

# **UNDERSTANDING MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF HOMELESSNESS IN METRO VANCOUVER**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This project examines newsprint media's coverage of homelessness in Metro Vancouver; specifically, documentation of its causes and solutions. I investigate how the media represented these, compared to causes and solutions proposed in the Regional Homelessness Plan, 3 Ways to Home: Housing, Income, and Support Services. This project includes an assessment of media representations-- causal attributions and proposed solutions/responses-- of homelessness and their potential to affect outcomes in public awareness, policy attention and change.

Findings indicated abundant media coverage of individual causes, specific structural responses to homelessness. Coverage focused on municipal government involvement in causes and solutions/responses to homelessness. Lack of, or low-income leading to homelessness received considerably less coverage than housing affordability, availability, and provision of support services. Recommendations flowing from this research for stakeholders to draw attention to income problems as a key cause of homelessness, and continued awareness efforts on housing, and support services.

**Keywords:** homeless; homelessness; causes of homelessness; solutions to homelessness; responses to homelessness; proximate causes of homelessness; proximate solutions to homelessness; ultimate causes of homelessness; ultimate solutions to homelessness; media; media coverage; newsprint media; representations; framing; agenda-setting; Regional Homeless Plan; Metro Vancouver

## **DEDICATION**

*This paper is dedicated to my mum.*

*Without your constant encouragement and love*

*I would never have gotten to where I am today.*

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The current research project has sought to contribute to the body of research on media coverage of homelessness. It is focused within the regional Vancouver, British Columbia context in Canada, assessing the causes and solutions to homelessness presented in the regional media coverage of the issue. Not only may the region's media actors play a role in the ways in which the problem of homelessness is understood in the region, but other key groups of homeless advocacy stakeholders have made concerted efforts to promote media coverage of their view of the causes for and solutions to homelessness in the Metro Vancouver region. For the current study, I have focussed on assessing how the media frames reflected causes and solutions to the region's homelessness problem; secondly, whether the media frames reflected the causes and solutions that the region's homelessness policy stakeholders have been concerned with, that is, a sympathetic view of those that are homeless in the region; thirdly, any identification of the systematic causes, and therefore solutions needed to change the situation of those in need.

Significant amounts of research has been devoted to examining media coverage of homelessness; researchers have documented the nature of the coverage of homelessness (Klodawsky, Farrell, & D'Aubry, 2002), as well as changes in this nature and tone of coverage over time (Buck et al., 2004). In addition, research has been dedicated to the examination of the media's potential to affect public perceptions of homelessness (Forte, 2002; Greenberg, May, & Elliott, 2006; Remillard & Schneider (*forthcoming*); Link et al., 1995). Within much of this research, researchers have sought to explain how the media can both reflect, and affect, stakeholders' perceptions of homelessness. As well, factors that may influence the diverse opinions about homelessness that have been presented by the media have garnered specific analytical interest (Forte, 2002; Greenberg, et al., 2006; Remillard & Schneider (*forthcoming*); Link et al., 1995). Research has been dedicated to examining the differences in media coverage and/or portrayals between information sources, such as news coverage compared with academic journals (Buck et al., 2004). This research on media coverage

of homelessness has served to aid a general understanding of the “broad societal factors influencing this pressing social issue” (Buck et al., 2004, p. 151), namely the media, diverse stakeholders, the public, as well as homeless individuals themselves. The purpose of the current research project is to gain a further understanding of media coverage of homelessness, specifically in the context of the Metro Vancouver region, and more particularly, how the media portrays the causes and solutions to homelessness in Metro Vancouver. Furthermore, the current project also seeks to examine the implications of the media’s coverage of homelessness.

## **Homelessness in Metro Vancouver**

The issue of homelessness within the context of the Metro Vancouver region has been a point of continual concern and attention for over a decade. Homelessness doubled between 2002 and 2005, and grew by over 400 people, or 22%, between 2005 and 2008 (Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia (SPARC BC), 2008b, p. 3). Since the inaugural report, *Vital Signs: Our City's Check-up* first published in 2006 by the Vancouver Foundation, homelessness has persistently been named as a top “priority for action” (Vancouver Foundation, 2007, 2008). The scope of the problem has become increasingly regional across Metro Vancouver over the past years, with 43% of the homeless population living in the region outside of the City of Vancouver (SPARC BC, 2008a, p. 2). Eliminating or ameliorating the situation for the province’s homeless continues to be at the top of citizen survey priority lists, political campaign platforms, as well as provincial and municipal government funding priority lists, including and consequently, the subject persistently receives media attention.

## **Functions of the Media: Why Examine Media Representations of Homelessness**

To understand why the current research project centres on an examination of media representations of homelessness, a brief introduction of the plethora of roles and functions of the mass media is vital. Predominantly, it has been argued that the role of the media is to guide attention to an issue, problem, or event, including not only the attention of the general public, but also political and policy attention. Because “the range of issues pressing on government and the public is huge, [while] the attention capacities

of both...are constrained quite severely" (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005, p. 250), at the very least, the mass media can draw public and government attention to issues in an information-rich world. Depending on the issue, media focus on an issue can raise it to attention temporarily or over prolonged periods of time. Some researchers argue that the role and influence of the media is based upon the media's ability to increase the accessibility of information on any pertinent issue (based upon pivotal research by McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The underlying assumption of these accessibility-based models is a correlation between emphasis on pertinent issues by the mass media, and the importance placed upon these issues by mass audiences: that "people form attitudes based on the considerations that are most salient (i.e., accessible)" (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p.11). Other researchers argue that media coverage does more than to merely draw attention to pertinent social issues through increasing information accessibility; ultimately, media actors have potential to 'frame' important issues (the process of framing is discussed below). Here, the assumption is that the influence of the media transcends accessibility models of attention and describes that how "media organizations 'frame' issues and debates will influence how the publics form their opinions" (Greenberg et al., 2006, p. 132). Consequently policy actors, including "government departments, corporations, pressure groups, and many voluntary organizations" place importance on media coverage of an issue (*ibid.*). The strength and direction of the relationship among these three factors --the media, the general public, and policy actors-- is complex and there are a number of ways in which these three actors influence each other (Greenberg et al., 2006; Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Jones & Baumgartner, 2005; Soroka, 2002). The central theoretical assumption of this project is that media have the ability to influence the lens through which any given issue is examined, a process referred to as framing. Of central interest in the current research is the "frame" that is being produced in the regional context, and consequently how the public and political actors are potentially being affected. Framing of an issue by media players serves as "a necessary tool to reduce the complexity of [any one pertinent] issue...in a way that makes [it] accessible to lay audiences" (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006, p. 12). But in doing so, the media is shaping, perhaps inadvertently, the ways in which an issue is understood. Both the amount of coverage, as well as the nature of media attention is given great value by stakeholders, advocates, and interest groups.

The current project examines the ways in which regional newsprint media covered homelessness during a specific time period, January to June 2008, during

which goals by regional homeless stakeholders were to raise both public and media awareness of and attention to the problem of homelessness through an event, the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count. The focus of the 2008 Count was not only to enumerate the homeless population, but also to bring awareness of the problem of homelessness in Metro Vancouver to the attention of the public, and thus, their public representatives. Using comparative data from the prior year, 2007, and the following year, 2009, I focused on comparing news coverage leading up to, including, and following the 2008 Count. The 2008 Count “put” numbers on a trend that is becoming more apparent within the region, and drew attention to the statistical data showing the growing extent of the problem, and the necessity for a response. To achieve the underlying purpose of understanding media coverage of homelessness in Metro Vancouver, and the implications of this coverage, the current study is an assessment of the salience of this issue, an assessment of the nature of the coverage, and the frames of the media attention. In Chapter 2, I will discuss in greater detail the function of framing, as well as the processes by which the media is utilized as an instrument of knowledge or information dissemination by political actors, key stakeholders, and other interest groups (Greenburg, et al., 2006, p. 131).

Previous research has indicated that media attention can have a decided effect upon public attention to a particular societal problem. Understanding the pattern of media coverage can help understand how the publics may view a certain issue, in the current case, homelessness. Public attention has the potential to influence a demand for response to the problem. Public commitment to solutions in turn, has the potential to impact political, and more importantly *financial*, commitments to the solutions. Drawing attention to and seeking to influence the nature of the coverage of homelessness in Metro Vancouver by regional stakeholders has the potential to focus on homelessness as a public issue. Furthermore, it has the potential to facilitate a more informed understanding of the causes of and solutions to homelessness in the region on behalf of the public and the politicians that represent them.

Media representations of homelessness demonstrate the ways in which homelessness, and its causes and solutions, may have been traditionally understood by the general public, the media, as well as policy-makers. Media representations of homelessness have been the subject of international research, but Canadian researchers have also focussed on the media representations in Canada (Klodawsky et al., 2002; Greenberg, et al., 2006; Remillard & Schneider, *forthcoming*). Whether or not

these representations are similar to portrayals in Metro Vancouver is one of the interests in the current project.

To summarize, my key research questions ask how the newsprint media in Metro Vancouver portray the causes and solutions to the region's growing problem of homelessness, and whether these reflect the messages of the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (GVRSC). Furthermore, I address what the implications of some of the themes in media portrayals might be for those who are trying to increase public knowledge about the overarching causes and solutions to homelessness in the region. In order to answer my research questions, newsprint media coverage in the Metro Vancouver region was examined over 18 months, in specific periods during the years of 2007, 2008, and 2009. Content analysis methods were used to determine causes of and solutions to homelessness outlined in the regional newsprint media coverage. Both quantitative and qualitative coverage of homelessness was of interest.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES: HOMELESSNESS, MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS, AGENDAS**

In order to provide the context for this research project, I will begin with a discussion of the varying causes contributing to homelessness, in general. Following this, I will examine the media's role in representations of homelessness. Finally, I will discuss the theoretical basis for why examination of media coverage of homelessness is important, placing the current project within the context of public policy and public agenda-setting literature.

There are two very broad categories by which the causes and solutions to homelessness can be divided: one as individual risk factors and the second as societal factors. The divergence between arguments that homelessness is due to societal inequalities as distinct from deviant individual behaviours is the basis for the major divide in identifying the causes of and solutions to homelessness. This divergence has characterized the debate since the issue of homelessness emerged and was identified as a growing 'societal' problem over twenty years ago. For one body of researchers, stakeholders, political groups, and concerned public groups, the causes of and solutions to homelessness should be based upon the resolution of individual risk factors (referred to in this paper as proximate causes<sup>1</sup>). In contrast, for others, the causes and solutions are based on fundamental problems in the political and social system (referred to in this paper as ultimate causes<sup>2</sup>) and require overall changes in our societies.

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<sup>1</sup> Proximate causes of homelessness are those which are viewed as the most closely or immediately responsible for causing homelessness, and generally in relation to individual characteristics, such as deviant individual behaviour, mental illness, laziness, and substance abuse and addictions.

<sup>2</sup> Ultimate causes are those larger scale causes such as: failure of a social welfare system, or the widening income gaps, lack of affordable housing, decreases in government funding, etc.

## A. Causes of Homelessness

### Ultimate Causes of Homelessness

#### Social Stratification: Income inequalities, government policy changes

Modern society exists as a socially-divided classist society, within which there are different levels of power and property. Karl Marx argued that these divisions, highly apparent in capitalist society, “constitute a world-wide system of stratification: the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’. And *within* every nation, including...socialist countries, stratification can... be found” (Tumin, 1985, p. 2). Societal inequalities, namely income or economic inequality, or the disparity in the distribution of wealth and economic assets are becoming particularly apparent in urban centres, where the juxtaposition of wealth and poverty is evident. Portraits of this social stratification are becoming visibly more evident in our societies, cities, and urban space. Growing societal inequalities have, in part, contributed to homelessness (Toro, 2007; Toro et al., 2007; Shinn, 2007; see also, Kendall et al., 2004); the emergence of homelessness is often viewed as evidence of this social stratification. The problem of homelessness began to increase sharply in the mid 1980s<sup>3</sup>. Since this time, the problem became increasingly apparent, as did the heterogeneity and nature of the population, with the “nature of homeless people changing from ‘skid row’ alcoholic to de-institutionalized mentally ill” (Buck et al., 2004, p. 152).

Financial and wealth inequalities seated in the Canadian context are particularly apparent. Of the industrialized nations in North America and Europe, Canada has one of the “worst records of income inequality” (Kendall et al., 2004, p. 189). Statistics Canada reported an increase in earnings of 16.4% among the richest fifth of Canadians, and a decrease in earnings of 20.6% of the poorest fifth of Canadians between 1985 and 2005 (Grant, 2008). Not only is this stratification documented in terms of real differences in earnings of Canadians, it has become visibly more apparent as homelessness increases. In many Canadian centres, populations of under-housed and homeless individuals continue to grow. Within larger Canadian cities including Metro Vancouver, the increasing gap between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ is marked. The Vancouver Foundation, in *Vital Signs* (2007), reported that, “the gap between the rich and poor

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<sup>3</sup> A number of factors may have contributed to this increase. These factors are discussed below.

increased by 8.7% between 2001 and 2005 in Metro Vancouver" (Vancouver Foundation, 2007, *based upon Statistics Canada data*). Homelessness in the region grew by 22% between 2002 and 2008 (SPARC, 2008a). Not only is it evident that the income levels between Canada's poorest and richest citizens continues to grow, this trend, including one of its outcomes- homelessness- is decidedly apparent in the current project's context of Metro Vancouver.

### **Shifts in Public Policy**

The gentrification, de-institutionalization, and economic restructuring that took place throughout the 1980s are often cited as reasons for increased occurrences of homelessness in Canada (Klodawsky et al., 2002). Over the past 20 years, there have been significant shifts in federal and provincial government engagement in housing policy (Frankish, Hwang, & Quantz, 2005, p. S24), contributing to changes in commitment to construction of social housing in the region. During the 1990s, the Canadian federal government remarkably changed its role in social housing; in 1993, it ceased funding new social housing units, and by 1996, effectively transferred its role in funding social housing, to provincial governments (McAfee, 2010). Since the withdrawal of federal funding for social housing, there has been a shift to an increased role for municipal governments in housing initiatives, whether or not there is funding available. As a result, there has been an increased reliance on incentives for private developers (such as increased densities for providing affordable units among other bonuses) by municipalities to create affordable housing. The reduction in the creation of new social housing, in conjunction with other pressures, including considerable development demands has affected the number of households in core need of housing<sup>4</sup> across the country. In British Columbia, in 2006, the percentage of provincial households in core need was 14.6%, greater than the national average of 12.7% (CMHC, 2009). The shortage of social housing and the growing economic gaps are some of the contributing factors to a rise in homelessness within Metro Vancouver specifically.

The case of Metro Vancouver is characterized by the problems faced all across Canada: growing income inequalities, deinstitutionalization, economic restructuring, as well as shortages of social housing, and overall housing affordability. In a recent report,

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<sup>4</sup> Those "in core need" of housing are defined by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation as households spending more than 30% of before tax household income on housing.

the 6<sup>th</sup> Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey (2010), two Metro Vancouver municipalities ranked high on the report's least affordable cities in the world. The City of Vancouver topped the report's "extremely unaffordable markets" and the City of Abbotsford came 26th out of the 62 most unaffordable markets across the globe (Cox & Pavletich, 2010, p. 4). A number of factors have impacted to the cost of housing specifically in the Metro Vancouver region: development demands and continually rising land values have contributed to a loss in the number of rental units.

Differences in the 'problem definition' of homelessness among local, national, and international scopes of research have been outlined by past researchers(Toro et al., 2007; Shinn, 2007; Frankish, Hwang, & Quantz, 2005): definitions varying between "literal' homeless who reside in shelters, abandoned buildings...or the more encompassing 'precariously housed'" (Toro et al., 2007, p. 506). The varying estimates based upon the different 'problem definitions' of homelessness have affected the estimates of the number of homeless individuals across cities and nations. These differences can make cross-sectional and wider-scale comparisons, explanations and solutions to homelessness difficult. While it seems apparent that proximate causes, (including individual risk factors to be discussed in greater detail below) contribute to individual cases of homelessness, the ultimate causes associated with homelessness, such as those outlined above (the decrease in federal funding, shortages of social and affordable housing, and widening income gaps) must also be considered. While ultimate causes are discussed in many different contexts outside of the Canadian context of shifting federal funds, it has proved more difficult to directly attribute homelessness to larger scale changes or occurrences. Other factors identified as ultimate causes of homelessness include "shortage of jobs, inadequate schools" (Lee, Hinze Jones, & Lewis, 1990, p. 253) "inadequate income, declining [social] welfare services, and loss of housing" (Wright, 2000, p. 31). These broad, societal problems may require considerable policy changes<sup>5</sup> at higher government levels, because the creation of affordable housing may require economic stimulation that is often considered outside the realm of municipal government funding. The manner by which changes in policy occur has been well documented in past research. Political agendas are commonly characterized by "long periods of relative stability" (Baumgartner & Jones, p. 10). Given that, there can be relative difficulty in creating change in government policy; however, once a change in

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<sup>5</sup> For example, policy changes such as minimum wage changes, changes to social welfare and housing programs, programs that attempt to combat poverty and social exclusion.

policy has occurred, the new practice will often remain for an extended period of time, the period “of relative stability” in policy practices.

A number of researchers have sought to specifically highlight large overarching societal inequalities (Toro et al., 2007), hoping to stimulate change at higher levels. Housing advocates have hoped to outline the ways in which the decrease in funding and off-loading of social housing responsibilities from senior levels of government has affected both housing affordability and availability in Canada. Advocates for the homeless have called for higher levels of government to again provide or at least be involved in housing initiatives. The requested changes are not achievable through everyday government reallocation of funds and spending within the present Canadian system, but require “radical realignment of contemporary politics” (Kymlicka, 2009, para. 18).

Changes to public policy and the associated funding reallocations inevitably require widespread consensus on the factors affecting the lack of housing. Policy change aimed at the proximate causes may achieve some success at the local level, but is less likely to address the ultimate causes and bring pressure to bear on provincial and federal governments.

If homelessness is a product of larger systemic issues, it can be solved by systemic changes, including the examination of, and changes to, government social transfer policies such as: funding for social services, housing, and medical services, (Shinn, 2007, p. 674); increasing the inclusivity and comprehensiveness of social welfare systems (Toro et al., 2007, p. 513); and, government involvement in guaranteed sustainable minimum incomes, comprehensive social welfare networks, and provision of housing. Stimulating large influential systemic changes can more difficult to achieve than influencing smaller, common policy practices. Reactive and stop-gaps solutions to individual homelessness (often on a case-by-case approach) are more easily achieved than are changes to larger systemic inadequacies viewed as causing or continuing homelessness on a broader scale.

## **Proximate Causes of Homelessness**

### **Individual Responsibility**

As indicated earlier, while one body of thought posits structural problems as the root causes of homelessness, other researchers maintain that due to the diversity amongst the homeless population, the problem can never be “adequately explained by grand theory or by structural forces such as capitalism” (Neale, 1997, p. 59). Individual risk factors vary but predominantly include “mental illness, behavioural problems including substance abuse and addiction, and family estrangement” (Sommer, 2001, p. 19) as well as factors like “lack of thrift, effort, or talent” (Lee, Hinze Jones, & Lewis, 1990, p. 253). These individual factors have been cited most often as core causes of individual homelessness (see Buck et al., 2004; Frankish, Hwang, Quantz, 2005; Sommer, 2001; Klodawsky et al., 2002). When proximate causes are characterized as the cause of homelessness, the core result is a figurative segregation between those who are homeless due to these factors, and the domiciled population.

The solutions to the proximate causes of homelessness differ substantially from homelessness attributed to structural problems<sup>6</sup>. Charity is often portrayed as a central response to “individual homelessness”, wherein individual risk factors leading to homelessness can be remedied by charity of material goods. In an analysis of images of homelessness in Calgary, Remillard & Schneider (*forthcoming*) found that images depicting acts of giving by volunteers and acts of receiving by homeless “present homelessness as a problem most readily resolved by personal charity” (p. 18). Additionally, whereas response to “structural homelessness” warrants societal changes, including both means-tested and universal social policies, “individual homelessness” solutions, (particularly deviant behaviours and lifestyle choices) predominantly include punitive solutions (Sommer 2001, p.37; Lee, Jones, & Lewis, 1990). The segregated population of homeless individuals can often be portrayed as the “bearers of social disadvantage whose problems are to be explained, prevented, and cured by charitable organizations, health professionals and the government” (Hodgetts, et al., 2006, p. 498). Though the inclusion of government and health professionals may seem to suggest systemic change, the solutions here often suggest little more than a “constructed

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<sup>6</sup> The implications of the differences between the solutions to proximate versus ultimate causes will be discussed below.

dialogue between charity and governmental representatives" (Hodgetts et al., 2006, p.498). The key point is that government is not viewed as primarily responsible for solutions to homelessness, because responsibility lies in a balance of private, public, and charitable sectors and individual responsibility. Here, while the government maintains a role in the well-being of its citizens, those who engage in deviant and problematic social behaviour, causing individual deficits, are not the sole responsibilities of the government because government action has not caused these problems. Intervention or help for these individuals is based upon a combined solution of private, individual, and government contributions. Discussion of proximate causes, specifically deviant behaviours leading to homelessness, has dominated the past literature, but a more recent shift in the literature is the inclusion of a combination of factors, often both proximate and ultimate causes.

### **Implications for the Resolution of Homelessness**

While health researchers and psychologists may be more favourable to empirically examining and ascribing individual risk factors to homelessness, sociologists tend to attribute homelessness to marked societal problems (Toro, 2007; Shinn, 2007). The nature of one's disciplinary background plays a significant role in influencing the causal patterns to which one attributes the given phenomenon (Frankish, et al., 2005). For example, health researchers focus on individual factors, and social scientists focus on marginalization, exclusion, and economic force. Whether and how these research findings from either background may receive public or media attention still remains unanswered. While some research findings gather a great amount of focus from the media, often as a news "event", bringing the findings to public attention, other findings may never gather attention and remain largely within the research community.

The important consequences of these two approaches are that the causes identified for homelessness often translate to very different proposed actions and solutions to homelessness. Sommer's (2001) review of literature on homelessness outlined trends in past research, suggesting that individuals attributing homelessness to 'lifestyle' or personal choices may be more inclined to "propose either punitive policies... or no policy at all...[as] lifestyle choices are not an appropriate realm for government

interventions”(p. 37)<sup>7</sup>. Findings by Lee et al. (1990) in their study of public opinion about the cause of homelessness outline that:

As a rule, respondents believing in structural or external causes [of homelessness] considered few issues more important than homelessness... and supported proposals to increase taxes and provide additional housing. By comparison, those believing in individualistic or internal causes were more likely to devalue homelessness as an issue and to favour restrictive measures over service provision. (p. 261)

The implications of these findings suggest some difficulties in terms of influencing an individual's understanding of homelessness, because understanding is based upon personal beliefs<sup>8</sup>. However, a number of external factors play a role in increasing public understanding of social problems, such as the effects of media coverage, as well as perceptions of others' opinions. Therefore, although one's beliefs about the causes or solutions to homelessness may be affected by a particular background, external factors may influence an individual's understanding and beliefs. At the very least, expanding the understanding of the plethora of factors that may cause homelessness, “proximate” or “ultimate” remains warranted to increase the amount of information available to the public about homelessness, including the causes and solutions.

### Sites of Representation of Homelessness

The media, government policies, advocacy efforts, and scholarly research represent varying “sites of representation” of homelessness (Takahashi, 1994, p. 303). These sites of representation on pertinent public issues, and the way in which the information about specific problems is portrayed have important ramifications on the nature of solutions proposed. These venues provide ‘problem definition’, and opportunities for presentation of the individual versus the structural causes and solutions to homelessness. They are places where ideas about homelessness develop. In turn, these sites are key to understanding public and political knowledge of homelessness, and the identification of its causes and accompanying solutions (Takahashi, 1994, p. 303). The mass media is a particularly influential site of representation as “the key players in these other arenas are also part of the ‘media gallery’ ... [meaning] they ‘look

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<sup>7</sup> Although even this assumption may be changing in more recent years, as varying levels of Canadian government become involved in regulation of personal lifestyle choices, such as public smoking bans, and restrictions on trans-fats, sodium, etc., in commercial-vended foods.

<sup>8</sup> An assumption that is difficult for a structuralist to process

to the mass media to assess their effectiveness” (Greenberg et al., 2006, p. 130). The site of representation of homelessness of interest in the current project is the mass media, discussed next.

## B. Media’s Role in Representation of Homelessness

Information to do with homelessness in our cities and societies is relayed to the general public, in large part, by the media; the issue itself has drawn media attention consistently over the past 20 years (Buck, et al., 2004; Kłodawsky et al., 2002; Remillard & Schneider, *forthcoming*). The problem of homelessness, its complexity, and subsequent discussions of this problem in the media have varied greatly. The discussion of homelessness transcends disciplines, including health services, sociology, social justice and inequality research, political studies, and many others. This presents problems for journalists and the media seeking to cover the issue. In order to make logical sense of the information, journalists and media actors seek to organize the information that they encounter.

Three significant “media-effects” models were constructed to explain a number of aspects about the ways in which media can affect its audiences, as well as the ways in which media actors can affect the material that is distributed to these audiences. These models are agenda-setting, priming, and framing; they are all based upon the assumption that “subtle changes [made by the media] in the description of a situation invoke interpretative schemas that influence the interpretation of incoming information” (Weaver, 2007, p. 145). All three models acknowledge the importance and influence that the media can have on different issues. The ways in which the media does this, differs substantially among the models.

Media agenda-setting is based upon accessibility: exposure to information is important. Here, the media has little effect upon the ways in which an individual views a situation, the “media’s central function is, perhaps not in “telling people what to think, but...in telling [them] what to think about” (Lang & Lang, as cited in McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 177). Priming, often described as an extension of the agenda-setting model, is referred to in mass-media research as a process by which information provided by the media serves as cues for interpretation of information by the public. Information presented becomes the baseline by which the public processes supplementary future information. Priming occurs when media actors endeavour to set the tone for the way in

which an issue is received by audiences. Examination of the processes of agenda-setting and priming has focused on how the media can make information “more salient in people’s minds... [thus shaping] the considerations that people take into account when making judgments about political candidates or issues”, based primarily upon accessibility of information (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p.11).

Framing differs fundamentally from two other media-effects models. Whereas the agenda-setting model focuses on which issues are discussed in the media, framing is concerned with how that information in the media is portrayed (Weaver, 2007).

Traditionally, a model to explain the political communication processes, the term framing has become synonymous with the process by which the media can influence *how* an audience understands information. By framing an argument, the journalist plays a more active role in selecting, and therefore, changing information presented to audiences. Whether or not the journalist intends it, the tone of the presentation of information in a news item has the inherent potential to influence the audience’s view point. While it is understood that framing potentially influences the audience, it is useful practice that enables “journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely [and to] package the information for efficient relay to their audiences”, in the most understandable angle for audiences (Gitlin, 1980, as cited in Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 56). By presenting information in a “package”, the media is effectively shaping the way in which the information is portrayed; consequently, thereby affecting how this information is processed by audiences (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 11). Despite the ways in which framing can impact the information, framing itself is a common practice for media actors and journalists, as it represents a convenient and easy way to present information. The framing model has become the most popular model for indicating the effects of the media because of the “comprehensive nature of the term” (p. 144), but also because “framing does seem to include a broader range of cognitive processes—such as...appeals to principles, and recommendations for treatment of problems (p.146) than do the other two models (Weaver, 2007).

## **Framing Practices**

Entman (1993) famously described framing as the process to  
*“select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way to promote a particular problem definition,*

*causal interpretation, ...and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described” (p. 52, italics in original)

A number of factors including “reporter interest, routines and uses of sources, the ideological position of the publisher or owner, and the actions of groups interested in a particular issue can all have significant impacts on the news media framing” (Hayes, et al., 2007, p. 1843). Not only do media actors construct frames, but stakeholders, advocates, governments, and others develop frames which guide their respective activities. Framing is a tool for these other groups to organize information in a way in which accurately reflects their position on any given issue. Additionally, for issues garnering political, public and media attention, specifically in this case, homelessness, accessibility to information is no longer at the forefront, as research has demonstrated that attention is given to homelessness (for example, see Buck et al., 2004; Takahashi, 1996), and the importance now lies in shaping the ways in which the problem is viewed.

### **Journalistic Practices**

Not only can outside factors influence media actors, to be discussed below, but practices of the ‘industry’ can play a role. Greenberg et al. outlined a number of important practices that can influence journalism , such as “commercial interests and orientations of mainstream mass media, the journalistic routines and news norms that determine what and who are newsworthy...and the propensity of news media to report about events rather than issues” (2006, p. 132). Additionally these researchers pointed to different processes of framing itself which media actors use. Benford and Snow (2000, as cited in Greenberg et al.,2006) explain diagnostic framing, which involves problem identification and assigning responsibility, in contrast to prognostic framing, which identifies the problem and articulates a direct solution (p. 144). The process and outcome of diagnostic frames “entail forms of conflict that are more amenable to the conventions of news reporting” than does prognostic framing (*ibid*).

### **Outsider Practices: Influencing the Media’s Frame**

While journalists and the news media often seek to “maintain their self-described position as objective and fair reporters of events”, many other influences come into play, including attempts by others with vested interests to “frame” the media’s frame (Martin,

2004, p.51). The relationship between changes in public opinion and media coverage and “frame” of an issue motivates stakeholders to “operate under the assumption that how media organizations ‘frame’ issues and debates will influence how the public will form opinions” (Greenberg et al., 2006, p.132). Therefore, at the same time as journalists influence the media’s ‘frames’ or events, there are *also* continual efforts by others to influence the media’s frame of an issue, particularly for controversial public interest issues.

