

FRAMING THE HOMELESS:
MEDIA FRAMING EFFECTS ON HOMELESSNESS IN SAN FRANCISCO

A Thesis

Presented to the faculty of the Department of Public Policy and Administration
California State University, Sacramento

Submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

by

Michael Fries

SUMMER
2020

© 2017

Michael Fries

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

FRAMING THE HOMELESS:
MEDIA FRAMING EFFECTS ON HOMELESSNESS IN SAN FRANCISCO

A Thesis

by

Michael Fries

Approved by:

_____, Committee Chair
Edward Lascher, Ph.D.

_____, Second Reader
Kimberly Nalder, Ph.D.

Date

Student: Michael Fries

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and this thesis is suitable for electronic submission to the library and credit is to be awarded for the thesis.

_____, Department Chair
Edward Lascher, Ph.D.

Date

Department of Public Policy and Administration

Abstract
of
FRAMING THE HOMELESS:
MEDIA FRAMING EFFECTS ON HOMELESSNESS IN SAN FRANCISCO
by
Michael Fries

The homeless population of San Francisco attracts a significant amount of media attention from both local media, but especially from national media outlets. In comparison with other west coast cities such as Seattle and San Diego, San Francisco does not have much larger homeless population. The effects of receiving more media attention are hard to quantify, but is there a noted difference in how San Francisco is covered from these other cities? This study seeks to answer if San Francisco is truly the standard bearer for homelessness and how its media coverage is different than that of Seattle and San Diego.

In order to answer that question, this study used a content analysis method and took articles from the three largest daily newspapers: *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, looking for common underlying themes within the articles. Then all articles concerning the three cities and homelessness and collated. Using media framing techniques suggested by the media framing literature, I then broke down the different types of coverage received by all three cities. The results showed San Francisco did receive more media coverage than Seattle and San Diego, but that extra received coverage was more elaborate and covered San Francisco in more

detail and used a greater variety of frames, while Seattle and San Diego's homeless population usually needed to be about criminal activity to reach any of three selected newspapers.

_____, Committee Chair
Edward Lascher, Ph.D.

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to acknowledge the support of my family. You have always supported my decisions and gave me the guidance I needed in going forward in joining the PPA program. Thank you for being a constant source of support, I would not be where I am without you.

Next, the support of my friends and fellow members of my PPA cohort. You all made going through this program a joy and pleasure.

I want to acknowledge the support and advice given by the entire PPA faculty, who made going through this program easy and taught me a whole range of skills I never had before. I want to especially thank Ted Lascher, as his guidance throughout the thesis process was invaluable.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Acknowledgements vii

List of Tables..... i

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION 1

 Background on Homelessness in San Francisco 2

 Background on Homelessness in Seattle and San Diego 5

 Conclusion..... 7

2. LITERATURE REVIEW 9

 Content Analysis 10

 Media Analysis I: Emphasis Framing 10

 Media Analysis II: Equivalency Framing 12

 Media Analysis III: Sub-categories of Framing 13

 Media Analysis IV: Poverty Frames 14

 Homelessness Literature: Media Coverage of Homelessness17

 Summary 20

 Conclusion..... 22

3. METHODOLOGY 24

 Selecting Media Sources 25

 Selecting Stories from Newspapers 26

 Framework for Collecting and Collating Articles 28

 Analyzing Articles 26

 Limitations on Research 31

Conclusion.....	32
4. RESULTS	33
Did San Francisco’s Homeless population Receive more Media Attention	33
Framing	38
Conclusion.....	43
5. CONCLUSION	44
San Francisco vs. Seattle and San Diego	44
Criminality and Statistical Framing	45
More Media Attention is Good.....	45
Further Questions	46
Final Thoughts.....	47
References	48

LIST OF TABLES

Tables		Page
1.	San Francisco Homeless Population Statistics.....	4
2.	Seattle Homeless Population Statistics.....	7
3.	San Diego Homeless Population Statistics.....	7
4.	Different Categories of Frames.....	23
5.	Newspaper/City Table	28
6.	Major/Minor Frame Criteria	30
7.	Different Categories of Frames.....	31
8.	City Comparisons of Number of Homeless Stories.....	34
9.	San Francisco Frames and Results 2005 -2020.....	35
10.	Seattle Frames and Results 2005 - 2020.....	36
11.	San Diego Frames and Results 2005 – 2020.....	37

Chapter One

Introduction

Since 2018, the *New York Times* reported homelessness in California and focused on one singular city in the state as the emblem of the homelessness crisis, San Francisco. In 2020, President Donald Trump singled out the homeless of San Francisco as a significant problem in the state (New York Times Editorial Board, 2020). According to recent opinion polling from PPIC (carried out before the social changes in response to Covid-19), Californians listed homelessness as the number one issue facing the state, with 15% percent of recipients listing it as their number one concern, pre-COVID-19 outbreak (Baldassare et al., 2019). Yet while San Francisco receives a lot of attention for its issues with homelessness, it is not unique within the state, and even within the broader United States. As of this moment, Seattle, Washington D.C, Boston, and New York City all have higher numbers of homeless residents per 100,000 than San Francisco, and yet do not receive the same level of public attention from the nation at large (City and County of San Francisco [CCSFO], 2020). San Francisco's homeless population per 100,000 is less than that of Seattle, and only slightly ahead of Oakland and Berkeley. When a study conducted a national poll from residents in 47 different states, they found that 78% of respondents identified homelessness as a significant issue in their community. With all of this data in hand, the question arises as to how San Francisco became a national symbol of the homelessness crisis.

The question I intend to answer in this study is precisely how and why San Francisco has become the standard-bearer for the homeless crisis on the west coast and

country. To answer this question, I will use a document review method methodology based on methods suggested by media framing literature. The analysis is based on articles from the major national newspapers: *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Times*. Within the media analysis section, I will examine the number of times each city's homeless issues are covered and the context around policy mentioned in each article about the city's problems. Literature about the treatment of the homeless and public attention and care for the homeless informed my approach.

Background on Homelessness in San Francisco

San Francisco does handle some of its reporting of homelessness differently than the national definition of homelessness provided by the national Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD's official description of homelessness states being homeless is when "Living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement; or With a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground." (Applied Survey Research [ASR], 2020a). San Francisco's definition seeks to include those living with family members, in Single Occupancy Rooms (SROs), jails, hospitals, and rehabilitation centers, though San Francisco can only include those in prisons, hospitals, and rehab centers in their official count of the homeless population in the city. Using the federal standard measure of homelessness, San Francisco had about 2,000 less homeless people than by using the city's standard, where the homeless population reached 9,784 in 2019 (CCSFO, 2020).

All of the comparisons made within this paper use the federal standard for the ease of comparison. Still, it is crucial to keep in mind. Some other key differences come from the specific makeup of the city's homeless population in contrast to other cities.

San Francisco may not be unique in homelessness rate per 100,000 or the number of unsheltered homeless individuals, but it is unique in the demographic makeup of its homeless population. San Francisco homeless population does not contain many homeless families compared to the national average. The number of homeless families in San Francisco is much smaller than that of the national average of 29% (CCSFO, 2020). The other subpopulations of homeless people measured in the city are higher than the national average. Homeless veterans make up more of the population than 8% nationally (CCSFO, 2020). Homeless youths and the chronically homeless makeup even larger percentages of the people compared to the 8% and 23% percent nationally (CCSFO, 2020). San Francisco does lag behind in the number of homeless people who are without shelter at night.

Nationally, around 57% of homeless individuals find housing at night, which San Francisco does not reach. Currently, only 42% of homeless individuals have shelter in the city. Compared to other Bay Area cities, San Francisco is performing better, which will be discussed in the next section. When it comes to permanent supportive housing (PSH), San Francisco is ahead of most cities.

