

Public Policy & Political Parties: A Qualitative Analysis of Homelessness and Poverty  
Reduction Frameworks in British Columbia

by

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BA, The University of British Columbia, 2017

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We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

## **Supervisory Committee**

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### **Supervisory Committee**

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## **Abstract**

This study employed the Qualitative Narrative Policy Framework (Q-NPF) and content analysis as methodological approaches in order to analyze the differences between the province of British Columbia's New Democratic Party (NDP) and the British Columbia (BC) Liberal Party's policy strategies towards the issues of poverty reduction and homelessness in BC. The Q-NPF is a theoretically deductive approach used to analyze narratives in public policy, and its defining purpose is to "empirically understand the role of policy narratives in shaping public policy" (Gray & Jones, 2016, p. 22). Analyzing the policy recommendations and implementations by these political parties revealed how the parties framed poverty and homelessness issues. Three research questions guided this study: (i) Does the characterization of these issues within policy differ between the BC NDP and the BC Liberals, and if so, how? (ii) What narrative strategies did each political party use to promote their policy positions on poverty and homelessness, and how did these differ? (iii) Are there policy-related reasons for the continuation of poverty and homelessness in BC? The results of this study demonstrated that the characterization of poverty and homelessness within policy does indeed differ, which was demonstrated in the narrative strategies of both parties. While the NDP focused on their innovative, 'landmark' policies and programs, discredited and criticized past government efforts, and utilized themes of togetherness and community, the Liberal party's two most dominant narrative strategies consisted of promoting past successes and strengthening economic prosperity. Finally, in regard to the third research question, assumptions were able to be made that pointed towards the notion that there are policy-related reasons for the continuation of poverty and homelessness in BC. However, evidence to sufficiently answer this question was found to be more nuanced and requires further research.

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# 1. Introduction

## *1.1. Context & Importance of Research*

Public policy, and its respective outcomes, can have a direct and observable influence on an individual's life in terms of access to services or rights that were previously inaccessible to them. Further, public policy is a vital tool for social change, often times affecting groups that fall into the category of 'marginalized', and policy change can have a significant impact on societal and cultural values, as well as social norms. This is why public policy is of particular importance when addressing poverty and homelessness in BC. For the purposes of this study, public policy is understood as the laws, regulations, and courses of action enacted by the government in response to a certain issue, that are made on behalf of the 'public interest' and are oriented towards a certain goal (Birkland, 2019).

The motivation for this study, and the reasoning for the choice of location, comes from observing the alarming scale of poverty and homelessness that has been, and still is, occurring in British Columbia (BC). The most recent Homeless Count Report done by the Homelessness Services Association of BC, Urban Matters, and the BC Non-Profit Housing Association (HSABC, UM, & BCNPHA) in 2018 found that 7,655 people were identified as experiencing homelessness in BC in that same year. A similar Homeless Count report on the Vancouver area in particular noted that homelessness is at its highest level in Vancouver since the first regional homeless count that occurred in 2005, which demonstrates a "growing concern about the welfare of Vancouver residents who are marginalized and about how we respond to homelessness in our city" (Urban Matters & BC Non-Profit Housing Association, 2018, p. i).

Public policy can also have a substantial impact on a social issue such as poverty and homelessness. As an example of this, it has been noted that the increasing number of homeless

people in Victoria, BC is a result of societal changes and years of social policy shifts that have both limited the growth of and supply of housing and available income for ‘vulnerable’ populations (Shapcott, 2009). As homelessness numbers continue to rise, the issue remains unsolved. It is evident that homelessness in BC continues to be a pervasive issue that requires attention and new strategies, and so this is a timely and important study. I believe that exploring how the BC NDP and the BC Liberals characterize poverty and homelessness in BC, and what narrative strategies these political parties employ to promote their policy positions on these issues, will provide pertinent findings regarding why poverty and homelessness persist in BC.

During the document-searching phase of this research, it became evident that homelessness policy and strategies were often intertwined with poverty reduction policy. This connection is consistent with research that has explored the relationship between poverty and homelessness (Marston, 2012; Sharam & Hulse, 2014), which will be further discussed in Chapter 2. Thus, it is important to note how the concepts of homelessness and poverty are understood in existent literature.