Construction of the ‘proper’ or ‘ideal’ frame of the issue of interest is of central importance to interested parties and stakeholders wishing to guide public perspectives. The importance of the ‘proper’ frame is best described in work by Forte (2002): “human understandings of troublesome conditions and public problems...are social constructions, ‘products of claims-making, labelling, and other constitutive definitional processes” (Franklin, 1995 in Forte, 2002, p. 136). Interested parties and stakeholders are a part of these claims-making, definitional, and labelling processes. Claims-making is the process by which groups or individuals seek to draw attention to their position on an issue, as well as influence others to hold this position. A smorgasbord of claims-makers appear on any given issue, including interest groups, pressure groups, voluntary groups, government institutions and corporations, to create a frame that the media will utilize to portray their social issue or problem . The “claims-makers” use their own “images, words, and phrases...to compete in reality definition contests” (Forte, 2002, p. 153). That is, the claims-makers compete not only for media coverage of the issue against the vast amount of other issues facing the public and government realms, but also for media coverage that displays their side of the debate. Different claims-makers commonly construct their frames to contrast with other frames, sometimes including the dominant frame. However, the benefits of constructing complementary frames have also been documented. Different actors can work together to arrive at “agreements about the problems they are trying to solve....and the content of the policy object they are trying to shape” (Schon & Rein, 1994, p. 169). While framing issues to conflict with that of the “opposition” or the contrasting frame is common, it may be equally beneficial for parties to recognize different approaches, or reflect upon the frame they have created, and how this may ultimately be integrated with the contrasting frame. For those framing an issue in hopes of achieving policy change, reframing can ultimately be very advantageous, especially when challenging the dominant frame, most frequently the frame which guides government policy. Flexibility in framing and reframing allows for the ability of individual

actors in the policy controversy to adjust and “to improvise pragmatic resolutions of their controversies” (p. 177). Through varying means, including media campaigns and information releases, claims-makers ‘frame’ their issues for the media, according to how they would like the media to cover them. This activity, or “frame-building” (Scheufele, 1999) can have significant impacts on the nature, as well as the volume and character of news media coverage of a particular issue (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 12).

For socially-sensitive issues such as homelessness, a number of factors must also be considered for “claims-makers” wishing to frame their issue. There can be particular difficulties because the media resist reporting controversial or debated issues, which show “realities of dispossession and social inequality” (Hackett & Zhao, 1998, in Greenburg, et al., 2006, p. 138). These are often avoided in the interest of “not disturbing audiences and advertisers” (*ibid.*). However the mass media are “not a monolithic, internally cohesive institution open only to powerful groups and in service to a dominant ideology” (Greenburg, et al., 2006, 132). While it may be more difficult for underrepresented groups to influence media coverage of an issue, this does not mean that certain groups are necessarily left out of the discourse. These groups have to fine-tune their approaches and organize their information according to the ways in which the media has predominantly set the discourse on a certain subject. Through media advocacy, campaigns, press conferences, “local events, activities, and ‘happenings’”, stakeholders seek to draw the attention of the media to their cause or issue (Holder & Treno, 1997, p.s191). Groups seeking to draw attention to their cause often participate in the ‘game’ by utilizing different types of framing, such as providing the media with news releases and information sheets.

The role of framing by organizations, interest groups, public relations, and political campaigns, and their potential impacts through continual efforts to influence both the media agenda and the public agenda have been documented (McCombs, 1994, p. 99). The news media is receptive to incorporating the frames, or positions, of other organizations, as, periodically, “communications professionals subsidize the efforts of news organizations to cover the news by providing substantial amounts of organized information, frequently in the form of press releases” (McCombs, p. 102). How the “forces and groups in society try to shape public discourse about an issue by establishing predominant labels” has been of interest to researchers (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 13); an evaluation of the efforts made to ‘frame’ the discourse on homelessness in a local context is of central interest in the current project.

## **Media Representations of Homelessness: The Research**

Homelessness, as a socially contentious issue, has not been avoided in news media coverage in the past (Buck et al., 2004; Kłodawsky et al., 2002; Greenberg et al., 2006). However, for the topic of homelessness, power dynamics between dominant societal groups and underrepresented groups has played a role in media coverage of the topic. Views of dominant groups and populations have been commonly overrepresented in mainstream mass media, wherein the small or underrepresented groups of the population face difficulties (Greenberg et al., 2006). Specifically the stage of 'problem definition' and propensity to change or alter opinions within the predominating media frame can be particularly difficult for homeless individuals and groups or advocates representing them (Forte, 2002, p.136). Confounded with this problem, through buyouts of major new media outlets by a small number of powerful corporations throughout the 1980s, many mainstream media outlets in both Canada and the United States are owned by the same limited number of companies. The views expressed by these 'different' media outlets are often the same, as they are in fact owned by the same corporation (see Bullock, Wyche, & Williams, 2001; Martin, 2004, p. 44). The increased syndication of news media coverage, as well as a decrease in investigative and local journalism as media outlets have had to cut costs in a struggling industry has also had potential impacts on traditional media coverage of homelessness.

Past researchers have examined localized case studies of media coverage of homelessness, and conducted more longitudinal examinations of national news coverage. This research has been conducted in several different fields, including geography and psychology (Kłodawsky et al. 2002; Buck et al., 2004); cultural studies (Hodgetts, Hodgetts, & Radley, 2006); social work (Remillard & Schneider, *forthcoming*); and communication studies (Greenberg et al., 2006). In general, these media portrayals can be described as a reflection of the debate about the different causes of homelessness both within academic research as well as in empirical examination of public opinions on the matter. Past media representations have reflected both the ultimate and proximate causes of homelessness. However, summarized or aggregated findings on the coverage of homelessness in the media and academic research have been representations of homelessness as an individual problem (see Buck et al., 2004). The media's key focus on proximate causes has allowed an aggregate focus on short-term solutions, such as shelters and charity, rather than broader changes to the

coordination and connectivity of social services, housing and income levels to enable our society to be more inclusive of those at the margin of our society.

Research on media coverage of homelessness has been dedicated to highlighting the themes in the media coverage of homelessness, outlining trends in coverage, as well as identifying construction of frames in media coverage. There have been a number of evident themes in the media coverage of homelessness emergent in past research of the subject: stereotypical depictions of homeless individuals and individualization of the problem; divisions between the homeless population and the ‘general public’, as well as divisions amongst homeless populations.

### **Stereotypes and Individualization**

Several analyses of media representation of homelessness reveal the stereotypical characterisations of homelessness, with attributions like “irresponsible lifestyle choices”, including substance abuse (Klodawsky et al., 2002, p. 135), or descriptions such as “diseased, passive, voiceless [individuals] overly reliant upon charitable assistance” (Hodgetts et al., 2006, p. 498). Klodawsky et al.’s (2002) findings revealed that media coverage portrayed homeless individuals as “hapless, passive, and unaware of how to help themselves without someone else telling them how” (p. 135”). One third of the articles reviewed touted substance abuse as a common part of the homeless individual’s lifestyle. More recently, Remillard and Schneider (*forthcoming*) examined the visual representations and images of homelessness in newsprint media coverage in Calgary during a season of heightened media attention to homelessness. These researchers suggest that the visual representations present “individual action as the primary mechanism through which homelessness is addressed in society” (p. 8).

Many researchers have indicated that when “individual failings [are indicated] over structural problems, the preferred solution [accords to the inferred cause, which] is often charity, over systemic change” (Shields, 2001 as cited in Greenburg, et al., 2004). p. 138).

### **Divisions**

A distinct division in media portrayal between “them (passive, incapable, isolated) and us (active, realistic, connected)” has been an evident theme in media coverage of homelessness (Klodawsky et al., 2002, p.141). Remillard and Schneider (*forthcoming*)

found that the visual narratives examined were found to “naturalize a separation between homeless and domiciled populations, further a sense that homelessness is a state devoid of meaningful community, restrict the agency and actions of homeless individuals, and reinforce the notion that charity and individual action are adequate to address homelessness as a social issue” (p. 3). Klodawsky et al. (2002) concluded that often media representations of homelessness as passive and hapless were then used to justify “responses to the symptoms of homelessness through such short-term interventions as emergency shelters rather than addressing its longer-term structural causes” (p. 141).

Media depictions of homelessness “marginalize and differentiate the status of persons who are homeless” commonly including references to illness and diseases, specifically those which are stigmatized, including mental illness, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis (Klodawsky et al., 2002, p. 135). These illnesses are discussed in both ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ terms, depending on the nature of the media discussion but the fundamental piece is that the discussion of these factors again serves to differentiate homeless individuals, *them*, from the societal, *us*.

Not only is there a decisive division between “us” (the general public) versus “them” (the homeless, or at-risk) populations in the media realm (Hodgetts et al., 2006; Klodawsky et al., 2002), there is also a division within the “them” population, characterized by descriptions of the ‘deserving’ versus the ‘undeserving’ poor or homeless (a theme which does evidently run deeper than media framing). Work by Hodgetts et al. (2006) sought to combat the prevailing limited characterizations of the homeless population by the media in the UK. Previous work by Hodgetts, Cullen, and Radley (2005), found that homeless people were depicted by the media in a world distinct from the ‘general public’, a world wherein the homeless were “diseased, passive, voiceless, and overly reliant upon charitable assistance” (Hodgetts et al., p. 498). In their follow-up study, they focused on personal narratives of homeless individuals in order to promote a more balanced and robust picture of homeless individuals. Interestingly, they found that homeless individuals “reproduced common media explanations for homelessness as being the product of lack of personal motivation and substance misuse issues, [but then] distanced [themselves] from these characteristics” (p. 507). Hodgetts et al.’s (2006) work exemplifies the potential power that the media holds in representations of homeless individuals, providing evidence that homeless individuals themselves reflect the media frames of the general homeless population.

Klodawsky et al. (2002) outline that arguing for the deserving nature of homeless individuals can “unwittingly contribute to the idea that others are undeserving in social policy terms” (p. 129). This creation of the ‘deserving’ label means that those who do not fall under it are cast as ‘undeserving’ homeless. The predominant assumption about the ‘undeserving’ is that these individuals have made ‘lifestyle choices’ to be homeless, and are uninterested in help offered through social policy. Additionally, their analysis of coverage indicated an “absence of in-depth information about what it was that brought them to current homeless circumstances” (Klodawsky et al., 2002, p. 135). Therefore, there are no means by which government or social interventions are able to help these individuals. In one way or another, homelessness will be addressed by government policies (supportive or punitive). However, as some individuals are cast as undeserving, the reasons for their homelessness will not be addressed. They will be viewed as outside the realm of capabilities and responsibilities of social policy-makers, because they are seen as not wanting to receive the help. The media images of the “undeserving” poor or homeless commonly include those who have substance abuse problems or who are “welfare cheats” (Bullock, Wyche, & Williams, 2001).

Unlike those stereotyped as ‘undeserving’, the ‘deserving poor’ are often depicted with in-depth narration and “complex histories and situations” that have led them to become homeless (Klodawsky et al., 2002, p. 139). Deserving poor were described as those who have fallen through the cracks, in particular hard-working families with children in need, and the elderly (Bullock, et al., 2001). Their problems were associated with systemic and “access-related” issues, including “inadequate health insurance...difficulty finding and maintaining housing, hunger...and inadequate skills training”, rather than individual risk factors (p. 241). Notably, these constructions of the ‘deserving poor’ point to a variety of reasons for homelessness rather than the homogenous homeless population often displayed in the media. Rarely have the ultimate causes been given for the problems of the ‘undeserving poor’ in media portrayals of homelessness.

## Trends in coverage of homelessness

A comprehensive study by Buck et al. (2004) examining newsprint media coverage over a period of thirty years, and academic literature indexed from PsycINFO<sup>9</sup> served to highlight the pattern of media coverage of homelessness in the USA. These researchers' findings over an expanded time period also serves to highlight discrepancies between aggregated findings on coverage of homelessness versus smaller scale studies on media coverage and homelessness. Their study paints a more optimistic profile of the coverage of homelessness, specifically during the past decade. The overall result was that the "simplistic view that media have become more negative towards homelessness in recent years" was not supported by their findings (p. 164). These researchers found that the news media coverage became increasingly varied and robust over the thirty year period examined. Overall they found that homelessness was attributed to proximate causes more often than to ultimate causes, both in newspaper articles as well as professional research. News media articles depicted ultimate causes for homelessness more often than did professional research on the matter<sup>10</sup>. They found that traditionally negative tones of homelessness in media coverage have been more recently replaced by evidence of compassion for homeless individuals. They also found that longer-term structural solutions, such as permanent housing and job programs, were supported. Whereas many of the findings by researchers discussed above (i.e., Kłodawsky et al., 2002; Bullock et al., 2001; Hodgetts et al., 2006) outlined individualization of homelessness and according solutions within media coverage of homelessness, Buck et al.'s findings contrasted these, concluding that mass media dedicated coverage to longer term structural solutions.

Some of Buck et al.'s (2004) findings did however align with Kłodawsky et al. (2002), with an overall decline in the portrayal of homelessness as associated with alcoholism and an increase over time in the coverage of mental illness and homelessness. Buck et al. found that homelessness associated with mental illness gained the most coverage during the period of 1982-1987, probably attributable to the structural change in government policy during this period in which governments sought

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<sup>9</sup> PsycINFO is an abstract database that provides systematic coverage of the psychological literature from the 1800s to the present.

<sup>10</sup> This can be attributed to the fact that the professional literature examined by Buck et al. (2004) was psychological literature on the subject. As I have discussed, professional disciplinary background can play a significant role in the causal patterns that one ascribes to (see Frankish et al., 2005).

to transition individuals institutionalized for mental illness, and reintegrate them back into communities, with mental health services. These researchers also outlined a decrease in the associations between mental illness and homelessness during the ‘plateau’ period of newspaper coverage of homelessness, in 1996 to 2003.

### **Frames of Homelessness in Media Coverage**

Specific research has also been dedicated to the examination of the frames of homelessness depicted in the media coverage, particularly how different perspectives have been reflected in the media. Forte's (2002) analysis of the social constructions of homelessness in newspapers in Richmond, Virginia revealed how different community groups seek to create different, often divergent, frames of homelessness depending on their given interests of business or advocacy. Forte's analysis of articles concerned with the closure of a homeless shelter revealed that the articles “expressing business themes offered unfavourable depictions of the social problem while those adopting the perspectives of social workers, advocates, and those committed to Christianity were consistently favourable” (p. 151).

Overall, review of past findings on media representations of homelessness suggests that, traditionally, media coverage, psychological scholarly data, and public opinion attribute homelessness more often to individual deficits than to larger societal causes such as failure of a social welfare system or the increasing gap between a nation's richest and poorest citizens (Buck et al., 2004; Takahashi, 1996).

## **C. Agenda-Setting: The Media, the Public, and the Policy-Makers**

As indicated earlier, past analysis revealed that the causes presented relate directly to the solutions put forward (Greenberg et al., 2006; Kłodawsky et al., 2002; Buck et al., 2004). Following the discussion of the process of framing, and the past media representations of homelessness, an important question underlying the current research project remains: How does the media relate to, or impact the policy and the public agenda<sup>11</sup>?

Significant research has been dedicated to the intersecting relationships, among the media, public opinion, and public policy (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Baumgartner &

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<sup>11</sup> Policy and public agendas to be defined specifically below.

Jones, 1993; Jones & Baumgartner, 2005; Soroka, 2002). There is substantive evidence for interwoven multi-directional relationship among the media agenda, the public agenda, and the political agenda (Soroka, 2002). Though the strength, the degree, and the direction of the relationships among media, the public, and policy formation remain an ongoing debate, there is limited debate over whether or not the media and the public influence policy makers to some extent (McCombs, 1994; Jones & Baumgartner, 2005; Baumgartner & Jones, 1993). The realm of argument remains in the “how” rather than the “if”.

The public agenda is best described as a “set of policy issues to which the public attends” (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005, p.251). Various stakeholders make considerable efforts to influence this agenda, based upon the assumption that the public agenda can potentially influence the policy/political agenda. One means of influencing or bringing items to the public agenda suggests “a central role [of] the news media in initiating items for the public agenda” (McCombs, 2004): media organizations can influence how public opinions are formed (Greenberg et al., 2006; Buck et al., 2004; Martin, 2004). McCombs (1994) posits that the public will use the media attention for “salience cues...to organize their own agenda and decide which issues are important... [and that] over time, the issues emphasized in news reports become the issues regarded as most important among the public” (p. 2). The policy agenda is the “list of subjects or problems to which governmental officials...are paying some serious attention at any given time” (Kingdon, 2003, p.3).

In turn, the policy agenda can be influenced by both the public agenda and the media agenda. Debate about any given policy issue involves a number of “standard suspects in democratic political systems... [including] interest groups....and the media” (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005, p. 90). Some researchers tout a strong relationship between media and political action, wherein “policy actors “operate under the assumption that how media organizations... [portray information] will influence how publics form their opinions” (Greenberg et al., 2006, p. 132). Furthermore, the media is implicated as a means to “spread changes in language use and political consciousness [amongst the general public]” (Gamson, 2004, in Greenberg, et al., p. 131).

All three agendas play a role in creating a new understanding of societal problems or issues (Baumgartner et al., 2008 p. 2). Heightened media, public, and/or policy attention and a consequential shift in policy can be due to factors such as “framing, venue control, and social mobilization” (Baumgartner et al., p. 3). Framing, re-

framing, creating interest, re-creating interest, spurring both positive and negative attention to the current state of any one agenda all represent ways in which to draw awareness to any one item of interest. These processes of framing, reframing, creating or re-creating interest, represent a part of the issue-attention cycle (Downs, 1972). Public attention to political issues follows cyclic patterns, a process of “a never-ending series of ‘alarmed discoveries’ [by the public]” wherein public attention suddenly focuses on a new or even existing issue due to various factors of attention (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993, 87). While “focusing events, chance occurrences, public-opinion campaigns by organized interests, and speeches by public officials...cause issues to shoot high onto the agenda”, these occurrences *may or may not* cause changes in policy action (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993, p. 10). Baumgartner et al. (2008) suggest that “forces reinforcing the status quo, resisting the emergence of new issues or the incorporation of new actors” can be quite strong; these forces can make political change difficult, though not impossible. While the most probable outcome of media or public attention generally does not generate a dramatic shift in political will or policy, there are “windows of opportunity”, or “policy windows” -- periods within which rapid and dramatic change occurs (Kingdon, 2003). Most importantly, a “short-lived spurt of interest may leave an institutional legacy.... [which will not] ‘fade away’ like public interest or media attention” but lead to institutionalization of programs meant to deal with the problem (Baumgartner & Jones, p. 87). While these windows of opportunity may be few and far between, as the longitudinal studies demonstrate, the “windows of opportunity” lend a glimmer of hope to those seeking change in the broader political agenda.

Research has identified the role of the media in public opinion formation which in turn “influences public responses to policy initiatives that affect homeless people” (Link et al., 1995, p. 534). The quantity of research on public opinions of homelessness attests to the importance placed upon public opinion and public understanding of homelessness and how it relates to policy and political agenda setting (see Lee, Farrell, & Link, 2004; Tompsett et al., 2006; Takahashi, 1994; Link et al., 1994; Deer & Gleeson, 1991). Conclusions on public opinion on homelessness have ranged. Although public opinions may not always be positive, past researchers have found evidence for public interest in the resolution of homelessness. Link et al. (1995) concluded that the public viewed homelessness as a growing societal problem and little evidence for that the public is “unwilling to support policies to help homeless people” (p. 533). Exposure to homelessness, including “learning about homelessness vicariously (through media

reports)" (p.51) can influence policy-oriented attitudes toward homelessness, usually in sympathetic-heightening fashion (Lee, Farrell, & Link, 2004, p.59).

Action on and resolution of the problem of homelessness has the potential to be fairly costly to policymakers, if the problem is seen to be government responsibility. The problem, which can range from punitive responses versus corrective responses, can be a range of costs depending on what the appropriate response is viewed as. Therefore policy-makers are interested in whether this problem is a priority for the general public.

## **Current Context: Metro Vancouver**

### **Causes, Solutions, Framing, and Agendas**

The issue of homelessness within the context of the Metro Vancouver region has been a point of growing concern, specifically within the past decade. In order to centralize and organize groups around ameliorating and ultimately eliminating homelessness in the Metro Vancouver region, the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (GVRSC) was created in 2000 as an umbrella organization representing over 40 groups advocating for the homeless. The GVRSC is a part of the regional governing body of Metro Vancouver consisting of 23 local governments in the Greater Vancouver area. Amongst representatives on GVRSC are different levels of government, federal and provincial housing agencies, interest groups, and service providers (see Appendix A). The members represent a number of influential regional homeless stakeholders in Metro Vancouver. For the purposes of this research project, I have defined regional homelessness stakeholders to include those who are on the GVRSC. Of course, this list is not exhaustive of groups and stakeholders who seek to resolve the problem of homelessness in the region, but they make up a considerable portion of those who have interests in ending homelessness.

The GVRSC coordinated the creation of the Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver, *3 Ways to Home* (2003), (referred to in this paper as the RH Plan (2003)) researched and published by the SPARCBC on behalf of the GVRSC. Outlined in the Plan are the causes of homelessness in the region and their associated solutions. According to the RH Plan (2003), there is a continuum of housing and support that must exist in order to eliminate homelessness in Metro Vancouver. The RH Plan (2003) identified the ultimate causes of homelessness in the region, and the three main pillars upon which the problems of homelessness are built: Housing, Income and Support

Services. A lack of affordable housing in the region, a lack of adequate and sustainable income levels for those at the lower levels of our society, and lack of adequate and appropriate support services for individuals play key roles in the cause of and the solution to homelessness. All three pillars are viewed as “critical for preventing and alleviating homelessness. Addressing homelessness effectively “requires actions in all three areas” (SPARC BC, 2003, p. 16). Identified in the plan are 13 priorities, four of which are dedicated housing priorities, two of which are directed at inadequate income, and six of which are directed at social services (the remaining priority is research and planning on homelessness) (See Appendix B). The first 12 priorities identify 32 gaps in the provision of affordable housing, establishment of adequate income programs, and support services. These 32 gaps are ultimately the causes of homelessness. The solutions are not explicitly stated, though it is implicitly evident that if the 32 gaps identified in the RH Plan (2003) are addressed, homelessness would be resolved in their opinion.

The GVRSC and its constituent groups make ongoing efforts to promote awareness of the values of the RH Plan (2003), which was formulated through an extensive community planning process, in order to gain a broad understanding of homelessness and its solutions in the region. Since its inception, the GVRSC and its stakeholders have completed significant research on homelessness in the region through a variety of initiatives including homeless counts and consultation groups. Municipal homelessness plans have been prepared for Burnaby, Langley, Richmond, Surrey and the Tri-Cities of Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Anmore and Belcarra (SPARC BC, 2003, p.109).

The GVRSC inaugurated the “regional homeless count”, with the first count conducted in 2002, followed by 2005 and 2008. As stated above, the findings of these counts revealed that homelessness has continued to grow between all of these three counts (SPARC, 2008b). Strategies for using this data gathered regionally in the homeless counts (as well as additional data in a 2002 Greater Vancouver Regional district research project on homelessness, and national studies by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the National Homelessness secretariat) “to increase public knowledge and understanding of homelessness would be beneficial” (SPARC BC, 2003, p.109). The data gathered in the counts serves not only to enumerate the growing population for funding purposes, but the process of the counts was recognized as a

potential means to attract media and public attention to the problem of homelessness through concerted media campaign and media release efforts by the GVRSC.

In 2008, the third tri-annual homeless Count was held to statistically document the growth in the homeless population in the Metro Vancouver region. The GVRSC sought to use this event as an opportunity to raise public awareness, as well as understanding of homelessness in the region. Significant efforts were made to draw increased public attention to this count by widely publicizing the count. One of the central means of publicizing the issue of homelessness during the 2008 Homeless Count was through the region's media coverage. There were media releases prior to, and following the count. Calls for volunteers were widely publicized through local news media sources, including local newspapers, yielding over 800 responses, some 500 more than the 2005 count. According to a GVRSC news bulletin, the 2008 count itself "generated over 500 news articles between the release date [of preliminary numbers on April 8, 2008] and May 7" (GVRSC, 2008, p.1). Through promotion of the homeless count, the GVRSC used an 'event', related to the issue of homelessness to create attention. The GVRSC was actively participating in efforts to influence the regional media's "frame" of homelessness, ultimately in anticipation of effects upon the public and policy-makers attention. The frame used by the GVRSC included arguments that causes of and solutions to homelessness in the region can be both proximate and ultimate. Some causes and their solutions can be individual (proximate), with support services helping homeless individuals. Their "frame" identified structural issues leading to homelessness in Metro Vancouver. But more importantly, the 'frame' they constructed included solutions for the ultimate causes of homelessness: that is, systemic solutions, based upon access to affordable housing, adequate income solutions, and access to appropriate support services, over and above solutions that react to individual causes of homelessness.

My assessment will consider the ways in which the regional media covered the causes and solutions for homelessness between January 2008 and June 2008, and whether these differed from comparative months in 2007, and 2009, considering the considerable efforts of the GVRSC to draw attention to homelessness through the 2008 Homeless Count and its results.

# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

## Research Questions

The central research questions addressed are:

- *How do the media portray the causes of and solutions to homelessness in Metro Vancouver, and is the nature of media coverage congruent with the messages of GVRSC and regional stakeholders?*
- *What are the implications of the media's portrayal for key stakeholders seeking to further awareness of the causes and proposed solutions to address and eliminate homelessness in the region?*

For research question 1, I was interested in whether the causes of homelessness were being broadly presented. If so, what were they? How were they presented: alone or along with solutions? Were these causes and solutions proximate or ultimate? Were proximate and ultimate causes and solutions presented together? Specifically, I was interested in whether the causes and solutions articulated by the GVRSC achieved media coverage, and in particular, was attention drawn to the three major themes of the RH Plan (2003) - affordable housing, adequate income, and support services?

The reasoning behind research question 2 deserves a more dynamic explanation. Media coverage acts as one venue for potential public awareness and attention to an issue. As research has shown, the connection between a problem and its causal factors is often key to its resolution. In the past, the challenge for homeless advocates and stakeholders in advancing their perspectives in the media and public agendas has been the articulation of this direct connection between the identified

problem and its solution<sup>12</sup>. Drawing a connection between a policy problem and its solutions can be key to policy change, as “much of the policy process is determined by the artful connection of solutions to problems” (Kingdon, 2003, p. 181). Change in policy has been linked to concurrent connections between the definition of a policy problem and its solutions, at the same time as these are the focus of public and media attention (Kingdon, 2003; Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Jones & Baumgartner, 2005; Baumgartner et al., 2008). Therefore, it is crucial for regional stakeholders to create an environment for policy change, or at the very least an environment with the precursors for change, if desired policy change is to occur. I was interested in discovering the nature of the connections drawn in the media between the causes for and the solutions to homelessness in Metro Vancouver; then, what strategies might be recommended to the GVR SCH in order to attract or shape stories about homelessness in their hopes to connect the region’s problems with their solutions in the RH Plan (2003).

### **Newsprint Media**

My primary source of data for the project was newsprint media. Here, the media is neither the all powerful means of influencing public opinion (see McCombs, 2004) nor an un-biased entity relaying information devoid of implications for action<sup>13</sup>. The media sits somewhere in between these two, organizing information that can both reflect and influence public opinion, and an entity of its own which has its own agenda to play a role of influence in public policy. Overall, the findings of this project do not lend credence to the idea that any ‘proper’ amount of media coverage will ultimately lead to a changed public or policy audience (McCombs, 2004) but confirm that media coverage has the potential to do so in creating an environment that presents precursors to change.

The advantages of print media have been well outlined as “accessible and rich in vocabulary of the political ideology” (Howland et al., 2005, 210). Newsprint coverage is recognized as a single, but representative medium of the media, with recognition of differing audiences between different forms of media. However, newsprint media coverage has been considered significant: “in Canada newspapers are the agenda-

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<sup>12</sup> An assessment of a media awareness campaign on homelessness in Ottawa indicated the difficulty for journalists to connect afforded solutions to homelessness due to a lack of presentation of clear connection between the “causes of the problem and the best solutions for fixing it” by advocate groups (Greenberg et al., 2006, p. 145).

<sup>13</sup> Other key factors influencing public opinion include social statuses, religious and political values, exposure to a problem

setting media... [and because] there is significant media integration in Canada at present...newspaper stories have considerable presence in television and radio programming" (Hayes et al., 2007, p. 1844). Newsprint media can be expected to be reflective of the tone of general media coverage on a given issue.

The initial idea for the current project came from an amount of unanalysed data on media coverage of homelessness in Metro Vancouver collected by the GVRSC. The methodological approach was a blended approach as I sought to examine media coverage of homelessness both in terms of an academic standpoint, but also in terms of the implications from a policy needs standpoint. The GVRSC had collected almost 500 articles on homelessness from January 2008 to June 2008. The articles in the GVRSC sample included term references to homelessness (key terms in the word search "homeless", "homelessness", "social housing", "public housing", "assisted housing", "affordable housing", "mental health", "drug use", "youth safe house", "youth at risk", "safe house", "Philip Mangano<sup>14</sup>"); the articles were coded to find out how the 3 pillars were being covered. Unfortunately, I was unable to use this data for the current project, because the coding process used by the GVRSC's independent coder did not outline coding methodology (i.e., coding definitions or a code-book) or the way in which the coding process was completed.

## Content Analysis

Content analysis can be defined as the "analysis of the manifest and latent content of a body of communicated material...through a classification, tabulation and evaluation of its keys symbols and themes in order to ascertain its meaning and probable effect" (Merriam-Webster, 2009). It is one of the most common methods of assessing the media frame of homelessness, and the method I used to analyse media coverage of homelessness in Metro Vancouver. For this research project, I was interested in a quantitative assessment of the media coverage of homelessness and whether, and how, the causes and solutions of homelessness are represented in the regional media coverage. Rather than in-depth portrayals or depictions of

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<sup>14</sup> Philip Mangano was the executive director of U.S. President George Bush's United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. The council's primary mandate is based upon 'housing first', and underlying principles include "ensuring a reduction in reliance and dependence on shelters and emergency services, targeting the 'chronics' and creating a business plan with measurable and cost-effective outcomes" (Crowe, 2007).

homelessness, I analyzed the data for its manifest content or “elements that are physically present and countable”, over its latent content, “consisting of unobserved concepts” (Gray & Denston, as cited in Neuendorf, 2002, p. 23). Additionally, the examination of the manifest content of media coverage did allow for inclusion of qualitative data on the subject as well. Following my review of past literature on the examination of media coverage of homelessness, I concluded that content analysis is a common means by which to assess media coverage of homelessness.

