

COVER SHEET

This is a pre-copyedited, author-produced version of an article accepted for publication in *Applied Linguistics* following peer review. The version of record Eva M Gómez-Jiménez, Leanne Victoria Bartley, 'Rising Number of Homeless is the Legacy of Tory Failure': Discoursal Changes and Transitivity Patterns in the Representation of Homelessness in *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* from 2000 to 2018, *Applied Linguistics*, Volume 44, Issue 4, August 2023, Pages 771–790 is available online at: <https://academic.oup.com/applij/article-abstract/44/4/771/7059974>.

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Short title: *Rising number of homeless is the legacy of Tory failure*

‘Rising number of homeless is the legacy of Tory failure’: Discoursal changes and transitivity patterns in the representation of homelessness in *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* from 2000 to 2018

Abstract

Experts in different fields have claimed that the United Kingdom has experienced a process of growing economic inequality since the 1970s. Following Fairclough’s dialectal-relational approach, this paper presents a detailed, systematic analysis of the representation of homeless people and homelessness in *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* from 2000 to 2018, in order to explore how these have been discursively represented over time. Therefore, our study addresses two specific research questions: How have homelessness and homeless people been represented in the UK press? Are there any discoursal changes in representation with the passing of time? The analysis, which has employed mostly qualitative but also quantitative (statistical) methods drawing on corpus-assisted discourse analysis, is informed by the theory of TRANSITIVITY within Systemic Functional Linguistics. Results indicate that, within an overall negative representation of homeless people and homelessness in this period, there have been some significant discoursal changes over time. As such, this paper contributes to critical discourse studies and transitivity research on a relevant social problem, that of growing economic inequality in the United Kingdom.

Keywords: economic inequality, class, homelessness, corpus-assisted discourse studies, *Guardian*, *Daily Mail*, TRANSITIVITY, Systemic Functional Linguistics

1. Introduction

Economic inequality has increased significantly in the United Kingdom (UK) since the early 1970s (Toolan, 2018; Gómez-Jiménez and Toolan, 2020), with different factors exacerbating this problem. Regardless of the measures used to define this form of inequality, studies point towards an uncertain, pessimistic economic outlook in this country, with increases in relative poverty, contractions in the average household income of the less affluent and a more unequal wealth distribution if no action is taken. Following a social constructionist perspective, we assume in this paper that the language used in newspaper discourse may have had an impact on the readers’ perception of the problem, particularly through using a discourse that tends to favour the political decisions contributing to enlarging economic inequalities in this country. In this sense, critical discourse analysis (CDA henceforth) can prove useful in revealing linguistic patterns (and possible changes in these) in newspaper discourse over recent decades, especially those that might be less noticeable to the average reader. Though there is a considerable amount of studies addressing different forms of economic inequality in the UK, no approaches with a specific focus on language, to our knowledge, have yet focused on homelessness in this country.

In light of the abovementioned, this paper seeks to shed light on our understanding of the way homelessness and homeless people have been represented in the UK newspaper discourse over time. To achieve our aims, two research questions are proposed here: Firstly, how have homelessness and homeless people been represented in the UK press? And secondly, are there any discoursal changes in representation with

the passing of time? The above questions are primarily addressed using CDA, although corpus linguistic methods have also been incorporated for the quantitative part of the analysis. More specifically, a detailed, systematic analysis of the transitivity patterns, within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL henceforth) (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014), is carried out on our dataset, with a focus on process and participant types, as the two core elements of the clause. Due to space constraints, circumstances will not be discussed in this paper. With this in mind, our paper comprises an introduction to economic inequality and homelessness in the UK (section 2); a critical review of the relevant literature regarding the discourse of economic inequality in the UK (section 3); an overview of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS henceforth) (section 4); an outline of the TRANSITIVITY⁽¹⁾ framework (section 5) and the data and methodology applied in this study (section 6); a description and discussion of our main findings (section 7); and some concluding remarks (section 8).

2. Economic inequality and homelessness as social issues in the UK

Economic inequality is a form of inequity that reflects the social variable of class, an important defining feature of individuals and groups within society. Examples of these features include country of origin, sexual orientation or religion (Gómez-Jiménez and Toolan, 2020). The bigger the rates of class inequality are in a country, the worse their impact is on society. Health issues, for instance, are badly affected, particularly regarding life expectancy (Kondo et al., 2009), mental illnesses (Burns et al., 2014), adult obesity and infant mortality (Offer et al., 2012). Different authors have also shown that higher rates of inequality are linked to violent crime and corruption (Elgar et al., 2013), higher levels of social insecurity (Corak, 2016) or worse educational performance (Morrisson and Murtin, 2013). Even from a purely economic perspective, economic inequality leads to less labour productivity and less regulated economies, and it is more prone to instability with, ultimately, a higher tendency for debt (Iacoviello, 2008), inflation and financial crises (van Treeck, 2014).

