles relating to individual cases involving the homeless, especially when the incident was a crime. It seems to be that the offender is usually explicitly mentioned to be homeless. In the case of this article, the homeless status of the criminal is already mentioned in the title. Constant exposure to negative news on homeless people committing crimes is likely to keep the public perception on homeless as an inherently negative one (Ramasubramanian, 2007).

6.6.3. Unstable environment and mental health

> "We also welcome the increase in the budget for mental health services, and for early childhood interventions, as we have been trying to shine a light on the impact of domestic abuse on children," Ms Horan said.
>
> *Article 6*

The quote above discusses the effects of mental health and childhood experiences in relation to homelessness and is also taken from an article discussing the 2019 budget. Mayock et al. suggest that childhood trauma, including serious conflict with guardians and parental substance abuse has been frequently discussed in the discourse on youth homelessness. A study done in Australia showed that there is quite a strong correlation between family conflict and youth homelessness, witnessing or experiencing violence during childhood did impact the decision to leave home into another unstable environment (Mayock et al., 2011).

Studies have shown that the homeless population show high levels of mental health disorders, much higher than the levels of in the general public. A study done on homeless people living in a hostel in Edinburg showed that "*59 per cent met the clinical criteria for personality disorder, 46 per cent for anxiety disorder, 23 per cent for PTSD and 21 per cent for major depression*" (Matthews, 2006; referred in Cockersell, 2011). According to Cockersell, these levels are comparable to psychiatric in-patients. However, the especially important discussion within the context of this thesis is whether mental health issues are a cause of homelessness or if mental illness leads to homelessness, and how the media frames the causality.

> The focus should have been on tackling addiction and mental illness, and on solving homelessness. Instead, what has been done is merely a "drop in the ocean", she complains.
>
> *Article 9*

The two quotes do not directly frame the issue of mental health in a cause for homelessness, neither do they frame it as an issue caused by homelessness. However both quotes have a strong message that there needs to be more funding in mental health services for the homeless and that not enough is done to alleviate the issue.

6.3. The road towards a holistic understanding of homelessness

> While alcohol and drug issues, along with mental health problems (a third reported having received a diagnosis of mental illness of some kind) fitted the traditional route into homelessness, their plight was exacerbated by more recent structural factors, such as the precarity in housing and labour markets.
>
> ***Article 3***

The individual issues of homelessness are brought up in the structural discourse as well. However, the focus is on how the poor housing and labour market, as quote above illustrates. As previously discussed, current policy in Ireland focuses on short term solutions to fix homelessness, such as funding emergency accommodation. Article 3 discusses how the homeless battling personal vulnerabilities, such as mental health and addiction, do not have a safe space to heal. Therefore the quote can be said to represent the Housing First idea, which has, for instance, been widely credited for Finland's success in decreasing the mass of the homeless population (FEANTSA, 2017). Housing First aims to provide the homeless, regardless of other underlying conditions, a place to call home (Tsemberis, 2010). The home can act as an anchor for the homeless person, where they can feel safe and begin to heal from any other conditions they may have suffered from. A larger number of social and government subsidised housing is needed for the concept to work, as well as wider access to housing like this for more people in countries like Ireland. Additionally, the above quote aims to highlight the complexities of the homelessness crisis. The individual's personal circumstances need to be considered when tackling their homelessness, but the structural context cannot be forgotten. A solution is only feasible when both issues are acknowledged.

7. Concluding discussion

The goal of this thesis has been to analyse which discourses the Irish Times employ in the discussion on homelessness. This was done by following the exact research question: How does media represent homelessness in Ireland? The method of analysis was done through a critical discourse analysis, which dives deeper into the ways language can be used to control social phenomena (Mullet, 2018). The study was guided by two theoretical frameworks, framing theory and the theory on stigma. This provided the thesis with important structure and deeper understanding of the complexity of both homelessness and the way it is portrayed in the Irish media.

Twenty different articles were selected for the analysis. The chosen articles were all published within the month of October 2018 and needed to have a relevant connection to homelessness. That being said, selected quotes did not need to involve the word 'homeless'. It was highlighted as long as the topic discussed was connected to a certain individual or structural issue relevant to homelessness. The time frame was used because of a housing rally called 'Raise the Roof'. Around 10 000 people participated in the rally to protest the housing policies in Ireland, expressing disappointment in the actions taken by the current government to alleviate the pressing homelessness crisis the country currently faces. The articles were analysed through the NVivo 12 program.