Homelessness, as a concept, has been noted as a “broad term that can encompass a range of housing conditions”, which can be understood on a “continuum of types of shelter”, ranging from absolute homelessness on one end, to hidden or concealed homelessness in the middle, and relative homelessness on the opposite end of the continuum (Echenberg & Jensen, 2008, p. 1). Echenberg and Jensen (2008) also note that the way in which a problem is defined, in this case how homelessness is defined, has crucial policy implications, as the definition can not only “influence the perceived extent of the problem, but it can also circumscribe the possible solutions” (p. 1). Although there is not an officially adopted definition of homelessness that is used by the government in Canada, there is a widely used and accepted definition of

homelessness that is important to note. This definition was developed by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and was created as a means to better understand, measure, and create responses to homelessness in Canada by providing a common language to address the complex issue of homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2017). The following is ‘Canadian’ definition of homelessness:

Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household’s financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, unhealthy, unsafe, stressful and distressing. (Gaetz et al., 2017)

Here, homelessness is also described as encompassing a range of housing and shelter circumstances, and individuals can experience multiple different living situations, including: unsheltered, emergency sheltered, provisionally accommodated, and at risk of homelessness. It is also vital to note that the issue of homelessness and housing exclusion is described as follows:

[H]ousing exclusion is the outcome of our broken social contract; the failure of society to ensure that adequate systems, funding and supports are in place so that all people, even in crisis situations, have access to housing and the supports they need. The goal of ending homelessness is to ensure housing stability, which means people have a fixed address and housing that is appropriate (affordable, safe, adequately maintained, accessible and suitable in size), and includes required income, services and supports to enhance their well-being and reduce the risk that they will ever become homeless. This means focusing both on prevention and on sustainable exits from homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2017)

Further in terms of defining homelessness, “advocates, researchers, and policy makers have interpreted the issue in a multitude of ways”, most often taking into account the “specific housing situation and the duration and/or frequency of homeless episodes” (Echenberg & Jensen, 2008, p. 1). Aside from the aforementioned range of types of housing situations, Echenberg and Jensen (2008) also note that definitions of homelessness “often contain the element of time”—meaning the frequency and persistence of homeless episodes—which can “have important

consequences for how the problem is understood and addressed” (p. 2). These “broad categories” include chronic homelessness, cyclical homelessness, and temporary homelessness (Echenberg & Jensen, 2008, p. 2).

In regard to understanding how poverty is defined and understood, Akindola (2009) explains that because different individuals’ experiences of poverty vary significantly, a working definition of poverty is “elusive” which makes poverty reduction strategies more complex (p. 122). Akindola notes that despite the lack of consensus on the definition, “the monetary approach mostly retains its dominance in description and analysis” (p. 122). Akindola argues that while “most policy interventions revolve around monetary definitions”, poverty is multidimensional and transcends the traditional definition of a shortfall of income levels, as this is not the only determinant of poverty. It is also noted that improving our knowledge and understanding of poverty “must serve as a basis for better policies” and programs that are “designed to reduce and alleviate poverty” (Webster & Engberg-Pedersen, 2002, as cited in Akindola, 2009, p. 122).

It is important to note here that I view homelessness as a consequence of poverty and see these as two interconnected issues that must be understood in relation to each other. This interconnectedness is further detailed in the Literature Review in Chapter 2.

## ***1.2. Research Aims***

My research will explore how the BC Liberals and the BC NDP engaged public policy regarding homelessness and poverty reduction while they were each in power and formed the provincial government. This will involve analyzing the policy recommendations and the government-enacted public policy regarding homelessness and poverty reduction under each political party. Further, I will explore and analyze the narrative policy strategies that each of these political parties have adopted in order to promote their policy positions on homelessness.