Within a global context of growing economic inequality (OECD, 2015), experts in different fields indicate that economic differences within society have grown in the UK since 1971. Just to name a few examples, the average household income of a fifth of the population contracted by 1.6%, while that of the richest fifth increased by 4.7% in 2018 (Office for National Statistics, 2019); relative poverty has steadily increased since the 1980s; and the top 10% of the British population owns 100 times more than the bottom 10% (Rowlinson, 2012: 3). Even if we compare the UK to other countries, official figures establish that the former has one of the highest rates of inequality, particularly in terms of the gini coefficient. As illustrated in Figure 1, this coefficient, which measures wealth inequality within countries (0 representing the “most equal” society; 1, the “most unequal” one), is established at 0.36, with just Lithuania, the US, Turkey and Chile displaying worse rates (OECD, 2020). All these numbers contrast with two crucial aspects: firstly, the fact that the UK experienced the opposite tendency in previous decades, when political parties of different orientations reached an agreement to reduce the economic differences within its society in the post-WWII context (Poverty and Social Exclusion, 2013); secondly, the fact that this country is highly developed, holds a globalised economy and is considered among the largest economies in the world.

Figure 1. Income inequality in OECD countries – gini coefficient (OECD, 2020)

Within the many damaging consequences of economic inequality, homelessness is defined as the state in a household whereby there is “no home in the UK or anywhere else in the world available and reasonable to occupy” (Public Health England, 2019). Homelessness does not just include rough sleepers, but also people sleeping temporarily in institutions and shelters, or living in insecure or inadequate housing. The causes of inequality can be either structural (inequality, poverty, housing supply, affordability, unemployment, access to social security...) or individual (poor health, experience of violence or harassment, drugs and alcohol problems, experience of care or prison...). Although it is complicated to get a clear picture of the whole situation in the UK context, there is evidence that homelessness and rough sleeping have increased substantially since the Great Recession, with some statistics showing a significant increase in the number of households waiting to be accommodated by local authorities in England (from roughly 40,000 to 59,000) or in the cases of homeless prevention reported by the same authorities (from roughly 165,000 to 215,000) (Public Health England, 2019). More recent reports have indicated that these numbers have significantly increased after the Covid-19. For instance, prior to the pandemic the number of rough sleepers in London was around 4,250 in November 2019, while this rose to nearly 15,000 people by May 2020 (Whitehead et al., 2021). Regardless of this, the problem has received little attention from the government, who barely makes reference to the issue in their last manifesto, when discussing the Affordable Homes Programme and the Homelessness Reduction Act (Conservative Party, 2019). This coincides closely with the results reported by Flinn et al. (2021), who have remarked that there has been minimal media coverage concerning this problem, after having conducted a quantitative analysis of more than 8,000 media articles referencing social disadvantage and inequality. Interestingly, other recent reports have determined there has been a shift in the way the Government perceives the problem of homelessness. Prior to the pandemic, rough sleeping was a housing issue alone. However, according to the Kerslake Report (Kerslake Commission, 2021), homelessness is now also a consequence of poor health. Given the pressure placed on the National Health System during the pandemic, the Government since seems more inclined to invest in prevention measures and, thus, reduce pressures placed on the NHS and society at large.

In this context of growing economic inequality and homelessness, we believe that language might have played an important role in this situation. Firstly, because the way that language is used and the semi-automatic choices that are made day after day (either consciously or unconsciously) influence how a society understands reality and how people in that society behave and interact with others. Secondly, because the language employed in mass media discourse in particular may have influenced, one way or another, certain changes in the British societal attitudes and expectations (in this case, regarding inequality and homelessness), by either facilitating or obstructing these. As suggested by Fairclough and Chouliaraki (1999), it is an important characteristic of the economic, social and cultural changes of late modernity that they exist as discourses as well as processes that are taking place outside discourse, and that the processes that are taking place outside discourse are substantively shaped by these discourses. Therefore, approaching public discourses around this or any other social issue (e.g. by uncovering ideological assumptions) will help not just in understanding the problem itself, but also, and to a larger extent, in trying to contribute to solving it. More specifically, we as applied linguists can shed light on the extent to which newspapers may have contributed to this situation, particularly by possibly producing and reproducing a discourse that is supportive of the policies that have made the UK a less egalitarian society today. The British case is of great relevance within and outside the country since this is the sixth

largest national economy in the world in terms of the gross domestic product (International Monetary Fund, 2022), which makes it a model for other less developed economies, especially in the European framework.