San Francisco currently provides more Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) than the national average and ranks among the nation's highest cities. PSH is a housing model that provides long term supportive housing for formerly homeless individuals (CCSFO,

2020). Currently, San Francisco offers 971 PSHs per 100,000 compared to a national average of 461 PSHs per 100,000. Besides providing more PSHs, San Francisco beats the national average of PSHs for households with children. San Francisco offers 105 PSHs for families per 100,000 compared to a national average of 47 PSHs per 100,000 (CCSFO, 2020). The amount of money that San Francisco spends on homelessness in its budget is significant.

San Francisco's current budget is about 12.3 billion, and its spending on homelessness is at the heart of the budget. San Francisco now calls for 364 million a year, or approximately 3% of the budget, to be spent on homelessness issues in the 19-20 budget. That number set to drop to 287 million in the 20-21 budget (Mayor's Budget Office, 2020). As a comparison, New York City spends about 2% of its budget on homeless services (McKinney, 2018).

Table 1. San Francisco Homeless Population Statistics

Total Homeless Residents	8,011
Homeless Families	9%, 721
Homeless Veterans	10%, 801
Homeless Youth	17%, 1,362
Chronically Homeless	31%, 2,483

Background on Homelessness in Seattle and San Diego

Since San Francisco is a county, I will be using King County in the State of Washington and San Diego County to represent Seattle and San Diego. Starting with Seattle, it is apparent how severe the homeless crisis within the city. The numbers in Seattle were actually down in 2019 from a high point in 2017(ASR, 2020b). Seattle's 2017 rate of homelessness per 100,000 in Seattle stood at 1,274 people, the highest in the nation (CCSFO,2020). When it comes to homeless families, Seattle outnumbers San Francisco but is comparable with San Francisco concerning homeless veteran populations (ASR, 2020b).

Conversely, homeless youth make up much less of Seattle's homeless population (ASR,2020b). The most significant difference between Seattle and San Francisco is the number of chronic homeless in either city. Currently, the chronic homeless make up 20% of the total homeless population in King County, as opposed to 31% of the San Francisco population (ASR,2020b). Seattle's homeless population is mostly in some temporary housing. Around 53% of the homeless population is in some temporary accommodation, with a large number of living in cars (ASR,2020b). The most significant difference is the number of homeless people living in a vehicle, with 19% of Seattle's homeless population live in a car (ASR,2020b). San Diego's homeless population is smaller than Seattle and very comparable to San Francisco.

San Diego does not currently have 2019 PIT count numbers available, so all of the following numbers come from the 2018 PIT Report. San Diego's homeless population is around the same size as San Francisco's, but it is considerably smaller than that of

Seattle (Regional Task Force on the Homeless [RTFH], 2018). San Diego's chronic homeless population is much more comparable to San Francisco than Seattle's population. San Diego's chronic homeless putting it roughly halfway between Seattle and San Francisco's chronic homeless population (RTFH, 2018). The level of homeless veterans in San Diego is approximately equal to Seattle's veteran homeless population (RTFH, 2018). The number of homeless families in San Diego is quite low compared to both Seattle and San Francisco. Homeless families in San Diego are only 5.6% of the homeless, smaller than 9% in San Francisco, and considerably lower than Seattle's 22% (RTFH, 2018). The homeless youth population in San Diego is about equal to Seattle's homeless youth, and quite a bit smaller than San Francisco's youth population (San RTFH, 2018). The unsheltered population of San Diego is quite similar to San Francisco and lower than Seattle. San Diego's sheltered homeless population is 41.8%, which a little bit below San Francisco's 42% and considerably lower than Seattle (RTFH, 2018). As the numbers on all three of these cities show, they all have very similar levels of homelessness to San Francisco. As will be demonstrated in the following sections, they receive much less scrutiny from national media and receive less attention from the public.

Table 2. Seattle Homeless Population Statistics

Total Homeless Residents	11,199
Homeless Families	22%, 2,464
Homeless Veterans	7.4%, 829
Homeless Youth	10%, 1,120
Chronically Homeless	20%, 2,240

Table 3. San Diego Homeless Population Statistics

Total Homeless Residents	8,756
Homeless Families	5.6%, 490
Homeless Veterans	7%, 613
Homeless Youth	11%, 963
Chronically Homeless	25%, 2189

Conclusion

Homelessness in San Francisco gets a lot of media attention, and it probably should because homelessness is a severe issue. However, when a single region becomes the avatar for homelessness, it avoids discussing the broader context issue. The comparison between San Francisco, Seattle, and San Diego helps to clarify the actual scope of the homelessness crisis in America. This paper hopes to illuminate the role media has in underrating the range of policy problems, specifically homelessness. The

differences in media coverage of the issues can cloud how both the population and policymakers look at homelessness as an issue. San Francisco is the poster boy for homelessness in the United States. It does not help policymakers and citizens understand the best way to deal with a growing issue, not just in San Francisco but all over the country. Homelessness in America is underrated as a problem because of the way that media cover the topic.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The literature used to help build the mixed methods methodology of this paper uses two different areas of study: literature about the current homelessness crisis in the United States and literature about the effects of media framing on a policy. The literature on media framing will guide the media context analysis of media framing.

In the media analysis literature, a few themes become evident throughout. First, the media emphasize certain aspects of a policy issue, which directs media consumers' attention to a policy issue in the same way as the writer of the story. Equivalency framing is the other significant type of framing categorization, which focuses on how media use academic and scientific data to create false equivalencies. Besides emphasis and equivalency framing, analyzing media framing requires creating sub-categories of frames, some of which are unique to the study, and some are universal.

Literature around homelessness is growing and changing now, as homelessness is becoming a more significant issue in the United States. The homelessness literature around the media is slim but discusses much negative framing towards the homeless from media. Though there is not a great deal of academic literature about the media coverage of homelessness, there is quite a bit of literature around the coverage of poverty in general, which connects up well with the limited media treatment as the homeless. The frames and history of media coverage of the poor will influence what type of language to look for from media sources discussing homelessness.

Content Analysis

Media framing analysis is a form of content analysis defined by Dr. Kimberley Neuendorf as the “study of recorded human communications” (Neuendorf, 2010). Content analysis is flexible, which allows for the interpretation of changes in the wording of different forms of communication. The content analysis encompasses both qualitative and quantitative research methods, but all types of content analysis look for specific communication changes. All kinds of content analysis look for changes in underlying themes indicated by wording changes over time or between different organizations (Duriiau, Pfarrer, and Reger, 2007). Whether following a quantitative or qualitative research approach, the critical tenet of content analysis is the repetition of keywords. The importance of using the keyword is that it empirically shows the centrality of the themes represented by the keywords (Duriiau, Pfarrer, and Reger, 2007). Media framing is one of the qualitative research approaches within the content analysis field.

Media Analysis I: Emphasis Framing

Often a newspaper or a television story starts with an individual's account to draw in the audience and then discusses this individual in an attempt to connect to a more significant societal problem. This type of framing is common, and according to research often helps to disconnect media consumers from seeing the issue as a policy problem and instead focus on the individual. This type of framing is emphasis framing, which leads consumers of media to look at the point through the lens the story was written in (McDonald, 2009). In a study about the effects of media framing around the Columbine school shooting, Thomas Birkland and Regina Lawrence found that people are in favor of

stricter gun laws when people discuss guns in abstract terms. However, when those issues are given a more personal frame, people oppose more stringent gun laws (Birkland, and Lawrence, 2009). Since most of the media coverage after Columbine focused on the personalities and habits of the shooters, most people's opinions about gun control focused on individual choices like parenting and movies as the cause of the problem, not gun laws (Birkland, and Lawrence, 2009). Emphasis framing changed the debate around gun control after Columbine, but placing the wrong emphasis also happens with coverage of climate change. Often, climate change coverage issues are discussed as issues of political will, which obscures the urgency behind the scientific research into the effect (McDonald, 2009). All of these studies rely on broad trends easily detectable from the opening lines of an article, quickly picked out through content analysis. However, some forms of emphasis framing are more embedded in the report.