Through the analysis two overarching discourses were identified, the individual blame frame and the structural blame frame. The structural blame frame has undertones that suggest disappointment in the current Irish government and their ineffectiveness in solving the homelessness crisis. The frame also highlights lack of trust in the Irish government. Language insinuating corruption is used, such as implicating the government of manipulation for their political agenda and using money on projects that will benefit the affluent. One quote directly accuses the government of corruption. Other articles express dissatisfaction in the ignorance of the government and claiming that they are unable to alleviate the problem. When issues like the housing market and welfare are discussed, it is often suggested that the government has ignored the complexity of said problems in the structure, and are instead focused on quick fixes like funding emergency accommodation.

The individual blame frame is characterised by how several stigmatising conditions connected to homelessness are discussed in the analysed articles, conditions such as addiction, crime and mental health. The individual blame in the articles are sometimes highlighted as a cause of structural issues, such as the homeless not having adequate services and spaces to heal from addiction and mental health struggles. The articles that do not discuss individual blame through a structural lens, are mostly articles on a certain incident involving the homeless, for instance, a crime committed by a homeless person. In articles like these it seems like the homeless status of the offender is brought into the limelight. Sometimes their status is brought up in the title already, sometimes it is highlighted later in the text. Most of the issues discussed in the individual blame frame are linked together in the articles, usually when one stigmatising condition, such as addiction is discussed, there is also a mention of another condition, like crime or violence.

It is important to remember that this thesis never aimed to analyse how the utilisation of each frame impacts popular opinion on homelessness. Neither was it to analyse which of the discourses are more commonly used in the Irish Times. A study like this was out of scope, however a study exploring these issues could be an idea to expand on for further research. This study's particular objective was to merely identify the two ideal-type frames, individual and structural, which gives a base on which to expand on in the future.

Additional future research could be done on the effect of homelessness discourses on the public opinion and whether policies affect homelessness frames in media. These are topics that could have been interesting to analyse in this thesis, however such research was never feasible. It could also be very interesting to look more into family and child homelessness in the context of Ireland, as the nation is currently facing overwhelming issues with this type of homelessness. In any case, more research on media representation on homelessness and the different aspects of the issues it entails is needed. While this study does not and never intended to provide a solution to the problem of framing homelessness in media, it wishes to inspire future research on the field. Holistic representation is crucial for future empathy and understanding of the homeless population.

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Appendix: List of articles

Article number	Article name	Date	Author
Article 1	Housing cannot be left to market, say bishops	Mon, Oct 1, 2018	Patsy McGarry
Article 2	Up to 10,000 attend rally demanding end to housing crisis	Wed, Oct 3, 2018	Kitty Holland and Vivienne Clarke
Article 3	Long-term emergency accommodation stays 'not helping homeless'	Wed, Oct 3, 2018	Barry Roche
Article 4	Homeless man jailed after threatening staff with syringe during robberies	Thu, Oct 4, 2018	N/A
Article 5	Councils should not be 'distracted' by short-term housing plans	Thu, Oct 4, 2018	Jack Power
Article 6	Budget 2019: Landlords the 'big winners' says homelessness worker	Tue, Oct 9, 2018	Lorna Siggins
Article 7	Budget is a betrayal of the homeless, says Doherty	Tue, Oct 9, 2018	Marie O'Halloran
Article 8	Housing charities marvel at the idea thousands of rental properties will suddenly appear	Tue, Oct 9, 2018	Olivia Kelly
Article 9	Budget will make no difference, says Penny Dinners charity	Wed, Oct 10, 2018	Olivia Kelleher
Article 10	Budget will benefit higher earners, claims Social Justice Ireland	Wed, Oct 10, 2018	Kitty Holland
Article 11	Depaul calls on HSE and Department of Health to do more	Mon, Oct 15, 2018	Kitty Holland

Article number	Article name	Date	Author
Article 12	Galway rough sleeper who died a 'nice young lad who had gone astray'	Tue, Oct 16, 2018	Lorna Siggins
Article 13	Homeless families could 'fall through the cracks' due to change in service, charity warns	Tue, Oct 16, 2018	Aine McMahon
Article 14	Files to DPP after arrest of three housing activists at Cork City Hall	Mon, Oct 22, 2018	Barry Roche
Article 15	Almost 200 children became homeless in the past month in Dublin	Wed, Oct 24, 2018	Kitty Holland
Article 16	More than 1,600 removed from homeless figures 'still accessing services'	Sat, Oct 27, 2018	Kitty Holland
Article 17	Increase in welfare reports over homeless children	Mon, Oct 29, 2018	Jack Power
Article 18	Heroin addict kicked pensioner in groin and stamped on his glasses	Tue, Oct 30, 2018	Olivia Kelleher
Article 19	Large minority of children 'falling through the gaps', Unicef report	Tue, Oct 30, 2018	Tim O'Brien
Article 20	Housing charity moves students into complex it asked elderly residents to vacate	Tue, Oct 30, 2018	Olivia Kelly