Briefly, policy narratives are understood as those narratives that are strategically deployed by competing stakeholders in order to influence policy, which according to the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) consists of a setting, characters, a plot and a moral of the story—i.e., the policy solution (Gray & Jones, 2016). This will be further discussed in Chapter 3. To explore this topic, I will be comparing and analyzing the policy suggestions and goals that have been put forth by the BC Liberals and the BC NDP. Analyzing these policy narratives will reveal how both the BC Liberals and the BC NDP frame homelessness issues, meaning what the problems are, which actors are involved, and what the solutions are. The following questions guide my research:

- (1) Does the characterization of poverty and the homelessness crisis within policy narratives differ between the BC Liberal government and the BC NDP government? If so, how?
- (2) What narrative strategies do these two government parties adopt to promote their policy positions on homelessness and poverty reduction? In what ways do these policy narratives differ?
- (3) Are there policy-related reasons for why poverty and homelessness persist?

### ***1.3. Ethical Concerns & Knowledge Dissemination***

This study did not require the attainment of ethics approval, as a content analysis was conducted that solely included analyzing various government documents. Because there were no human participants in this study, there were no possible inconveniences or risks of harm relating to this research. This also means that informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality were not of concern with this study. In terms of conflicts of interest, because I was the sole researcher of this project, there were no additional research members, and thus no one involved was seen to be in a perceived, actual, or potential conflict of interest regarding this research project.

Because of the aforementioned nature of this research and its non-inclusion of human participants, the use and disposal of the data collected is not of concern. In terms of the dissemination of the knowledge gained from this study, it is possible that the results of this research may be disseminated through online publication or presented at academic conferences. Further, this thesis may be posted by the University of Victoria on UVicSpace, making it publicly available on the Internet.

## 2. Literature Review

While there is a substantial amount of literature available that explores poverty and homeless prevention policies throughout the world, including in the Canadian context, there is a need for further research exploring the role of political parties and their characterization of social issues such as poverty and homelessness. *There is currently a gap in the research that is important to address regarding poverty and homelessness in BC: specifically, where exploring how political parties differ in their aims to address poverty and homelessness could shed interesting light on why this social issue persists in BC.* Thus, the focus of my literature review was on literature that explored and addressed both homelessness and poverty.

### **2.1. BC Liberal & BC NDP approaches to homelessness & social services**

As the BC Liberals and the BC NDP differ in their positions on the political spectrum, the Liberals being center-right leaning and the NDP being center-left leaning, there are bound to be differences in the policy that is implemented while each of these political parties are in office.<sup>1</sup> Various policy commentaries and responses showcase the differences in the BC Liberals' and BC NDP's approaches to poverty reduction, homelessness and the corresponding social services.

Cohen and Klein (2011) use British Columbia as an example to demonstrate how federal and provincial policies can prevent economic growth from benefiting all but those who occupy the upper-income category. Cohen and Klein (2011) note that when the NDP government was in office in the late 1990's, conditions in BC began to change rapidly, and they "noticeably

<sup>1</sup> The Liberal Party in British Columbia is unique in that it is often very conservative in comparison to other Liberal parties in Canada. This distinction is discussed in the following news article: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/why-the-b-c-liberals-are-sometimes-liberal-and-sometimes-not-1.4100339>

declined after ill-advised modifications and welfare cuts to poverty support programmes made by the NDP government” (p. 59). However, they also explain that the “most dramatic transformation” happened after the Liberal government was elected to office in 2001, when “huge revisions were made to labour regulations, welfare, and social supports” (Cohen & Klein, 2011, p. 59). It is also suggested that the changes to public policy in BC regarding labour and low-income groups “had a direct impact on the income disparity between groups...on poverty levels...and [on] homelessness” (Cohen & Klein, 2011, p. 68). Cohen and Klein (2011) propose that the high levels of inequality and poverty in BC are not solely the “result of economic changes associated with two major economic downturns in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, or even the structural features of the B.C. economy”...rather, they argue that “the decline in social welfare is a result of decisive government policy” (p. 61). Although this research looks at policies from the 1990’s onwards, it demonstrates that the differing policies that have been put in place by the BC NDP and the BC Liberals have led to a continuation and worsening of the homelessness crisis in BC.