An article looking at emphasis framing around the Russian-Georgian war underscores the more severe form of content analysis. Instead of finding clues within the totality of the material, it looks at the individual words used to describe each side in the conflict. The authors look for keywords because modern war reporting tends to be somewhat cut and dry in tone. They found that the media used more aggressive words to describe Russia's actions, which in turn corresponds to negative feelings towards Russian among the American population (Arbalti, and Bayulgen 2013). The individual words in these articles slightly slant the media coverage towards the negative by emphasizing one side's fault over the other.

One area closely related to the homeless is how media often portray the poor in America. When looking at media effects on poverty policy, the words used to describe poor people changed how the public felt about welfare procedures. In the 1990s and 80s, media often used the term "Welfare Queen" to describe women of color receiving welfare benefits. This led public opinion to turn to welfare reform to solve what they perceived as a national problem (Baumgartner, and Rose, 2013). These types of emphasis framing by the media change policy debates and public opinion and create different policy windows.

Media Analysis II: Equivalency Framing

Emphasis framing is not the only major categorization of framing; the other major category of media framing is equivalency framing. Equivalency framing goes hand in hand with emphasis framing, and both can happen within the same media source. Equivalency framing is when information from a media story about the same events is presented in a negative or positive light, depending on how the data is reported (Druckman, 2001). Often media consumers do not have a good understanding of statistics, so reporters presenting a ten percent chance of an event happening as high likelihood instead of more statistically relevant outcomes. A classic example of equivalency framing comes from climate change reporting. An often-cited statistic is the percentage of scientists that believe in climate change. When the story wants to present climate change as a problem, coverage will state that 97% of scientists believe in climate change, while if the story wants to downplay climate change, it cites that 3% of scientists are skeptical (McDonald, 2009). Equivalency framing makes data points confusing or reaffirming for consumers, and often helps them ignore significant issues.

Equivalency framing is about data points and statistics and word choice, especially questions asked by media members. In media polls or questions of people on the street, the choice of words can convey very different ideas, like whether or not it someone forbidden or not allowed (Druckman, 2001). While these words describe the same thing, they often confuse the people who answer them and cause them to answer the questions differently. This misleading wording is a common problem with survey questions and is something that equivalency framing should take into effect (Druckman, 2001). Emphasis and equivalency framing are overarching types of media content analysis that exist, and many of these smaller frames will be useful when looking at media coverage of homelessness.

Media Analysis III: Sub-categories of Framing

Emphasis and equivalency framing are significant categories of media framing that take place in most articles, but they do not look smaller. When looking at how media covers disease outbreaks, many different frames are used to analyze the problem. Hawe and co-authors identify many different frames used to investigate disease outbreak coverage, such as ideological, health, economic, societal, and practical (Hawe, et al., 2019). These different frames mean that different effects and consequences are pulled to the forefront of media attention, and often do not come from the same part of the media. The various frames are often visible in the same publication, but different sections cover the story differently, such as the business section focusing on the economic impact of disease (Hawe, et al., 2019). A study of immigration in the Netherlands clarifies how sub categorical framing is carried out with media sources.

When analyzing a sub-categorical frame, it is essential to pull out the lines and words that emphasize specific ways of thinking. In immigration in the Netherlands, any words that focused on the personality and personal history of immigrants went into the sub-category of human interest (Dekker, and Schloten, 2017). There is not much research on media framing and homelessness, but there is quite a bit about poverty, which will provide a couple of frames for looking at homelessness.

Media Analysis IV: Poverty Frames

Poverty and homelessness are not equivalent, but there appear to be similarities in the sub-categories of frames used to describe each. It is important to remember how media do their job and often their reliance on others, especially with hard to quantify and understand the causes of an issue like poverty or homelessness. Reporters often work through sources, and the biases of those sources often influence reporting (Kim, Carvalho, and Davis, 2010). This affects the type of coverage received, as it does not come from the afflicted but from those who deal with the issues at an organizational level. Another underlying assumption in American media comes from American culture. American media portrays poverty as an individual condition because Americans view themselves as individuals and not as members of a collective (Kim, Carvalho, and Davis, 2010). This means that not only stories about poverty, but people in general, are focused on individuals more often in the United States than is typical. Secondly, Americans are skeptical of social welfare programs more often than other countries, which colors American media coverage of social welfare programs (Kim, Carvalho, and Davis, 2010).

With all of these underlying assumptions and biases populating media, it makes sense that people living in poverty receive quite a bit of negative media framing.

The first relevant frame is that media coverage often reports ambivalence regarding tackling the poverty problem. For example, a headline that reads ‘Americans believe poverty is a problem, but are wary of increased taxes’ suggested that people do not care enough about poverty to want more public spending (Nisbet, 2010). Often poverty in the 1980s and 1990s was depicted as a problem created by individuals (Nisbet, 2010). This casual relationship between individuals and their life outcomes is true in how media often frame who is responsible for dealing with poverty. Poor people are commonly placed in two binary categories, which can lead to confusion among consumers in the media. Often, a single mother living on welfare is depicted as a positive dependent, while someone abusing welfare while not looking for a job is considered a deviant (Baumgartner, and Rose, 2013). When people covered and thought about welfare also determined that media covered the goals of welfare programs as getting people off welfare instead of supporting them in their lives (Nisbet, 2010). The changing views on poverty could be attributed to politicization on the issue.

Many factors contribute to the direction of media coverage of poverty over the last forty years. Since the 1960s, Democrats became the defenders of welfare, and Republicans became opponents of the program. Both sides would often advance these viewpoints through the media to influence voters (Baumgartner and Rose, 2013). These views started to change in the 2000s, but progress on improving these is not quick. Since the Great Recession and economic hard times came across America, media coverage has

been more sympathetic towards the poor in general. More recent studies focus more on the intersections between poverty and other factors. Poverty uniquely affects minorities in the United States. New literature on media framing reveals that now journalists are more likely to focus on how policies like welfare reform negatively affected African Americans and single mothers (Baumgartner, and Rose, 2013). Newer frames used in media started to emerge in papers. The invention of social media gave more straightforward access to collect and publish materials directly gathered from those using social welfare programs, instead of relying upon officials or second-hand information (Nisbet, 2010).

Still, a fundamental problem with media coverage on poverty is the focus on statistics, and how low the total number of people in poverty means it is not a topic worthy of media coverage. No matter what the year is, often poverty is covered by talking about the percentage of people living below the poverty level, with no real focus on the human cost of having a high poverty rate (Kendall, 2011). Often besides focusing on the statistical measures, media can also focus on the difficulty of obtaining those numbers. Media regularly report on homelessness and poverty but focuses on the challenge of counting the total population or cite the failings of standard measures of poverty, such as income level instead of talking about the situations of the people involved (Kendall, 2011).

New frames might not matter that much to cover poverty because the amount of poverty coverage as an issue drops continuously. Media coverage of poverty in the New York Times peaked in the 1960s and decreased with each passing decade (Baumgartner,

and Rose, 2013). Diane Kendall, in her book *Framing Class: Media Representations of Wealth and Poverty*, states that this choice in coverage could be a deliberate choice by editors. Kendall says that editors at newspapers do not like to cover people living in poverty because media audiences do not wish to see poverty all the time (Kendall, 2011). Kendall points out that the most common period of the year for the poor and homeless to get media coverage is during the holidays, but the poor are not the focus of the media. Instead, those who make charitable contributions receive attention (Kendall, 2011). Besides focusing on the holiday story about charity, the other common focus of the media is the extraordinary story about individuals who rise out of poverty.