Both qualitative and quantitative analysis were undertaken for the current study. Though quantitative information was of interest, a purely quantitative analysis would have limited the complexity of analysis, and thus, qualitative discussion of the content of newsprint coverage is also included.

## **Procedure**

### **Time frame**

My examination of media coverage surrounding homelessness began with the coverage surrounding the 2008 Count. The Count was conducted during a 24 hour period, beginning at 6 pm on March 10<sup>th</sup> 2008. I examined whether the Count attracted news coverage attention; also, I reviewed the general characterization of homelessness in news coverage in the Metro Vancouver region. I was interested in an extended period of time leading up to the Count, in order to capture not only coverage of homelessness during the time of the 2008 Homeless Count but also to capture general representations of homelessness in regional media coverage. In order to assess whether the Count gained additional media coverage for the issue of homelessness, it was necessary to include months leading up to the Count, and months following the announcement of the results of the Count. I selected a time period of January 1, 2008 to June 30, 2008. In order to understand whether the amount of regional media coverage may have been different in years wherein a homeless count was not conducted, I used a comparison group of articles from the time periods from January to June in 2007 and 2009. The inclusion of this comparison period also served to help understand the scope of the causes, solutions, and general characterizations of homelessness outlined in media coverage in Metro Vancouver.

An initial call for volunteers and promotion of the 2008 Count began in mid-December 2007. However, neither the month of December 2007 (nor December of comparative years) was included in the current study because news coverage of homelessness tends to increase dramatically during this month. It has a different focus and nature than other months, as December is the “prime time for homeless charities to bid for public attention and funds” (Remillard & Schneider, *forthcoming*, p. 3). Therefore, the inclusion of the month of December could have had the potential to over-represent the role of charity in the problem of homelessness in Metro Vancouver. The primary time frame, January 2008 to June 2008, was selected because during this time a number of actions were undertaken to raise awareness of homelessness within the Metro Vancouver region, in addition to the 2008 Count itself. These included a number of information bulletins and media releases outlining the Count, and subsequent results of the count (See Table 1). The comparison years did not have specific coordinated events by the GVR SCH and other stakeholders. However, there were several newsworthy events that did occur in the comparison years, which may have contributed to media attention to homelessness, both in terms of public awareness, but also political attention (see Table 2).

**Table 1. Timeline of News Events related to homelessness: January 2008 to June 2008**

Month	Major News Events
<b>January 2008</b>	Jan 15: Metro Vancouver Homeless Count 2008- Frequently Asked Questions released on Metro Vancouver
	January 24: “National Action Plan on Housing and <i>Homelessness</i> ” announced by Federation of Canadian Municipalities
	Jan 29: Online Information Bulletin #12 released by the GVRSCCH on the 2008 Homeless Count
<b>Feb 2008</b>	Feb 3: Treatment centre and Community Court given the go-ahead by the BC Provincial for funding, following comprehensive research studies
	Feb 12: BC Throne speech outlining a number of Provincial Government initiatives, including funding for mental illness and drug addiction facilities: Riverview & Willingdon; and revitalization of Vancouver’s DTES.
	Feb 23: BC Premier, Gordon Campbell, announces funding for opening of Burnaby Centre for Mental Health and Addictions
	Feb 24: MLA Gregor Robertson announces bid to run for Vancouver city mayor; among his top priorities: “ending homelessness in Vancouver”
	Feb 28: Canadian Federal Budget announced, including \$110 million pilot project on homelessness and mental illness in Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg, Moncton, Montreal
<b>March 2008</b>	March 7: Media release by Metro Vancouver on behalf of the GVRSCCH to promote the Regional Homeless Count 2008
	<b>March 11: 2008 Homeless Count</b>
	March: Public release of findings from BC Ministry of Health’s study: <i>Housing and Supports for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in BC</i>
<b>April 2008</b>	<b>April 8: Release of preliminary numbers of homelessness individuals from the 2008 Homeless Count</b>
	April 8: Q & A Media Kits released by GVRSCCH outlining preliminary numbers
	April 18- 25: The Vancouver Sun five- part series entitled “Our city’s shame” runs
	April 18: Construction of a new \$14.1-million homeless shelter in Langley begins, created through the Provincial Homelessness Initiative, which is part of the ongoing work of the Premier’s Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Illness and Addictions.
	April 28: Fraser Valley Homeless Count numbers released ( the Fraser Valley Count conducted on same day as Metro Vancouver count was)
<b>May 2008</b>	--
<b>June 2008</b>	June: GVRSCCH Information Bulletin # 13 on the 2008 Homeless Count

**Table 2. Timeline of News events related to homelessness 2007, 2009.**

Month: Comparison Periods	Major News Event(s)
<b>October 2006<sup>15</sup></b>	Oct 3, 2006: BC Provincial Government announces <i>Housing Matters BC</i> , “an innovative and comprehensive strategy to help British Columbians access affordable housing” focused on addressing housing issues, including homelessness (Thomas & Thom, 2006).
<b>January 2007</b>	--
<b>February 2007</b>	<p>Feb 20: 2007 BC Provincial Budget announced (Caledon Institute, 2007):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$ 250 million Housing Endowment Fund</li> <li>• Increase in shelter allowance rates</li> <li>• More permanent shelter beds</li> <li>• Additional funding for women’s and children’s transition houses</li> <li>• Higher annual ceiling for rental assistance program eligibility</li> <li>• Conversion of 750 units of social housing to supportive housing for seniors</li> </ul> <p>Provincial Homelessness Initiative grants funding to Canadian Mental Health Association, with over \$1million to Maple Ridge treatment centre.</p> <p>Release of Metro Vancouver’s Draft Regional Affordable Housing Strategy for Greater Vancouver</p> <p>Feb 23: As part of the <i>Housing Legacy Budget</i>, BC Government announces \$196 million for 758 supportive housing units across British Columbia, by Housing Minister, Rich Coleman.</p>
<b>March 2007</b>	March 31: Federally- funded <i>National Homelessness Initiative (NHI)</i> expires
<b>April 2007</b>	<p>April 1: Canadian Federal government announces the <b><i>Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) which replaces the NHI</i></b>. The strategy is providing \$269.6 million over two years to prevent and reduce homelessness in Canada</p> <p>April 3: BC Provincial Government announces the funding of 996 more units of supportive housing to reduce homelessness. An \$80-million investment includes the purchase of 15 buildings in Vancouver (10), Victoria (1) and Burnaby (4) to protect affordable housing;</p>

<sup>15</sup> This event is not considered part of population of articles, but is included as it relates to a number of news events which followed over the course of time periods examined.

Month: Comparison Periods	Major News Event(s)
<b>May 2007</b>	May 1: BC Housing purchases in Burnaby on Alpha and Beta Avenues
<b>June 2007</b>	--
<b>2009</b>	
<b>Jan 2009</b>	Canadian Federal Government renews funding for the <i>HPS</i> from April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2011.
<b>Feb 2009</b>	<i>The Province</i> begins Operation Phoenix, a year-long project exploring the problems of Vancouver's DTES
	<i>The Globe and Mail</i> and CTV release the Canada's Slum: The Fix: a newspaper series, and public forums on Vancouver's DTES
<b>Mar 2009</b>	March 20: VPD officers alleged to be involved in shooting of Michael Van Hubbard, a homeless man
<b>April 2009</b>	--
<b>May 2009</b>	May 12: BC Provincial government election
<b>June 2009</b>	--

## Gathering the Data

The population of articles was gathered using the Canadian Newsstand™ online database, (referred to as Canadian Newsstand), a full text database of the major Canadian newspapers and small market newspapers, including British Columbia. I selected the 28 regional publications of newspapers in Metro Vancouver listed in Canadian Newsstand relevant to the project (see Appendix C), and used “Publication Title” as a search criterion. During the specific time periods of interest, the key word search used was “homeless\*” in the “Citation and document text” section, in order to capture all articles that mentioned homeless, or homelessness, but also to leave the search as wide as possible. The only other two widely published and disseminated regional newspapers not indexed in Canadian Newsstand were *The Georgia Straight* and *The Tyee*<sup>16</sup>. Articles from *The Georgia Straight* were gathered through a search on the newspaper’s website of back issues from January to June 2008, using the term “homeless\*”. I then manually counted the number of articles per month. Differentiations between broader-circulation newsprint papers and regional newsprint papers were not

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<sup>16</sup> *The Tyee*, an online news source, was not included in the study population, as its website did not provide a search function that would allow for accurate inclusion of all articles related to homelessness in the specific time periods desired.

made in quantitative analysis of findings. I was interested in the general causes of and solutions to homelessness presented about homelessness across the region. Because advanced statistical conclusions were not of central research interest, I did not differentiate between regional sources, nor did I weight a source according to its prevalence.<sup>17</sup>

An initial population for January 1, 2008 to June 30, 2008 revealed 1333 articles from only Canadian Newsstand. I randomly sampled articles from this population as a means of testing the coding system I had created, and to get a feel for the nature of the coverage. This sampling revealed a number of articles clearly unrelated to the issue of homelessness in Metro Vancouver (i.e., homelessness due to house fires, or homelessness in other countries). As Krippendorf (2004) states, content analysts “have to sample their texts to give their research questions a fair chance of being answered correctly” (p. 113).

Consequently, I chose to re-evaluate sampling methods and search for articles on “homeless\*” greater than 200 words, as an article of this size was likely to contain a meaningful understanding of the context of homelessness and its causes and solutions, of primary concern to the central research question. I refined my search of the term “homeless” based upon elimination criteria used by past researchers (Hayes et al., 2007). The coding selection was based upon articles that included the keyword ‘homeless’ unless:

1. homeless\* was not referenced in the article abstract or the first four sentences of the article<sup>18</sup>
2. the article only discussed homelessness outside of Metro Vancouver
3. the article only discussed homeless animals and animal shelters;
4. the article only discussed a movie or TV show related to homelessness\*;
5. the term reference was a description of a photograph\*;

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<sup>17</sup> A lack of differentiation between larger newsprint circulations and local newsprint circulation is recognized as a statistical limitation to the current study.

<sup>18</sup> Initial review of article population revealed articles not discussing homeless\* in these means offered little to answer the research questions.

\* Canadian Newsstand is a text-only database, therefore captions about movies, and photographs were not included in analysis.

6. the term reference was in association with an rare or large incident that left a large amount of people homeless (i.e., Fraser Valley flood in February 2007)
7. the term reference was use of figurative language (i.e., “hipster trend a little cleaner than the *homeless* and a little more artful” (Peters, 2008).

Similarly, if the same article was run in several different local newspapers (i.e., the same article re-named differently was run in *Surrey Now*, *Abbotsford Times*, *Richmond News*, etc.), I eliminated the repetitious articles. This led to a smaller population for 2008. I then used the same process to develop comparison populations for 2007 and 2009. Table 3 shows the population of articles for the study.

**Table 3. Population of articles, and the distribution across years, and months of study.**

Month	Total # of Articles from CDN Newsstand prior to manual elim of articles	Total # of articles from CDN Newsstand after manual elim	Total # of articles in Georgia Straight prior to elim	Total # of articles in Georgia Straight after manual elim	Total # of articles to sample from	Mean # of articles per month
January 2007	232	82	5	2	84	
February 2007	236	90	7	4	94	
March 2007	195	63	5	2	65	
April 2007	149	49	7	5	54	
May 2007	171	74	4	3	77	
June 2007	158	49	6	4	53	
2007 Jan- June (inclusive)	1141	407	34	20	427	71
January 2008	210	82	7	1	83	
February 2008	235	95	13	4	99	
March 2008	212	73	11	5	78	

<b>Month</b>	<b>Total # of Articles from CDN Newsstand prior to manual elim of articles</b>	<b>Total # of articles from CDN Newsstand after manual elim</b>	<b>Total # of articles in Georgia Straight prior to elim</b>	<b>Total # of articles in Georgia Straight after manual elim</b>	<b>Total # of articles to sample from</b>	<b>Total # of articles per month</b>	<b>Mean # of articles per month</b>
<b>April 2008</b>	265	141	12	8	149		
<b>May 2008</b>	275	89	7	5	94		
<b>June 2008</b>	136	52	7	7	59		
2008 Jan- June (inclusive)	<b>1333</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>563</b>	<b>94</b>	
<b>January 2009</b>	205	86	7	2	88		
<b>February 2009</b>	185	49	10	10	59		
<b>March 2009</b>	218	103	9	6	109		
<b>April 2009</b>	186	72	15	11	83		
<b>May 2009</b>	156	58	10	10	68		
<b>June 2009</b>	143	71	8	4	75		
2009 Jan- June (inclusive)	<b>1093</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>80</b>	
<b>TOTAL articles</b>	3567	1378	147	94	1473		

## **Sampling Methods**

Following manual elimination of un-related articles, the total population of relevant articles related to homelessness in Metro Vancouver in the three six-month periods of investigation remained relatively large, a total of 1473 articles. I chose to sample articles from the total population for the purpose of the current project. Due to timed media releases and news events made specifically surrounding the 2008 Homeless count by the GVR SCH (see Table 1) I was interested in any differences in extent and nature of coverage of homelessness between the population months. For this

reason, I used a stratified sampling technique in order to ensure articles from each month were included<sup>19</sup>. There is no “universally accepted set of criteria for selecting sample size” (Neuendorf, 2004, p.88). Both qualitative and quantitative data was of interest for the study years, in order to get a selection of examples of the causes of and solutions to homelessness outlined in the regional media coverage.

## **Study Population**

From January 2008 to June 2008, I sampled 60 articles, systematically randomly sampling 10 from each of the months of interest. This sample was approximately 11% of the total population of articles during this six month period. I gathered comparison articles from 2007 and 2009 in the same manner, and systematically random-sampled three articles from each of the six months from 2007 and 2009, for a total of 18 articles from each year (roughly 4% of the total articles for each year). As a result, from the total population of relevant articles on homelessness of 1473 articles, I sampled a total of 96 articles ( $n=96$ ), roughly seven percent of total articles. Within each month from each year, random-sampling was completed by generating random numbers using an online true random number service, [www.random.org](http://www.random.org). Once I had generated the random numbers and selected these articles, I coded the articles from the sample.

Overall, the conclusions to be drawn from the current study were not advanced statistical conclusions from the data. Statistical weighting was not used across comparative years, which meant that not every story had the same probability of selection between year of interest and comparative years. Small sample size of less than 30 articles in 2007 and 2009 meant that averaging also would not have been reliable. I sought to address to address the limitations of not doing so with the inclusion of qualitative data in my analysis.

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<sup>19</sup> The final sample size was not overly large, but there is no standard consensus on the ‘right’ amount of articles that should be sampled; the sampling unit should be “large enough to well represent the phenomenon under investigation” (Neuendorf, 2004, 73). Increasing the sample size does not “produce significantly more accurate results”, simply by performing data analysis on a larger sample (Riffe et al., 1998, as cited in Krippendorff (2004), p.123).

## Coding Procedure

While gathering the population sample, I was able to review articles, getting a feel for the general content. This process, consistent with past researchers' work, aided the construction of my coding scheme to capture the data within the population (Hayes et al., 2007). Following the process of constructing codes and an appropriate coding scheme outlined by Neuendorf (2002, p. 51), I developed the coding scheme prior to undertaking the coding process, but also developed codes organically throughout the coding process. While I created and refined most codes throughout the process of the initial sampling and test of my coding scheme, I created new codes when a different cause, solution, or position on homelessness was presented in the media. I constructed the coding scheme to gather as much information as I could about the information presented in each of the articles (see Appendix D, for a list of all codes). Specific codes were constructed for each specific cause or solution reported. This allowed for specific solutions to be identified, but also thematic groupings differentiating between proximate and ultimate causes or solutions.

For each article, complete publication details were coded, including month and year of publication, article source, article type (letter, opinion/editorial, and news article). Then each article was coded for causes and/ or solutions mentioned. I coded for a number of other criteria, including specific references, tone of article, tone of action, descriptors of homelessness, and motivation for change.

As indicated by my research question, I focused on the assessment of the causes attributed to and solutions for homelessness reported by the media. For coding purposes, I defined each:

- CAUSE was defined as any reference within the article to terms implying factors causing homelessness or those related to causation of homelessness. Terms included were, for example, "lack of", "no attention to", "has not", "cuts", "reduced", "reduction of", "does not have".
- SOLUTION was defined as any reference to actions taken to react to homelessness, resolve homelessness, house individuals, help homeless individuals or any direct action taken that would provide more housing in some way. Terms included, for example, were references to "solution" or "address", "solve", "resolve", "answer", "resolution". Also included was any reference to the

need for this an action to be taken to resolve homelessness, i.e., "This is what is needed".

## **Solutions versus Responses**

Primarily I was interested in whether discussion in the regional media coverage was concerning factors leading to, or contributing to homelessness (Cause) or whether media coverage discussed reactions, ways to resolve, or help homeless individuals (Solution or Response). Fundamentally there is a difference between a temporary solution, or immediate response to homelessness, and a longer term resolution to the problem of homelessness. For the purposes of quantitative findings, solutions were coded as direct responses to gaps outlined in the RH Plan (2003). Personal judgement of whether a proposed action, such as an emergency shelter was solution rather than a response to homelessness in the region was not passed, but in the final analysis a distinction between responses to alleviate immediate homelessness and those that were longer term responses to the problem. Examples of the qualitative differences in some of the "solutions" to homelessness in regional newsprint will be outlined in Chapter 4, Results and Discussion. This discussion serves to highlight some of the variability in interpretation and understanding of homelessness and where the problem is derived, what problems create it and what we as a region, as municipalities, as individuals should do about it.

## **Types of "Solutions"**

There is a distinction to be made between addressing the core root of homelessness in the region as compared to more reactive responses to the manifestation of the problem of homelessness in the current urban context. While some of the solutions captured in the current context reflect responses needed to adjust regional affordability, others respond to sheltering street homeless in emergency shelters as a means to manage the problem of homelessness in the Metro Vancouver region. As each of the pillars of the R H Plan (2003) represent a continuum, some of the "solutions" coded in the current context may represent more of means to manage the problem rather than address the core root of homelessness. For example, while the RH Plan (2003) specifies a lack of affordable housing as a major contributor to regional

homelessness, it also outlines the need for temporary and permanent shelters while more permanent solutions to regional housing affordability are addressed. Cases where shelters were presented as a meaningful solution to a problem that will continue due to individual behaviours are fundamentally different than when solutions to homelessness in the regional coverage presents shelters as only a part of the solution to relieve the presently homelessness, while the large problems leading to homelessness as a broader societal problem are tackled. Qualitative discussion of nine articles demonstrates both of these types of solutions presented in the media coverage.

I was the primary coder of the articles, and I had an experienced coder assess the code-book and coding process, and code a few sample articles. Because there was only one primary coder, the coding scheme had to be tested for reliability, to ensure “the degree to which members of a designated community agree on the readings, interpretations, responses to, or uses of given texts or data” (Krippendorf, 2004, p. 212). In order to test this reliability and ensure stability in my own coding, I also coded the articles from the data set twice, verifying the same articles were coded correspondingly between two independent coding occasions. HyperResearch, a qualitative analysis program, was used to code and analyse the data. Microsoft Excel was also employed for analysis.

### **Coding specific to The RH Plan (2003) Pillars and Gaps**

In order to answer my first research question, (*what are the causes and solutions to homelessness narrated in the regional newsprint media coverage?*), I constructed my coding scheme to reflect the causes of homelessness reported in the RH Plan (2003) and related solutions. In the coding process, I used the 32 gaps noted in the plan as indicators of causes of homelessness identified in the RH Plan (2003), based upon the three pillars: Housing, Income, and Support Services (See Appendix B). References to resolution of these gaps, either responses or solutions to these gaps were coded as “Solutions” to homelessness. Solutions therefore were direct opposites of the gaps identified in the plan (see Appendix B). In the RH Plan (2003), there were 12 housing-related gaps identified. A total of 14 solutions were directly related to the housing gaps identified. Some of the solutions addressed the same gaps, accounting for the 14 solutions, versus the 12 causes. For example, the Plan differentiated between a low-

barrier shelter as a solution and the elimination of access-related barriers to homeless shelters as another proposed solution.

### **Coding “Gaps” versus “Broader” Causes and Solutions**

Initially, I coded causes of and solutions to homelessness based solely upon the 32 gaps identified in the RH Plan (2003). Use of these codes could be indicative of media coverage of the causes of homelessness as related to the three pillars of the RH Plan. After I began coding, it was evident that a number of references would not have been captured in my data, using solely these gaps. I created additional codes for alternative, yet related, causes of and solutions to homelessness referred to in the regional newsprint media.

A similar process for creating additional codes was used for the solutions to homelessness which could not be coded according to the 32 gaps, but were related to housing, income, or support services. I created 11 additional codes for ‘expanded’ causes of homelessness, and 21 codes for ‘expanded’ solutions related directly to one of the three pillars: housing, income, or services (See Appendix F).

### **Coding “Themes”**

The coding program, HyperResearch, allowed me to create themes, which facilitated the comparison between, as well as within, proximate causes and solutions (see Appendix G), as well as these themes of the RH Plan (2003): Housing, Income, and Support services. I organized findings using some of themes to assess media coverage of homelessness in the region. The theme of proximate causes and solutions implied the role of individual behaviours; solutions like case-by-case management, and individual resolutions aimed at specific behaviours. Themes related to the examination of the RH Plan Theme (2003) included references, such as lack of shelters, lack of services, requirements for construction of affordable housing units or greater funding of outreach services. The major “themes” reflected the three pillars of the RH Plan (2003) (see Appendices, I, J, K). Themes were also used to compare present findings to past research findings, including the theme of charity (see Appendix H).

## **Individual Causes versus References**

In order to capture the individual causes of homelessness, I created codes for proximate causes which past studies have indicated as prevalent in the media coverage. These codes were outside of the 32 gaps in the RH Plan (2003).

During the coding process, I distinguished between causes directly ascribed to homelessness and references to individual behaviours often linked to homelessness (See Appendix B). References to individual behaviours and homelessness serve to reinforce, almost subconsciously, a connection between problematic individual behaviour and homelessness. While individual deficits may be the cause of an individual's homelessness, a passing reference to such a connection can reinforce negative stereotypes about homelessness, and lead to a tendency to ascribe negative actions to homeless individuals or to a devaluation of the need for societal intervention.

Whereas a cause is explicitly stated as a reason for individual homelessness, a reference implies individual behaviour is the cause of the individual's homelessness. For example, in an article from April 28, 2008, the author states "many of our current homeless do not work, do not want to work, and do not seek work" (Thomas, 2008). In this example, the cause of homelessness would be coded as "Cause- Individual choice", as the author is attributing personal choice not to work, leading to lack of ability to pay for a place to live, and causing homelessness. At the end of the same article, the author states "as for drug addicts, don't even get me started" (*ibid*). This statement is a reference to drug addiction as a cause of homelessness, even though the author does not explicitly state that drug addiction causes homelessness. I coded this statement as "Reference-drug addiction". Included in the codes of references and causes are what Buck et al. (2004) referred to as "deficits and deviant characteristics of people who are homeless (i.e., mental illness, physical illness, alcoholism, drug abuse, begging/panhandling)" (p. 157).

Ultimately, I was interested in the larger distinction between individual behaviours as the cause of homelessness as opposed to references to larger more structural factors, but it was interesting to determine differences between passing references to individual behaviour rather than direct references.

# CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## General Findings

### Current Scope

Of the 96 articles reviewed, 63% were news articles, while the remaining ranged from letters to opinion columns and editorials (see Table 4). Of a total 28 sources, 17 newspapers were represented (see Table 5). The most referenced city in the regional coverage was Vancouver (50% of articles), followed by Langley (13%), Abbotsford (12%) and the ‘Tri-Cities’ (9%)(See Table 6). Surprisingly, only 6% of the entire sample population referred to the 2008 Count specifically. Similarly, explicit references to the RH Plan (2003) were rare in the media coverage. Only one article in New Westminster’s *The Record* referred to a municipal action plan on homelessness. Overall, the pillars of the RH Plan (2003), housing, income and support services were covered considerably by regional newsprint media.

There was a varying depth in the level of discussion of homelessness in the articles examined. Homelessness was referenced only in passing<sup>20</sup> in 13% of the articles, and others did little more than mention the fact it was a problem and “action” was needed (9%). A number of articles referred to the solutions to homelessness at very basic levels, including references such as:

- the “Union Gospel Mission provides meals, shelter, education, counselling, and housing for the homeless” (Willis, *Delta Optimist*, 2008)
- Tri-city “councillors agreed that something must be done to house the homeless...and that a shelter needs to be set up as soon as possible” (Saltman, *Coquitlam Now*, 2008a)

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<sup>20</sup> While most of these types of articles were eliminated using the specific search criteria, a few articles did little to present causes or solutions to homelessness. I.e., “the students are recognized for their participation in community service, such as their annual campaign to donate warm clothing to the homeless” (Berger, *Langley Advance*, 2007).

**Table 4. Type of Articles represented in sample population.**

Type of Article	Number of Articles
<b>TOTAL</b>	96
<b>Letter</b>	19
<b>News article</b>	60
<b>Opinion Column</b>	16
<b>Editorial</b>	1

**Table 5. Total number of articles, per newsprint media source**

News source	Number of Articles
<b>TOTAL</b>	96
<b>Abbotsford Times</b>	7
<b>Burnaby Now</b>	6
<b>Coquitlam Now</b>	11
<b>Delta Optimist</b>	2
<b>Georgia Straight</b>	1
<b>Globe and Mail</b>	2*
<b>Langley Advance</b>	12
<b>Maple Ridge Pitt Meadow Times</b>	3
<b>MetroValley news group</b>	1
<b>National Post</b>	1*
<b>Richmond News</b>	3
<b>Surrey Now</b>	1
<b>The Province</b>	8*
<b>The Record- New West</b>	5
<b>Vancouver Courier</b>	10
<b>Vancouver SUN</b>	23*

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\* As a regional spread of coverage of the topic of homelessness was of interest, larger-circulating newspapers were not distinguished from other circulations, and a random-sample of the total population of articles was undertaken.

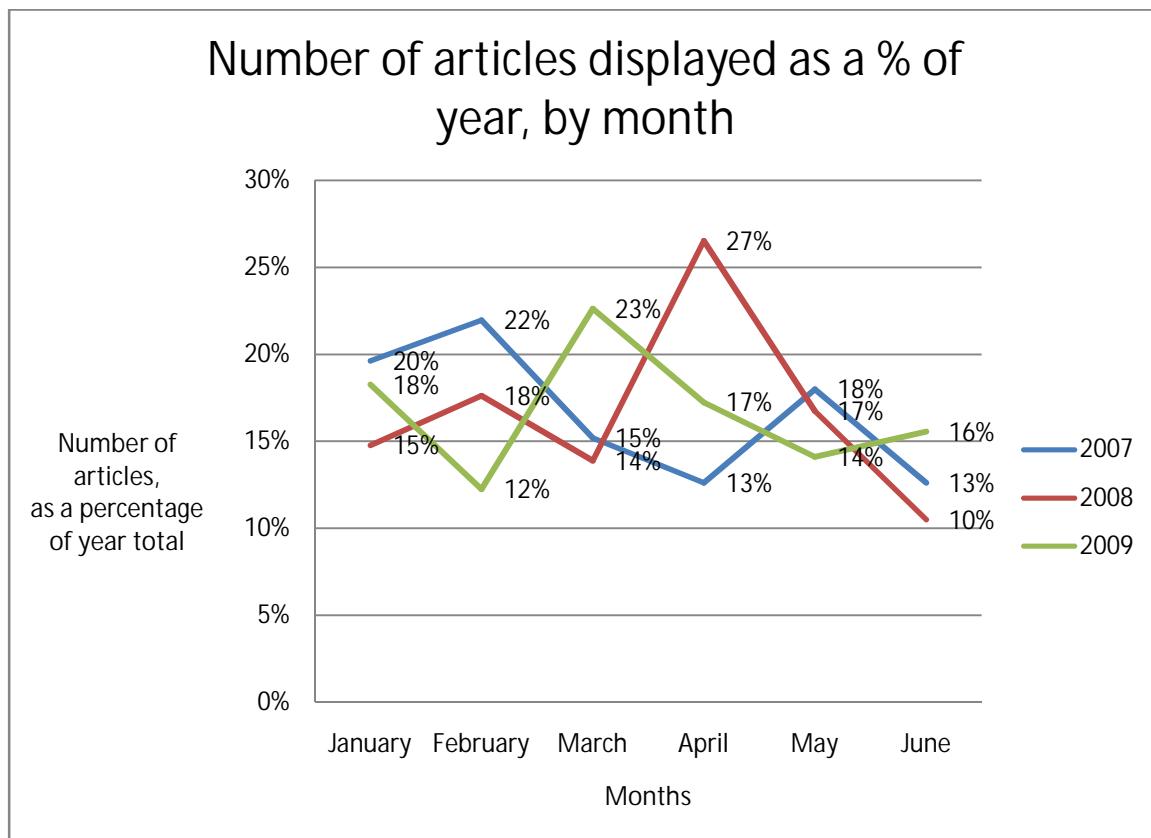
**Table 6. Municipalities, Areas in Metro Vancouver referred to in total sample articles, n=96**

Areas referred to	Number of Articles		Areas referred to	Number of Articles	
	N	%		N	%
<b>Abbotsford</b>	8	8	New Westminster	8	8
<b>Aldergrove</b>	1	1	North Shore	2	2
<b>British Columbia</b>	9	9	North Van District	1	1
<b>Burnaby</b>	4	4	North Vancouver City	2	2
<b>Coquitlam</b>	7	7	Pitt meadows	1	1
<b>Delta</b>	1	1	Port Coquitlam	6	6
<b>Elsewhere in BC</b>	7	7	Port Moody	3	3
<b>Elsewhere in Canada</b>	4	4	Richmond	1	1
<b>Fraser Valley</b>	2	2	Surrey	6	6
<b>Langley</b>	12	13	Tri-Cities	9	9
<b>Lower mainland-General</b>	13	14	USA	2	2
<b>Maple Ridge</b>	3	3	Vancouver	48	50
<b>Mission</b>	3	3	White Rock	1	1

### Comparison by Time Period

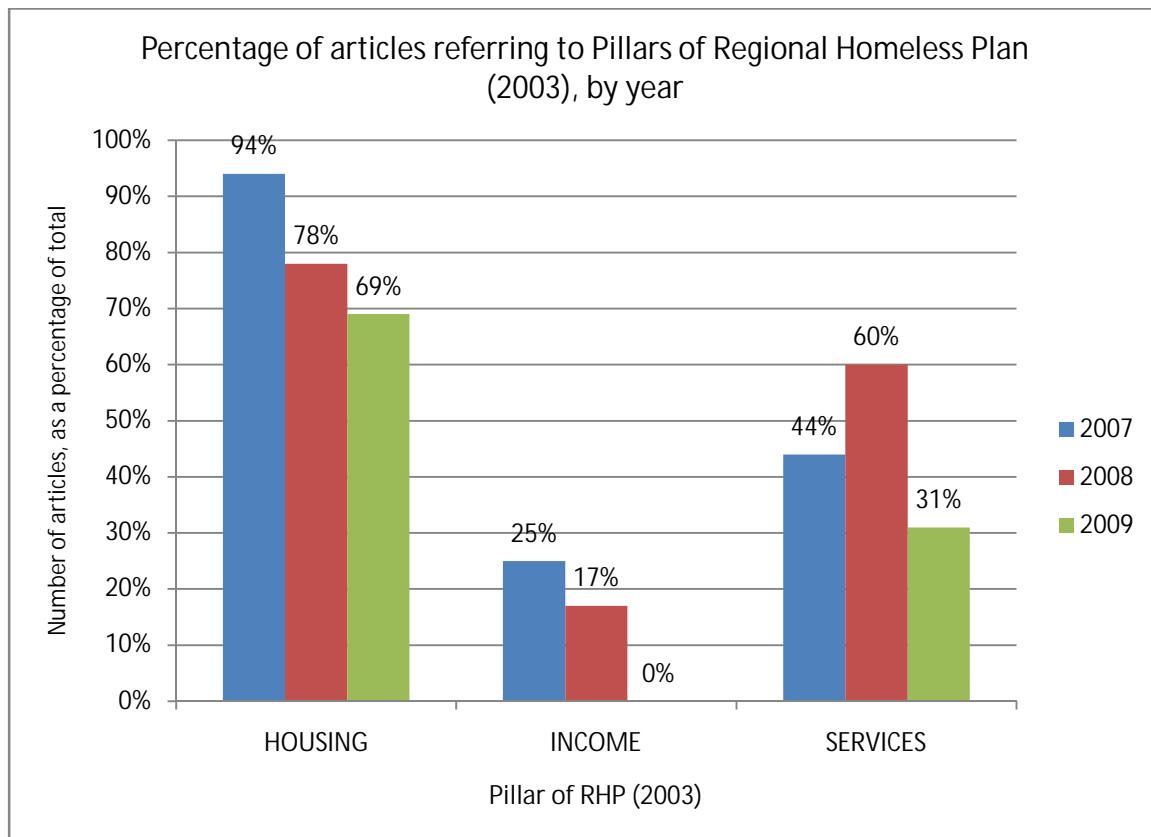
Table 3 shows that the number of articles prior to manual elimination and following manual elimination gathered using the criteria: “homeless\*\*”, “WRD > 200” were reliable across all three years (see Chapter 3: Methodology). Comparing all three years ( 427 relevant articles in 2007, 563 articles in 2008, and 482 articles in 2009) shows a detectable increase in the number of articles in 2008. The mean number of articles per month was highest in 2008 (mean= 94), followed by 2009 (mean= 80), and finally, 2007 (mean= 71). April 2008, the month of the release of the preliminary results from the 2008 Homeless Count had the largest number of relevant articles on homelessness ( $n=149$ ). Figure 1 shows the percentage of articles in April 2008, which compared to the same month in the preceding and following years, reflects increased media attention to homelessness corresponding with the release of preliminary findings of the 2008 Count.