Nick Falvo (2018), who is the Director of Research and Data at the Calgary Homeless Foundation, provides an insightful commentary on BC’s homelessness crisis and the various public policy factors that are likely to have contributed to it. Falvo (2018) explains that there has been a steady decline in the overall public operating spending by the BC provincial government over the past twenty years. He notes that as a share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), BC’s provincial public operating spending has decreased from about 22% to about 18% over the last two decades. This downward trend was particularly sharp under the Gordon Campbell BC Liberal government, from 2001 to 2005. However, Falvo (2018) also notes that this downward trend has not yet been reversed, despite the recent election of the BC NDP government. Further, Falvo (2018) explains that while the BC Liberals were in office from 2001 to 2017, the “supply

of subsidized housing for low-income households failed to keep up with increased demand” (Ten things to know about homelessness in BC, para. 2), noting that when the successive Liberal governments did provide new funding for affordable housing, the funding was directed at rental assistance for low-income tenants renting from for-profit landlords, as well as emergency shelter beds and single-room-occupancy hotels. While funding these initiatives is important, there was a lack of funding for other important initiatives, such as new units of permanent, not-for-profit housing for low-income households. Falvo (2018) also discusses some important measures that the BC NDP government has undertaken to help reduce homelessness—among these are a monthly increase in social assistance benefit levels, as well as a commitment within the provincial budget to allocate \$291 million over two years to build 2,000 modular housing units for homeless individuals, as well as \$172 million to operate said units. The new provincial budget under the NDP also includes \$208 million that will fund the construction of 1,700 new rental units that will be operated by not-for-profit organizations, as opposed to for-profit landlords. Further, the BC NDP also introduced a new tax bracket for individuals who earn more than \$150,000 per year, and has increased the corporate tax rate. These changes will help to finance the aforementioned initiatives, as well as other important social services.

In a 2018 news article written by the Georgia Straight editor and reporter Charlie Smith, Smith showcases the differing views of the BC Liberals and the BC NDP in terms of the housing issue in BC, which is directly related to the homelessness crisis. Smith (2018) explains that Andrew Wilkinson, who is the leader of the BC Liberals, penned an open letter on housing regarding the BC homelessness crisis. In this letter, Wilkinson notes that easily understood and clear policies are needed from the government that aim to help with new housing developments for BC citizens. Wilkinson claims that the BC NDP made ‘grand promises’ in regard to their

plans to create more affordable housing, but that their actions so far are inhibitive to this goal. He also claims that the current BC NDP government believes they can ‘ignore’ market trends and address the housing crisis in BC on their own, without partnering with external investors and builders. In response to this letter, Smith (2018) presents the rebuttal from the BC NDP, which came in the form of a news release. The rebuttal claims that the new NDP government’s aim is to focus on those residents of BC who were ‘left behind’ under the BC Liberal government, who the NDP claims gave ‘giveaways’ to and sided with the wealthiest British Columbians. The NDP rebuttal also notes that their housing plan will not only ask for a slightly higher contribution from the wealthiest BC residents, but that this will help in stabilizing housing prices in BC. From this, it is clear that there are stark differences in the ways in which the BC NDP and the BC Liberals approach the factors that affect poverty and homelessness in BC.

In a 2008/2009 report on homelessness, the office of the Auditor General of BC assesses whether or not the provincial government (the BC Liberals, at the time) had laid a strong foundation—via policies, programs, and funding related to homelessness—within which “to set clear direction, coordinate resources and make informed decisions” (Auditor General of BC, 2009, p. 1). Further, the purpose of the audit was to “assess whether government is providing adequate leadership in the effort to reduce and prevent homelessness” in BC (Auditor General of BC, 2009, p. 7). The report also notes that it is crucial for the provincial government to “provide clear direction”, commitment, and support so that entities such as municipalities and non-profits can properly “plan, build and coordinate their services to align with that direction” (Auditor General of BC, 2009, p. 2). In this vein, it is noted that there was “significant activity and resources being applied to homelessness issues, but there is no provincial homelessness plan with clear goals and objectives”...this “absence of clear goals and objectives raises questions about