The story of success coming from poverty is familiar, and it makes people feel good. However, it has the unintended consequence of belittling the difficulty of getting out of poverty and make those who rise out of poverty seem more common than they are in actuality (Kendall, 2011). The literature around homelessness will help to provide other frames but also to build questions asked during the interview process.

Homelessness Literature I: media coverage of homelessness

Media coverage of homelessness has not been the subject of many studies looking at media framing for content analysis. However, the tone and coverage are mentioned in quite a bit of the academic literature around homelessness in general. Media coverage of the homeless used to be sympathetic and positive in the 1970s and 1980s, but since it has become more negative (Lee, Tyler, and Wright, 2010). The other underlying factor affecting the media framing of homelessness is a lack of historical context. Though media coverage often compares the current homelessness rate to the rate in prior years, very

often, they do not include critical other contexts like the price of homes and economic conditions (Burns, et al., 2011). This lack of meaning leads to homelessness being covered as a social condition rather than something that happens in a broader context. Like poverty, homelessness is often covered as a social problem rather than a policy problem. One study of homelessness in Denver found this to be the case. Homelessness in Denver was not covered as a structural or systemic issue but as a social problem and often connected in media coverage to crimes committed by homeless individuals (Best, 2010).

Homelessness is often portrayed through a frame of deviancy. Media often discusses the high number of homeless people who are drug addicts and petty criminals, instead of focusing on solutions or other underlying issues creating the problem (Kendall, 2011). Even when the media reports objective statements of fact, middle and upper-class readers may interpret the information negatively. Often media report stories about homeless individuals who commit crimes in an actual matter in metro sections; upper class and middle-class readers usually understand those stories negatively because they, in general, have negative feelings towards common crimes like drug abuse and petty theft (Kendall, 2011). Besides negative framing and negative emotions coming from media and media consumers, often, homelessness is treated differently by the media.

The media do not just portray homelessness negatively; they also treat it as an episodic period in the individual's life. A study of Canadian media demonstrated that media often found stories of short term homelessness. Whether they were attempting to tell the story of someone positively exiting a temporary state of homelessness as a feel-

good story, like stories about people who overcome poverty, media belittle the difficult and the potential long term nature of being homeless (Burns, et al., 2011). Often when something is viewed as an episodic problem, the focus goes away from the systemic issues. Episodic framing makes it easier to focus on personal problems like mental illness and drug abuse, which affect large numbers of non-homeless individuals and distract from the systemic issues that allow people to fall into conditions of homelessness like lack of affordable housing and adequate access to healthcare (Kendall, 2011). Similar to poverty, homelessness is often portrayed as a problem of dependence on social welfare programs. Usually, media covers how homeless individuals violate and take advantage of systems when violators and rulebreakers are statistically a small group of individuals (Burns, et al., 2011). Though the homeless do not usually receive a positive depiction in the media, certain select groups that afflicted do receive more favorable coverage.

Though the homeless are not usually depicted positively, certain groups always receive favorable media coverage. Children in poverty and homelessness always get positive coverage because they are not framed as having the choice about their material position in the world (Kendall, 2011). Though the coverage of children is always framed as not being their fault, the flaws typically seen in the coverage of homelessness are still evident. Often the media discuss the parents of homeless children, and they are not exempt from receiving the typical negative framing associated with the homeless in general (Kendall, 2011). Media coverage of the homeless is often flawed and misses the nuances of the situation.

Summary

The literature around media framing shows that media framing influences different types of policy decisions in various fields. The critical part of media framing is finding the specific frames relevant to media analysis around a different topic. The most central underlying theme of media analysis is selecting the appropriate frames for the topic and using the frames that appear in the literature. The different types of media framing discussed in this literature review will guide the methodology used in the paper. Emphasis framing focuses on where media emphasize their coverage. The press will often focus on an individual's story, which does not highlight the more significant societal problem. Besides whom the media decide to focus on, the word choices used by the media place create biases and make media consumers inherit them.

Equivalency framing is the other major category of media framing. Equivalency framing looks at how the media interpret data points and can create false equivalences through their use of statistics. The most common form of equivalency framing happens with statistics, where five percent is framed to be equal or comparable to ninety-five percent. It can also occur through the use of language, where specific word choices can create false equivalencies. Emphasis and equivalency framing are major framing categories that are evident in most media articles, but smaller categories are framing are essential to proper media analysis.

Sub-categories of framing are up to the choice of the person doing the analysis, and the frames chosen should be drawn from the topics discussed within the article. The

framing categories could include economics, health care, environmental issues, and other relevant media coverage areas and framing. The most relevant field of media framing analysis done on the topic of homelessness is around poverty.

Media framing of poverty has deep literature that will help to illuminate possible frames and issues to look at homelessness. Poverty is often covered in the media as an individual problem instead of a societal issue. This can lead to media consumers blaming poor people for their choices instead of looking at the inadequacies of the system that are supposed to support them. Another frame that often comes up in media coverage of poverty is that poverty is often presented as a single episode in a person's life, making the issues of poverty seem more comfortable to solve. Some groups of people living in poverty, such as children and the elderly, receive positive media attention and positive reactions from media consumers.

A significant factor in media coverage of poverty is the lack of coverage of poverty, as it is not a heavily covered topic by the media. The lack of coverage of poverty could happen because editors do not like negative coverage.

Media coverage about homelessness brings up many similar themes as media coverage of poverty. Often homelessness is covered like a social problem that does not have many policy solutions. Episodic coverage of homelessness is also standard in media coverage of the issue. Even objective fact-based reports from crime sections of newspapers create negative images in the minds of the middle and upper-class media consumers.

Conclusion

The literature around media framing will help to guide the methodology used within this paper. The significant categories of media framing will be the starting point for the analysis. Emphasis and equivalency serve as major frames which are apparent in most media sources, so the media sources analyzed in this paper will be looked at using both emphasis and equivalency framing.

The sub-categories of framing used will be built on the literature on sub-categories as well as the literature about media coverage of poverty and homelessness. Sub-categories in media framing are unique to the subject, even if they fall into common categories like an economic frame or an environmental frame. This is means that many will come from the literature about media coverage of poverty and homelessness like episodic framing or social problem framing. The other important part of the poverty and homelessness literature is that there may be holes in the literature because of the overall lack of sources about media coverage of homelessness, which means that frames may exist that are not previously discussed in the existing literature.

Table 4. Different Categories of Frames

Major Frames	Sub-categorical Frames	Poverty Frames
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis Framing • Equivalency Framing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Framing • Economic Framing • Ideological Framing • Societal Framing • Practical Framing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminality Framing • Ambivalence Framing • Statistical Framing • Charity Framing • Episodic Framing

Chapter Three

Methodology

This study used a document content review analysis of story level mentions of homelessness in *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. The literature utilized in the literature review will help guide the rest of this study, which seeks to answer the questions: Does San Francisco receive more media attention than Seattle and San Diego? And if so, why? Moreover, what is the tone of that media coverage?

The remainder of the chapter follows the following structure. First, I will explain the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal* selection as the media sources examined for this study.

Next, I will discuss how I chose each frame used for analysis and its theoretical backing in the literature or background research on the study's cities. Following that, I will layout the origins and parameters of the articles that were studied and how they were selected. The next section will outline which frames I will be using to analyze the media sources, and why they are appropriate to help answer the primary research question. The final section will cover the tools used to analyze and place stories in the selected frames.