**Figure 1. Number of articles as a percentage of total sample per year (2007: n=18; 2008: n= 60; 2009: n= 18), displayed by month**



I found that media coverage of the pillars identified in the RH Plan (2003) was similar across all three years (see Figure 2). Findings indicated a trend across all time periods: reports related to housing and support services associated with homelessness received more attention in regional newsprint media than did income. Reports on or discussion of Income problems were not as common in articles related to homelessness in the regional media coverage. Media coverage of income as a factor in homelessness dropped between 2007 and 2009; income-related issues did not appear in any of the randomly sampled articles in 2009. It appears that news events in 2007 and 2009 (see Table 2, Chapter 3: Methodology) functioned in the same manner as the 2008 Count to draw attention to the issue of homelessness in regional media coverage. However, the different nature and themes of the events may have contributed to the differences between pillar themes among the years, seen in the findings. For example, coverage of support services peaked noticeably in 2008, the year of the Count.

**Figure 2. Number of articles as a percentage of total, n=96, mentioning causes and/or solutions to homelessness by GVRSCCH pillars of the RH Plan (2003).**



## Research Question 1: Causes and Solutions

***How do the media portray the causes of and solutions to homelessness in Metro Vancouver, and is the nature of media coverage congruent with the messages of GVRSCCH and regional stakeholders?***

To answer the first central research question, an examination of the total sample of articles served to highlight the causes of and solutions to homelessness which gained media attention in the Metro Vancouver region ( $n=96$  for 2007-2009 versus  $n=60$  for 2008). My central findings indicate that, overall, media coverage centred on the proximate causes of homelessness consistent with prior research on media coverage. A number of ultimate, or structural causes, also received attention; housing affordability (or lack thereof) and erosion of affordable housing options were most often the broader structural problems indicated as causes of regional homelessness. Media coverage of

solutions to homelessness commonly included references to the provision of support services for homeless individuals and the construction and provision of social or subsidized housing. The solutions to homelessness most often covered by the media were in fact better characterized as “responses” to homelessness, in the immediate resolution of homelessness, rather than larger systemic solutions to the problem of homelessness in the region.

Various themes were evident within the categories of more proximate and more ultimate causes of and solutions to homelessness. Current findings on individual causes of homelessness differ from previous conclusions about addictions, but the present sampling of newsprint media coverage mirrors Buck et al.’s (2004) findings on the coverage of mental illness and homelessness. Housing and support services were more often referenced as the solutions to homelessness, rather than problems causing homelessness, whereas lack of income was more often referenced as a cause, rather than resolution of income problems as a solution to homelessness. Income problems, including wage- levels, rent-to-income ratios, ability to access provincial income assistance (i.e. “welfare”), or federal employment insurance benefits received decreasing attention in regional media coverage from 2007 to 2009. Government, specifically municipal governments, were indicated frequently as major stakeholders in the causes of and solutions to homelessness in the region.

This section is a discussion of my general findings on causes of, and solutions, or ‘responses’ to homelessness in Metro Vancouver. Included in this discussion, I will outline a number of qualitative examples to highlight the discourse surrounding homelessness, including examples of proximate causes of and solutions to homelessness, as compared to more ultimate causes and solutions to homelessness in my sampling of the regional media coverage on homelessness in Metro Vancouver.

## **Proximate or Individual Behaviours**

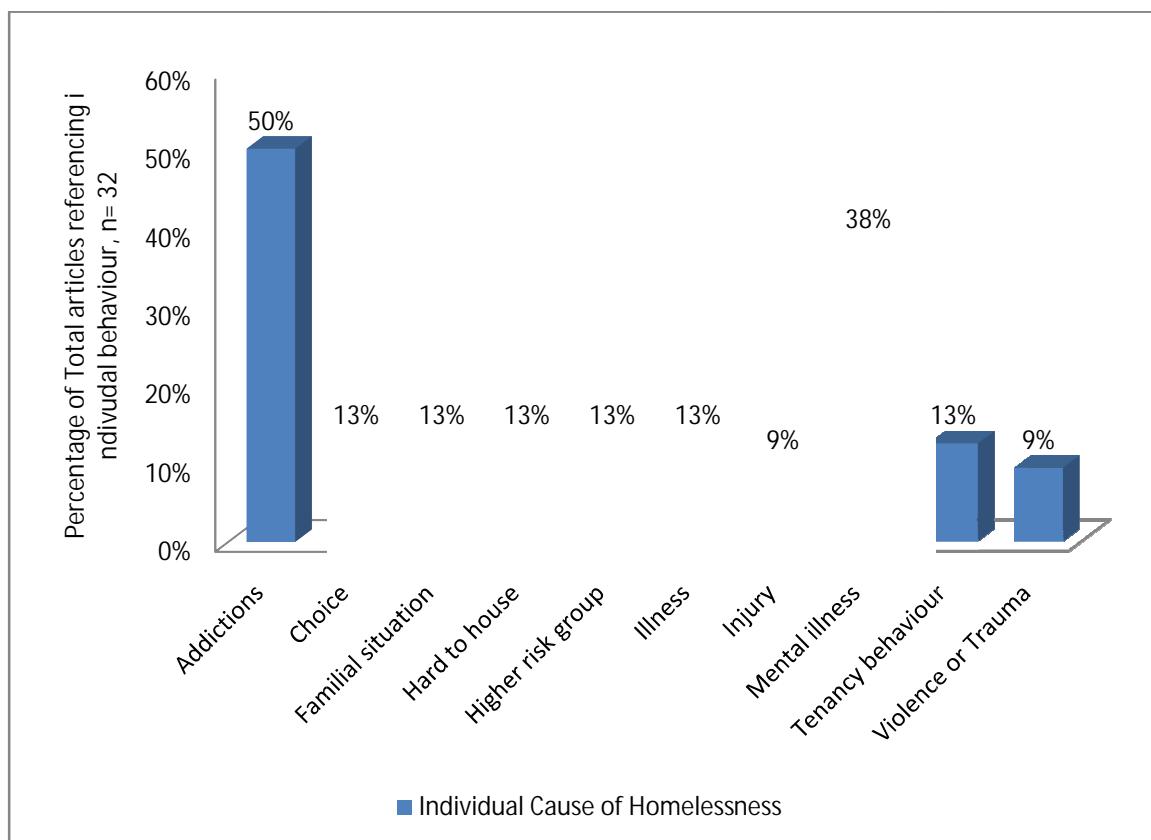
### **Proximate Causes**

As mentioned in the Methodology section, in coding the articles, I distinguished between direct links to causes of homelessness in media coverage and passing references which implied a causative relationship. Findings on direct statements versus references to individual behaviour differed, and there was overlap between articles indicating direct causation versus references. Individual factors indicated as the direct

causes of homelessness appeared in 33% of total articles, while 44% of the total articles included both direct statements as well as references to individual behaviours and homelessness (See Appendix G for a list of Proximate codes).

Individual behaviours, directly causing homelessness, the *proximate causes*, included addictions, mental illness, familial situations, personal choice, and illness, among others (see Figure 3). Addictions topped the list of proximate causes. Fifty percent of the 32 articles attributing homelessness to proximate causes indicated addictions (drug and/or alcohol addictions) as the cause of homelessness, and 38% reported mental illness as a direct cause (again, see Figure 3). Addiction to drugs was referred to more often than alcohol addiction in articles containing individual causes: 50% of articles (n=16), and 28 % (n=9) respectively.

**Figure 3. Distribution of direct causes of homelessness indicated as individual behaviours, or deficits, displayed as a percentage of articles referencing direct causation (n=32)**



While fewer factors received passing references, the prevalence of references within the regional media coverage to addictions and mental illness were numerous (See Figure 4). After addictions, mental illness and mental health were most often cited as proximate causes of homelessness, and by passing reference. Whereas mental illness/mental health was given as the direct cause of homelessness in 13% of the sample articles, a total 21 % (n=20) articles discussed mental illness in the context of homelessness (see Figure 4). Similarly, while only 17% linked direct causation of addiction and homelessness, 29% of articles referred to homelessness and addictions.

**Figure 4. Individual behaviours or deficits referenced as a factor in homelessness, displayed as a percentage of total articles (n=96).**

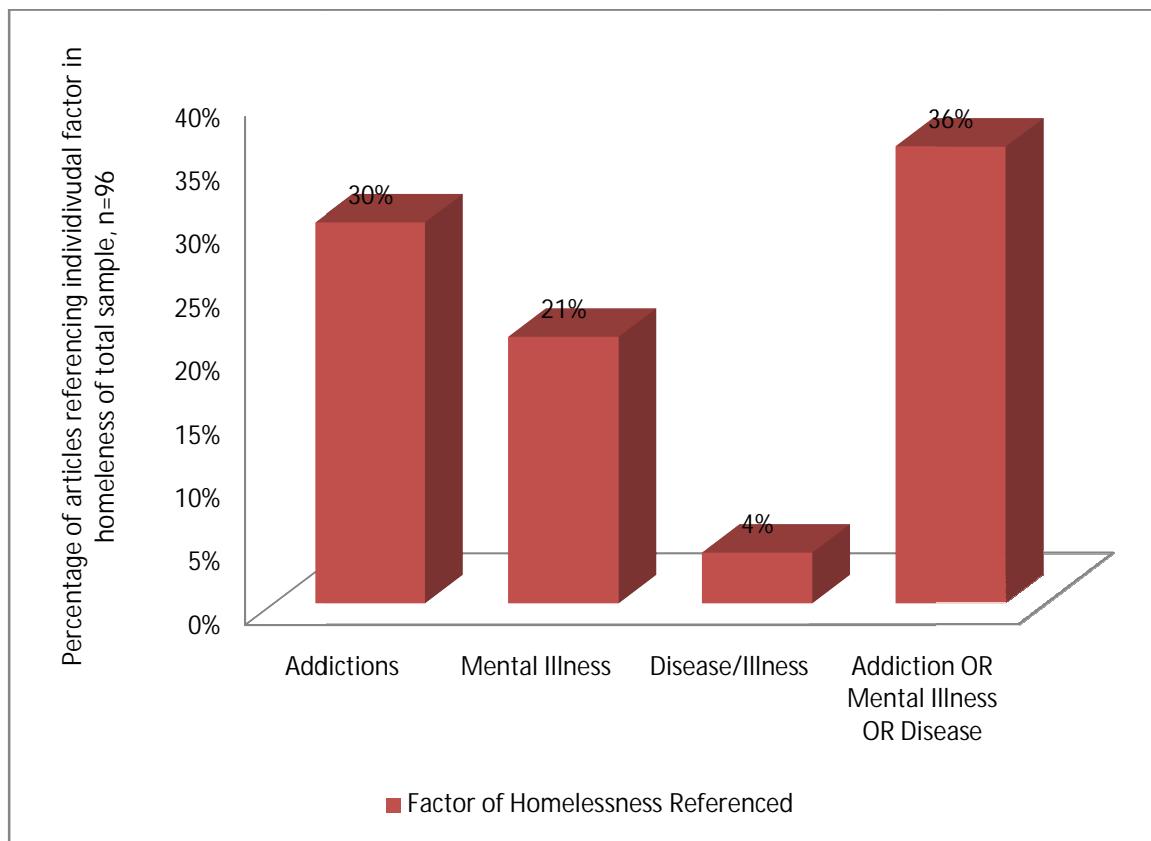
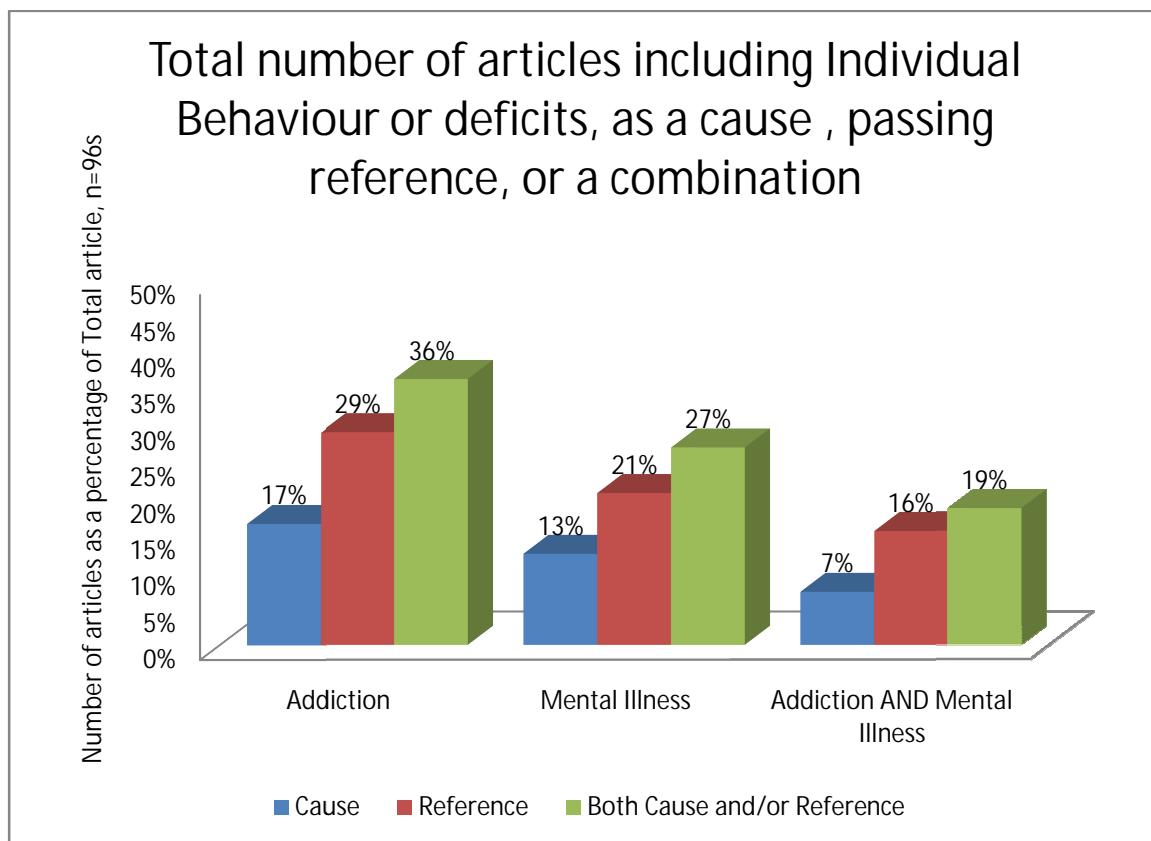


Figure 5 displays a theme that emerged in my examination of media coverage of homelessness: the simultaneous discussion of mental illness and addictions (drug and alcohol), in conjunction with homelessness. Sixteen percent of the articles report these two factors concurrently, with homelessness. Additionally, as a matter of interest, a

comparison between the number of articles attributing homelessness to particular proximate causes versus references to proximate causes for homelessness is shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5. Number of articles directly stating individual causes of homelessness, Reference to individual Behaviour, and finally both (and/or) as a percentage of total sample articles (n=96)**



Overall, the media coverage of homelessness with addictions, as well as individuals with “concurrent disorders”<sup>21</sup> seems to accurately portray an increasing trend in the homeless population in the Metro Vancouver region. Findings from the 2008 Homeless Count revealed that addiction issues were one of the top three causes of homelessness in the Metro Vancouver region. Furthermore, the 2008 Count findings indicated a considerable percentage of homeless reported suffering from concurrent disorders. The GVR SCH Comparative Community Profile report (2010), based upon the

<sup>21</sup> Concurrent disorders and dual diagnosis is used to describe a situation where in an individual has both a substance abuse/addiction problems concurrent with a psychiatric disorder, or mental illness.

findings from the 2008 Count findings stated that of “the 1015 homeless [of total regional homeless population of 2,660] that reported multiple health conditions, nearly half (45%) reported both mental health and addiction problems” (GVRSC, 2010, p. 20). Therefore, according to data gathered during from the Count, media coverage of the role of mental illness and addiction reflects the reality of a portion of the homeless population in Metro Vancouver<sup>22</sup> Whereas, Buck et al. (2004) identified a “failure [of the media coverage] to include substance abuse issues in addition to mental illness” as factors leading to homelessness (p. 159), current findings indicate this is not the case in Metro Vancouver regional newsprint media coverage.

Buck et al. (2004) reported a marked decline over 30 years time in reference to addictions (specifically, alcoholism) as a cause of homelessness. The current study shows a considerable number of the news articles in the Metro Vancouver region covering homelessness included alcohol and drug addictions as joint causes. Within the province as a whole, recent reports on addiction indicate that alcohol and illicit drug abuse is more prevalent in British Columbia than in other parts of Canada (Vancouver Sun, 2007, August 22). Researchers at UVIC Centre for Addictions Research of BC found that the rate of alcohol consumption per capita in British Columbia has been increasing at a faster rate than the rest of Canada, “by 16 per cent [in British Columbia] versus 9 per cent since 1998” (UVIC centre for Addictions Research of BC, 2009). Additionally, there is evidence that “use and availability of crack cocaine, ecstasy, and prescription medication” is growing in the province (*ibid*). While this research reflects alcohol and drug usage in the province, it may help explain the media coverage of individual drug and alcohol addictions in the context of homelessness. The GVRSC Comparative Community profile report (2010) indicated that across the Metro Vancouver region, addiction was one of the three primary causes of homelessness (17% of the homeless population) along with lack of or inadequate income (25%) and housing affordability, availability, condition and cost (19%) (GVRSC, 2010, p. 6). Differences between past and present findings in the prevalence of media coverage of homelessness attributed to addictions may be the result of a combined impact of the overall prevalence and notoriety of alcohol and drug use in Metro Vancouver, efforts of the GVRSC, as well as regional political concerns about homelessness.

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<sup>22</sup> Although many of the region’s homeless are struck by compounding individual factors, it is also important to recognize these references serve to reduce descriptions of homelessness to a more homogenous population, and also differentiate the homeless population from the general public.

## **Proximate Solutions**

### **Solutions and Responses to Individual Homelessness**

Thirty-six percent of the 96 articles directly stated proximate causes and 55% referenced these proximate causes. As mentioned in Chapter 3, for analysis, solutions to homelessness were coded as direct responses to gaps outlined in the RH Plan (2003). Some of the solutions discussed in media coverage could have been viewed as a “response” or a means of “managing” individual homelessness, rather than a deep-seated solution to the problem of homelessness in our society. Responses to individual behaviours can be viewed as more of a management of the homeless problem or an immediate response to individual behaviours. Fundamentally, these responses are reactions to homelessness, based upon the assumption of individual behaviour causing homelessness, rather than existent problems in a larger system, or societal problems as a whole that may be contributing to the problem. Speculation about the ongoing effectiveness and suitability of management of the problem versus changes associated with societal conditions is not included in this discussion.

Within the 96 articles, emergency (temporary or permanent shelter) housing was referred to in 43% of the articles. Other direct solutions to proximate causes, or individual behaviours occurred in 11% of the articles, including “individual case management”, “tools for ongoing or self-reliance”, and “hospitalization” (See Appendix G). The need for temporary measures, such as shelters and hospitalization, was referred to as a means to help the homeless who are “truly sick”<sup>23</sup> with mental illness (Cernetig, 2008).

While attention paid to the need for shelters as a solution (part of the RH Plan (2003)) remains important, a shift in focus from permanent shelters to permanent housing remains a key area upon which to focus in the regional media dialogue. Ultimately, emergency housing, including permanent emergency shelters, is not viewed by regional stakeholders as a long term solution to homelessness in Metro Vancouver, but included as part of the RH Plan (2003) in its goals of “identifying issues...for alleviating homelessness” (SCARP BC, 2003, p.8).

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<sup>23</sup> “Truly sick”, those with mental illness, as opposed to those who are not ill with addictions

## **Charity**

For the purpose of comparison to past studies which have often included analysis of the coverage of charity, I separately enumerated the articles referring to charity as a response to individual homelessness. 27% of the articles referred to charity as means of responding to homelessness (See Appendix H-Charity). Past researchers have commonly included charity as a solution to individual failings causing homelessness (see Remillard & Schneider, *forthcoming*; Shields, 2001 as cited in Greenberg, et al., 2006). Often, research has been based upon the assumption that “when individual failings are stressed over structural causes of homelessness, charity is the preferred solution” (Shields, 2001, as cited in Greenberg, et al., p.132). The role of charitable organizations is often the provision of services: soup kitchens, donations of food, or warm clothing; volunteer work contributing to bettering individuals’ lives. In these cases, charitable actions and donations as the solution function as reactive responses to problematic individual behaviour. While charity is a “solution” to homelessness, its role as a solution or response is more intertwined with the role of management of the problem through reacting to individual behaviours creating homelessness. The underlying assumption here is that the role of charity and “the provision of short-term material donation [is viewed] as a triumph and [there is]no need to initiate alternative or long standing solutions” (Remillard & Schneider, *forthcoming*, p. 16). Systemic change, such as a shift in government funding to social housing or changes to the social welfare system, is not seen as necessary as these larger changes will not bring about change in individualistic behaviour or choice. Alternatively, the necessity of charity and charitable organizations as part of the reaction to homelessness has been viewed as the result of ever decreasing government funding for social welfare initiatives, and therefore fills a gap in response to homelessness within the structural solutions to homelessness. Charitable organizations fill gaps in funding or service provision, in the publically-funded system: a church space used as an emergency homeless shelter as a stop-gap solution to systemic issues of homelessness; or corporate and/or charitable donations to safe houses, shelters, etc., to supplement government funding.

In the Metro Vancouver region, partially due to inadequate government funding, charities and charitable donations have been relied on as a part of an ongoing response

to homelessness<sup>24</sup>. Charity was coded as a ‘solution’ in the present study, including references such as an “annual campaign to donate warm clothing to the homeless” (Berger, Langley Advance, 2007); “relying on charity from the community for some of the basics like clothing and blankets” (Hooper, Langley Advance, 2007). References also included the role of donations, such as corporate donations: “the donation to Iron Horse [Youth Safe House] is the second to a Maple Ridge charity from the insurance company’s foundation” (Rantanen, *Maple Ridge Times*, 2008).

## **Ultimate Causes and Solutions**

While the current findings indicated that media coverage linked proximate causes to homelessness in 54% of the cases, there was also strong structural component to the causes of and solutions to homelessness reported in regional media coverage. Current findings indicated that many articles reported housing affordability problems, structural problems in service provision, or lack of funding—within the same article. Structural or ultimate solutions, including factors like the role of permanent housing (supportive, social or subsidized housing), income legislation, and government involvement were mentioned in many of the articles. A theme which was evident in the media coverage, which I will outline in qualitative discussion below were references to proximate reasons for homelessness, with a discussion of the need for structural intervention, as well as individual changes in behaviour to resolve homelessness. This finding is similar to those of past research on homelessness. Buck et al. (2004) found that traditionally media and professional literature discussed individual deficits and deviant characteristics of people who are homeless to a “significantly greater extent than structural causes of homelessness”, but more recently (1998-2003), references to homelessness in media coverage have shifted to emphasize the role of long-term needs and changes, such as permanent housing and job training (p.164-165).

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<sup>24</sup> For example, in 2008, in order to receive the same government funding it had in 2005, the Iron Horse Youth safe house in Maple Ridge had to “indicate that they have other community support as well [which] might be financial support like a donation”. Previously, the safe house was funded 100 percent by the federal government (Rantanen, *Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadow Times*, 2008).

## **Qualitative Examples of Regional Media Coverage**

The following section outlines a number of examples of the themes of regional media coverage of homelessness in Metro Vancouver. These articles demonstrate the variability in newsprint media coverage of this topic across different sources, including both smaller as well as broader-circulating papers. Examples below highlight the range of interpretations in the media of what individual and structural, or proximate and ultimate, causes and solutions presented about homelessness as these appear in the regional newsprint media. This section serves to provide a richer understanding of the coding strategy employed for the quantitative analysis.

What is evident from the examples to follow is that the media coverage on homelessness in the region focused both on means to “alleviate” homelessness as well as “prevent” it, both of which are parts of the RH Plan (2003); however, what is evident in the regional media coverage is that there is a range of interpretations of what this might entail. Within the RH Plan (2003) itself are 32 steps to eliminate homelessness in the region. In order to do so, not only must there be a response to the situations of homelessness at present (the alleviation of street homelessness and ‘breaking the cycle of homelessness’), but most importantly a means of preventing at-risk situations from occurring in the future. Evidenced in the news coverage, many parts of the steps to end homelessness identified in the RH Plan (2003) are presented in regional media coverage, but communication of the RH Plan (2003) did not establish a common broader understanding of the causes of and solutions to homelessness. This is illustrated by the variable treatments of these questions in the regional media coverage.

The melange of coverage included articles that discussed only the impact of personal behaviours on homelessness, but also the broader causes of homelessness. There was discussion of the need for responses to individual homelessness, both in absence and with the discussion of longer term or more structural needs to prevent ongoing homelessness. Responses and solutions to homelessness were discussed across all three pillars of the RH Plan (2003) most evidently in housing and support services. Immediate responses to alleviate homelessness (such as emergency shelters and health services) and more permanent solutions to homelessness (such as supportive housing, housing for seniors; changes to income, including minimum wage and access to benefits) were discussed across different sources. However, in a fair amount of cases, emergency shelters were considered permanent solutions.

The qualitative case examples detail the variety of articles on homelessness in the region, with some detailing only individual behaviours, and others presenting the ideas behind the broader solutions to homelessness in the region.

A number of the articles on homelessness outlined “individual incapacity, be it physical, mental, or social” as Remillard and Schneider (*forthcoming*) described (p.2). These researchers suggest that these types of representations silence “the need for more serious and systemic social change and [work] to categorize homeless individuals based on social conceptions of legitimate health issues and incapacities” (p. 2). Cases 1 through 5 below outline where individual behaviours were highlighted. While a considerable number of articles did outline individual incapacities, there were also articles which described the more systemic causes of homelessness.

While the current findings indicated that media coverage linked proximate causes to homelessness in 54% of the cases, there was also evidence of coverage of structural components as the causes of and solutions to homelessness reported in regional media coverage. Generally, the articles that discussed the causes of homelessness in greater depth, and those that included more discussion of ultimate causes of and solutions to homelessness were longer than were articles that merely described the region’s homeless population. Longer articles were evident in smaller circulating regional papers.

### **Case 1: Proximate Causes, Ultimate Causes, Proximate Responses: Emergency Shelters, Support Services**

Line may import more homeless: [Final Edition]

Nelson Bennett. Richmond News. Richmond, B.C.: Jan 11, 2008. (533 words).