3. The (changing) discourse of economic inequality in the United Kingdom

After being considered an outdated object of study for some time, understandings of class inequities in society have received a renewed academic interest, especially since the late 2000s (Machin and Richardson, 2008). Naturally, this generated an interest in class and class divisions that originally arose in fields such as sociology, history or anthropology, and has since stimulated further growing discussion within critical discourse studies.^[2] In this sense, relevant literature on the discourse of economic inequality suggests an overall tendency to legitimise wealth inequalities in contemporary British society. Different studies have found this is produced by (i) the negative portrayal of the benefits system and benefit claimants in mass media (see e.g. Baker, forthcoming; Roberts, 2017) and responses to these (see e.g. Baker and McEnery, 2015; van der Bom et al., 2018); (ii) the support for economic privileges of the most well-off (see e.g. Graham and O'Rourke, 2019); (iii) the disappearance of class struggle and the concept of class from the British public agenda (see e.g. Bennett, 2013); or (iv) the more recent discourse of unavoidable austerity measures (Fairclough, 2016; Jeffries and Walker, 2019).

All that said, we know little from previous studies about how the representation of different forms of class inequality in the UK has changed since the 1970s, when economic differences in Britain began to increase. In this way, this paper is part of a larger body of corpus-assisted work (see Toolan, 2016; Toolan, 2018; Gómez-Jiménez, 2018; Gómez-Jiménez and Toolan, 2020) that aims to explore the representation of forms of class inequality in the last 50 years, based on the belief that newspaper discourse in the UK may have helped in naturalising inequality in British society, economically speaking. Results in this area have already demonstrated that class had mostly disappeared in 2013 TV reviews in the *Daily Mail* (Toolan, 2016), and that discussions about maternity leave benefits became monetized in the *Times* and *Daily Mail* in the late 1990s (Gómez-Jiménez, 2018). In an attempt to adopt a more comprehensive approach, Toolan (2018) identified a number of significant patterns that implicitly changed the representation of this form of inequality in recent decades in the same newspapers. Similarly, Gómez-Jiménez and Toolan (2020) have recently co-edited a volume where contributors have inspected newspaper and political discourse, propaganda and television, all of these helping to make sharply increased wealth inequality seem perfectly normal.

This paper contributes to the existing literature on the changing discourse of economic inequality by examining UK newspapers discourse across time, regardless of their political orientation. We assume here that even newspapers with a more leftist orientation might have changed the way they present forms of economic inequality, to a point where these and related matters are presented as commonplace or unavoidable, as Toolan (2016, 2018) points out. More specifically, this paper looks at homelessness in particular as one of the many signs of economic inequality, because there appear to be limited studies up to this period (i.e. 2018) that have focused exclusively on homelessness as part of this problem (Huckin, 2002), with most research based in the United States (Baum and Burnes, 1993) and Brazil (De Melo Resende, 2016).

4. Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies

In light of the abovementioned, this paper, referred to as a corpus-assisted discourse study, reflects on the issue of homelessness and homeless people across UK newspaper discourse. This dual approach is by no means novel (cf. Hardt-Mautner, 1995; Baker et al., 2008; Paterson and Gregory, 2019), given that it invites an in-depth linguistic analysis, with a focus on representation and ideology, on a rather large scale, thus ensuring that the results retrieved are also generalisable. Thus, CDA will serve here to reflect on the language used, and more specifically, uncover the ideological stance adopted towards homeless people and the issue of homelessness more generally in the UK press over an eighteen-year period (2000 - 2018). Simultaneously, CDA will prove revealing of the power (im)balance that inevitably penetrates a given piece of discourse (Fowler, 1986; Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Meanwhile, CL will enable the systematic analysis of a substantially large dataset, as well as the possibility to determine whether or not the results retrieved are statistically significant.

Although several schools of CDA exist, the one adopted in this paper is Norman Fairclough's dialectal-relational approach (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995), which originates from what was formerly known as Critical Linguistics (Fowler et al., 1979). Critical Linguistics was proposed in the late 1970s (ibid) at the University of East Anglia with the aim of studying language at any of the linguistic levels (i.e. phonological, syntactic, lexical, semantic, pragmatic or textual) within its "social and historical situation of text" (Fowler, 1991: 67). This derived from the belief in an inextricable link between language and context and that our beliefs and values are encoded in language, although they often go unnoticed by the average reader or listener who views the discourse they are exposed to as 'natural' (ibid). Central to Critical Linguistics and, nowadays, Fairclough's dialectal-relational approach, is SFL, which asserts that the language humans use allows us "to make sense of our experience, and to carry out our interactions with other people" (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: 25). According to SFL, it is possible to classify language use into one of three language metafunctions, namely (i) the ideational metafunction, (ii) the interpersonal metafunction, and (iii) the textual metafunction. One could argue that this paper focuses on all three metafunctions; nonetheless, the ideational metafunction remains our primary concern here given that it accounts for how we use language to construe our inner and outer experiences (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: 30) and, to do this, we employ the TRANSITIVITY framework (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014).