Selecting Media Sources

I choose to focus on the following three newspapers: *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. The reason for selecting the three newspapers involved in this study is to give us the most precise picture of how the media perceive San Francisco's homelessness issue, separate from any local peculiarities. The three chosen newspapers matched selected requirements, and certain newspapers and media sources were left because they did not fit the criteria. More specifically, the three newspapers used in this study each produce a large amount of daily news, provide exclusive features, and offer long-form journalism with in-depth articles. They are also widely respected. All three newspapers are fact-based unbiased sources of news reporting, and according to *Forbes*, they are the three most reputable news sources in the United States (Glader, 2017). The next reason is that these are legacy media outlets that have not changed as much as other outlets over the past decade. Media outlets have gone digital and have faced significant financial troubles over the 15 years and underwent substantial changes in the coverage levels they provide to any of the subjects they cover because of a lack of resources. The three selected media sources avoided diminishing their coverage and continued to cover a diverse array of topics. The last element that led to their selection as sources is the availability of different types of coverage. The *Times*, *Post*, and *Journal* offer different kinds of stories; whether it is an investigative piece or opinion column, they have a diversity of media coverage that allows for different tones and frames to be available for study.

Picking three east coast based newspapers helps to eliminate proximity bias. The Bay Area, San Diego, and Seattle are home to reputable local news outlets, but their focus on local coverage means that they would consider their cities more than any other city. The same goes for *The Los Angeles Times*, which, while a major national newspaper, does have a particular focus on California, so stories about San Diego and San Francisco are familiar.

Selecting Stories for Newspapers

The articles selected for this study mention homelessness at the story level, with homelessness being a significant part of the story, if not the entire story's entire focus. The reason only story level mentions of homelessness were the focus is because it allowed for the keyword search functions of the three newspapers website to be utilized and allowed for research to be carried out. I determined that if a story had homelessness, an essential element of the story is whether or not homeless people were a genuine factor in the story or made an incidental appearance. For example, an article about a run-down subway station that mentions homeless people using the station but is mostly about the state of the subway system would not count as a story focused on the homeless. If a story about the same subway station had a 33% of the article devoted to homeless individuals who live in the stations or how the homeless make others who use the station feel, the story would be considered to have focused on homelessness.

The next decision was deciding on the period of study for the articles selected. I determined that the most reasonable period to focus upon was between 2005-2019, because of significant structural changes to news media during the 21st century. During

the past twenty years, news media moved from a print-based medium to a mainly digital publication. Starting in 2005 allowed for those shifts in media production to already have happened and still an early enough date to get a clear as possible picture of media coverage of homelessness. The ending of 2019 is essential since the COVID-19 pandemic is now the dominant story about the homeless, as it is for many subjects. The vast number of articles about the homeless during the epidemic would alter media coverage analysis since 2005, necessitating their exclusion.

In addition to articles about homelessness in three case study cities, I compiled stories about homelessness in other cities into a separate category, comparing the number of stories versus the three case study cities and San Francisco in particular. The goal of compiling these stories was to see how comparable stories about homelessness in San Francisco have compared to the national conversation on homelessness. This allowed me to move beyond merely comparing San Francisco coverage to coverage of Seattle and San Diego.

Framework for Collecting and Collating Articles

I first collected and collated the news stories into separate tables organized by newspaper sources and then by the city in question. The newspapers were separated from each other by the city to keep the process of analyzing the different frames used in covering the cities and how standard each frame is in each of the three newspapers. This separation avoided broad categorizations about the media and allowed for the analysis of each paper as separate entities. The tables included columns for the headline, author, publication date, and URL. This information helped keep the articles straight, and

publication dates readily available while adding the URL to allow for easy access. Table 3.1 below illustrates how I collated the news source by newspaper and by city

Table 5. Newspaper/City Table

Newspaper/City			
Headline	Author	Publication Date	URL

Analyzing Articles

Framing is a concept that refers to the points of view within an article that could influence the audience. The specific frames utilized by a researcher refer to the language used by those providing the information (McDonald, 2009). Media use frames in order to give information to audiences in understandable packages. Therefore, framing happens as a journalist choose which facts belong within the narrative they want to develop (Carvalho, Davis, and Kim, 2010). Therefore, selecting frames for research is taken from the values and attributes assigned to subjects by journalists and writers (Baumgartner and Rose, 2013). Content analysis literature suggests that these critical words demonstrate underlying assumptions and connections between concepts (Duriau, Pfarrer, and Reger, 2007). This means that researching framing means that the researcher's frames are not developed independently.

The frames I used to analyze the articles about homelessness started with those gathered from the literature but also drew from repeated topics of the coverage mentioned within the materials. Articles sometimes had multiple frames, and some frames that were

the focus of individual stories were only minor points of discussion in others. Within the table used to separate the different frames, each story within the column indicated a major frame within the article. In content analysis, the use of language is central, and word frequency is an indicator of the importance of the words (Duriiau, Pfarrer, and Reger, 2007). I defined a major frame as one at the center of the headline or had ten or more keywords mentioned throughout the article. Articles could have multiple major themes. A headline mention indicates the importance of the word to the ideas conveyed in the article.

In contrast, the ten keyword mentions that the determination of minor frames is also done by word count, though they are different and lower criteria, and the first requirement is between 5 and 10 keywords. The other requirement is that content is incidental to the story and not the focus. For example, a story about homeless shelter not having a enough shelter beds that also mentions an elderly shelter volunteer would have city systems as a major frame because the focus of the article is on the shelter beds, but the minor frame would be charity framing because of the mention of the elderly volunteer. Minor frames were not generally in the headline of the article, though if the headline contains multiple topics, it may be eligible as a minor frame. Table 3.2 summarizes the criteria I used to determine if something was either a major or minor story frame.

Table 6. Major/Minor Frame Criteria

Major Frame	10 Key word mentions, Headline of story
Minor Frame	5 Key word mentions, incidental to story

Concerning content, I identified several specific frames. The first frame was charity framing, which are stories about those who help the homeless philanthropically and are often the focus of articles about people living in poverty (Kendall, 2011). The second frame was ambivalence framing, which included stories about the citizens' indifference to the homeless (Kendall, 2011). The third frame was statistical framing, which are stories about statistical changes and quirks of the homeless population. The next frame was criminality framing, stories about homeless people's criminal actions, or done to homeless people (Baumgartner, and Rose, 2013). The fifth frame was episodic framing, which are stories framed around an episode of homelessness instead of the chronic condition of homelessness (Kendall, 2011). I called the sixth frame, affecting neighbors' framing, or stories about how non-homeless residents perceive the homeless (Baumgartner and Rose, 2013). The seventh frame was economic framing, articles about the financial difficulties, and solutions involving homelessness (Nisbet, 2010). The next group of frames draws from the articles themselves.

The following frames came from the newspaper articles and driven by what I encountered during the collection of the articles. The first frame from the articles start with city system framing. These were articles that framed city systems as failing to serve the homeless population. A specific frame that applied only to San Francisco and San

Diego, I call California framing, as some stories about homelessness deal with California's homeless as a state-level issue mention both cities. San Francisco-Los Angeles framing was a specific frame to San Francisco, where stories talk about homelessness in California but only mention San Francisco and Los Angeles. The next frame, and it only occurred in post-2016 articles, I call presidential framing. President Trump directly made several statements about homelessness in Democratically controlled cities, and his comments were either the focus of an article or a lead into a different story. Table 3.3 shows the framework I used to organize all of the frames for easy comparison and collation.