<b>Exemplary Codes in Case 1</b>	
Cause	Individual-Addiction- Drugs
Cause	Individual -Addiction- Alcohol
Cause	Individual- Mental Illness
Cause	Individual behaviour ( "Smoking")
Cause	Individual behaviour (Tenancy Behaviour /Undesirable tenants")
Cause	Individual behaviour ("Emotional problems")
Cause	Individual behaviour ("Hard to house")
Cause	Individual- Injury
Cause	Income- Low-income or Low-wages
Cause	Housing- Lack of Affordable Housing
Solution/Response	Housing- Emergency Shelter
Solution/Response	Services- General Support Services
Solution/Response	Services- Services-Mental Health Services

A number of articles specifically referred to individual behaviours causing homelessness, many of these referring to the role that support services and emergency responses had in mitigating homelessness due to these individual behaviours. Case 1 serves to exemplify individual behaviours attributed to homelessness in many of the articles in regional news coverage, as well as some of the more structural causes. In the discussion of the problem of homelessness in Richmond and Vancouver, the article details causes of homelessness for individuals in Richmond and Vancouver:

"Some are addicted to drugs or alcohol, most have some kind of mental or emotional problems, and a lot of them smoke, making it hard to find affordable housing....they're undesirable tenants." (para. 9)

<b>Excerpt Codes</b>	
Cause	Individual-Addiction- Drugs
Cause	Individual -Addiction- Alcohol
Cause	Individual- Mental Illness
Cause	Individual behaviour ( "Smoking")
Cause	Individual behaviour (Tenancy Behaviour /Undesirable tenants")
Cause	Individual behaviour ("Emotional problems")

Other behavioural reasons for which individuals found themselves homeless were discussed. The article describes that people “find themselves temporarily on the streets when they get evicted for causing damage to their rental unit, for not paying their rent” (para. 13, Code: Individual behaviour-Tenancy behaviour). Additional references to causes of homelessness included back injury, which led an individual into problems paying rent.

Although this article centred mainly on individual behaviours causing homelessness, it also referenced some structural factors that caused, or left some individuals in a situation of homelessness: Low-income employment and housing affordability.

“Working at a low-paying job, he could barely afford the \$400 a month he was paying for a room when he injured his back. He said he could not afford to pay for both his medication and his rent.” (para.16)

<b>Excerpt Code</b>	
Cause	Income: Low-income or wages

“He eventually found a place to live and another job, but he had to leave Richmond, where he said rent was simply no longer affordable.” (para.18)

Excerpt Code:

Cause	Housing-Lack of Affordable Housing
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Both individual and more structural causes leading to homeless were referenced, though the solutions or responses to homelessness in the article were passing

references to an emergency shelter or support services, namely a food bank, general support services, and mental health services. The references implied the role of the responses in homeless individuals' lives, but did not serve to explain how these services might impact income problems, or housing. Additionally the particular role that each of these services had were not referenced in a definitive way and all three references to the 'responses' were mentioned in the context of service providers interviewed for the article: the housing supervisor for Richmond House (a 10 bed Salvation Army emergency shelter); a representative from the Richmond Food Bank; and the program director for Pathways, which provides an array of services for people with mental health problems.

This article characterizes many of the regional articles reviewed. It references several individual reasons for homelessness; it includes passing reference to a number of current supports in place (emergency shelter and general support services) but little information is provided in terms of solutions to the income or housing affordability problems, which it also references as a cause of homelessness for individuals in the article. This article is 533 words from a small community newspaper concerned with an increase of the number of homeless in the city with the construction of the newly-built metro line, the Canada Line. Not surprisingly, it does little to detail the underlying causes or responses other than referencing them but does imply the individual causes that have brought some individuals to homelessness.

### **Case 2: Proximate causes, Proximate Responses: Emergency Shelters**

"Putting up bars won't solve the problem"

Anonymous. Coquitlam Now. New Westminster, B.C.: Apr 23, 2008. (304 words).

<b>Exemplary Codes in Case 2</b>	
Cause	Individual- Mental Illness
Cause	Individual- Addiction- Drug
Cause	Individual- Addiction- Alcohol
Solution/Response	Specific ("Gates and Fence Construction")
Solution/Response	Housing-Emergency Shelter: Permanent Shelter

The article, which concerns physical bars being constructed at "five locations where homeless people congregate", in the Tri-Cities region (para. 2), states "homeless

people, let's face it, are often mentally unstable or on drugs" (para. 8, Code: Individual mental illness, Individual Addiction-Drug). The discourse then turns to the discussion that "while putting up bars won't solve the problem of homelessness in the Tri-Cities it will make other citizens feel safe" (para. 8). Shortly thereafter, the anonymous author then states a solution to homelessness in the region, a permanent emergency shelter:

"What's really needed, though, is a permanent shelter, so those struggling with mental health issues, drug and alcohol addiction and other problems, have a safe place to go-- year round. Only then will we be able to say that we're a community who truly cares." (para. 9)

Excerpt Codes	
Cause	Individual- Mental Illness
Cause	Individual- Addiction- Drug
Cause	Individual- Addiction- Alcohol
Solution/Response	Housing- Emergency Housing: Permanent Shelter

Like Case 1, Case 2 outlined a number of proximate causes of homelessness, with a number of immediate responses to these behaviours. Unlike Case 1 which made passing references to services, Case 2 serves as an example of articles that specifically indicate a "solution" or response to individual homelessness. The 'solution' is not preventative, but serves to alleviate homelessness due to personal behaviours specifically outlined in the article. As long as individual behaviour is attributable to the cause of homelessness, the solution will be a response to this behaviour, rather than a solution to the deeper rooted problem that may be causing homelessness at levels above and beyond individual behaviours.

### **Case 3: Proximate causes, Proximate Responses: Support Services**

Camps, break-ins among problems; In 2006, Langley RCMP responded to 700 calls related to homelessness: [Final Edition]

Hooper, R. Langley Advance. May 11, 2007 (690 words).

<b>Exemplary Codes in Case 3</b>	
Cause	Individual- Addiction- Drug
Cause	Individual-Choice
Cause	Housing-Lack of Affordable Housing
Cause	Specific-Multi-faceted causes of homelessness
Solution/Response	Specific- "Long-term solutions"
Solution/Response	Services-Support Services
Solution/Response	Services-Coordination of Services
Solution/Response	Charity- Clothing /Blankets

An article in the Langley Times characterizes homelessness problem similarly to Case 2, although the solutions or responses discussed are support services, rather than a shelter, for homeless individuals. Descriptions of homeless individuals included phrases, such as “people trying to survive...relying on the charity of the community for some of the basics like clothing and blankets” (para. 16, Code: Solution/Response- Charity-Clothing/Blankets). The article references reasons for why some individuals are, or remain homeless:

“Many homeless people remain on the street because they're unwilling to give up their addiction, and prefer to live on the street where they don't have rules” (para. 17).

<b>Excerpt Codes</b>	
Cause	Individual- Mental Illness
Cause	Individual- Addiction- Drug
Cause	Individual- Addiction- Alcohol

“The contributing issues to homelessness such as mental illness, drug addiction, and lack of affordable housing.” (para. 13)

<b>Excerpt Codes</b>	
Cause	Individual- Mental Illness
Cause	Individual- Addiction- Drug
Cause	Individual- Addiction- Alcohol
Cause	Housing- Lack of Affordable Housing

The article begins with a description of a growing homeless population in Langley, “up to 80 constant homeless this winter, according to police” (para. 10), and the need to look for “some long-term solutions” (para. 10, Code: Solution/Response: Reference-“Long term solutions”). Acknowledging several reasons for homelessness and indicating that “the causes of homelessness are multi-faceted, and the solution takes a multi-agency approach with no promises of success” (para.15, Code: Cause-Specific- Multi-faceted causes), the article does not make these longer-term solutions clear. In the article, the conclusions for a solution to homelessness are services, and finally it is suggested by the RCMP officer quoted in the article:

“All anyone [professional, or member of society] can do is to offer [the homeless] assistance, with hope that one day they’ll reach out and accept it.” (para. 18)

<b>Excerpt Code</b>	
Solution/Response	Services-Support Services

While there are many issues contributing to homelessness in the region, including a “lack of affordable housing”, there was little discussion about the solution, other than a reference to “long term solutions” needed. One of the conclusions made is that there is little to do in terms of a structural response, other than wait for the day that a homeless individual will accept help. This is despite the earlier acknowledgement by the RCMP constable interviewed for the need for a multi-agency approach to a multi-faceted problem. Finally, the response to homelessness is to have support services available for when an individual is ready to accept help, referencing the individual behaviour and homelessness.

#### **Case 4: No cause, Responses as the role of Charity**

UCFV students take class ideas to streets; POVERTY: [Final Edition]

Abbotsford Times, Feb 12, 2008, Fontaine, Paul. (307 words)

<b>Exemplary Codes in Case 4</b>	
Solution/Response	Charity
Solution/Response	Charity-Clothing/Blankets
Solution/Response	Caring Individuals
Solution/Response	Services-Outreach Services

As outlined in the cases above, there was plenty of newsprint media coverage focused on individual behaviours causing homelessness. There was also considerable coverage of the role of charity as a response to homelessness. 27% of the articles documented the role of charitable organizations responding to homeless individuals. Charity has been characterised as a suitable means to respond to homeless, and as suitable response to individual homelessness on an ongoing basis. Charitable acts include provision of clothing, blankets, meals and other supplies.

Case 4, an article in the Abbotsford Times, discusses a social work class at a university-college. Described in the article are charitable acts of the students as “part of their course work, [they prepare] homeless people for the cold by providing “jackets and blankets... [and] collecting new underwear, and new and used socks of all colours, shapes and sizes” (para. 2, Code: Charity-Clothing/Blankets). Charity is viewed as a means of aid to homeless in the area: “we decided we wanted to help the homeless in Abbotsford” (para. 3)...we were largely thinking of the cold weather this year, and bags, because they often don’t have anything to carry their stuff in” (para. 5). Here, the charitable acts of individual members of society are portrayed as “beneficently taking action...[an individual as] an agent capable of “making a difference” (Remillard & Schneider, *forthcoming*, p. 12). While philanthropy should clearly not be discounted as a means to help less fortunate individuals in our society, it is important to recognize the impacts of outlining the role of charity in addressing homelessness in Metro Vancouver. Overall, charity is a means of alleviating the stress for those who are currently homeless, not as a means of preventing future homelessness in the region.

Characteristic of charity-themed articles, this article gave little description of homeless individuals, or factors leading to homelessness. Instead, this article, and other discussing charity described the ways in which charity directly helps homeless individuals with little discussion of why individuals are homeless, or any broader responses needed. In Case 4, there were no descriptions of the reasons for homelessness, individual or systemic. Outreach services that hand out “groceries, soup, and coffee” (para. 7, Code: Solution/Response- Services: Outreach Services), were described as a means of getting these charitable items out to homeless individuals. The outreach services provided would be an access point “to get the donated items out to the community” (para. 8, Code: Solution/Response: Services-Outreach Services). Additional responses or solutions were not offered (even despite the fact that the article was about a class of university-college social work students).

### **Case 5: Income Problem Causes, Proximate Responses**

Stability sought for street dwellers; Langley's homeless people are looking forward to a future with a shelter - and with cautious optimism.

Langley Advance, Mar 28, 2008; Claxton, Matthew (775 words).

<b>Exemplary Codes in Case 5</b>	
Cause	Income-Employment/Unemployment
Solution/Response	Housing-Emergency Shelter: Permanent
Solution/Response	Specific: Stability
Solution/Response	Caring individuals
Solution/Response	Tools for self-reliance: Individual
Solution/Response	Services: Support Services-General reference
Solution/Response	Services: Health Services
Solution/Response	Services: Counselling Services
Solution/Response	Government Funding
Solution/Response	Government Intervention- Federal
Solution/Response	Government Intervention- Municipal
Solution/Response	Government Intervention- Provincial

Case 5 exemplifies a theme of a number of the sampled articles: the role of the individual. The article highlights ways in which to respond to individual problems causing homelessness, namely the combination of the role of an emergency shelter, as a step back toward individual “stability”, as well as support services, which are primarily aimed at the resolution of individual homelessness.

“The stability is what the new shelter....aims to provide....the idea is that [shelter staff, then, try] to build relationships and trust with the homeless, show that someone cares, and offer them the tools they need to improve their lot in life”  
(para. 19, 21)

Excerpt Codes	
Solution/Response	Housing-Emergency Shelter: Permanent
Solution/Response	Specific: Stability
Solution/Response	Caring individuals
Solution/Response	Tools for self-reliance: Individual

The reference to improving the “lot in life” serves to highlight the individuality of the case of the homeless individuals discussed. Appropriate responses are therefore the individual tools to help specific individuals address “their lot”.

“The 30 beds will offer emergency shelter...medical and counselling services for the homeless, and help will be provided for those at risk of being homeless”  
(para. 28)

Excerpt Codes	
Solution/Response	Housing-Emergency Shelter: Permanent
Solution/Response	Services: Support Services- Medical
Solution/Response	Services: Support Services- Counselling
Solution/Response	Services: Support Services- General reference

Additionally, this article exemplifies the way in which the role of emergency housing is characterized in its role in ending homelessness. The role of the emergency shelter is transition, a response to immediate homelessness, it provides a means for an individual “with support...to move to a stable life in a home” (para. 27). While the article does mention the role that emergency shelter has in creating stability, it does not

distinctly describe steps beyond this shelter to different housing, other than to highlight that the emergency shelter can create some stability in order to do so.

The article implies the role of funding for homeless initiatives at all three levels of government. The articles outline how the emergency permanent shelter is being paid for, and the role of all three governments in funding:

“the bulk of construction funding is coming from the provincial government, and Langley City is donating the land and waiving taxes for the site. The Township is also contributing financially, as is the federal government.” (para. 30, 31)

Excerpt Codes	
Solution/Response	Government funding
Solution/Response	Government Intervention- Federal
Solution/Response	Government Intervention- Municipal
Solution/Response	Government Intervention- Provincial

### **Case 6: Proximate Cause, Ultimate Cause, Proximate Solution, Ultimate Solution**

A new breed of the mentally ill puts B.C. facilities near chaos; A chorus of experts sounds the alarm on cost to society:[Final Edition]

Frances Bula, Lori Culbert. The Vancouver Sun. Vancouver, B.C.: Feb 15, 2008. (1422 words).

<b>Exemplary Codes in Case 6</b>	
Cause	Individual-Mental Illness
Cause	Individual-Drug Addiction
Cause	Individual behaviour (Tenancy Behaviour /"Undesirable tenants")
Cause	Services Provision Problem
Cause	Inadequate supply of acute psychiatric beds
Cause	Inadequate community care resources in the mental health system
Solution/Response	Housing- Social or Subsidized
Solution/Response	Housing- Housing First
Solution/Response	Housing- Preservation of low-income buildings
Solution/Response	Support Services- Mental Health Services
Solution/Response	Support Services- Outreach Services
Solution/Response	Support Services- Housing support services
Solution/Response	X-Ineffectiveness of current solutions
Solution/Response	Government Intervention: Provincial

The article, 1422 words in length, is exemplary of the individual causes and solutions to homelessness as well as the need for structural interventions. It documents individual problems causing homelessness, but also outlines systemic problems which have led to these individuals becoming homeless. Not only does it explain the structural problems in addressing individual behaviours, it also outlines which individual services are needed in order to alleviate, as well as prevent homelessness in the Metro Vancouver region.

Individual behaviours causing homelessness were named as drug addiction and mental illness, describing that even in social housing, individual behaviour can lead to eviction: “In all but a few places that provide social housing, [individuals] are thrown out if their behaviour is too crazy, or if they are using street drugs” (para. 5, Code: Individual- Drug Addiction; Individual- Tenancy Behaviour). The article describes the complexities of homeless populations in Metro Vancouver: a “new generation who are fractured by powerful combinations of mental illness, drug use, homelessness, and severe psychical breakdown” (para. 3). Following this reference, the article outlines problems in current service provisions, gaps in services available to individuals with complex problems, deemed as central factors causing these individuals to become or remain homeless.

“A growing chorus of psychiatrists, police, housing providers, and health-care workers say...old solutions are working for this new breed.” (para. 8)

“... the old systems are working for that group because [systems] were created to deal with people who only had one problem a piece, not everything all at once.” (para. 10)

Excerpt Code	
Solution/Response	X-Ineffectiveness of current solutions

Housing responses to homelessness outlined in the article are to be facilitated through the assistance of the provincial government, namely the purchases of “low-income buildings...all aimed at people with precisely these complex problems” (para. 28, Code: Housing- Preservation of low-income buildings). The authors explain that the municipalities are not equipped with the means to house these individuals who will not be able to maintain housing on their own. The solution suggested is more complex, as housing these populations will not be as simple as “building them a place to live” (para. 10). While this article is able to describe the complex populations of homeless in BC in more detail because of its length, it remains focused on individual populations being particularly affected by systemic problems. The solution therefore is supportive housing, and housing with mental health and addictions supports, for these particular populations.

Similar to many cases reviewed, the article indicates that while it is individuals afflicted, causing their individual homelessness, it is the role of government to address systemic issues leading to growing homeless populations of people with these disorders. Most importantly, it is the role of the government to provide housing, with supports, for

these individuals. Therefore while individual behaviours may be leading to homelessness, the size of the populations says something about the need for systemic interventions in the problem. The difference between this case and Cases 2 or 5, which also discussed individual behaviours leading to homelessness is the type of housing response suggested. In Case 6, supportive housing is the option, rather than emergency housing (permanent or temporary). The emergency shelter as a housing option for these types of homeless individuals will do little to address the ongoing problem for a “growing” number of homeless individuals who are both mentally ill and drug-addicted in British Columbia.

### **Case 7 : Ultimate cause, Ultimate solution**

Homeless help is not enough: City councillors say provincial budget isn't meeting needs:[Final Edition]

Erin Hitchcock. Burnaby Now. Burnaby, B.C.: Mar 7, 2007 (1039 words).

<b>Exemplary Codes in Case 7</b>	
Cause	Inadequate supply of supportive housing
Cause	Erosion of supply of Existing low-income housing
Cause	Housing- Inadequate supply of transitional housing
Cause	Housing- Inadequate supply of affordable housing
Cause	Income- Shelter component of IA inadequacy
Solution/Response	Housing- Supportive housing
Solution/Response	Housing-Emergency housing
Solution/Response	Housing- Transitional housing
Solution/Response	X-Ineffectiveness of current solutions
Solution/Response	Government Intervention- Provincial
Reference	Deferred Responsibility

Many of the smaller circulating newspapers did provide information about the broader causes of and solutions to homelessness in the region. Particularly, this article from Burnaby Now highlighted the discussion of the structural component needs to housing, and the prevention of homelessness, and the role of municipal and provincial

governments in this. This article referenced solutions to a number of existing housing gaps, including emergency housing, but also transitional housing, and supportive housing. The article references pro-active government behaviour to house specific at-risk populations: \$45 million in provincial government spending on social housing and conversion of 750 social housing units to supportive housing units across 19 municipalities in BC to “make them more accessible to seniors and others with special housing needs (para. 22, Code: Solution/Response: Housing, Supportive Housing). However, the article also outlines a key problem in provincial government policies: the conversion rather than the creation of more units of social housing for all populations.

Quotes by municipal politicians outline that the supportive housing units to be ‘created’ are “housing units [that] are going to be converted from [existing] low-income family housing units” (para. 22)

<b>Excerpt Code</b>	
Cause	Housing- Erosion of supply of existing rental housing

“the provincial government is turning existing [social] housing into other forms of housing...it doesn’t give us increased housing stock. We need additional housing stock. We don’t need converted units to look glitzier.” (para. 29, 30)

<b>Excerpt Codes</b>	
Cause	Housing- Erosion of supply of existing rental housing
Cause	Housing-Inadequate Supply of Affordable Housing
Solution/Response	Housing- General (“additional housing stock”)
Solution/Response	X-Ineffectiveness of current solutions

A key distinction is to be made between creation of housing and conversion of housing. While the need for supportive housing is acknowledged by the politician in the article for specific at-risk of homelessness populations (such as seniors and “those with other special housing needs”), this housing should be in addition to, not replacing low-income housing for other groups, such as low-income families. The ongoing problem of homelessness, or longer-term solutions to homelessness cannot be addressed with conversion of housing, or the erosion of housing stock. This article exemplifies the media coverage of discussion of problems associated with current responses to homelessness.

Additionally, references in this article highlight a theme of coverage of deferred responsibility between different levels of government in the newsprint media (a topic which I will discuss in greater detail below). As one Burnaby councillor outlines, “the primary responsibility [for housing] is with the province, we [the municipality] have a secondary responsibility” (para. 25, Code: Deferred Responsibility).

Overall, Case 7 highlights the themes of discussion of causes of and solutions to homelessness in Metro Vancouver that is evident in both smaller and larger circulating newsprint media coverage.

### **Case 8: Proximate Solution, Ultimate solution**

Highlights of the city's homelessness strategy:[Final Edition]

Theresa McManus. The Record. New Westminster, B.C.: Mar 7, 2007. (541 words).:

<b>Exemplary Codes in Case 8</b>	
Solution/Response	Housing- Emergency shelter
Solution/Response	Services-Outreach Services
Solution/Response	Housing-Supportive
Solution/Response	Housing- Social or Subsidized housing
Solution/Response	Housing- Rental supplements
Solution/Response	Income- Social assistance/ “welfare” rates
Solution/Response	Income- Minimum wage
Solution/Response	Income- Elimination of \$6 training wage
Solution/Response	Income- Eligibility criteria for Employment Insurance Benefits
Solution/Response	Income- Income Legislation or Legislative Reform
Solution/Response	Services- Addiction Services
Solution/Response	Services- Health Services
Solution/Response	Services- Prevention Services
Solution/Response	Government Intervention- Provincial
Solution/Response	Government Intervention- Municipal
Reference	Deferred Responsibility

Case 8 again exemplifies smaller newspapers coverage of more ultimate, or broader causes of and solutions to homelessness in Metro Vancouver. The article itself discussed the City of New Westminster's 'homeless action strategy', and detailed the points of the plan. The article in *The Record* was explicit about the needs and changes to be implemented in order to address homelessness in the city on all three pillars of the regional homeless plan, and at all levels, both responses and solutions to address and alleviate homelessness. Because it outlined the City's homeless plan, within the discussion were temporary and permanent housing responses, changes in income support, as well as services responses.

The article outlined the "continuums" of each pillar of the RH Plan (2003) which are mirrored in New Westminster's homeless plan, referencing "emergency shelter beds and assessing what is " required for which populations (i.e. men, women with or without children who are not fleeing abuse, couples)" (para. 4, Code: Solution/Response-Housing- Emergency shelter). Additionally, the role of longer term housing solutions, such as the role of the "supported housing facilit[ies] for the chronically homeless in the city" (para. 7, Code: Solution/Response- Housing-Supportive Housing) were mentioned. Furthermore, the article referenced the role of the "social housing supply" (para. 8) and meeting the city's affordable housing needs through the use of municipal incentives. Because this article detailed the homeless plan in New Westminster, it outlined both immediate responses to homelessness (in addressing the shelter beds needed), but also the structural changes that need to occur in order to prevent future homelessness.

The ways in which income can affect risk of homelessness were outlined and the response to income-related problems was described as in the city's homelessness plan to "raise the minimum wage so that people who are working can afford housing without paying more than 30 per cent of their income in shelter costs" (para. 12, Code: Solution/Response- Income- Minimum Wages). The article referenced the support services recommended to respond to and prevent homelessness, including discussion of "preventative services for households facing eviction such as legal services or financial assistance" (para.19, Code: Solution/Response: Services- Prevention Services).

As in Case 7, the role of the municipality in advocating for change at higher levels of government was thematic in this article as well, with actions recommended including "advocating with the provincial government to increase support benefits through BC Employment Assistance Program to at least reflect the cost of living increases since 1991...[as well as advocating] to raise the minimum wage level so that

people who are employed can afford housing without paying more than 30 per cent of their income on shelter costs (para. 11, 12, Code: Reference- Deferred Responsibility; Code: Solution/Response- Government Intervention-Provincial; Code: Solution/Response: Government Intervention- Municipal).

### **Case 9: Ultimate cause, Proximate Response, Ultimate solution**

Poverty activists to complain to UN

Christina Montgomery. The Province. Vancouver, B.C.: Apr 14, 2008. (491 words).

<b>Exemplary Codes in Case 9</b>	
Cause	Housing-Erosion of supply of existing rental housing
Cause	Housing- Inadequate supply of affordable housing
Cause	Services-Inadequate Assistance to avoid evictions
Cause	Income-Shelter component of income assistance inadequate to afford suitable housing
Cause	Housing-Inadequate housing or living conditions
Cause	Government- Municipal Government
Solution/Response	Housing- Emergency shelter
Solution/Response	Housing- Construction of housing
Solution/Response	Housing- Rental Housing- Construction or Preservation
Solution/Response	Housing/Income-Rental Supplements
Solution/Response	Government- Provincial

The article details problems plaguing Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and a human rights complaint that was reported to the UN by two University of British Columbia students following a class project. It mainly outlines more structural problems causing homelessness, and risk of homelessness, but also outlines some of the initiatives that the provincial government has made in terms of responding to some of the problems of homelessness in the area. The causes presented in this article are largely structural problems leading to homelessness. The problems presented in Case 9 include systemic problems such as failures to protect some of the city's affordable

housing stock for people who have limited budgets, and also failures of the government to intervene in situations wherein people find themselves in precarious housing situations:

“Failing to provide an adequate system for tenants to seek remedies where landlords illegally evict them” (para. 14)

Excerpt Code	
Cause	Services-Inadequate assistance to avoid evictions

“Failing to enforce what few protections exist to prevent conversion of SRO stock to other uses” (para. 15)

Excerpt Code	
Cause	Housing-Erosion of existing housing supply

The lack of intervention explicitly at the municipal level is highlighted, with the inclusion of the argument that living conditions in existing housing is appalling, and “the city [must be forced] to maintain minimum standards in buildings” (para 11)

Excerpt Code	
Cause	Government- Municipal

The solutions presented within this article primarily drew attention to structural solutions to prevent future homelessness. The “efforts made by governments” in this case were the “provincial announcement of \$41 million for housing, including 24-hour emergency shelters, rent supplements, and money to fast-track approvals for housing on 12 sites donated by the city” (para. 9, Code: Solution/Response: Government Intervention- Provincial). These types of efforts are those that are thematic across cases as well as the sample population of articles.

### **Summary of Qualitative Cases**

Cases 1 through 9 exemplify some regional newsprint media coverage of homelessness and outline a number of themes that were evident throughout the sampling of 96 articles coded in analysis for the current study. To conclude this section of discussion of the qualitative examples, I will briefly highlight some themes in coverage evident in the 9 case examples.

## **Government**

The attention to the role of the different levels of government in both the causes of, and solution/responses to homelessness was a theme across the sample population of articles (a quantitative comparison of this theme and of deferred responsibility will be discussed below). Cases 5, 7, 8, and 9 outlined this theme in the regional newsprint media coverage. While often the solutions or responses referenced are responding to individual homelessness, government responsibility for reacting to the problem of homelessness is assumed in many of the articles. In some cases, the appropriate response is the involvement in the provision of a shelter. Like Case 2, commonly, these articles did not address the systemic causes of homelessness, but still suggested that the government plays a central role in responding to homelessness, a theme which was evident in the newsprint media coverage.

Case 7 and 8 outlined the theme of deferred responsibility between different levels of government, specifically municipal governments deferring responsibility to higher levels. Deferred responsibility for homelessness was most often municipal officials highlighting the role of other levels of government, over and above municipalities. The “secondary responsibility” outlined in Case 7 of the municipal government’s was a key theme to newspaper coverage (Hitchcock, 2008, para. 25). Similarly, the role of the municipal government highlighted in Case 8 as “advocating to the provincial government” specifically for income related changes, “minimum wage levels” and “support benefits” was also a theme (McManus, 2007, para. 11, 12). Government officials at all levels take opportunities to publicize funding to housing, homelessness initiatives and coordinated efforts to alleviate the problems of homelessness, including municipal level politicians. For municipal governments, it can be both beneficial to be recognized for inputs into housing and services, but also a sensitive point not to draw pointed attention to a role of municipalities in terms of monetary responses to homelessness. Housing , and support services (prevention, mental health, health), as well as income have typically been the role of provincial and federal governments, and area of funding where limited resources available for municipal governments. If the municipal role in homelessness is focused upon, it can mean that the public assumes such a role exists for municipal governments in this realm. Municipal politicians and representatives are keen to highlight the role of other levels of government because “the problems of homelessness and housing affordability are ‘straining the limited resources of Canadian cities’” (Bellett, The Vancouver Sun, 2008,

para. 8) as a problem that manifests itself in the urban setting. The greater responsibility for housing and responses to homelessness viewed by municipalities is as a responsibility of higher levels of governments, and should be highlighted in the media coverage as such.

### **Homelessness and Specific Populations**

Exemplified in the qualitative cases and evident across the sample of newsprint media coverage was the specific homeless populations targeted for homelessness initiatives in the Metro Vancouver region: specifically drug and alcohol addicted and/or mentally ill homeless individuals. Case 2 highlights this trend in regional newsprint media coverage. Homelessness in this case is described as attributable to mental illness and addiction issues, and the appropriate solution/response proposed to respond to the homeless population (of these individuals). As in Case 2, permanent shelters are often portrayed as an ongoing permanent response to homelessness: "what is really needed is a permanent shelter, so [people]... have a place to go—year round" (Case 2, Anonymous, 2008, para 9.) It is particularly interesting that a permanent shelter has become a response for homeless individuals with mental illness. Exemplary in another sampled article was the role and necessity of Cold/Wet Weather-mat programs and emergency shelters (e.g., those in church basements, open on rotating basis) as a temporary solution until permanent shelters could be opened (Saltman, Coquitlam Now, Feb 27, 2008). These types of discussions attested to the appropriateness of constructing permanent shelters as a solution to homelessness in the long run; this is the type of discussion that could influence spending on shelters over and above more permanent housing solutions in Metro Vancouver. While both temporary and permanent shelters are outlined in the RH Plan (2003) as a means to "alleviate" homelessness, the plan does not outline these two responses as ongoing solutions to homelessness. However, as highlighted, in Case 2 specifically but also thematic in the regional newsprint, there is coverage of these types of responses as permanent solutions to homelessness.