5. TRANSITIVITY framework

With a vast number of CDA studies adopting the TRANSITIVITY framework to analyse corpus data (cf. Bartley and Hidalgo-Tenorio, 2015; Statham, 2016; Young and Harrison, 2004), very few (cf. Garcia Da Silva, 2012) have examined the topic of homelessness and none of these, to our knowledge, has focused on the UK context, nor from an SFL perspective. This paper, thus, contributes to the existing literature in the field, not just in the sense of approaching an underdeveloped topic, but also, and more importantly, in applying a framework (i.e. transitivity), which can shed light on how changes in the discourse over time serves to perpetuate certain ideas surrounding the issue of homelessness and those who find themselves in this situation.

TRANSITIVITY, according to Halliday (1973: 134), concerns the linguistic options employed by the speaker to represent his or her internal and external world, along with those who form part of those worlds and any 'attendant circumstances'. When humans interact, we are thought to have our own unique linguistic repertoire, which serves to

reveal how we view reality. As such, we may focus on certain aspects or use certain vocabulary choices in favour of others, which act as an indication of stance and how a particular situation is perceived (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: 217). In order to account for these aspects, Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) TRANSITIVITY model comprises three components, namely processes (usually a verbal group), as in (1), participants (usually a nominal group), as in (2), and circumstances (usually an adverbial group or prepositional phrase), as in (3).

- (1) Three million **are** homeless for all sorts of different reasons
- (2) **Three million** are homeless for all sorts of different reasons
- (3) Three million are homeless **for all sorts of different reasons**

Both processes and participants are considered core items of the clause, whilst circumstances are classed as optional features that proffer additional detail regarding how, where, or why, for instance. Bearing this in mind, the present study focuses exclusively on the analysis of processes and participant types in the corpus (see section 6).^[3] According to Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014: 215) model, the TRANSITIVITY system consists of 6 process types, with each type having its own unique participant configuration, as illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1 goes here

To briefly detail each of the participant roles, a material process, as evidenced, can comprise any one of five different participant roles, including (i) an *Actor*, defined as the one responsible for an action; (ii) a *Goal*, defined as the entity impacted by the action; (iii) a (beneficiary) *Recipient*, which represents the entity who receives goods; (iv) a (beneficiary) *Client*, for whom someone carries out a service; and (v) a *Scope*, defined as the entity over which the process takes place. For the mental process category, each of the same semantic roles correspond to all four mental process subtypes (i.e. cognitive, emotive, desiderative and perceptive). Thus, we may encounter (i) a *Senser*, defined as the entity who thinks, feels, desires or perceives something; (ii) a *Phenomenon*, which represents the thing that is thought, felt, desired or perceived; and (iii) an *Inducer*, which denotes the entity that causes the *Senser* to think, feel, desire or perceive something. Thirdly, the relational process category comprises 6 roles, although three of these pertain to relational attributive processes whilst the other three pertain to relational identifying clauses. Thus, for the former, we may find (i) a *Carrier*, which is the entity to which a quality is attributed; (ii) an *Attribute*, defined as the quality attributed to a *Carrier*; and (iii) an *Attributor*, which ascribes an *Attribute* to the *Carrier*. Meanwhile, for relational identifying clauses, there exist (i) an *Identifier* (i.e. the role that identifies a second entity); (ii) an *Identified* (i.e. the role that is identified by another entity); and (iii) an *Assigner*, which represents the role that assigns an identity to the *Identified*. For the verbal process category, any one of four participant roles may emerge, including (i) a *Sayer* (i.e. the role responsible for the communicative exchange); (ii) a *Receiver* (i.e. the entity to whom the communicative exchange is addressed); (iii) a *Verbiage* (i.e. the role denoting what is said); and (iv) a *Target* (i.e. the entity verbally affected or, rather, evaluated by the *Sayer*). The final two process types and, commonly, the least employed in discourse, are behavioural processes and existential processes, with the former consisting of (i) a *Behaver* (i.e. the one who experiences a physiological or psychological behaviour); and, very rarely, (ii) a *Behaviour*, which closely aligns with a *Goal* and represents the physiological or

psychological behaviour itself. Meanwhile, the latter may include one participant role, labelled as *Existent* and is defined as the entity which exists, whether that be a person, an object, an abstraction, an action, event or institution.

6. Data and method

6.1. Data collection

To explore the discursual representation of economic inequality in the UK newspaper discourse, two national newspapers were selected: the *Daily Mail* (and *Mail on Sunday*), and *The Guardian* (and *The Observer*). Two reasons justify this decision. Firstly (and mostly), these correspond to the newspapers with the highest monthly readership in the country, including their print and digital editions (PamCo 2018); secondly, they include both broadsheet (*The Guardian*) and tabloid (*Daily Mail*) press.