Table 7. Media Framing Table

Newspaper-City										
Charity Frame	Ambivalence Frame	Statistical Frame	Criminality Frame	Episodic Frame	Affecting Neighbors Frame	Economic Frame	City System Frame	California Frame	San Francisco-Los Angeles Frame	Presidential Frame

Limitations on Research

The core restriction placed on this study is the lack of time. A more comprehensive look at media framing would incorporate national television sources and other east coast newspapers, such as the *Boston Globe* and *Philadelphia Inquirer*. The chief limitation on the study is the lack of time to gather and collate these sources and move beyond the portrayal in the three national newspapers, which are, in some ways, different from other media outlets.

The other major limitation is the lack of time to interview and contact people working in the media and serving the homeless in the selected cities. Recording

interviews would allow for a more comprehensive picture of the media framings effects to be able to be taken. Interviews with journalists would have helped explain how they see the job of covering and reporting on the homeless, and if they agree that the selected media frames are present in their work. Interviewing people who work with the homeless would help to establish the effects of journalism on the actual services provided for the homeless, and interviews would also be allowed me to discern how such people view the media coverage and the accuracy of the selected frames.

Conclusion

This study's methodology was initially derived from the literature about media framing but moved beyond that to consider specifics of framing choices related to homelessness. The focus is on primary national news outlet coverage about homelessness in three selected west coast cities. I explained the criteria for choosing stories that focused on homelessness and determined the frames used. In the next chapter, I present my findings from this archival study of news coverage.

Chapter Four

Results

This chapter will discuss the results of my study in two separate sections, which cover the different questions asked through the research. The first section breaks down the volume of media frames from each of the three legacy newspapers (the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal*) and how they compare to each other in terms of the sheer number of stories. San Francisco, Seattle, and San Diego will also be compared to the number of stories about homelessness nationally. The second section will cover which frames are most commonly used by each newspaper, and which frames are the most common regardless of which publication the article originates.

Did San Francisco's Homeless Population Receive more Media Attention than Comparison Cities?

San Francisco's homeless got more attention from all three newspapers than did the homeless population of the other two West Coast cities that were the focus of my study. In the *New York Times*, San Francisco's homeless population had 31 articles published between 2005-2019. For comparison, Seattle only had eight stories published, and San Diego had five articles. In the *Washington Post*, San Francisco's homeless population had 21 articles published, while the Seattle and San Diego received considerably less attention. The *Wall Street Journal* offered the lightest coverage overall, with less than ten articles about the homeless, but San Francisco still came out on top of the sheer number of articles. Table 4.1 shows the total number of stories about all three

cities from all three publications, and San Francisco gets more coverage from then the rest of the cities and compared to the national amount of stories.

Table 8. City Comparisons of Number of Homeless Stories

City	San Francisco	Seattle	San Diego	National Stories
New York Times	31	8	5	247
Washington Post	21	10	6	306
Wall Street Journal	7	N/A	1	143
Total	43	18	12	696

The three selected newspapers coverage of homelessness nationally followed certain trends:

- All papers covered homelessness nationally, but all three devoted coverage to the regions in which their home offices were located. For the ease of counting, those stories are not included: the national story count includes only stories about cities other than the city where they are located.
- *The Times* and *The Post* are first and foremost local newspapers and focus on local stories, this is especially true of *The New York Times*, which is a community paper at its base. *The Post* is a local paper, but because of being a Washington D.C. based, they also cover the federal governments initiatives and bills around homelessness.
- *The Wall Street Journal* is first and foremost a business newspaper and provided substantially less coverage of the homeless than *the New York Times* and

Washington Post. Often the coverage of homelessness was limited to editorial board pieces which condemned the state of homelessness in America or New York City, but there is a decided lack in depth coverage of homelessness as an issue.

Table 9. San Francisco Frames and Results 2005-2020

Frames – New York Times	Number of Major Theme Articles	Number of Minor Theme Articles	Frames – The Wall Street Journal	Number of Major Theme Articles	Number of Minor Theme Articles
Charity	5	4	Charity	0	0
Ambivalence	0	4	Ambivalence	0	0
Statistical	2	3	Statistical	0	6
Criminality	2	5	Criminality	4	3
Episodic	4	2	Episodic	0	0
City Systems	11	3	City Systems	0	1
LA-SF	1	1	LA-SF	0	0
Presidential	1	0	Presidential	2	0
Environmental	2	0	Environmental	0	0
Affecting Neighbors	4	3	Affecting Neighbors	0	3
Economic	8	6	Economic	0	3
Frames – Washington Post	Number of Major Theme Articles	Number of Minor Theme Articles			
Charity	3	0			
Ambivalence	0	2			
Statistical	5	0			
Criminality	4	0			
Episodic	0	1			
City Systems	3	2			
LA-SF	2	4			
Presidential	5	0			
Environmental	0	1			
Affecting Neighbors	2	5			
Economic	0	7			

Table 10. Seattle Frames and Results 2005-2020

Frames – New York Times	Number of Major Theme Articles	Number of Minor Theme Articles	Frames – Washington Post	Number of Major Theme Articles	Number of Minor Theme Articles
Charity	2	2	Charity	1	0
Ambivalence	0	0	Ambivalence	0	0
Statistical	0	3	Statistical	1	3
Criminality	3	1	Criminality	5	0
Episodic	2	0	Episodic	0	1
City Systems	5	0	City Systems	3	0
National	2	0	National	0	1
Presidential	0	0	Presidential	0	0
Environmental	0	0	Environmental	0	0
Affecting Neighbors	0	0	Affecting Neighbors	2	0
Economic	0	5	Economic	1	1

Table 11. San Diego Frames and Results 2005-2020

Frames – New York Times	Number of Major Theme Articles	Number of Minor Theme Articles	Frames – Wall Street Journal	Number of Major Theme Articles	Number of Minor Theme Articles
Charity	0	3	Charity	0	0
Ambivalence	0	0	Ambivalence	0	0
Statistical	0	3	Statistical	0	0
Criminality	1	0	Criminality	0	0
Episodic	1	0	Episodic	0	0
City Systems	2	0	City Systems	0	0
LA-SF	0	0	LA-SF	2	0
Presidential	0	0	Presidential	1	0
Environmental	0	0	Environmental	0	0
Affecting Neighbors	0	0	Affecting Neighbors	0	0
Economic	1	1	Economic	0	0
Frames – Washington Post	Number of Major Theme Articles	Number of Minor Theme Articles			
Charity	0	0			
Ambivalence	0	0			
Statistical	1	1			
Criminality	2	0			
Episodic	0	0			
City Systems	1	0			
LA-SF	2	0			
Presidential	0	0			
Environmental	0	0			
Affecting Neighbors	1	0			
Economic	0	0			

Framing

The major frames used in particular articles were profoundly affected by which newspaper they were published by as the papers differ in their tone and the nature of their coverage. I have divided the results into three sections: the most striking aspects of the results, the similarities in the framing between the three cities, and the differences between them.

The Most Striking Framing Results

The most striking aspect of the results is that the charity frame appeared more often in *The New York Times* than in the other two papers, and was often the focus of articles in *The Times* focused on San Francisco. In stories about San Francisco, the charity frame articles often revolved around whether or not the wealthy citizens were doing enough for the city's homeless population. Out of the New York Times stories in the charity frame, 4 of the stories focused on the amount of money the wealthy of the city have and how the amount donated by the wealthy is not enough to close the gap. The other charity frame articles had to do with innovation around charity. 3 of the 11 articles had as a major theme innovation in aiding homeless. Articles focused on how the tech community of San Francisco is trying to use their skills to help non-profits and the city. The majority of these stories come from the tech section of the paper, and mostly focused on the tech people, and not the homeless, who are more incidental than the primary focus. The charity stories commonly considered the economic disparity between the wealthy and the poor and the failures of the city systems the charitable actions were trying to fill.