Other cases highlighted longer-term solutions to homelessness, supportive housing, rather than emergency shelters, but, again, primarily for these specific populations of homeless individuals in the region. Case 6 exemplifies this theme in coverage. The discussion surrounded the "new generation...[with] combinations of mental illness, drug use, homelessness, and severe psychical breakdown" (para. 3). The

fundamental problems in the health care system affecting populations with concurrent disorders are outlined and the solutions to housing populations with these problems are discussed. While it is necessary for systemic interventions in order to address homelessness, here the systemic interventions are aimed at addressing specific problems. As Remillard and Schneider (*forthcoming*) explain, the current conception of the problems in the system can “fundamentally impact the manner in which...governmental [funding and intervention] is designed and administered” (P.2). In Case 6, the problem for a distinct population is clearly defined, which is beneficial for this population of homeless. As it is very clear where the gaps are, and what exactly should be done to address, or respond to this population. The discussion in Case 6, exemplary of many articles in the sample population, is not related to more general discussion of the problem of homelessness for people without these complex individual problems. The theme of housing provision for specific populations, whose individual behaviour or situation is causing homelessness rather than larger systemic problems. Therefore, although there are systemic interventions, namely the provision of long-term housing for homeless and at-risk populations through government funded initiatives, there remains also considerable attention within the media coverage to the individual behaviours attributed to the need for supportive housing. These longer-term solutions are targeted at specific groups.

#### **Homelessness on the broader scale**

There was also media coverage of efforts to highlight the skirting of the role of longer term housing solutions for other at-risk populations such as those with “low-paying jobs...barely affording \$400 a month” in rent, (Bennett, 2008, Case 1, para. 16) or “low-income families” (Hitchcock, 2007, Case 7, para. 22). Whereas the costs of not dealing with the drug-addicted and mentally ill homeless populations was a theme identified in regional newsprint coverage (to be discussed below), addressing at-risk homeless populations, and potential costs (which are difficult to directly identify as they are not immediate costs, and will not be identified until this person is homeless, in a shelter, etc.) are harder to highlight. It was evident in media coverage that efforts were being made to draw attention to a focus on more general populations being affected by homelessness (Case 1, Case 7, and 9) and the potential larger problems behind homelessness. Case 9 specifically highlights some systemic problems that are contributing to larger scale homelessness in Vancouver. The problems outlined in Case

9 exemplify the lack of response to problems described in the RH Plan (2003) to maintain affordable and low-income housing in the region. The plan outlines that “given the lack of new social housing... some tools and strategies [are not being] used to preserve the stock of affordable housing, including demolition and/or conversion controls; policies of one-for-one replacement of SRO units, implementing and enforcing standards of maintenance by-laws” (p.52). Case 9 specifically drew attention to causes, failures in response to homelessness and at-risk populations; case 6, with a focus on the New Westminster homelessness strategy drew attention to the responses and solutions needed to reduce homelessness, however, overall the attention was primarily upon specific homeless populations. This is likely because it is easier to connect a cause of the homelessness to mental illness or drug addiction, and a number of appropriate responses (emergency housing, or longer-term supportive housing). It seems decidedly more difficult to highlight in newsprint media the fundamental problem with earning lower wages and how this affects housing, primarily because the affects of low-income are not as immediate. This is not to say that there is no evidence in newsprint media coverage of income problems, specifically evidenced in Case 8 and 9. However, the findings of the current study do indicate the absence of coverage of income as a factor in homelessness in regional media coverage (see Figure 2).

### **Connecting Causes and Solutions/Responses**

Past research has suggested that a connection between the cause of any given problem and the specific means to resolve it is particularly difficult for the media to capture, often due to, a “lack of a tangible, clear-cut prognosis [making it] difficult to establish a narrative link between cause and solution” (Greenberg et al., 2006, p. 145). A key component of the resolution of any given problem is the creation of a connection between the cause of the problem and the necessary responses, or solutions proposed. Success in desired policy change to address a given problem is “based upon the ability...to attribute responsibility for the problem or condition to a blameworthy agent” (*ibid*, p. 145). The connection of the causes of and solutions or responses to the problem of homelessness at the opportune time, the *window of opportunity*, can lead to action, namely public policy change (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Kingdon, 2003). Drawing a clear connection between existing problems and keys to its resolutions at the opportune time is vital as these “short-lived spurts of interest may leave an institutional legacy...[which will not] ‘fade away’ like public interest or media attention but lead to

institutionalization of programs meant to deal with the problem (Baumgartner & Jones, p. 87)

Though it was not always the case, there was evidence of cases wherein a connection was established between the causes of and solutions or responses to homelessness in Metro Vancouver. There was of course also evidence of a lack of connections between causes of and solutions to homelessness in the regional media coverage (exemplified by Case 3, in the generic call for “long-term solutions” to a problem that was attributed both to individual behaviour but also many multi-faceted factors). Cases 6 and 9 exemplified cases wherein a connection between causes of and solutions or responses to homelessness was evident .Both Case 6 and 9 draw a connection between what is responsible for the current condition of homelessness. In Case 6, the blameworthy agents are larger systems not equipped to deal with individuals with complex and concurrent problems meaning that the individuals end up in a continuous cycle of “city hospitals, shelters, streets, and jails, draining emergency-room and police resources” (Case 6: Bula & Culbert, 2008,para. 16). The solution to these ongoing problems is the preservation and creation of “low-income buildings...all aimed at people with precisely these complex problems” (para. 28).

In general, cases that point at specific individual problems leading to homelessness are able to establish a connection between the causes of and necessary solutions or responses to homelessness more easily. However, Case 9 represents an example of the connection between larger more systemic problems are attributed to homelessness and responses that ameliorate the situation. Similar to Case 6, Case 9 creates the connection between the causes and solutions, or responses to homelessness in Vancouver is offered by referencing activists who have been “critical of the impact of the 2010 Olympics on the supply of low-cost housing...but more recently have applauded efforts by the city and the province to purchase and preserve 17 low-rent hotels” (Case 9: Montgomery, 2008, para. 6). The connection is made between a loss of low-cost housing, and the preferred solution offered following this, with the preservation of housing.

The larger problem still remains in a concise agreement and consensus of the overall causes to homelessness and therefore the appropriate responses to the problem of homelessness. Evident in the coverage is a lack of a common understanding or agreement of the “right” solution or response to homelessness .For example, whereas Case 2 suggested that the proper response to homelessness due to mental illness and

addictions are permanent emergency shelters, Case 6 implies supportive housing, funded by the provincial government as the proper response. This area implies a gap for continued work for those advocating for homeless individuals and those that attribute homelessness to larger systemic causes and solutions than individual behaviours.

Over, this section sought to demonstrate the way in which coding analysis was conducted for the current study. Overall, the nine qualitative examples outlined above serve to exemplify the diversity in media coverage of homelessness, as well as the diversity of the causes of, responses to, and solutions for homelessness included in the regional newsprint media coverage. There was a broad range of coverage of homelessness in Metro Vancouver, and there is evidence of coverage of many of the factors that regional stakeholders would applaud. However, it is not evident from the current sampling of media coverage of homelessness in Metro Vancouver, that there is a clear understanding of the causes of and solutions to homelessness in the coverage. There is evidence of coverage of a number of the parts of the R H Plan (2003), and all the three pillars of the plan (which I will discuss more below). However, the range of interpretations of what the current problems associated with homelessness are, as well as appropriate solutions or responses to homelessness are quite varied.

What follows is a continued examination of some of the themes of the coverage of homelessness, including the coverage of the three pillars of the RH Plan (2003), more exploration of the role of government, and deferred responsibilities, as well as a few additional others evident in the media coverage. Following this, I will discuss some of the implications of the themes that are evident, and what this could mean for those interested in regional attention to homelessness.

### **Pillars of RH Plan (2003): Housing, Income, and Support Services**

**Is the nature of media coverage congruent with the messages of GVRSC and regional stakeholders? Were the causes of and solutions to homelessness in Metro Vancouver discussed in context of Housing, Income, or Support Services?**

The three pillars of the RH Plan (2003) represent three major themes in causes of and solutions to homelessness in Metro Vancouver. All three pillars are viewed as “critical for preventing and alleviating homelessness” (SPARC BC, 2003, p. 16).

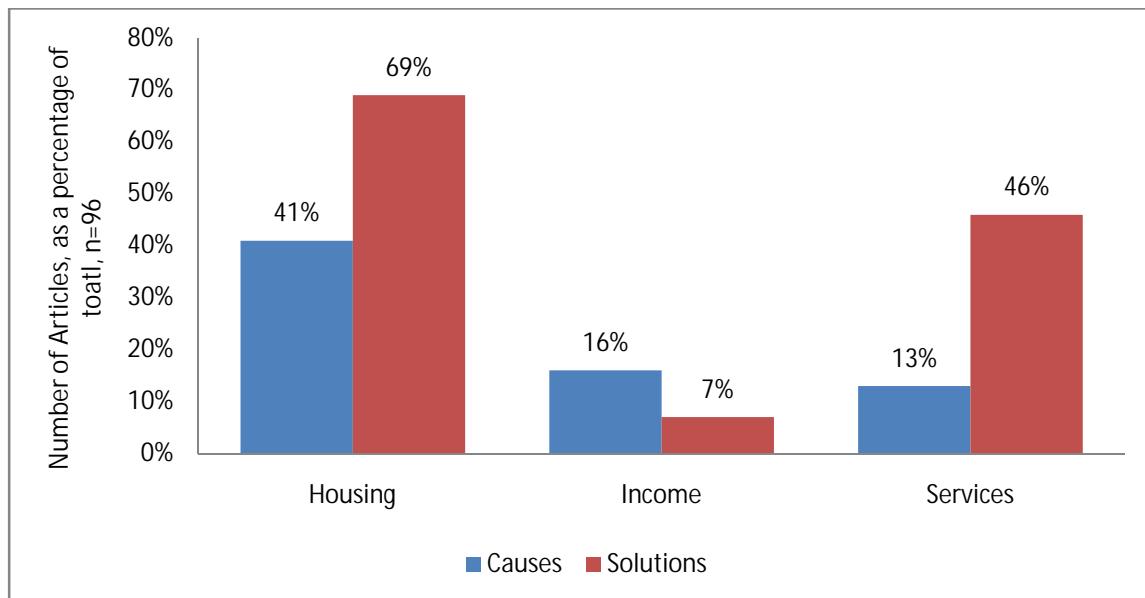
Frequencies and distribution in the sample population of causes of and solutions to homelessness associated with the three pillars of the RH Plan (2003) are shown in Table 7. Figure 6 displays the frequency of media coverage of each pillar as a cause or

solution for homelessness. Together Table 7 and Figure 6 show that the provision of housing and support services as solutions to the regional homelessness problem were more often reported as solutions than the lack of them as causes of homelessness. Conversely, income problems were reported as the cause of homelessness more often than the ways in which increases to income could be a solution to regional homelessness.

**Table 7. Causes and Solutions/Responses associated with RH Plan (2003)'s Three pillars of Homelessness, presented in newsprint media.**

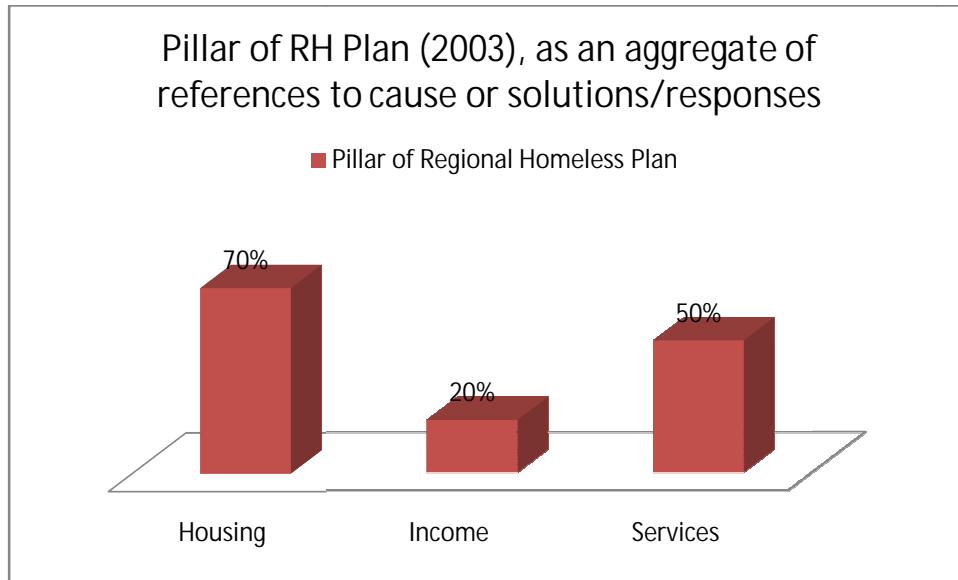
<b>Category of Causes and Solutions/Responses to Homelessness</b>	<b>Specific Pillar</b>	<b>Number of articles referring to Causes of Homelessness</b>		<b>Number of articles referring to Solutions/Responses to Homelessness (n)</b>	
		<b>N</b>	<b>% of total population</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>% of total population</b>
ALL RHP PILLARS		46	48%	69	72
	RH Plan PILLAR: Housing	39	41%	66	69%
	RH Plan PILLAR: Income	15	16%	7	7%
	RH Plan PILLAR: Services	12	13%	44	46%

**Figure 6. Number of articles, as a percentage of total, n=96, mentioning causes and solutions/responses associated with each pillar of RH Plan (2003).**



Aggregating all the instances of media reports of causes and solutions related to each pillar provides a comparison between coverage of each of the pillars. Figure 7 illustrates how the pillar of housing dominated the news articles, appearing in 76% of the articles; income appeared in 20% of the stories; and the pillar of services appeared in 50% of the articles.

**Figure 7. Number of Articles referencing the Pillars (Cause and/or Solution) of the RH Plan (2003), displayed as a percentage of total sample population (n=96)**



Only one article in the entire data set reported lack of income as a cause or income changes as a solution in absence of other suggested causes and solutions. The data gathered on media coverage of homelessness by the GVRSC (unusable for the current study for reasons outlined above, and exclusively from January to June 2008) indicated that of their 324 coded articles, 86 articles referred to affordable housing, 220 referred to support services, but only 18 referred to income. Their data is similar to the present 2008 data in the current study outlined in Figure 2 above, which shows an emphasis on housing and support services during 2008. The different results for housing and support services in the current study and the 2008 GVRSC data may be attributable to a difference in coding between supportive and transitional housing as a service provision rather than housing, a limitation outlined below.

### **32 Gaps in Provision identified in RH Plan (2003)**

The gaps discussed in the RH Plan identify 32 causes of homelessness, and served as the basis for construction of the analysis for the study (see Appendix B & E). Of the 96 articles in the sample, 32% referred to gaps related to housing, 15% referred to income gaps, and 13% of the articles referred to gaps in services. In total, 59% of the articles referred to specific gaps as causes of homelessness. Twenty-two gaps received media coverage, while 10 gaps were not mentioned in the newsprint media coverage.

Solutions or responses to homelessness related to the gaps identified the RH Plan (2003), received similar media coverage (See Appendix E for a list of solutions/responses to the “gaps”). Solutions to gaps in housing were covered in 63% of the articles, income gap solutions in 5%, and gaps in services in 42% of the articles. Solutions were proposed (and identified in the regional media coverage) for 8 of the 12 housing gaps. Solutions were not explicitly proposed for Gaps 4, 7, 9, and 12. All of the income-related solutions to gaps in income were covered by media actors. Of 17 services solutions identified in the RH Plan, 5 were not referred to (Gap 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, and 32). Some of the 32 gaps identified in the RH Plan (2003), laid out in comprehensive 232-page document, overlapped as they were inter-related. While some seem to be left out of media coverage, these gaps were in fact, covered through the coding of another gap. For example, there was a notable overlap between Housing Gap 8 (Inadequate supply of supportive housing) and Housing Gap 6 (Inadequate supply of transitional housing) with Support Services Gap 31 (Lack of transitional and supportive housing for addiction and those who are recovering). This often made it appear that more media attention was focussed on housing gaps than services gaps. Analysing data solely at the level of the 32 gaps would have led to a loss of data.

## Housing

“Housing” causes of homelessness, including housing affordability in the Metro Vancouver region, were indicated in 41% of the cases <sup>25</sup>(See Figure 6). A number of references were quite general, such as advocates being upset that “affordable housing can’t be guaranteed to people in such a well-off country as Canada” (Pablo, The Georgia Straight, Mar 7, 2008), and broad references to general lack of affordable housing in the region (Hooper, Langley Advance, May 11, 2007). Other articles outlined specific reasons for the link between housing affordability and homelessness. Common for why housing problems were leading to homelessness included:

- Failures, specifically by the government, to protect low-cost accommodation (Montgomery, The Province, April 14, 2008)
- Rising and unaffordable rental prices (Bennett, Richmond News, Jan 11, 2008; Anonymous, Coquitlam Now, June 6, 2008)
- Rental housing availability rates dropping across the Lower Mainland, and British Columbia (Lam, Coquitlam Now, Mar 28 2008)

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<sup>25</sup> Codes: Cause- Gapx10- Inadequate supply of affordable housing; Cause- Affordability of Housing

- Limited rental housing “in the realm of possibility for people on limited incomes” in the Metro Vancouver region (Anonymous, Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Times, April 1, 2008)
- Rising costs in the “market-oriented housing sector” (Pablo, The Georgia Straight, Mar 7, 2008)

Shortage or lack of social or subsidized housing was another major theme of articles reported in the regional newsprint coverage. Lack of construction or creation of new social housing, as well as criticism of conversion of existing social housing units for families to social housing for seniors or other homeless populations was also highlighted in coverage. As highlighted in Cases 7, 8, 9, government intervention in the housing sector was indicated in cases continually as a means of remedying an affordable housing market.

Emergency housing, transitional housing-- safe houses where stays are longer than 30 days but less than 2 or 3 years- was reported as distinct from emergency housing, but also from long-term housing. As mentioned in the discussion of solutions to individual behaviours above, overall, within the 96 articles, emergency or shorter-term housing was referred to in 43% of the articles. Transitional housing was referred to in 13% of the articles. Longer-term housing, such as affordable housing, low-income housing, supportive housing, and permanent housing, was mentioned in 41% of the articles. As mentioned, the populations for supportive housing were often targeted as specific at-risk populations (mentally ill, and or drug/alcohol addicted); however, exemplified by Cases 7, 8, and 9, articles discussed housing options as longer-term solutions to these complex problems, over and above emergency shelters to house these individuals.

## **Income**

As displayed in Table 7, only 16% of the data set included articles referencing income as a cause of homelessness, and even fewer, 7% of the articles referred to addressing income problems as a response or solution to the problem of homelessness in the Metro Vancouver region. Themes of references to income and homelessness included: the “working homeless” (Bowen, Coquitlam Now, May 2, 2008); the inability to pay high rents with low paying jobs (Bennett, Richmond News, Jan 11, 2008); low or minimum wage levels, contributing to difficulty in finding housing in one’s price range (Christophersen, Burnaby Now, April 14, 2007); and difficulties accessing, or getting onto social assistance, or employment insurance (Garr, Vancouver Courier, April 11,

2008). Theme of income-related solutions often included municipal governments advocating to more senior levels of government for change, as outlined above in the qualitative discussion of Case 8. Given that the results of the 2008 Homeless Count revealed that 25 % of the 2,592 homeless interviewed indicated that lack of income was a main contributing factor to their homelessness, it is interesting to find a marked neglect of income as a factor in homelessness within regional media coverage. Speculation on why the pillar of Income was neglected in regional media coverage will be discussed below.

### **Support Services:**

Media references to support services encompassed employment services, addiction services, preventative health services, and preventative tenancy services. Media coverage of the need for support services peaked in the year of the Count (Figure 2). When compared to other years of the study the difference is noticeable. The GVR SCH's media campaign efforts to draw attention to the three pillars may have contributed to the support services coverage. Support services were reported most frequently as part of the solution, rather than their lack as a cause. Support Services solutions were references to outreach services (16% of all articles), addiction services (15%), while there was less coverage of services supporting the tools for long term success, as well as prevention services (6%), educational services (7%) and employment services (4%).

A remarkable number of the "Services" gaps outlined in the RH Plan (2003), or causes due to lack of services (see Appendix B) were sparsely addressed or not addressed at all: specifically, there was limited coverage of lack of outreach services or 24/7 drop-in centres. Many articles mentioned the problems in the provision or delivery of support services, rather than a lack of services, a point I will address in the discussion of articles referring to the ineffectiveness of current solutions in resolving the problem of homelessness in Metro Vancouver. Quite possibly the overall number of support services including outreach programs and drop-in centres available to homeless individuals has increased in the region since 2003, specifically since the creation of the provincial government's Homeless Outreach Program in 2006 aimed at connecting homeless individuals with resources in the community.

## **Additional Causes and Solutions**

As highlighted in the qualitative examples of newsprint media coverage, there were other factors mentioned in media coverage as causes of or solutions to homelessness in Metro Vancouver, which included were not individual behaviours, nor direct references to any of the 3 pillars or gaps discussed above. Additional codes were created for these. Most of these other causes and solutions fall within larger categorical themes, including government performance and its role in homelessness and the ineffectiveness of current approaches to homelessness. A small number of these additional causes and solutions did not fit into any broader subject area. Some of these media references were broad generalizations, which did little other than highlight that homelessness is an issue in Metro Vancouver. For example, 7% of the articles reviewed suggested that permanent solutions to the problem must be addressed, and another 7% reported that the problems associated with homelessness are quite complex, requiring a comprehensive understanding of the causes and solutions, without listing what these complex problems were. Others, however, exemplified additional causes of and solutions to homelessness reported in regional media coverage.

### **The Role of government**

Sixty-three percent of the articles referred to the “government” in some capacity: by reference and in relation to causes and solutions to homelessness. Fifteen causes of homelessness and 13 solutions were mentioned in the media and attributed to the government (see Appendix K). While 33% of all articles point directly at proximate causes, 55% reported that the government plays a role in the resolution of homelessness, in terms of government funding, initiatives, or other involvements. I found that there were fewer references to the government as part of the cause of homelessness, but a larger role for government involvement in the solution to homelessness. Speculation on this particular finding will be discussed below in my discussion of “News events versus Issues”. Government (municipal, provincial, regional, or federal) was reported as a responsible cause of homelessness in 31% of the articles; government funding cuts or inadequate levels of funding were mentioned in 9% of the articles; government involvement in the solution or response to homelessness was reported in 55% of the articles (See Table 9). Twenty-nine percent of the articles

referred specifically to government funding as the key solution or response to homelessness.

**Table 8. Articles referencing Federal, Provincial, or Municipal governments with homelessness**

Level of Government implicated	Number of articles referring to Causes of Homelessness		Number of articles referring to Solutions/Responses to Homelessness	
	N	% of total population	N	% of total population
<b>Municipal and/or Provincial and/or Federal in some capacity</b>	30	31%	53	55%
<b>Municipal</b>	11	12%	39	41%
<b>Provincial</b>	15	16%	35	37%
<b>Federal</b>	9	10%	17	18%
<b>General reference to “Government” involvement/responsibility</b>	4	4%	7	7%

Emphasis on the role of government in the cause and resolution of homelessness is reflected in these findings. Buck et al. (2004) reported that media had a tendency to emphasize “deinstitutionalization, and other government policies as structural causes of homelessness” (p.159). These researchers found these types of statements were almost a detriment to explaining causes of homelessness, because the media demonstrated an inability to reference other causes, or refer to ways in which the government should specifically be involved in the resolution of homelessness (Buck et al., 2004, p.159). While there were media references to “deinstutionalization” as the cause of homelessness and broad statements indicating the government’s need for action, explicit ways in which varying levels of governments should be involved in homelessness were also reported in Metro Vancouver’s regional newsprint media coverage. As highlighted in Cases 1 through 9, specific responses to homelessness were highlighted in media coverage, such as the need for permanent shelters or supportive housing for those who are drug and/or alcohol-addicted, and/or mentally ill. For example, specific references to the provincial government’s responsibility and actions to “buy existing low-income housing and get more money for new social

housing—all of it aimed at people with....these complex problems [of dual-diagnosis of mental illness and addiction]" (Case 6: Bula & Culbert, Vancouver Sun, Feb 15, 2008); the municipal government's responsibility to "advocate" to other levels represent some examples of beyond broad generalizations. However, a hole that may be evident based upon analysis could be similar to that mentioned by Buck et al. (2004) for less specific populations. Specific responses were suggested for specific populations. Broader responses and solutions were less evident in the coverage.

### **Municipal involvement**

Municipal governments and their involvement in homelessness in the Metro Vancouver region was referenced in many of the articles, in a number of different forms including "advocating" to other levels of government, but also in terms of attention to municipal involvement in the problem. References such as municipal government role in maintaining "minimum standards in buildings" (Case 9: Montgomery, 2008, para. 11), and inclusion of statements like" local governments have a role to play in providing affordable housing through the use of municipal assets" (Lam, Coquitlam Now, 2008) demonstrate how municipal government involvement was referenced. Forty-one percent of all 96 articles referred to municipal government involvement in either the causes of or solutions to homelessness. Just under half of these, 48 % mentioned emergency housing and the municipal role in emergency interventions, rather than longer-term strategies. Of the total 53 articles referring to government involvement in responses, 74% mentioned the municipal government. The emphasis on proximate causes of homelessness in the media coverage may explain the considerable coverage given to "responses" to alleviate homelessness, rather than solutions to prevent homelessness. Many of these responses and emergency interventions to alleviate homelessness are at least in part funded at the municipal level, at which point municipal governments tend to publicize involvement. According to GVRSC, the involvement of the provincial and federal governments is key to resolving the issue, and while the roles of more senior levels of government have received media attention, the attention has been directed to the municipal level. This is related to the theme that while individual causes, proximate causes, and behaviours are indicated as the causes of homelessness, most often responses to individual behaviours, realized as temporary and permanent emergency shelters in Metro Vancouver, were highlighted. Regionally funding for responses, such

as shelters, has increasingly come from municipalities, and potentially with this overall references of municipal governments in the causes of and solutions to resolving the problem has been increasingly indicated. At the same time, many municipal governments in the region express dedication to resolving homelessness, through leveraging municipal assets, or advocating to other levels of government for funding. Municipal homeless plans have been prepared specifically for six municipalities in the lower mainland. Recently, the City of Vancouver announced the goal of ending street homelessness by 2015.

My findings show that coverage of solutions and responses to homelessness in the region was greater than that given to the causes of homelessness. Temporary solutions to homelessness (charity, meal provision, clothing, emergency shelters—mat programs, and permanent shelters) were referenced more often than longer term solutions (ongoing job training, individual case management, and permanent housing solutions). The prevalence of this discussion may be connected to the higher percentage of articles discussing municipal involvement in the solutions to homelessness.

### **Deferred Government Responsibility**

As highlighted in qualitative cases above, a considerable number of articles demonstrated the ways in which levels of government appear to blame or defer responsibility for homelessness to another level of government. Specifically, there was coverage of the role of the municipal government in shifting the discussion to longer-term housing solutions, which implies involvement of other levels of government. All of the 60 articles referring to government responsibility, 22% percent included one level of government (municipal, provincial, or federal) deferring responsibility in homelessness to other government levels. All of these 12 articles involved the municipal government implicating higher levels of government.

Overall, as qualitative Cases 6-9 demonstrated, media attention focussed on the significance of the role of government actors. Past research has pointed to the “self-reinforcing aspects” of agenda-setting within the media, public policy and public attention. Public and media attention has been seen to lead to increased government activities, and these in turn lead to greater public and media attention in the future” (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993, p. 171). As homelessness remains a prominent issue in Metro Vancouver, and “as government officials become more active in [the] issue... media coverage... [is] affected both by the social problem itself and by reports of

government activities to solve the problem" (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993, p. 171). Continued attention and coverage of government involvement in homelessness increases the potential not only for continued deliberate spending on the resolution of homelessness, but also increased potential for policy change.

## **Concurrent Messages about Homelessness in Metro Vancouver**

### **Ineffectiveness of Current Solutions/Responses**

Another theme in regional media coverage was the attention paid to the ineffectiveness of the current solutions and responses, as well as dissatisfaction with the ways in which homelessness is being addressed currently. Just under half of the articles in the sample were coded with at least one of the four codes displayed in Table 10.

**Table 9. Percentage of articles referencing inefficiencies with current initiatives or actions on homelessness in Metro Vancouver**

Code	Sub Code	Number of articles as a percentage of total, n= 96
Ineffectiveness of Current Solutions/Responses		25%
Questioning Initiatives		24%
Ineffectiveness or Question or both		36%
Costs of Homelessness		25%
	Costs of Deliberate/Direct Spending	17%
	Costs of Non-deliberate/Indirect Spending	10%

The ineffectiveness of the current responses to address homelessness and of reliance on charities and non-profits to resolve the crisis of homelessness, were highlighted as:

- "ad hoc interventions that are the least effective and least efficient" (Chan, The Province, Mar 5, 2009)
- ineffectiveness of additional, but existing services which were not seen as able to address the problem ("The inability of current services "to cure

- the plague of addiction by just adding more places to get drug treatment” (Bula & Culbert, Vancouver Sun, Feb 15, 2008).
- Funding for emergency responses (i.e., shelters) over solutions viewed as counselling services, employment services, and educational services” (Campbell, Langley Advance, April 4, 2008).