The data was taken from LexisNexis (2019), an online database comprising a range of UK newspaper articles, among other types of documents. The search query used for data gathering was *homeless OR homelessness*, which was used to obtain results from 30th October 2000 to 31st December 2018. We focused on this time frame to include the previous and later years of the Great Recession, which took place in the UK in 2008-2009. To avoid retrieving non-relevant data, ‘low similarity’ results were excluded from the search. The newspaper material (articles, letters to the editor, opinion articles, etc.) was initially downloaded as .doc files, before proceeding to convert them into .txt files. In addition, duplicate materials were removed as well as any that referred to the issue of homelessness or homeless people outside of the UK. Once the files were converted into .txt format, they were saved using information to distinguish between newspapers and time period for subsequent comparative analyses, as illustrated in the following example: *DM-1992.txt*.^[4] The final dataset comprised circa 42 million words, with the distribution outlined in Table 2.

[Table 2 goes here](#)

6.2. Method

In order to conduct our analysis of the newspaper data, two pieces of corpus linguistics software were employed, namely AntConc 3.5.3 (Anthony, 2018)^[5] and the UAM Corpus Tool (O’Donnell, 2016).^[6] Once the dataset was retrieved, the .txt files used were grouped into four year periods (i.e. 2000-2004; 2005-2009, 2010-2014, 2015-2019). They were coded accordingly, and fed into AntConc in order to regulate the length of each example and analyse the transitivity patterns. The UAM Corpus Tool permits analysts to conduct a manual or automatic annotation; here, we used the former/> in order to discuss and debate examples at length. In this way, our study can be considered to reflect a high degree of inter-rater reliability. Subsequent to uploading the texts to the UAM Corpus Tool, it became apparent that the lowest number of examples in the data for a given year and newspaper was 120. As such, and to normalise the data^[7] across periods, a random number generator (random.org) was employed in order to select 100 examples in each file at random. Subsequently, we analysed the transitivity patterns in which the terms *homelessness* or *homeless* appeared as participants. This led to the annotation of 3,200 examples, designed to provide an initial and rather general overview of the representation of homelessness and homeless people in *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* coverage.

7. Results and discussion

7.1. Representation of *homelessness* and *homeless people* in the UK press between 2000 and 2018

When looking at transitivity processes directly relating to the terms *homelessness* and *homeless* in the news between 2000 and 2018, results show that relational and material processes are the most common categories, with both representing 72.7% of all process types in the examples inspected in our study (see Table 3). This may be unsurprising given that material and relational categories are, as Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 215) acknowledge, the most common types across all discourse genres.

Table 3 goes here

If we first consider **relational processes**, which represent 37.95% of the total number of processes in this corpus, what we witness are significant findings regarding the representation of *homelessness* and *homeless people*. More specifically, the analysis suggests that *homelessness* and the *homeless* themselves are associated with many negative societal issues, such as drug addiction, unemployment, crime or poor mental health, as evidenced in examples (4) to (6).^[8]

- (4) ‘... sometimes people who shouldn’t be in the building were coming in – people who had been drinking or who *were* **homeless**.’ (DM 2005-2009)
- (5) SEU found 32% are *homeless* before prison. (GD 2005-2009)
- (6) ‘... Asked [sic.] which client groups *were* most vulnerable to cuts, those surveyed replied: Single homeless people, people with drug and alcohol problems, ex-offenders, people with mental [and] health problems...’ (GD 2010-2014)

In the above examples that employ a relational process, we witness recurrent associations between the homeless and societal problems. That is, in (4), for instance, the idea of those who engage in activity that they are not supposed to, i.e. illegally entering a building, are the homeless. This, in turn, can lead readers to potentially view the homeless as criminals, an idea which is further reinforced by the modal *should*, suggesting they have a moral obligation that, in this case, they don’t abide by. Likewise, example (5) indicates that a third of people who go to prison were first homeless, suggesting again that homeless people are, therefore, criminals and, as such, a problem for society. Examples like this have the potential to perpetuate beliefs in society about not only what type of people the homeless are, but also who, therefore, is responsible for their situation. That is, if homeless people are classified as criminals, one possible assumption people may make is that the homeless must have brought their situation upon themselves and are, therefore, personally accountable for their current living situation (i.e. living on the streets), without any need for this to be stated explicitly. In fact, when examining the issue of blame and responsibility in more depth, the relational process findings also reveal that often no explicit agent is held responsible for those who become homeless, as in (7), or if there is, homelessness occurs as a result of natural disasters or non-controlled events (e.g. international conflicts), as in (8).

- (7) ‘The biggest single cause of the UK’s rising *homelessness* is a PRS tenancy ending.’ (GD 2015-2018)
- (8) ‘... a Kiev-born singer and guitarist who moved to the States after his family were left **homeless** by the 1986 nuclear accident at Chernobyl.’ (DM 2005-2009)

Lastly, relational processes are also used in our corpus (sometimes by the homeless themselves) to portray themselves as invisible, in unpleasant conditions and/or on the margins of society, as in (9) and (10) below. This coincides with Flinn et al. (2021), who have found that people facing homelessness or extreme poverty are marginalised.

