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The Media Portrayal of Homelessness in Portland, Maine

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Abstract
On January 24, 2017, 1,188 people were identified as homeless in Maine. The Maine State Housing Authority estimates that 527 of those people were unsheltered or resided in emergency homeless shelters in the City of Portland. People who suffer from mental illness and substance abuse, survivors of domestic violence, as well as unaccompanied youths and veterans represent many of the homeless individuals in the City of Portland (MSHA, 2017). There is an abundance of research on homelessness as it relates to mental health disorders and substance abuse (Sarvis, 2017); however, less attention has been paid to the portrayal of homelessness in the media.

Research Question
What is the public narrative of homelessness in the media of Portland, Maine from 2015 to 2017?

Methods
- Data was coded using the following themes:
  - Homeless Imagery
  - Identification of the Problem
  - A Call to Action
- The theoretical framework of social constructionism and symbolic interactionism guided this ethnographic content analysis. These theories helped to address the social meaning-making process and the influence of the media on public perception.