## Costs

The conclusion of the GVRSC’s RH Plan (2003) states that the growing incidence of poverty and homelessness in the region both “gives rise to direct societal costs including shelters, food, clothing and counselling... [but also results in] untold levels of indirect societal costs including higher health care costs, and increased costs of police and emergency services” (p. 119). Twenty-five percent of the articles referred to expenses to the government, the tax-payer, and costs of human life due to homelessness (See Table 9). Media coverage included references to direct and deliberate spending on homelessness, including announcements of government funding, or costs of homelessness initiatives:

- Vancouver, for instance, has put in \$155 million into social housing over the past 5 years (Bellett, Vancouver Sun, Jan 24, 2008 )
- “It would cost at least \$6 million to keep the [emergency] shelters open through April 2010 (Dalton Jr., Vancouver Sun, June 26, 2009)
- “For \$350,000 a year, the centre could keep its shelter service open, serving ‘hard to house’ women, including those suffering from mental illness and drug addiction” (Luymes, The Province, Mar 19, 2007)

Media coverage of spending viewed as avoidable or the non-deliberate spending/indirect costs included references to unexpected costs of hospitals, jails, and emergency shelters. These costs gathered considerable attention, particularly in March 2008, when a study completed by researchers at Simon Fraser University revealed the staggering and unexpected costs of homelessness to governments (and taxpayers), relative to the costs of providing adequate housing and supports for homeless individuals . This report, titled Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia concluded that the costs of unaddressed overlapping problems of homelessness and severe addictions and/or mental illness cost \$644.3 million a year in health, corrections, and social services spending (Patterson et al., 2008).

- “it costs society about \$55,000 a year to care for each of our estimated 11,750 homeless people [in British Columbia]—that’s over \$640 million. If however we invested in social housing that would drop to \$37,000 per person per year.” (Cernetig, Vancouver Sun, Mar 24, 2008).

- “more than 65 studies that show it is more costly to leave the homeless on the streets, ricocheting randomly through emergency rooms, courts, and jails, rather than providing them with a permanent place to live with supports in place” (Chan, *The Province*, Mar 5, 2009)
- “If a homeless person is ill or injured, they will likely require an ambulance to get to the hospital. Once there, they will be placed in an emergency bed. If they suffer from mental illness, they will be moved to the psychiatric ward. All of these services are many times more expensive than a visit to the doctor, clinic, or any other form of preventative healthcare” (Anonymous, MetroValley Newsgroup, Mar 28, 2008)

### **Prominence of Homelessness in the Region**

One of the key messages also contained in the conclusion of the RH Plan is the importance for the GVR SCH to “achieve communication goals ... [ensuring that these facts] about responding to homelessness in Metro Vancouver [are] known and used by all target audiences” (SPARC BC, 2003, p. 118). Of major emphasis in the conclusion of the RH Plan (2003) was the focus on the need for a regional approach to homelessness (based upon the three pillars), recognition of continued growth in the number of homeless within the region and a continued commitment to implementation of the RH Plan by invested parties, and stakeholders. These problems were reported in regional media coverage (see Table 10).

**Table 10. Distribution of articles referring to prominence of homelessness**

Code	Sub-Code	Number	Percentage
Regional Homelessness		16	17%
	Regional Responsibility	4	4%
	Regional homelessness	12	13%
Prominence of Homelessness		21	22%
Planning		17	18%

The prominence or population increase in homeless individuals was referred to in 22 % of the articles. Using codes “Reference- Regional homelessness and “Reference- Regional responsibility”, my findings were that 17% of the articles reported homelessness within a regional context, rather than isolating the problem to one area (See Table 10). While the incidence of homelessness is a greater problem in some areas of the region, and slightly less than half of the articles in the current study

mentioned the city of Vancouver and homelessness (see Table 6 above), the problem is not confined to Vancouver. Regional housing affordability was named as a cause of homelessness or of a risk of homelessness in approximately 10% of articles.

## **Research Question 2: Implications of Current Findings**

**What are the implications of the media's portrayal for organizations, institutions, and key stakeholders seeking to further awareness of the causes and proposed solutions to address and eliminate homelessness in the region?**

### **Shifting Media Attention among Pillars**

#### **Lack of coverage of Income in regional newsprint media**

Results from the 2008 Count revealed that of the 2,592 homeless individuals interviewed, lack of or low income was a main contributing factor to homelessness in Metro Vancouver in 25% of cases, followed by the cost of housing (19%), followed by addictions for 17% of the population (GVRSC, 2010, p.17). Therefore, while the findings from the 2008 Count showed that lack of income or low income was a major factor for homeless individuals, regional media coverage did not reflect the same attention to income as a central cause or solution to homelessness in Metro Vancouver. Conversely, the cost of housing, and addictions as a proximate causes received considerable regional media coverage. What follows is a discussion of some of the potential reasons for the differences in coverage between these factors.

#### **News Events versus Issues**

The media's propensity to cover news "events" rather than issues may provide a reason for the differences in media attention to the three pillars of the RH Plan (2003). Past researchers have discussed the practice of the media and its preference to cover "events" over "issues" as a barrier for coverage of an ongoing issue by the media (Greenberg et al., 2006). Media coverage is primarily focused upon events, current 'crises', attention-grabbing headlines, rather than ongoing societal problem, which would often warrant longer investigative series. In newsprint coverage specifically journalists are often limited on word count and space.

There were a number of events that attracted media coverage over the time period studied, in addition to the central 2008 Homeless Count. The majority of these additional news “events” were housing-associated: social housing purchases, funding announcements for housing, renewed or continued funding for emergency shelters. For example, purchases of SRO hotels by the Provincial government to be converted to supportive housing units occurred intermittently over the time period of the current project. These events in turn sparked media interest contributing to a considerable overall coverage of the role of housing. These events potentially raised awareness of homelessness in the Metro Vancouver region, and focused attention on housing as the central step to a responding to homelessness. On the other hand, there were few events generating attention to income-related causes of homelessness during the time frame examined. Perhaps one of the only major income “events” over the past few years appeared as an announcement by the Provincial government in October 2006, not part of the time frame for the current project<sup>26</sup>. Additionally, the “Vancouver Poverty Olympics”, held in 2008, 2009, and 2010, by concerned citizens and community groups sought to raise attention to the need to spend “public dollars...[more justly] on ending poverty and homelessness” (Poverty Olympics Organizing Committee, 2008).

Explanations of why income changes should occur may be significantly more difficult to describe than housing needs within limited wording and space constraints available in most major regional newsprint venues. The issue of lack of or inadequate income may also be one of the “contentious public issues [like growing income disparities] that might be....resource-intensive [for journalists]” (Greenberg et al., 2006, p. 138). Income-related issues may require considerably larger institutional or policy change. For example, there are more stakeholders impacted by an increase to the minimum wages in the province, including various levels of government as well as business owners, when compared a one-time purchase of a SRO building or municipal funding for a temporary emergency shelter or winter mat program.

It is in the best interest of regional stakeholders to organize “events” that draw attention and more media coverage of income in order for this pillar to be to fully recognized and eventually addressed as a cause for and a solution to homelessness. An

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<sup>26</sup> As part of Housing Matters BC, the Provincial government announced the Rental Assistance Program for families, a program subsidizing working families with rental earnings, but this was before the period of interest, and whether it garnered media coverage is outside the realm of the current project

area of focus for the regional stakeholders may be in drawing attention specifically to a need for income legislation changes, creating “events” specifically to do with lack of or inadequate income, as it seems that events related to lack of housing are covered considerably by the region’s media coverage. As Baumgartner and Jones (1993) outline, “the media play an integral role in the policy process by directing attention alternately toward different aspects of the same issues over time” (p.103).

The media’s propensity to cover events over issues can also help explain more frequent coverage of the role of government intervention as a solution/response to homelessness than as cause of homelessness. As mentioned, fewer references to government as a cause of homelessness were referenced in 31% of the cases, whereas government as part of a solution to homelessness was referenced over half of the articles. As highlighted in Case 7, a series of funding announcements made by the provincial government in March 2007 were referenced in news coverage. Although the funding was primarily targeted as “turning existing housing into other forms of housing, [one Burnaby councillor highlighted that the province gets] the opportunity to make public announcements [about spending \$250 million in a housing endowment fund” (Hitchcock, 2007, para. 28). These public announcements gather both public and media attention. Spending and announcements of funding are a means for the government to show their involvement and efforts that are being made in terms of spending, and initiatives to reduce or alleviate homelessness and are also quite conducive to news “event” coverage by the media.

### **The Focus on Current Inefficiencies**

Heightened attention in the form of “negative attention has higher propensity to influence change [than positive reinforcement], and is more often the case for political change than is positive reinforcement of action” (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993, p. 16). Attention to systemic inefficiencies, problems, or gaps in current services or policies may generate responses or changes to existing programs, based upon a media focus on the specific problems and their role in the issue. When “problems [in policy or system operations] are brought to the attention of people in and around government by systemic indicators...or by feedback from the operation of current programs” (Kingdon, 2003, p.19), change in these systems is more likely to occur, particularly when the focus is critical of the existing systems. Media articles reporting on the ineffectiveness of current

solutions to homelessness and the costs associated with the current situation may be highly beneficial to stakeholders seeking change in government funding, or policy.

That being said, negative and critical media attention contrasting, or challenging current solutions and responses must be artfully defined and redefined to remain effective and to lead to change. Schon and Rein (1994) documented the benefits of concurrently challenging and complimenting existing operations in order for change to occur. These researchers outlined the importance of offering new policy or modifications to current practices rather than simply criticizing existing practices. Schon and Rein also highlighted that “crisis, pressure...militate[s] against reflective inquiry, and the level of antagonism that frequently exists among actors in a policy drama works against collective policy designing” (p.189). Ultimately, the message here is that while challenging current practices is advisable for those wanting to create policy change, it is also vitally important to do this in a constructive manner if goals are to be achieved.

In the present context, regional stakeholders, key interest groups and advocates wishing to challenge the current situation should tailor their courses of action so that they are consistent or at least achievable in the regional context. Benefits gained from solely challenging the dominant structure without suggesting ways in which the system could achieve results may be minimal. Previous research suggests that those challenging existing policy and practice should pose the question: How is the system workable? Overall, the benefits of negative attention, such as media coverage of the ineffectiveness of current solutions, of the costs to the public health care system, and the inconsistencies in policies, actions, or service provision can raise awareness of homelessness; however, the benefits of agreement and collective responses must not be discredited (Schon & Rein, 1994; Jones & Baumgartner, 2005).

Many of the news events over the course of 2007 to 2009 created coverage of new funding, media releases on ongoing funding for supportive housing through the BC government’s housing legacy budget, and government purchases of Single Room Occupancy buildings (SROs). The press releases by the GVRSC following the initial results of the 2008 Homeless Count highlighted public sentiment towards the regional homeless problem was: “we care about homelessness” (GVRSC, 2008). Overall, regional newsprint media coverage reflected both an array of causes, solutions, and actions that have occurred in response to regional homeless. Not only was there positive feedback given to government funding in the media coverage, there was also a

substantial amount of questioning of the courses of government action, and the ways in which the issue is currently being addressed.

Overall, as evidenced in the qualitative examples, media coverage of homelessness discusses a variety of the causes of, responses to and solutions for homelessness but does not give an overall common understanding of these. The causes and solutions range from reactive responses, individual deficit behaviours, as well as systemic problems and solutions to homelessness. While this conclusion seems grim, there is much to be taken from the examples of coverage in the Metro Vancouver region. The coverage is not one-sided, blaming individuals for their homelessness, or responses merely suggesting the provision of emergency shelters, which do little to resolve ongoing homelessness, there is evidence, even in smaller circulating regional newspapers that the media coverage does present the need for longer term solutions, and more systemic problems causing homelessness. The conclusion to be drawn from the current findings is that there is variance and range in the understanding of homelessness that could be drawn based upon media coverage, not that there is not a range. And based upon the extensiveness of the RH Plan (2003), there are a number of the gaps that it identifies that received coverage in the regional newsprint media coverage in Metro Vancouver.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The central focus of the current project was to investigate the nature of the regional media coverage of homelessness in Metro Vancouver, specifically the causes of and solutions to homelessness in newsprint media during the time surrounding the 2008 Homeless Count. Efforts to promote awareness to specific causes of and solutions to homelessness in the Metro Vancouver region have been apparent in recent years. As this is a stated goal of the GVRSC in the 2003 Regional Homeless Plan, a number of attention-grabbing events, as well as efforts to engage media attention to the problem of homelessness have been implemented over the past few years by regional stakeholders. Past research has indicated the value of “various mechanisms—[including]...focusing events, and feedback—bring problems to... attention” of government officials (Kingdon, 2003, p. 113). Media coverage is an essential part of public awareness of these focusing events and may shed light on key parts of a public policy problem. Media coverage has the potential not only to reflect public opinion or awareness of a topic, but also has the potential to influence political or policy change, if sustained media coverage occurs. Assessment of the Metro Vancouver newsprint media coverage served as one means of examining events, public sentiment and political environment surrounding homelessness in the region.

Within regional newsprint coverage of homelessness, both proximate as well as more systemic and longer term causes of and solution or responses to homelessness were covered. The role of proximate causes, specifically addictions and mental illness were reported most often as primary causes of homelessness in the media coverage. Housing affordability, availability, housing conditions and costs were also indicated as major factors in regional homelessness. The role of municipal governments were referenced most frequently with homelessness, over and above other levels of government, documented the most in regional media coverage. Media reports covered both short and long term solutions, and provided forums for discussion of some of the underlying causes of homelessness in the region, but lacked an overall common understanding of the causes of, and solutions to homelessness in Metro Vancouver.

Regional media coverage of homelessness appears to be accurately reflecting a number of existing trends in homelessness in Metro Vancouver, identified in 2008 findings by the GVR SCH. Overall, the region's newsprint media coverage of homelessness and its causes and solutions, or responses fairly represented many of the recommendations made by regional homelessness stakeholders. Media coverage lent attention to two of the three pillars of the RH Plan (2003). Namely, media reports have covered housing, and the need for social services in Metro Vancouver. However, one major cause of homelessness, as indicated in the 2008 Count findings, a lack of, or inadequate income as a leading cause of homelessness was not reflected in regional newsprint media coverage.

## **Limitations**

A few limitations to the current study are noteworthy. The central focus was the coverage of homelessness in Metro Vancouver, during the 2008 Homeless Count, a period of anticipated heightened awareness. Because the data gathered was limited to three years, a broader examination of changes or shifts in public, political, or media attention to homelessness in the Metro Vancouver region was not possible. A longitudinal study of regional media coverage of homelessness could indicate whether or how attention or policy changes and action may have changed significantly in the region. In the shorter time period, it is difficult to gauge whether a window of opportunity in policy change may have occurred, or is likely to occur, whereas these trends may be more visible in a longitudinal study. The current findings indicate that the environment and tone of the newspaper coverage exhibit an acceptance of the complex nature of the problem, more awareness of the hidden costs of homelessness, and perhaps a climate ripe to accept policy and program change. However, the current findings cannot serve to demonstrate whether this is a significant change from past sentiments, or attention paid to homelessness in the region.

The current study focused on the manifest content of regional newsprint media coverage of homelessness, rather than delving deeply into latent content. Past research has delved into the ways in which homelessness and homeless individuals are displayed in the media, an area that could provide another dimension to explore the issues in the context of Metro Vancouver.

It is important to note that due to the choice not to use systematic sampling to include more articles from large-circulating newspapers, income may not have been

represented as much in the current sampling of regional media coverage of homelessness. However, the qualitative examples outlined in Cases 1 through 9 exemplify that there was evidence of richer coverage of the causes of and solutions/responses to homelessness in smaller circulating newspapers as well as larger-circulating papers. However, one of central interests of the current study was to gather information about regional coverage of homelessness. However, income was discussed in both small circulating newspapers.

### **Future Implications**

There remains a gap in discussion of the relationship between homelessness and income problems in regional newsprint media coverage. Going forward, this may be an important area to focus on raising awareness and drawing attention to the connection between adequate incomes and solutions to homelessness. While the current project served to examine whether a news “event” may have sparked interest and content of media coverage on homelessness, it may be worthwhile to compare media coverage and political attention to homelessness in the region over a longer period to see where coverage in this region mirrored findings by Buck et al. (2004). Has or will media coverage in the Metro Vancouver region undergo the “issue-attention” cycle similar to that described by Downs (1972) as occurring in the United States? Has there been any significant change in regional media coverage of homelessness the last 10 years, and if so, what factors may have played a role in this? The implications of whether and how regional coverage or attention has changed over a longer period of time could help stakeholders to determine future focuses for attention to the problem as well as the resolution to homelessness.

During the time of the current study, it appears that the issue of homelessness was able to attract media attention and that it is a pertinent social issue in the current context of Metro Vancouver. It is vital for advocates and stakeholders to capitalize upon periods of attention, as they can represent fertile ground for policy change (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005; Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Kingdon, 2003). However, extended public or political attention to an issue does not lead to policy change, as the public may become more adjusted or de-sensitized to the issue of homelessness. That being said, ongoing efforts to define and redefine the causes and solutions to regional homelessness in Metro Vancouver are encouraged. As homelessness becomes more of a norm and part of urban social setting in municipalities in the region, it is important for

advocates and interest groups to remain committed to continually renewing media, public and political attention to homelessness as a regional problem with achievable solutions. The last thing regional homeless advocates desire is complacency with the fact that homelessness is a problem and a part of the face of our urban societies in the lower Mainland.

The current findings suggest that regional newsprint media coverage did increase during periods when events were held and efforts were made to draw attention to homelessness. Paired with the fact that a number of municipalities in Metro Vancouver, including the City of Vancouver have placed a priority on the resolution of homelessness, for example, the announcement of the “end of homelessness by 2015” by Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson in November 2008 and accompanying city strategies mean that homelessness as a problem will likely continue to be the focus of political, media and public attention in ongoing years in the Metro Vancouver region. In order to develop its resolution as a reality, not a political slogan, continued efforts to raise awareness and attention are merited.

Overall, while the focus of the current project was not to enumerate the findings on the feelings of the general population about homelessness, nor was it focused on the empathy expressed for homeless in the news articles examined, it is reasonable to suggest from the findings that the number of news articles reporting on, or implying the need for structural changes and societal involvement in the solutions to homelessness also implies that the Metro Vancouver region, its public and its governments, are interested in solving homelessness, as a structural whole, rather one individual at a time.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: List of GVR SCH members

Members as of January 1, 2010

Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee	La Bousolle
BC Housing	Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy
BC Non-Profit Housing	Lookout Emergency Aid Society
BC Coalition for People with Disabilities	Lower Mainland Network for Affordable Housing/Women's Housing
Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation	MOSAIC (Immigrant and Refugee Services)
Child, Youth and Family Network, Maple Ridge	Metro Vancouver
Canadian Red Cross	Ministry of Children and Family Development/Vancouver Coastal Region
City in Focus	OPTIONS for Services Community Services
City of Burnaby	Salvation Army
City of Coquitlam	Senior Services Society
City of New Westminster	Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force
City of Richmond	TRAC Tenants Resources and Advisory Society
City of Surrey	United Food and Commercial Workers
City of Vancouver	United Way of the Lower Mainland
Covenant House	Vancity Community Foundation
Downtown Community Court	Vancouver Agreement

## **Appendix B: 32 Gaps and 13 Priorities in RH Plan (2003)**

### **1. Housing**

- 1.1. PRIORITY 1: Emergency shelters, transition houses and safe houses
  - 1.1.1. GAP 1: Inadequate supply of permanent (year round) shelter beds
  - 1.1.2. GAP 2: Inadequate supply of seasonal beds
  - 1.1.3. Gap 3: Barriers to accessing shelters
  - 1.1.4. Gap 4: Lack of info about homeless population
  - 1.1.5. Gap 5: Inadequate supply of transitional housing for women and children fleeing abuse
- 1.2. PRIORITY 2: Transitional Housing
  - 1.2.1. Gap 6: Inadequate supply of transitional housing (stays from 30 days to 2-3 years)
  - 1.2.2. Gap 7: Lack of funding for support services in transitional housing
- 1.3. PRIORITY 3: Supportive Housing
  - 1.3.1. Gap 8:Lack of supportive housing: dual diagnosis
  - 1.3.2. Gap 9:Lack of funding to support services for supportive housing
- 1.4. PRIORITY 4: Independent Affordable Housing
  - 1.4.1. Gap 10:Inadequate supply of affordable housing
  - 1.4.2. Gap 11:Erosion of supply of existing rental housing
  - 1.4.3. Gap 12: Lack of fully coordinated list for affordable housing

### **2. Income**

- 2.1. PRIORITY 5: Employment Assistance services and training programs
  - 2.1.1. Gap 13: Inadequate employment assistance and training programs for homeless individuals
- 2.2. PRIORITY 6: Legislative Reform to provide adequate levels of incomes
  - 2.2.1. Gap 14 Incomes of the working poor are inadequate to afford decent housing
  - 2.2.2. Gap 15 – Inadequate access to employment insurance
  - 2.2.3. Gap 16 Inadequate access to BC Employment and Assistance
  - 2.2.4. Gap 17 Shelter component of income assistance inadequate to afford suitable housing

### **3. Support Services:**

- 3.1. PRIORITY 7: Prevention Services
  - 3.1.1. Gap 18 - Inadequate assistance to prevent evictions and promote stable tenancies
  - 3.1.2. Gap 19 - Barriers to accessing services
  - 3.1.3. Gap 20 - Inadequate support services for individuals and families
- 3.2. PRIORITY 8:Outreach Services
  - 3.2.1. Gap 21 – Lack of outreach services
- 3.3. PRIORITY 9:Drop-in centres
  - 3.3.1. Gap 22 – Lack of 24/7 drop-in facilities
  - 3.3.2. Gap 23 - Drop-in centres are unable to serve individuals with unique needs
- 3.4. PRIORITY 10: Health Services

- 3.4.1. Gap 24 – Inability of health care providers to access medical histories
  - 3.4.2. Gap 25 – Inadequate supply of convalescent beds for people who are homeless
  - 3.4.3. Gap 26 – Inadequate dental care for people who are homeless or at risk
  - 3.5. PRIORITY 11: Mental Health Services
    - 3.5.1. Gap 27 Inadequate community care resources in the mental health system
    - 3.5.2. Gap 28 – Demand for emergency psychiatric hospital beds exceeds supply
    - 3.5.3. Gap 29 – Individuals w/o serious and PPMB are falling between the cracks
  - 3.6. PRIORITY 12: Addiction Treatment and services
    - 3.6.1. Gap 30 – Lack of residential addiction treatment capacity
    - 3.6.2. Gap 31 - Lack of transitional/supportive housing w/ addictions and recovering
    - 3.6.3. Gap 32 - Lack of harm reduction measures
4. PRIORITY 13 Research, planning and capacity building

## **Appendix C: List of Regional Newsprint Media Publications**

[Burnaby News Leader; Burnaby, B.C. (PMID: 66770)] OR [Burnaby Now; Burnaby, B.C.(PMID: 55699)] OR [Business Examiner; Fraser Valley ed.(PMID: 78677)] OR [Coquitlam Now; New Westminster, B.C.(PMID: 55702)] OR [Bowen Island Undercurrent; Bowen Island, B.C.(PMID: 66813)] OR [Coquitlam Now; New Westminster, B.C.(PMID: 55702)] OR [Delta Optimist; Delta, B.C.(PMID: 55756)] OR [Delta Optimist; Delta, B.C.(PMID: 55756)] OR [The Globe and Mail; Toronto, Ont.(PMID: 72990)] OR [Langley Advance; Langley, B.C.(PMID: 55587)] OR [Langley Times; Langley, B.C.(PMID: 66793)] OR [The Leader; Surrey, B.C.(PMID: 66778)] OR [Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows Times; Maple Ridge, B.C.(PMID: 55713)] OR [National Post; Don Mills, Ont.(PMID: 38532)] OR [The News; Abbotsford, B.C.(PMID: 66805)] OR [The News; Maple Ridge, B.C.(PMID: 66800)] OR [North Shore News; North Vancouver, B.C.(PMID: 55750)] OR [The North Shore Outlook; North Vancouver, B.C.(PMID: 66795)] OR [Now; Surrey, B.C.(PMID: 55755)] OR [The Peace Arch News; White Rock, B.C.(PMID: 66794)] OR [The Province; Vancouver, B.C.(PMID: 33192)] OR [The Record; New Westminster, B.C.(PMID: 55757)] OR [The Review; Richmond, B.C.(PMID: 66806)] OR [Richmond News; Richmond, B.C.(PMID: 55751)] OR [The Tri City News; Coquitlam, B.C.(PMID: 66801)] OR [Vancouver Courier; Vancouver, B.C.(PMID: 55759)] OR [The Vancouver Sun; Vancouver, B.C.(PMID: 108)] OR [WestEnder; Vancouver, B.C.(PMID: 66786)] OR [Abbotsford Times; Abbotsford, B.C.(PMID: 55586)]

PLUS: The Georgia Straight

## **Appendix D: List of All Codes**

*Total number of Codes: n= 305*

**Area- Abbotsford**

**Area- Aldergrove**

**Area- British Columbia**

**Area- Burnaby**

**Area- Coquitlam**

**Area- Delta**

**Area- Elsewhere in BC**

**Area- Elsewhere in Canada**

**Area- Fraser Valley**

**Area- Langley**

**Area- lower mainland- General**

**Area- Maple Ridge**

**Area- Mission**

**Area- New Westminster**

**Area- North Shore**

**Area- North Van District**

**Area- North Vancouver City**

**Area- Pitt meadows**

**Area- Port Coquitlam**

**Area- Port Moody**

**Area- Richmond**

**Area- Surrey**

**Area- Tri-Cities**

**Area- USA**

**Area- Vancouver**

**Area- White Rock**

**Cause- Awareness** includes Denial Complacency Politicians denying it is an issue; Public denying it is an issue; Cries for help unanswered; Public complacency; Public desensitization; Lack of awareness; Our own societal inaction

**Cause- Cuts to Shelter**

**Cause- Cuts to Social Housing by FEDS**

**Cause- Cuts to Social Housing by MUNIC**

**Cause- Cuts to Social Housing by PROV**

**Cause- Deferred Responsibility- MUNIC government implicating FED**

**Cause- Deferred Responsibility- MUNIC government implicating PROV**

**Cause- Deferred Responsibility- PROV government implicating FEDS**

**Cause- Deferred Responsibility- PROV government implicating MUNIC**

**Cause- Development or Redevelopment- Structural:** Gentrification, Redevelopment, Development

**Cause- Education- INDIVIDUAL** personal education levels

**Cause- Education- STRUCTURAL-** Education system; Structural problems in the system

**Cause- Employment- Unemployment: Individual**

**Cause- Eviction not due to tenant behaviour** including illegal evictions

**Cause- Funding- Inadequate Amounts**

**Cause- Gap 1- Inadequate supply of permanent shelter-** Housing: General referral to "shelter" "need for shelter" "shelter beds" coded as permanent rather than temp beds

**Cause- Gap 2- Inadequate supply of seasonal beds- Housing**

**Cause- Gap 3- Barriers to accessing shelters- Housing**

**Cause- Gap 4- Lack of info about homeless population--using shelters- HOUSING**

**Cause- Gap 5- Inadequate supply of transitional housing for women children**

## **SHELTERS HOUSING**

**Cause- Gap 6- Inadequate supply of transitional housing 30 days to 3 years-  
Housing**

**Cause- Gap 7- Lack of support service funding in transitional housing**

**Cause- Gap 8- Inadequate supply of supportive housing**

**Cause- Gap 9- lack of funding for support services in supportive housing**

**Cause- Gap x10- Inadequate supply of affordable housing**

**Cause- Gap x11- Erosion of supply of existing rental housing-**

**Cause- Gap x12- Lack of fully coordinated lists of affordable housing**

**Cause- Gap x13- Lack of employment programs for homeless**

**Cause- Gap x14 - Low-income or low-wages or Working Poor- Income:** Includes references to working poor, low-income families, or individuals. inability to save due to infrequent work

**Cause- Gap x15- Inadequate access to EI- Income**

**Cause- Gap x16- Inadequate access to IA- Income**

**Cause- Gap x17- Shelter component of IA can't afford suitable housing--Income**

**Cause- Gap x18- Inadequate assistance to avoid eviction and promote stability**

**Cause- Gap x19- barriers to accessing prevention services**

**Cause- Gap x20- Inadequate services for individuals or families**

**Cause- Gap x21- Lack of outreach services**

**Cause- Gap x22- Lack of drop-in services**

**Cause- Gap x23- Drop-in services not adequately able to serve populations**

**Cause- Gap x24- Inability of health service to access medical histories**

**Cause- Gap x25- Inadequate supply of convalescent beds for homeless**

**Cause- Gap x26- Inadequate dental services for those who are homeless**

**Cause- Gap x27- Inadequate community resources in mental health system**

**Cause- Gap x28- Demand for psychiatric beds exceeds supply**

**Cause- Gap x29- Individual without persistent mental illness fall thru cracks**

**Cause- Gap x30- Lack of residential addiction treatment**

**Cause- Gap x31- Lack of transitional and supportive housing for addictions and recovering**

**Cause- Gap x32- Lack of harm reduction measures**

**Cause- GOVNT- 1 FED- Implication of Federal Government contribution to problem of homelessness** STRUCTURAL Cause of homelessness or risk of homelessness is due to lack of federal government ability or involvement in general. Implication that the FED government plays a role in the problem of homelessness, either through lack of ability or involvement. Also implicates the government contributing to the problem through lack of funding, or the elimination/cutting of problems geared toward the resolution of homelessness.; Fed Govt failing to meet monetary commitments

**Cause- GOVNT- 2 PROV Implication of PROV government contribution to problem of homelessness** STRUCTURAL- Implication that the PROV government plays a role in the problem of homelessness, either through lack of ability or involvement. Also implicates the government contributing to the problem through lack of funding, or the elimination/cutting of problems geared toward the resolution of homelessness.

**Cause- GOVNT- 3 MUNC- Implication of Municipal government contribution to problem of homelessness** STRUCTURAL- Implication that the MUNICIPAL government plays a role in the problem of homelessness, either through lack of ability or involvement. Also implicates the government contributing to the problem through lack of funding, or the elimination/cutting of problems geared toward the resolution of homelessness.

**Cause- GOVNT- 4 General** Mention of government and general inability or lack of involvement. Comments like "the government should do more to help the situation"; or it's the government's responsibility to take care of..."  
NO SPECIFIC reference to level of government, just government

**Cause- GOVNT- 5 No Government Responsibility in Homelessness** Specifically stated that it's not the government's responsibility. I used this code to distinguish if it's specifically indicated that government shouldn't become involved, versus the idea that government is not mentioned.