- (9) ‘As a **homeless** person you’re on the margins of society – ignored and invisible.’ (DM 2000-2004)
- (10) ‘... it is the millions living anxious and insecure lives, those who know that they are only one payslip from **homelessness**. It is a majority of Britain that no one really represented at the last election.’ (GD 2010-2014)

If we now turn to **material processes**, which represent the second most common process type here (34.75%), the examples point towards the same aspects touched on above; that is, there is often no single, explicit *Actor* responsible for *homelessness* and, if shown, it is (recurrently) a consequence of natural disasters, conflicts or, even, the homeless themselves driving this situation, as illustrated below.

- (11) ‘Labour had ‘fragmented the existing regeneration budget into a thousand incoherent, politically-correct particles’, while crime, **homelessness** and poverty *had risen*.’ (DM 2000-2004)
- (12) ‘He is now helping many others who *have found* themselves **homeless**...’ (GD 2015-2018)
- (13) ‘Without support, many fall into unemployment, **homelessness** and crime.’ (DM 2000-2004)

In addition, we also encounter an explicit *Actor* with a material process, at least in the Daily Mail, as a means of implicitly blaming a more specific (i.e. foreign) homeless population for the issue of homelessness in the UK, as evidenced in (14) and (15) below.

- (14) Are **homeless Eastern Europeans on our streets** *undercutting* our own homeless beggars by asking passers-by for only half the price of a cup of tea? (DM 2005-2009)
- (15) **Homeless Eastern Europeans** will *cause* havoc on Britain’s streets [...] (DM 2005-2009)

Examples (14) and (15) suggest that, should anyone be held accountable for homelessness, it should be those who have come into the UK from abroad. That said, the important thing to understand here is that, as well as the obvious racism inherent in this kind of example, the use of such discursive techniques implies that entities such as the local or national government are not accountable for the issue of homelessness and, therefore, if they do get involved and provide any help or support, as in (16) below, they will likely be depicted as the heroes of the hour who have managed to resolve the problem.

- (16) The government has made **homelessness** a priority and aims to reduce the numbers of rough sleepers to about 600 by the year 2002. (GD 2000-2004)

That said, there is, by no means, an absence of examples describing city councils or the government as *Actors* of a material process in which they fail to solve the issue of homelessness efficiently, as illustrated in (17).

- (17) ‘... the National Asylum Support Service, prompting claims that the city council *was not doing* enough to help its own **homeless**’ (DM 2000-2004)

Meanwhile, those who do come off rather positively, unlike the former, are charities, who instead are often described as helpers of the homeless, as in (18).

- (18) ‘We’ll also be joined by two representatives of Depaul UK, a charity which *helps* young people who are **homeless**, vulnerable and disadvantaged.’ (GD 2010-2014)

Thus, it seems that the government is portrayed in both a positive and negative light across our dataset. However, perhaps this is done with a particular aim in mind. That is, whilst describing the government as helping very little in contrast to charities, what in fact we could be observing is a shift in accountability, i.e. with accountability moving away from the government and instead towards the charities. Thus, the government is no longer required to resolve the issue because other entities are already taking care of it. To add to this, the fact that charities are assisting the homeless may lead one to assume that the issue of homelessness is actually already being addressed, at least to a degree.

Finally, when the homeless are assigned the role of *Actor* of a material process, they are commonly seen as engaging in negative activities within society, as in (19) to (22) below. This, once again, coincides with the findings discussed above about the common associations that are made between homeless people and criminality (e.g. drug abuse).

- (19) ‘... she slept rough, “to experience what it is really like”, and *was attacked* [by] a homeless man.’ (DM 2010-2014)
- (20) ‘I’ve often seen homeless people who *sit* there and drink, and it’s a place I would not walk my dog late and night.’ (DM 2010-2014)
- (21) a large proportion of the homeless are people who *have served* relatively short terms in jail and been released without anywhere to live, making it likely they will return to crime. (GD 2000-2004)
- (22) ‘We were given a job to do which involved dealing daily with people who take drugs, which 70 percent of homeless people do.’ (GD 2000-2004)

All in all, then, we can see that through both negative descriptions of homeless people (e.g. as drug users, alcoholics, criminals) as well as reinforcing this through references to negative activity that they (allegedly) get involved in, the image readers are left with is one in which homeless people are likely to be feared, disliked and, as the homeless themselves explain, marginalised by society. Furthermore, it also appears that no one entity and certainly not the government are considered as responsible for these people or expected to deal with the bigger issue at large.