An even more striking feature is the negative framing that ran throughout *The Wall Street Journal's* coverage of homelessness in San Francisco. *The Wall Street Journal's* stories about homelessness in San Francisco were quite different from the other papers because most of them were editorials and opinion pieces. *The Wall Street Journal* is noted for having an opinion section that leans towards conservative points of view, and that explains the stories focused on criminality as a frame. These stories pointed to a proliferation of homeless individuals in San Francisco, and how their deviant actions created are pulling down the reputation of San Francisco. *The Wall Street Journal* saw a high percentage of articles in the statistical frame to show the high number of people committing crimes.

Another prominent theme in multiple newspapers was the Los Angeles – San Francisco Frame: it appears in both *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. I call this the Los Angeles and San Francisco frame because the stories have to do with the wealth disparity between the wealthiest citizens and the poorest, specifically within two well-known cities nationally. The LA-SF frame also ran through coverage of San Diego, though in a slightly different variation. San Diego, like San Francisco, is often discussed in conjunction with Los Angeles in articles, and San Diego plays a unique role in these articles. In both *the New York Times* and *the Wall Street Journal*, San Diego is not the focus of these articles, but it was used to illustrate the claim that California has a homelessness problem in general and that the issue is not confined to San Francisco and Los Angeles

Similarities in Framing of Articles Across the Three Focus Cities

The public service systems of all three cities received the most criticism across all newspapers. The failure of the city systems frames often occurred along with another major frame. They occupied headline spaces or sub-headline space and were always connected to each throughout the article. A good example is an article entitled "Life on San Francisco's dirtiest block" from the *New York Times*, which covered the failure of city systems to help the homeless citizens living on a single block and the wealth of others living in the same neighborhood. Some of the stories about Seattle and San Francisco featured new and innovative ways of servicing the homeless population utilizing the tech industries in both cities. These stories focused on how the cities are trying to work with local tech companies to build homeless shelters and treatment areas. San Diego's city-systems received quite a bit of media attention in 2017. San Diego suffered an outbreak of hepatitis A which required the city to try to take a novel and expansive approach to a public health crisis, where the city sprayed bleach on the sidewalks of the city. Such stories covered the gaps in policies that made this drastic step necessary.

Criminality framing is the single most common frame used in Seattle and San Diego's media coverage, and stories about violent crimes grabbed most of the headlines. Violent crimes, such as the murder of three homeless individuals by a group of teenagers, gained multiple headlines in *The Washington Post*. In contrast, a shooting at a homeless encampment received the same treatment from *The New York Times*. The stories focused on the violence between homeless people, but they usually contrasted the violence with the wealth generated by companies like Microsoft and Amazon. The media coverage of

San Diego focused on criminality framing in a very similar way to Seattle. Still, there are overt connections to San Francisco which link the homeless problem in San Diego with the homeless problem in San Francisco. Seattle and San Diego are quite similar in coverage. Still, the use of statistical framing was most substantial in the coverage of both cities, mostly to assumed a lack of knowledge about Seattle issues with homelessness.

Statistical framing often appears in the coverage of Seattle, and most of it seems to come from an assumption that most of the readers will not be aware of the homelessness problem in the Seattle area. The statistical frame frequently appeared as a minor frame, usually alongside a major frame mostly to give context to homelessness in Seattle. This is different from the statistical framing from media coverage of San Francisco. More often, the statistics framing of San Francisco is used as an argument about the scope of its problem. Statistical framing appeared in quite a few stories about San Diego, but usually as a minor theme. This seems to come from a similar point of view as statistical framing in articles about Seattle, where statistics illuminate the homeless problem's actual depth in each of these cities. San Diego's homelessness is assumed not to be known to the reader in these stories. Often, San Diego is not allowed to stand on its own, as it is often connected to homelessness throughout the state of California.

Differences in Framing of Articles Across the Three Cities

In the economic frame, the stories in *The New York Times* often focused on the disparity between the wealth of San Francisco and the homeless on the other end of the spectrum. As a major frame, it focused on the economic realities that created the disparity

between the wealthy and poor, not on how the wealthy failed to give back to the community as in the charity frame. Instead, such stories addressed how property taxes and commercial taxes have not adequately addressed the apparent disparity between the cities. In comparison to the other two cities, the economic frame was much more prevalent. This probably was due to San Francisco's place at the center of the tech world and its connection to Silicon Valley. Episodic framing took a more prominent place in *The New York Times*.

Episodic framing appeared more often in *The New York Times* than any of the other newspapers. Many of these pieces were focused on individuals' stories, like how individuals became homeless or overcame homelessness. Often these stories focused on individuals with remarkable or exceptional reasons for entering a state of homelessness. One such story centered on a sommelier who became homeless while another focused on homeless people who dumpster dive in the wealthy people's trash for food. The presidential frame was a unique frame to *The Washington Post*.

The first frame that was unique to *The Washington Post* is the presidential frame. As a Washington DC-based newspaper, *The Washington Post* covered a lot of stories about the White House. An increase in coverage of the president is made evident by the number of articles touched on the president since 2016. Since President Trump entered office, *The Post* frequently wrote about the president's comments about homelessness in San Francisco. Most of these stories focus on how the president uses the homeless population to represent the failure of Democratic governance. Still, the stories connected with other minor themes try to clarify the exact nature of the problem the president is

using to prove his point. *The Post* also utilizes the Los Angeles- San Francisco frame more than any other newspapers, and often as a minor theme for the presidential frame.

Conclusion

The media coverage of the three cities reveals that San Francisco did receive more media coverage than San Diego and Seattle; however, the coverage was much less negative than the coverage of San Diego and Seattle. San Diego and Seattle enter national headlines most often when homeless people in the city either are at the center of crime or a health crisis. The realities that created these problems are much less explored and only explained through statistics. On the other side, San Francisco's homeless population received much more in-depth coverage, and the material realities and systems that affect their lives were covered in numerous different ways. In the next chapter, I focus on these results and what can be learned about media and the homeless.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

In this chapter, I will compare my results to the type of findings found in the literature about poverty and homelessness. The literature around poverty and that on homelessness are similar around criminality and statistical framing, but there are critical differences in how city systems framing happens. The final part of the chapter will deal with the lessons learned from the research. My study has implications for policymakers and those involved with servicing the homeless and the task of changing the perception of these issues on a wide scale.

San Francisco vs. Seattle and San Diego

San Francisco had more articles written about its homeless population than Seattle and San Diego. While this is what I expected at the outset of my research, the tone of those articles was not an expected result. Going into the study, I presumed that San Francisco received more negative coverage than the other two cities, but after reading and breaking down the articles, this was not the case. The homeless population of San Francisco received a more nuanced and multi-varied coverage than Seattle and San Diego. San Francisco's homeless population was the subject of stories like living off dumpster diving, going from being a sommelier to being homeless, and the costs a nunnery goes through to provide food for the homeless. Stories about homelessness in Seattle and San Diego seemed to need a violent crime or public health crisis angle to reach the national media. The more nuanced coverage of San Francisco might be

different from that of Seattle and San Diego, but all three cities received a lot of criticism.

The City Systems Frame

The literature on poverty pointed to a lack of coverage of the systems supposed to service the poor. Still, the coverage of the three selected cities extensively focused on the failure of the cities to provide adequate services to the homeless. Some of this focus came from the social nature of homeless services, as opposed to programs involving poverty, usually state or federal programs. Reporters seemed comfortable making connections to the failure to provide enough shelter beds more than they felt able to connect the lack of funding of a program like SNAP as a failure of the federal government. One of the significant lessons of the study is when it comes to media coverage, it matters whether or not a social problem is seen as needing a local response.