**Cause- GOVNT- 6 Regional governing body-Metro Vancouver**

**Cause- Housing- Affordability of Housing- Structural** STRUCTURAL: Includes both rental and ownership

**Cause- Housing- Availability of housing**

**Cause- Housing- Inadequate housing and or living conditions;** Includes, Bedbugs, rodent infestations, fire code violations, drug dealers

**Cause- Housing- Specific- Gap between unofficial help and assistance**

**Cause- Income- Rent to Income Ratio**

**Cause- Income- Seniors on a small or fixed income** INDIVIDUAL  
Code with Individual basis for homelessness

**Cause- Income- Social Assistance** Includes reference to wages, or the general income level of social assistance, or any aggressive cuts that have been made to welfare/income assistance

**Cause- Individual Basis**

**Cause- Individual- Addictions- Alcohol**

**Cause- Individual- Addictions- DRUG**

**Cause- Individual- Choice**

**Cause- Individual- Choice- NO- Rebuking assumption that homelessness is a choice**

**Cause- Individual- Cycle of Homelessness**

**Cause- Individual- Divorce**

**Cause- Individual- Family**

**Cause- Individual- Hard to house** This term is a term often used in the social service provision area, a term used to describe someone who is often chronically homeless because they have been a problematic tenant, or leave places quickly, usually due to multiple factors. These factors often include dual diagnosis of drug addiction and mental illness, but not always. This term is a term often used in the social service provision area, a term used to describe someone who is often chronically homeless because they have been a problematic tenant, or leave places quickly, usually due to multiple factors. These factors often include dual diagnosis of drug addiction and mental illness, but not always.

**Cause- Individual- Higher risk group**

**Cause- Individual- Homeless not due to drug addiction and mental illness**

**Cause- Individual- Illness- short or long term**

**Cause- Individual- Injury- leading to no or low wage**

**Cause- Individual- Mental Illness**

**Cause- Individual- Behaviour-Tenancy Behaviour- Eviction due to tenant**

**behaviours** Individual- Tenancy Behaviours, Undesirable Tenants, Smoking

**Cause- Individual- Violence and or Abuse or Trauma** INDIVIDUAL Cause of homelessness or risk of homelessness is due to violence or abuse or trauma or difficulties at home

**Cause- Planning and Policy By Gov Institutions.** STRUCTURAL Cause of homelessness or risk of homelessness is due to lack of coordination of services or accountability.

**Cause- Services problems**

**Cause- Specific- Bleeding hearts wasting money**

**Cause- Specific- Limited Resources of Canadian Cities** STRUCTURAL

**Cause- Specific- Multifaceted causes of homelessness**

**Cause- Specific- Not providing housing for low-income families**

**Cause- Structural- Deinstitutionalization** Deinstitutionalization refers to government change that meant closing large mental health facilities/institutions where many people with mental illness and mental health problems lived. Deinstitutionalization has been charged with directly or indirectly led to a larger number of homeless with mental illness in many communities across the lower mainland.

**Cause- Structural- Economy**

**Cause- Systemic Cause- Not Specific**

**Descriptor- deserving and undeserving homeless**

**Descriptors- Differentiating descriptors:** not necessarily positive or negative "them folk" "those people" "keep homeless people out of public areas--making them different from regular people"

**Descriptors- Negative** any negative word used in describing homeless population or situation. (Can be empathetic)

**Descriptors- Passiveness**

**Descriptors- Positive**

**Descriptor- Diverse nature of homelessness**

**Reference to government:** ONLY TO BE USED if not implying causation or part of the solution (otherwise use appropriate other codes) **Mention of government;** NOT **IMPLYING SOLUTION**

**Government- Federal**

**Government- Federal Politician**

**Government- Metro Vancouver**

**Government- Municipal Politician**

**Government- Municipal- Council**

**Government- Municipality**

**Government- Police**

**Government- Provincial**

**Government- Provincial Politician**

**Month- Apr 2007**

**Month- Apr 2009**

**Month- Feb 2007**

**Month- Feb 2008**

**Month- Feb 2009**

**Month- Jan 2007**

**Month- Jan 2008**

**Month- Jan 2009**

**Month- June 2007**

**Month- June 2009**

**Month- Mar 2007**

**Month- Mar 2009**

**Month- May 2007**

**Month- May 2008**

**Month- May 2009**

**Month-Apr 2008**

**Month-June 2008**

**Month-Mar 2008**

**Motivation- Costs of homelessness**      Economically sensible to resolve homelessness problem, because as it persists, costs are enormous; MOTIVATION must be stated to be coded. WHY RESOLVE HOMELESSNESS? If the article discusses solutions, is there a motivation to resolve homelessness mentioned?

**Motivation- Ingratiation**

**Motivation- Moral Obligation**

**Motivation- Olympics**

**Motivation- Public safety**

**Motivation- Tourism and or International attention**

**News Event** Is the article-event related? As related to one of events outlined in Table 1, 2 Did a news event spur on the WRITING of this article? ONLY USED if article is based primarily on this event, (i.e., the Homeless count is occurring.....)

**News Event- Homeless Count**

**Organization- 1 RSCH group member:** Reference to any of the GVRSH's members

**Organization- 2 Non profit or support service**      Reference to non profits, service providers that are modeled around giving/supporting homeless

**Organization- 3 Business or business group**

**Organization- 4 Advocacy group**

**Organization- 5 Church group**

**Organization- 7 Other**

**Organization- 8 Charity**

**Organization- 9 Taskforce on homelessness** use of the "Taskforce on homelessness" "or homeless team, Homelessness committee

**Reference- 1 Homeless or Homelessness**

**Reference- 2 Chronic homelessness**

**Reference- 3 Tri-Ref- Homelessness Addiction Mental Illness**

**Reference- 5 Homeless- Couch surf**

**Reference- Alcohol- Alcohol addiction-**

**Reference- Costs**

**Reference- Costs of DELIBERATE spending**

**Reference- Costs of NON-Deliberate spending** not thought of as SPECIFIC

spending on homelessness

**Reference- Crime**

**Reference- Criminalization of homeless or poor** : Includes ticketing for sleeping outside on sidewalks, or obstructing sidewalks, constructing shelters on city property

**Reference- Cycle:** cycle of homelessness, cycle of addiction, etc...

**Reference- Disease or Illness** Disease or illness; Other than mental illness

**Reference- Drugs- Drug addiction- substance abuse** drugs, drug addiction, drug market

**Reference- Entrenched**

**Reference- Mental Illness**

**Reference- No public opposition**

**Reference- Olympics**

**Reference- Panhandling**

**Reference- Philip Mangano**

**Reference- Population increase or prominence of homeless:** Increasing population and prominence of homelessness

**Reference- Public consultation**

**Reference- Public Opposition**

**Reference- Public Safety:** Includes personal safety, safety of belongings

**Reference- Regional homelessness**      Regionality of homelessness

**Reference- Regional responsibilities**

**Reference- Specific Plan or Program**

**Solution**      Solutions include any mention of "solution, or addressing, or solve, resolve"  
answer, resolution, "need"; DIRECT ACTION TAKEN that will provide more HOUSING in some way "This is what is needed" VERSUS CAUSE- LACK OF, no attention to, has not, cuts, reduced, reduction of, does not have. If the article could be interpreted as offering some sort of solution to homelessness what would it be? If you don't feel this categories encompass, create a new one.

**Solution- Action**      "ACTION" is needed but nothing specified.

**Solution- Awareness or Education on issues**

**Solution- Caring individuals**      INDIVIDUAL

**Solution- Charity**      INDIVIDUAL Past research has shown that when individual factors are stressed over structural factors, charity is often assumed to be the answer

**Solution- Charity- Clothing**

**Solution- Charity- Corporate Charity**

**Solution- Charity- Meals**

**Solution- Coordination- Cooperation between government business, advocates etc**

**Solution- Corporate Intervention**

**Solution- Deferred Responsibility- Municipality asking PROV** Part of the solution is the municipality advocating to PROV to get \$\$ versus the cause (the MUNIC blaming PROV for not enough funding, etc)

**Solution- Deferred Responsibility- MUNIC asking FED**

**Solution- Government funding**

**Solution- government Intervention- 1 Federal** Implied or overt expression of need for federal government intervention in the resolution of homelessness

**Solution- government Intervention- 2 Provincial** Implied or overt expression of need for Provincial government intervention in the resolution of homelessness

**Solution- government Intervention- 3 Municipal** Implied or overt expression of need for municipal government intervention in the resolution of homelessness

**Solution- government Intervention- 4 General**

**Solution- government Intervention- Not municipal government's responsibility**

**Solution- GOVT- Coordination between government** STRUCTURAL

**Solution- Hospitalization**

**Solution- Housing** S1 STRUCTURAL: AFFORDABLE HOUSING; includes mention of the "Housing Continuum" which is the housing solution offered by the Regional Homelessness Plan

**Solution- Housing- Affordable** S1 STRUCTURAL: AFFORDABLE HOUSING  
Affordable housing- includes references to low-cost housing, housing that is affordable for people on LOW incomes, or working poor

**Solution- Housing- Construction of housing**

**Solution- Housing- Emergency Shelter** S1 STRUCTURAL: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Solution- Housing- Emergency Shelter Barriers- Gap 3**

**Solution- Housing- Emergency Shelter for women and children**

**Solution- Housing- Emergency Shelter- For women**

**Solution- Housing- Emergency Shelter- Low Barrier shelter**

**Solution- Housing- Emergency- Permanent Shelter** S1 STRUCTURAL:  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Solution- Housing- Emergency- Temporary Shelter** S1 STRUCTURAL:  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING: Definition of temporary shelters include "cold weather shelters" implemented by municipal initiatives in the Lower Mainland.

**Solution- Housing- Housing and support-- HOUSING alone will not work**

**Solution- Housing- Housing First-- services and supports after** Reference to a specific model of housing first, then dealing with the other issues that have led an individual to become homeless in the first place.

**Solution- Housing- Mental Health Facility or Institution**

**Solution- Housing- Permanent or Long term housing solution**

**Solution- Housing- Preservation of low-income housing**

**Solution- Housing- Rental property- construction or preservation GAP 11**

**Solution- Housing- Rental Supplements**

**Solution- Housing- Safe housing**

**Solution- Housing- Seniors housing**

**Solution- Housing- Social or Subsidized or for low-income:** S1 STRUCTURAL: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Includes construction or generation of more social housing units

**Solution- Housing- Specific- Reinstututionalization**

**Solution- Housing- SRO for social housing**

**Solution- Housing- Supportive** S1 STRUCTURAL: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Solution- Housing- Supportive- Specific- Gap 31**

**Solution- Housing- Transitional** S1 STRUCTURAL: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Or second stage housing- Transitional housing, also called second stage housing, is affordable independent housing with supports, and is usually time limited for a period up to 2 to 3 years. A resident is typically expected to move to permanent housing upon stabilizing their living situation in second stage housing.

**Solution- Housing- Transitional housing for women with or without children**

**Solution- Housing- Youth Safe House** S1 STRUCTURAL:

**Solution- Incarceration**

**Solution- Income Legislation or Legislative Reform** S2 Solution Adequate Income

**Solution- Income- Elimination of 6 dollar training wage**

**Solution- Income- Minimum wage changes**

**Solution- Income- Review of eligibility and application for EI**

**Solution- Income- Welfare or Social Assistance**

**Solution- Legislation-Regulation-Laws- bylaws** Legislation, regulation, laws and bylaws

**Solution- Legislative Reform to provide adequate levels of income GAPs 14- 17**

**Solution- Long term stabilization for those with mental health problems**

**Solution- Non-Profit Organizations** Includes NON-profits who are running programs; providing housing (More than a backpack of material goods); they are viewed as key part of the solution; whether they get part or full government funding.; They differ from charity in that it is not just GIVING people MATERIAL ITEMS

**Solution- Planning and Policy 1 RHP 13** Includes reference to any government policy, or planning or program, or research action that might provide a solution or resolution of housing or homelessness problems. Includes changes to bylaws, or taxes.

**Solution- Planning and Policy- Change in Zoning and Bylaws to facilitate solutions**

**Solution- Planning and Policy- Long term planning** long term planning that will avoid things like year by year funding, or housing the homeless or good, not just in temporary solutions like shelter

**Solution- Planning and Policy- Reform to Mental Health Act for institutionalization**

**Solution- Planning and Policy- Specific- results-oriented metric measures**

**Solution- Police Involvement** Includes references to police moving people, as well as Safe Streets Act, and Trespass Acts, and vagrants/homeless to be moved by cops/police Police intervention; Includes references to police moving people, as well as Safe Streets Act, and Trespass Acts, and vagrants/homeless to be moved by cops/police; includes sleeping on streets should be illegal

**Solution- Research**

**Solution- Services 1 General Support Services** S3 Support Services as part of Solution

Includes mentions of Support services, support programs, general support programs GENERALLY ADDRESSING HOMELESS PLAN PRIORITIES- 7 thru 12

**Solution- Services Addiction- Substance Abuse Services Gaps 30-32** S3 Support Services as part of Solution

**Solution- Services Advocacy** S3 Support Services as part of Solution

**Solution- Services Drop-in or Resource centre Gap 22-23:** S3 Support Services as part of Solution

**Solution- Services Health Services Gaps 24-26** S3 Support Services as part of Solution

**Solution- Services housing support**

**Solution- Services Mental Health Services- GAPS 27-29** S3 Support Services as part of Solution

**Solution- Services Outreach Gap 21** S3 Support Services as part of Solution

**Solution- Services Prevention Gaps 18-20** S3 Support Services as part of Solution

**Solution- Services- Coordination of services**

**Solution- Services- Counselling Services**

**Solution- Services- Crisis Services** S3 Support Services as part of Solution

**Solution- Services- Educational Services**

**Solution- Services- Employment Programs--Counselling--Services**

**Solution- Services- Specific- GAP 28- Psychiatric beds at Hospital** direct response to Gap 28

**Solution- Services- Youth Services**

**Solution- Specific- Bus service to take people to shelters**

**Solution- Specific- Case management of individuals**

**Solution- Specific- Foundation for lifelong success of education employment and health**

**Solution- Specific- Gates and fences construction**

**Solution- Specific- Relocating homeless and providing them with opportunity to work and live on farm**

**Solution- Specific- Relocation Rejection of solution of relocation of homeless to farmers for work and place to live**

**Solution- Specific- Stability**

## **Solution- Specific- Urgent Response centre**

**Solution- Tools for self-reliance- individual skills, tools**

Solution- Teaching self-reliance, life

**Solution- X- Ineffectiveness of current solutions:** Solution to homelessness is not what is being done right now, presently by governments, municipalities, service providers. any reference to inability or lack of belief that what is being done right now is NOT the answer to homelessness in the region. Includes questioning of initiatives, spending, and lack of response.

Includes any reference to inability or lack of belief that what is being done right now is NOT the answer to homelessness in the region. Includes questioning of initiatives, spending, and lack of response

**Theme- Housing<sup>27</sup>** Does the theme of the article and homelessness have to do with a housing issue? Theme to be assessed at end of reading of article.

This code only used if there is a specific reference to any of the 3 pillars of homelessness.

Is the article related to any specific theme of the Regional Homeless Plan? One of the three pillars?

**Theme- Income**

**Theme- Support Services**

**Tone of Action- Ambiguous**

References like "emphasized efforts to combat homelessness" etc...

**Tone of Action- Negative action to be taken**

**Tone of Action- No action suggested**

**Tone of Action- Pro-active and positive action**

**Tone of Action- Questioning initiatives**

Questioning the initiatives or actions that are currently, or in the past, that have been taken

**Tone- Empathetic** Tone is assessed after reading the article thoroughly:

Positive tone is mentions of homelessness in a sympathetic tone

Also indicates the RESPONSIBILITY and need for ACTION to resolve homelessness

**Tone- Negative** Negative context of homeless, homelessness, homeless people, shelter, spending on homelessness. not civic duty to help. Non-sympathetic. Negative connections, connotations and words used with homelessness

**Tone- Neutral** Neutral- Description of events related to homelessness (i.e., the purchase of a building for housing, the homeless count) or the general issue of homelessness but

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<sup>27</sup> Theme was originally concluded, and manually coded but not used in analysis. Instead, HyperResearch software was used to create themes.

with no inferred sense of if this is inherently good or bad Article does not speak to ACTION on resolution of homelessness.

**Topic- Associative topic or Passing reference or NOT to do with homelessness**

**Z Source- Abbotsford Times**

**Z Source- Burnaby Now**

**Z Source- Coquitlam Now**

**Z Source- Delta Optimist**

**Z Source- Georgia Straight**

**Z Source- Globe and Mail**

**Z Source- Langley Advance**

**Z Source- Maple Ridge Pitt Meadow Times**

**Z Source- Metrovalley news group**

**Z Source- National Post**

**Z Source- North Shore News**

**Z Source- Richmond News**

**Z Source- Surrey Now**

**Z Source- The Province** Includes: Operation Phoenix: project by The Province, CKNW 980 and Global B.C.

**Z Source- The Record- New West**

**Z Source- Vancouver Courier**

**Z Source- Vancouver SUN**

**Z Type- Letter**

**Z Type- News article**

**Z Type- Opinion Column**

**Z Type-Editorial**

**ZZ- Media as a source of knowledge about homelessness**

## Appendix E: Solutions and/or Responses to Homelessness in Media Coverage

Solutions Related to the “Gaps” in 3 Pillars of RH Plan (2003)

<b>HOUSING (n=14)</b>	<b>INCOME (n= 5)</b>	<b>SERVICES (n=8)</b>
<p>1. Emergency Shelter (non-specific)- [Solution to Gap 1,2]</p> <p>2. Permanent Shelter- [Solution to Gap1]</p> <p>3. Temporary Shelter- [Solution to Gap 2]</p> <p>4. Elimination of Barriers to accessing Emergency Shelters- [Solution to Gap 3]</p> <p>5. Low Barrier Shelter- Additional Solution</p> <p>6. Emergency Shelters for Women with/without children- [Solution to Gap 5]</p> <p>7. Affordable Housing- [Solution to Gap 10]</p> <p>8. Preservation of low-income housing- [Solution to Gap 11]</p> <p>9. Rental Property- Construction or Preservation- [Solution to Gap 11]</p> <p>10. Subsidized or Social Housing [additional solution]</p> <p>11. Supportive Housing- [Solution to Gap 8]</p> <p>12. Supportive Housing- [Solution specific to those with addiction or recovering -Gap 31*]</p> <p>13. Transitional Housing- Solution to Gap 7</p> <p>14. Transitional Housing for women and children- Solution to Gap</p>	<p>1. Income Legislation</p> <p>2. Elimination of \$6 Training Wage</p> <p>3. Minimum wage changes</p> <p>4. Review of eligibility and access to EI</p> <p>5. Employment Programs</p>	<p>Solution-General Support Services</p> <p>Solution- Drop-in or Resource Centre</p> <p>Solution- Health Services</p> <p>Solution- Mental Health Services</p> <p>Solution- Housing support</p> <p>Solution- Outreach services</p> <p>Solution- Prevention Services</p> <p>Solution- Specific-Hospital Psychiatric Bed- Gap 28</p>

## **Appendix F: Additional Housing, Income, Support Services-Related Causes and Solutions**

**In addition to 32 “Gaps” in the RH Plan (2003)**

### **Eleven Additional Causes of Homelessness, related to the Three Pillars**

<b>HOUSING (n= 7)</b>	<b>INCOME (n= 3)</b>	<b>SERVICES (n=1)</b>
Cause- Affordability of Housing Cause- Availability of housing Cause- Deinstitutionalization Cause- Development/Redevelopment Cause- Inadequate housing and or living conditions Cause- Gap between unofficial help and assistance Cause- Not providing housing for low-income families	Cause- Rent to Income Ratio Cause- Social Assistance Cause- Seniors on a small or fixed income	Cause- Services problems

### **21 Additional Solutions to Homelessness, related to the Three Pillars**

<b>HOUSING (n=11)</b>	<b>INCOME (n=1)</b>	<b>Services (n=9)</b>
Solution- Construction of housing Solution- Housing Solution- Housing and support- - HOUSING alone will not work Solution- Housing First-- services and supports after Solution- Mental Health Facility or Institution Solution- Permanent and Long Term Housing Solution Solution- Safe housing Solution- Seniors housing Solution- SRO for social housing Solution- Reinstitutionalization Solution- Youth Safe House	Solution- Income-Welfare or Social Assistance	Solution- Addiction or Substance Abuse Services (Gaps 30-32) Solution- Advocacy Services Solution- Coordination of Services Solution- Counselling Services Solution- Crisis Services Solution- Education Services Solution- Youth Services Solution- Urgent Response Centre Solution- Rental Supplements

## **Appendix G: Proximate and Specific Individual Causes and Solutions**

### **INDIVIDUAL CAUSES**

Cause- Education- INDIVIDUAL  
Cause- Employment- Unemployment  
Cause- Individual Basis  
Cause- Individual- Addictions- Alcohol  
Cause- Individual - Addictions- Drug  
Cause- Individual- Choice  
Cause- Individual- Divorce  
Cause- Individual- Family  
Cause- Individual- Hard to house  
Cause- Individual- Higher risk group  
Cause- Individual- Homeless not due to drug addiction and mental illness  
Cause- Individual- Illness- short or long term  
Cause- Individual- Injury- leading to no or low wage  
Cause- Individual- Mental Illness  
Cause- Individual- Tenancy Behaviour- Eviction due to tenant behaviours  
Cause- Individual- Violence and or Abuse or Trauma  
Cause- Homelessness not due to Addictions and or Mental Illness

### **INDIVIDUAL- THE INDIVIDUAL MUST CHANGE/CAN CHANGE**

Solution- Case Management for individuals  
Solution- Hospitalization  
Solution- Incarceration  
Solution- Long term stabilization for those with mental health problems  
Solution- Specific- Foundation for lifelong success of education  
employment and health  
Solution- Specific- Stability  
Solution- Tools for self reliance- Individuals

## **Appendix H: List of Charity-Theme Codes**

### **CHARITY**

Solution- Awareness or Education  
on issues

Solution- Caring individuals

Solution- Charity

Solution- Charity- Clothing

Solution- Charity- Corporate  
Charity

Solution- Charity- Meals

## **Appendix I: List of Housing-Theme Codes**

### **THEME- HOUSING**

Cause- Gap 1- Inadequate supply of permanent shelter- Housing

Cause- Gap 1-5 Priority1- Shelters transition houses and safe houses

Cause- Gap 2- Inadequate supply of seasonal beds- Housing

Cause- Gap 3- Barriers to accessing shelters- Housing

Cause- Gap 4- Lack of info about homeless population--using shelters- HOUSING

Cause- Gap 5- Inadequate supply of transitional housing for women children  
**SHELTERS HOUSING**

Cause- Gap 6- Inadequate supply of transitional housing 30 days to 3 years- Housing

Cause- Gap 6-7- Priority 2- Transitional housing

Cause- Gap 7- Lack of support service funding in transitional housing

Cause- Gap 8- Inadequate supply of supportive housing

Cause- Gap 9- lack of funding for support services in supportive housing

Cause- Gap x10- Inadequate supply of affordable housing

Cause- Gap x11- Erosion of supply of existing rental housing- CONVERSION

Cause- Gap x12- Lack of fully coordinated lists of affordable housing

Cause- Cuts to Shelter

Cause- Cuts to Social Housing by FEDS

Cause- Cuts to Social Housing by MUNIC

Cause- Cuts to Social Housing by PROV

Cause- Eviction not due to tenant behaviour

Cause- Housing- Affordability of Housing- Structural

Cause- Housing- Availability of housing

Cause- Housing- Inadequate housing and or living conditions

Cause- Specific- Not providing housing for low-income families

Solution- Housing- Affordable GAP 10

Solution- Housing- Emergency Shelter Barriers- Gap 3

Solution- Housing- Emergency Shelter for women w or w/o children

Solution- Housing- Emergency Shelter- Low Barrier shelter

Solution- Housing- Emergency- Permanent Shelter

Solution- Housing- Emergency- Temporary Shelter

Solution- Housing- Preservation of low-income housing

Solution- Housing- Social or Subsidized or for low-income

Solution- Housing- Supportive

Solution- Housing- Transitional

Solution- Housing- Transitional housing for women with or without children

Solution- Housing- Rental property- construction or preservation GAP 11

Solution- Housing

Solution- Housing- Affordable

Solution- Housing- Construction of housing

Solution- Housing- Emergency Shelter

Solution- Housing- Emergency Shelter Barriers- Gap 3

Solution- Housing- Emergency Shelter for women and children

Solution- Housing- Emergency Shelter- Low Barrier shelter

Solution- Housing- Emergency- Permanent Shelter

Solution- Housing- Emergency- Temporary Shelter

Solution- Housing- Housing and support-- HOUSING alone will not work

Solution- Housing- Housing First-- services and supports after

Solution- Housing- Mental Health Facility or Institution

Solution- Housing- Permanent or Long term housing solution

Solution- Housing- Preservation of low-income housing

Solution- Housing- Rental property- construction or preservation GAP 11

Solution- Housing- Rental Supplements

Solution- Housing- Safe housing

Solution- Housing- Seniors housing

Solution- Housing- Social or Subsidized or for low-income

Solution- Housing- Specific- Reinstututionalization

Solution- Housing- SRO for social housing

Solution- Housing- Supportive

Solution- Housing- Supportive- Specific- Gap 31

Solution- Housing- Transitional

Solution- Housing- Transitional housing for women with or without children

Solution- Housing- Youth Safe House

## **Appendix J: List of Income-Theme Codes**

### **INCOME AS CAUSE**

Cause- Gap x13- Lack of employment programs for homeless  
Cause- Gap x14 - Low-income or low-wages or Working Poor-Income  
Cause- Gap x14-16- Priority 6- Legislative reform for adequate income  
Cause- Gap x15- Inadequate access to EI- Income  
Cause- Gap x16- Inadequate access to IA- Income  
Cause- Gap x17- Shelter component of IA can't afford suitable housing--Income

### **INCOME                    CAUSES OTHER**

Cause- Income- Income levels  
Cause- Income- Rent to Income Ratio  
Cause- Income- Social Assistance  
Cause- Income- Seniors on a small or fixed income  
  
Solution- Income Legislation or Legislative Reform  
Solution- Income- Elimination of 6 dollar training wage  
Solution- Income- Minimum wage changes  
Solution- Income- Review of eligibility and application for EI  
Solution- Services- Employment Programs-Counselling--Services  
  
Solution- Income- Welfare or Social Assistance

## **Appendix K: List of Support Services-Theme Codes**

Cause- Gap x18- Inadequate assistance to avoid eviction and promote stability  
Cause- Gap x19- barriers to accessing prevention services  
Cause- Gap x20- Inadequate services for individuals or families  
Cause- Gap x21- Lack of outreach services  
Cause- Gap x22- Lack of drop-in services  
Cause- Gap x23- Drop-in services not adequately able to serve populations  
Cause- Gap x24- Inability of health service to access medical histories  
Cause- Gap x25- Inadequate supply of convalescent beds for homeless  
Cause- Gap x26- Inadequate dental services for those who are homeless  
Cause- Gap x27- Inadequate community resources in mental health system  
Cause- Gap x27-29 Mental Health Services (Priority 11)  
Cause- Gap x28- Demand for psychiatric beds exceeds supply  
Cause- Gap x29- Individual without persistent mental illness fall thru cracks  
Cause- Gap x30- Lack of residential addiction treatment  
Cause- Gap x31- Lack of transitional and supportive housing for addictions and recovering  
Cause- Gap x32- Lack of harm reduction measures  
SOLUTION- SPECIFIC-residential treatment gap  
Solution- Services Drop-in or Resource centre Gap 22-23  
Solution- Services Health Services Gaps 24-26  
Solution- Services Mental Health Services- GAPS 27-29  
Solution- Services Outreach Gap 21  
Solution- Services Prevention Gaps 18-20  
Solution- Services- Specific- GAP 28- Psychiatric beds at Hospital  
Solution- Housing- Supportive- Specific- Gap 31  
Solution- Services 1 General Support Services  
Solution- Services Advocacy  
Solution- Services housing support  
Solution- Services- Coordination of services  
Solution- Services- Educational Services  
Solution- Services- Crisis Services  
Solution- Services- Youth Services  
Solution- Services- Counselling Services  
Solution- Specific- Urgent response centre  
Solution- Services Addiction- Substance Abuse Services Gaps 30-32

## **Appendix L: List of Government-Theme Codes**

### **Government as Cause**

Cause- Cuts to Shelter  
Cause- Cuts to Social Housing by FEDS  
Cause- Cuts to Social Housing by MUNIC  
Cause- Cuts to Social Housing by PROV  
Cause- Deferred Responsibility- MUNIC government implicating FED  
Cause- Deferred Responsibility- MUNIC government implicating PROV  
Cause- Deferred Responsibility- PROV government implicating FEDS  
Cause- Deferred Responsibility- PROV government implicating MUNC  
Cause- GOVNT- 1 FED-  
Cause- GOVNT- 2 PROV  
Cause- GOVNT- 3 MUNC-  
Cause- GOVNT- 4 General  
Cause- GOVNT- 6 Regional governing body-Metro Vancouver  
Cause- Planning and Policy By Gov Institutions  
Cause- Funding- Inadequate amounts  
Solution- Government funding  
Solution- government Intervention- 1 Fed Legislative Tax Reform  
Solution- government Intervention- 1 Federal  
Solution- government Intervention- 2 Provincial  
Solution- government Intervention- 3 Municipal  
Solution- government Intervention- 4 General  
Solution- government Intervention- Not municipal government's responsibility  
Solution- GOVNT- Municipality advocating for funds from other GOV  
Solution- GOVT- Coordination between government  
Solution- Deferred Responsibility- Municipality asking PROV  
Solution- Deferred Responsibility- MUNIC asking PROV  
Solution- Legislation-Regulation  
Solution- Legislative Reform to provide adequate income Gaps 14-17

### **PLANNING**

Solution- Planning and Policy 1 RHP 13  
Solution- Planning and Policy- Change in Zoning and Bylaws to facilitate solutions  
Solution- Planning and Policy- Long term planning  
Solution- Planning and Policy- Reform to Mental Health Act for institutionalization  
Solution- Planning and Policy- Specific- results-oriented metric measures

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