7.2. Representation of *homelessness* and the *homeless* in UK press across time

We now consider the general trends that emerge between the start and the end of the period under analysis (i.e. 2000-2004 and 2015-2018) in order to determine if there are changes over time. Below in Table 4, the raw frequencies, together with percentages and degree of significance, if noted, of each process type between the initial (2000-2004) and the final period (2015-2018) are outlined.

Table 4 goes here

As shown in Table 4, our findings reveal a notable decrease across the 18-year time span in relational processes (of 9.1%), whilst at the same time, show a tendency for verbal processes to significantly increase (in 8.9%). This is suggestive of a shift in focus; that is, as opposed to largely describing the homeless people and the issue of homelessness (which still occurs, but far less frequently when compared to the earlier years), there is a notable preference across the latter years (i.e. 2015-2018) to give certain people or certain groups a voice. On closer inspection, it becomes clear that one of the entities given status as *Sayer* at this time is political leaders (see Flinn et al. (2021) for similar findings), as shown in examples (23) and (24).

- (23) ‘Jeremy Corbyn yesterday *said* he would tackle **homelessness** by letting rough sleepers move into empty luxury flats.’ (DM 2015-2018)
- (24) ‘May *said* the extra-stamp duty, cash from which will be used to tackle **homelessness** [...] (DM 2015-2018)

Jeremy Corbyn, as Labour party leader at the time, and Theresa May, as the Conservative leader from 2016-2019, are both seen here to be given a voice in order to communicate to the public how they will address the issue of homelessness. As such, they are given the opportunity to sell their policies in such a way that permits them to be portrayed positively, i.e. as the problem solvers or, at least, as the ones who will try to help the more vulnerable in society. This also coincides with example (16) above, where again, we witnessed how the government in *Actor* position of a material clause to suggest the positive action being taken with regard to the issue of homelessness.

In addition to the latter, examples were also found whereby those given the status of *Sayer* were the homeless people themselves, as in examples (25) to (28).

- (25) ‘An art student living in Preston has raised over £21,000 for a **homeless man**, after she says he *offered* her his last £3 so that she could get a taxi home safely.’ (GD 2015-2018)
- (26) The woman who runs the bakery told me about **the homeless man** she had seen, who emptied his pockets in the bank, *saying* "I just want to do my bit" (GD 2005-2009)
- (27) ‘Homeless Bygraves *admitted* robbery at Southwark crown court via videolink from prison’ (DM 2015-2018)
- (28) ‘Stuart, a sociopathic, rough-sleeping beggar with a penchant for "little strips of silver" (knives, to you and me), was in no doubt. "Being **homeless** ain't about not having a home," he *pronounced*, "it's about something being seriously fucking wrong".’ (GD 2005-2009)

As evidenced in examples (23) and (24), it seems that the homeless population are also on occasion portrayed as positive *Sayers* when they are given a voice to tell the general public how they want to help others, in spite of their personal circumstances. Nonetheless, examples (25) and (26) reflect a notable difference in the representation of homeless people as *Sayers*, if compared to the political leaders mentioned above. Unlike Theresa May or Jeremy Corbyn who, when given the opportunity to express themselves, can encourage readers to view them in a positive light, the homeless people are instead sometimes *Sayers* who allege that they are, yet again, either mentally unstable or otherwise, involved in illegal activity. With this, we start to witness a resounding us vs. them dichotomy (Wodak 2015) across the newspaper discourse; that is, whilst political leaders and the rest of society are on one side (and portrayed in a positive light), the homeless are instead depicted as the Other and, thus, in a negative light. To add to this, unlike the positive self-image presented by political leaders, the homeless themselves seem to invite a rather negative image on occasion and, more specifically, have readers view them as common criminals. With that, although on the surface it may seem then that the homeless are no less oblique (as participants) than those in powerful positions because they also emerge as *Sayers*, the reality is that in terms of representation, we certainly witness some differences in their self-portrayal.

Having looked at the more general changes by comparing the start with the end of the 18-year time span under analysis, it is worthwhile exploring the peaks or plummets in process types that emerge during the interim years of the 18-year period (i.e. 2005-2009 and 2010-2014). These findings are in Table 5 below.

Table 5 goes here

As illustrated, the most notable changes during the two middle time periods involve material and relational processes. Thus, we witness a notable decrease in material processes in 2005-2009 when compared to both previous and subsequent 4-year periods. Meanwhile, there is a remarkable increase in relational processes in 2005-2009 when compared to other time periods. Thus, once again, there is a shift in focus in the newspaper discourse with less attention drawn to who does what and to whom, and instead an increased focus on describing the homeless people and the issue of homelessness itself between 2005-2009. On closer inspection, many examples of relational processes at this point in time seem to include references to people becoming homeless, as in (29) and (30).