Statistical and Criminality Framing

As is the case for stories about the poor, more generally, statistical and criminality framing took up the majority of homeless coverage of Seattle and San Diego. The literature around poverty suggested a lot of the reason behind criminality being so prominent is that these stories are dramatic and draw the media's attention because of their sensational nature. The stories about the murders of homeless individuals were some of the only stories about homelessness that broke through to the national media. Statistics were also used heavily in the coverage of Seattle and San Diego, and the primary purpose was to help illuminate an issue they did not think that their audience was aware of in the first place. This is notably different than the stories about San Francisco, which saw less

criminality framing. When criminality framing was used, it worked within other frames and helped to draw out the more profound problems causing homelessness.

More Media Attention is Good

I went into this study with the belief that San Francisco received more media attention for its homeless population, and this would hurt the city and how it approached homelessness. Now I am more convinced that the more media coverage received by these cities, the more it helps people understand the scope and depth of the problems facing the homeless and those who support them. San Francisco's homelessness issues are highlighted in a way that draws the attention of the citizens and city officials. They are more aware of the scope of the problems facing the homeless, which could explain why we see the wealthy of San Francisco like Marc Benioff (CEO of Salesforce.com) discussing what they should be doing for the homeless. This is not to say that city officials and citizens in Seattle and San Diego are not worried about homelessness. Still, they may not be aware of the scope of the problem in their cities, which could prevent more effective measures being put in place to assist and alleviate the problem of homelessness.

Further Questions

There are some obvious limitations about the lessons that can be learned from this research, but it can serve as a guide to where similar research could go. The main limitation of this study is the lack of time and ability to interview reporters and those that serve the homeless in San Francisco, Seattle, and San Diego. These would help to answer how reporters think that either they alter the discussions around homelessness and how

social workers and policymakers feel that these stories change how they provide services to the homeless. This would help determine the actual impacts of the media coverage on the services offered to the homeless. Additionally, a more quantitative approach might provide answers to whether these have some effect on homeless policy. Such an approach might take the budgets of the three cities and compare them to the number of media stories and see if they increased at the same rate as the budgets. The other and most important question that could be answered with further research is to determine if findings would differ by analyzing a greater diversity of media sources. My study focuses on how the three most prominent national newspapers cover homelessness. Cable news and national magazines like Time and Newsweek are also essential factors in how media influences and changes the discussion.

Final Thoughts

Media, and how it frames the events of the world, is how ordinary people come to understand the role politics and policy have in shaping our world. This influence should not be concerned lightly. The results of my study show that more reporting and journalism done on thorny, complex issues like homelessness help illuminate the role journalism plays in our political and policy landscape. The attention of the media is not always a bad thing. Diligent and thorough reporting uncovers flaws in systems and shows where gaps exist and how people are forgotten by the policies meant to help them.

References

- Applied Survey Research. (2020). *San Francisco homeless count and survey comprehensive report 2019*. https://hsh.sfgov.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2019HIRDReport_SanFrancisco_FinalDraft-1.pdf
- Applied Survey Research. (2020). *Seattle/King County point in time count of persons experiencing homelessness 2019*. http://allhomekc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019-Report_KingCounty_FINAL.pdf
- Arbalti, E. & Bayulgen, O. (2013). Cold war redux in US – Russia relations? The effects of US media framing and public opinion of the 2008 Russia – Georgia War. *Communist and Post – Communist Studies* 46, 513-527.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2013.08.003>
- Baldassare, M. Bonner, D., Dykman, A., Lawler, R. (2020). *Californians & their government*. Public Policy Institute of California. <https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/ppic-statewide-survey-californians-and-their-government-january-2020.pdf>
- Baumgartner, R. F., & Rose, M. (2013). Framing the poor: media coverage and U.S. poverty policy 1960-2008. *Policy Studies Journal* 41 (1), 22-53.
- Best, R. (2010) Situation or social problem: the influence of events on media coverage of homelessness. *Social Problems* 57 (1), 74-91.
<https://www.jstor.orgproxy.lib.csus.edu/stable/10.1525/sp.2010.57.1.74>

- Birkland, A.T., & Lawrence, G., R. (2009). Media framing and policy change after columbine. *American Behavioral Scientist* 52 (10), 1405-1425. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764209332555>
- Burns, K.K, Calder, J.M., Mao, Y., Richter, S. (2011). Framing homelessness for the Canadian public: the news media and homelessness. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 20 (2), 1-19.
- Carvalho, P.J., Davis, G. A., Kim, S. (2010). Talking about poverty: news framing who is responsible for causing and fixing the problem. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 87 (3-4), 563-581.
- City and County of San Francisco. (202). *Homelessness benchmarking*.
<https://sfgov.org/scorecards/benchmarking/homelessness>
- Dekker, R., & Schoten, P. (2017). Framing the immigration policy agenda: a qualitative comparative analysis of media effects on dutch immigration policies. *The International Journal of Press and Politics* 22 (2), 202-222.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161216688323>
- Duriau, J.V., Pfarrer, D.M., Reger, K.R. (2007) A content analysis of the content analysis literature in organization studies: research themes, data sources, and methodological refinements. *Organizational Research Methods* 10 (1), 5-34.
<https://doi-org.proxy.lib.csus.edu/10.1177/1094428106289252>
- Druckman, N.J. (2001). The implications of framing effects for citizens competence. *Political Behavior* 23 (3). 225-256. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1558384>

- Glader, P. (2017). 10 journalism brands where you find real facts rather than alternative facts. *Forbes*.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/berlinschoolofcreativeleadership/2017/02/01/10-journalism-brands-where-you-will-find-real-facts-rather-than-alternative-facts/#428d00cfe9b5>
- Hawe, P., Marks, L., McKinnon, M., Rowbothman, S. (2019). Research on media framing of public policies to prevent chronic disease: a narrative synthesis. *Social Science & Medicine* 237, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.112428>
- Kendall, D. (2011). *Framing Class: Media Representations of Wealth and Poverty in America*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- King, G., Schneer, B., White, A. (2017). How the news media activate public expression and influence national agendas. *Science* 358, 776-780.
<http://science.sciencemag.org/>
- Lee, A.B., Tyler, A.K., Wright, D.J. (2010). The new homelessness revisited. *Annual Review of Sociology* 36, 501-521. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25735089>
- Mayor's Budget Office. (2020). *Budget outlook update*. City of San Francisco Board of Supervisors. [https://sfcontroller.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Budget/Budget %20Outlook%20Report%20FY20-FY24.pdf](https://sfcontroller.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Budget/Budget%20Outlook%20Report%20FY20-FY24.pdf)
- McDonald, S. (2009). Changing climate, changing minds: applying the literature on media effects, public opinion, and the issue-attention cycle to increase public understanding of Climate Change. *IJSC* 4, 45-63. www.ijsc-online.org

- McKinney, L. (2018). *Fiscal 2018-2022 financial plan overview*. The Council of the City of New York. https://council.nyc.gov/budget/fy18-22_financial_plan_overview/
- Neuendorf, K. (2010). Content analysis – a methodological primer for gender research. *Sex Roles* 64, 276-289. <https://link-springer-com.proxy.lib.csus.edu/content/pdf/10.1007/s11199-010-9893-0.pdf>
- Nisbet, M. (2010). Knowledge into action: framing the debates over climate change and poverty. In D' Angelo, P. & Kuypers, A. J., *Doing News Framing: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives* (pp. 43-83). Routledge.
- New York Times editorial board. (2020, February 6). You from New York? You're first on Trump's revenge list. *New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/06/opinion/ny-green-light-global-entry.html>
- The Regional Task Force on the Homeless. (2018). *We all count: San Diego's annual point-in-time count*. <https://www.rtfhsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2018-WPoint-in-Time-Count-Annual-Report.pdf>