Research Question

How does the online Canadian public construct homelessness in the comments sections of news articles?
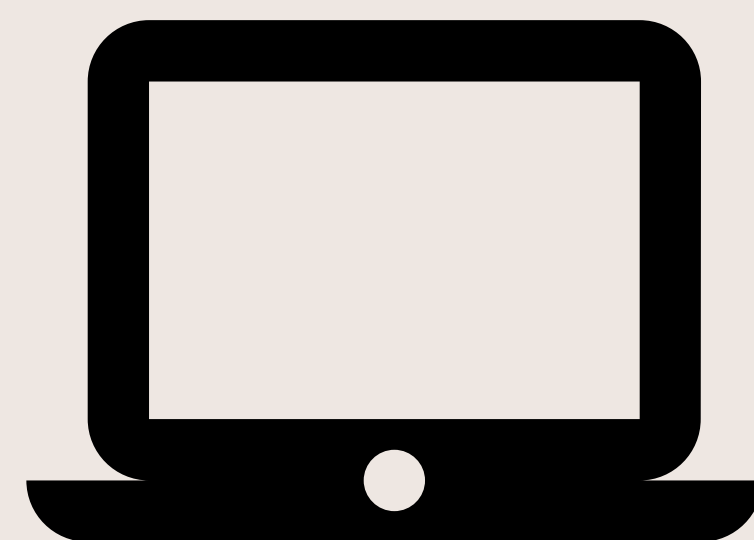
Significance of Inquiry

The significance of this inquiry lies in adding to existing knowledge of how discourse surrounding homelessness is constructed. The existing gap in the literature is in looking at this discourse construction online.

What if the solution to homelessness is really as simple as offering everyone a place to live?

f 🐦 ✉ 📧 in

Housing First initiative aims to eliminate chronic homelessness in Edmonton by 2022

Nick Purdon & Leonardo Palleja · CBC News · Posted: Mar 07, 2020 2:00 AM MT | Last Updated: March 7, 2020

Advocates call for moratorium on $1,500 fines to homeless who aren't physically distancing

f 🐦 ✉ 📧 in

Outreach worker ticketed, charged with obstructing justice while trying to help marginalized early in pandemic

Kate McKenna · CBC News · Posted: May 23, 2020 6:00 AM ET | Last Updated: May 23, 2020

Rent increase pushes Halifax woman toward homelessness

f 🐦 ✉ 📧 in

'I've done everything in my power to find a new apartment,' says Joedie Muise

Taryn Grant · CBC News · Posted: Jul 27, 2020 6:00 AM AT | Last Updated: July 27, 2020

Research Design

- Sourcing from CBC News Facebook page
- Keyword search "homeless"
- Selected 3 articles published in 2020
- Collected 10% of comments per article (around 15 comments each)
- 44 comments total

Theoretical Framework

- Discourse analysis
- Based on the work of Norman Fairclough
- Key Analytical concepts
    - **Discourses:** different perspectives of the world based on personal & social relations (Fairclough, 2003)
    - **Style:** the speaker's identities that appear in discourse (Fairclough, 2003)
- Tone & argument structure

"'housing first' is a b.s. concept. working should be #1. the "experts" are dumb asf (sic)"

"Bring in more free loading border jumpers!!!"

"That is why its (sic) important to buy your own home not rent. Never believed in paying for someone else's fur coat. Can't afford? Work 3 jobs like I did!"

Key Findings & Argument

- Homelessness is stigmatized in 2 ways:
  ○ 1) **individualizing** homelessness: making the social issue a result of individual failure
  ○ 2) **oversimplifying** homelessness and its solutions
- 3 categories of non-stigmatizing comments:
  ○ 1) comments with strong emotional responses
  ○ 2) proclamatory comments
  ○ 3) solution-based comments

Key Findings & Argument (cont.)

- Non-overtly stigmatizing comments still stigmatize
- Lack of consultation with those experiencing homelessness
- Dismisses this population's valuable input & expertise
- Perpetuates victimization of homeless communities
  ○ Removes agency and power
- Argument: this is one of the greater stigmatizations of homelessness as it is less recognizable, but deeply harmful

"Two words: Affordable housing. That ends homelessness for more than 90% of the people dealing with it, and free up countless resources to help the other 10%.."

"greedy slumlords… expecting higher rent while tenants live with rodents/rotting floors and mold"

Limitations

- Scope of the accessible public
  ○ Only accessed Facebook users on CBC News page
  ○ Not representative of the entire public
- Depth of analysis
  ○ Only analyzed 44 comments from 3 articles
- Further research: how individuals experiencing homelessness perceive stigma
  ○ Understanding their experience and perception