- (29) ‘54-year old Ed had sunk from successful television journalist to **homeless** alcoholic down-and-out.’ (DM 2005-2009)
- (30) Housing has been the hardest squeezed service of all in the last two decades. The rise in homeless families *should not be* a surprise. (GD 2005-2009)

The increase in references to people becoming homeless is perhaps unsurprising if we think about the UK credit crunch, which began in 2007 and, essentially, led to a financial crisis that took off in 2008, all of which led to a sharp rise in societal issues such as homelessness. However, what is relevant here is that, in using relational processes as opposed to material ones, which decline during this particular time period, it is possible for the press to portray the issue of homelessness as one that occurs on its own almost. In other words, there is no need to ascribe blame or assign responsibility

because no entity is doing anything to cause this; rather, homelessness “is simply happening”.

8. Conclusion

This article offers a contribution to both the existing literature on studies of inequality as well as those studies carried out in the field of SFL and, more specifically, those applying a transitivity analysis. The results from our study have uncovered, as initially foreseen, that both *The Guardian* and the *Daily Mail* newspapers employ discursive strategies that go hand in hand with neoliberalism; that is, they both present the issue of homelessness as if it were a personal choice and, in doing so, often use the homeless people themselves as their scapegoat, as opposed to laying any blame or responsibility with the UK Government. More importantly, findings in this study reveal that there is a notable change in certain transitivity patterns over time. Most notable are the findings of material and relational processes between 2005 and 2009, which show a decline in the number of references to actions and events regarding the homeless, whilst the descriptions of homeless people and homelessness increases. Thus, whilst initially *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* started to develop a negative image of the homeless through providing a description of the (illegal, or at least immoral) activities that they were reported to engage in (e.g. using drugs, committing crimes, getting drunk), as well as attributing blame to them for their personal circumstances, it seems that the focus later shifted towards removing any accountability in favour of, instead, implying that homelessness occurs either as the result of a natural disaster or, otherwise, all on its own. Our results are once again in line with what we encounter in the last Conservative Party Manifesto (2021) and the DHA Communications Project Report (Flinn et al., 2021), both indicating that homelessness is not an issue that the government or society as a whole need to address. In this sense, the changing discourse displayed by *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* has arguably contributed to making different forms of economic inequality look natural and unavoidable, in the same line as some previous studies within CDA have already suggested (see especially Toolan 2016, 2018, Gómez-Jiménez and Toolan, 2020). This study, though, sheds light on how homelessness and the homeless in particular have been depicted during the years surrounding the Great Recession in the UK.

Methodologically speaking, and in the same vein as many recent CDA studies, the incorporation of statistics and software such as Antconc (Anthony, 2018) and the UAM Corpus Tool (O'Donnell, 2016) for this paper has been very useful in highlighting subtle changes that are less noticeable to readers accustomed to the editorial line of a particular newspaper, especially when these appear gradually over time, as results in this study have revealed. This study is not free of limitations, though. On the one hand, while the timespan covered in our data has been restricted to the months between October 2000 and December 2018, we believe future studies should necessarily expand the dataset to as far back as the 1970s, when data suggests inequality started to increase in the UK. In addition, while we have focused here on analysing the core elements of the clause (processes and participants), circumstances could also be inspected in future research. Thirdly, in future research it would be worthwhile to consider additional terms used around the globe to refer to the issue of homelessness and homeless people (e.g. “pavement dwellers” in India) to gain a broader understanding. All that said, the corpus we have compiled in this study can serve other scholars who are interested in comparing newspapers from different political standpoints, as well as those willing to apply alternative theoretical frameworks for the analysis of ideology (such as metaphor,

modality or appraisal theory), and that would fruitfully serve to triangulate results from the present study.

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^[1] Small caps are used in this paper to make a distinction between the theoretical frameworks (i.e. TRANSITIVITY, MODALITY) and other uses of the same terms.

^[2] See the special issues published in *Discourse & Society* (Fairclough, 2002) and *Critical Discourse Studies* (Machin and Richardson, 2008; Silke, Quinn and Rieder, 2019).

^[3] For further details on circumstances, see Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 313-329).

^[4] DM stands for *Daily Mail* (including the *Mail on Sunday*) and GD for *The Guardian* (including *The Observer*).

^[5] AntConc 3.5.3 is a freely available piece of online software that enables concordance searches, as well as the identification of collocates and n-grams, for instance.

^[6] The UAM Corpus Tool is another piece of online software that is readily available and allows for statistical tests to be carried out in order to reveal if one's findings are significant. This program consists of a series of analytical frameworks, including TRANSITIVITY and APPRAISAL, among others, that can be used to annotate corpora, either manually or automatically.

^[7] In corpus linguistics, data normalisation is used in those cases where the amount of data differs across different datasets, so as to equate it and allow for comparisons.

^[8] For the sake of clarity, from now on (i) bold has been used in the examples throughout this section to highlight the keyword under inspection, (ii) italics for processes and (iii) underlining for participants.