whether the right breadth and intensity of strategies are being deployed” (Auditor General of BC, 2009, p. 2). The audit also points out the need for a clear time frame and strategies in order to accomplish the goal of eliminating homelessness, which at the time was only a recently identified goal of the BC Liberals. In addition, the audit concludes that “despite putting in place many best practice strategies and programs, government has not been successful in reducing homelessness”...further, it found that in addition to the lack of clear goals and objectives, information about the homeless population and the present services available to them was lacking, which “hampers effective decision-making” (Auditor General of BC, 2009, p. 8). The report also relays the importance of early intervention, noting that there are “typically several intervention points along the path to homelessness where government agencies have opportunity to offer assistance” (Auditor General of BC, 2009, p. 7), which points to the need for a ‘more than houselessness’ approach, which will be further discussed below. Clearly, there were issues with the strategies and policies that the BC Liberals had produced in regard to the homelessness crisis during this time period.

In early 2019, the NDP released BC’s first Poverty Reduction Strategy, called ‘TogetherBC’, which includes policy initiatives and investments intended to help those living in poverty in BC, and end the cycle of poverty. In a Global news article outlining this new strategy, Simon Little (2019) notes that the BC Liberals ‘slammed’ the strategy, calling it ‘underwhelming’, and exclaiming that there were no new initiatives in the strategy to address poverty. From this, it is evident that the BC Liberals and the BC NDP differ in how they aim to address and solve the homelessness crisis through public policy.

## ***2.2. Understanding the interconnectedness of poverty and homelessness***

Of particular interest here is the interconnectedness of poverty and homelessness, which I explored in my review in order to understand what some of the best practices and recommendations are in terms of addressing poverty and homelessness within public policy.

Within the context of homelessness in Australia, Sharam and Hulse (2014) explored the relationship between poverty and homelessness, finding that homelessness is often experienced as a manifestation of extreme poverty, while other factors (e.g. structures and social relations) can also create and perpetuate poverty, resulting in a continuation of poverty and homelessness. The authors also noted the work of Fitzpatrick (2005), who observed that poverty is not a ‘necessary condition’ for homelessness, as many but not all homeless individuals are poor, but poverty can be one within a number of causal factors that are interrelated in complex ways. Further, it was noted that while poverty “looms large” within explanations of the causes of homelessness, homelessness is generally portrayed within poverty literature as “only one of the many indicators of poverty and disadvantage” (Sharam & Hulse, 2014, p. 295).

The existing research has noted the use of prevention frameworks as a means of homelessness reduction and prevention. Further in the context of homelessness in Australia, Parsell and Marston (2012) discuss how Australia has approached homelessness prevention through the identification and early intervention of individuals who are ‘at risk’ of homelessness, which he notes as being consistent with prevailing policies in both the US and the UK. Parsell and Marston (2012) explains that at the “broader structural level”, the primary prevention of homelessness may take on two different forms: “addressing people’s impoverishment, but leaving the housing market/sector the same” or “increasing the supply of affordable housing that poor people can access, but not necessarily intervening to address their relative poverty” (p. 38).

Parsell and Marston suggest that “both types of structural changes are necessary in order to realize sustainable homelessness primary prevention, but efforts to eradicate poverty will likely enhance the sustainability of homelessness prevention and likewise contribute towards related wellbeing objectives” (p. 38). Thus, the authors suggest that primary prevention can occur “through societal changes that improve the material conditions of people so they no longer experience poverty”, and further, primary prevention should “focus more on directly increasing the supply of, and access to, affordable housing” (p. 39). A Canadian framework for preventing homelessness also exists and is detailed by Gaetz and Dej (2017). This framework “situates prevention within a human rights approach” and is said to “operationalize the policies and practices necessary to successfully prevent homelessness and highlights who is responsible” (Gaetz & Dej, 2017, p. 2). The definition of the prevention of homelessness is described as follows:

Homelessness prevention refers to policies, practices, and interventions that reduce the likelihood that someone will experience homelessness. It also means providing those who have been homeless with the necessary resources and supports to stabilize their housing, enhance integration and social inclusion, and ultimately reduce the risk of the recurrence of homelessness. (p. 6)

Gaetz and Dej (2017) explain that preventing homelessness is a human rights issue, and thus they explain why this framework is situated within a human rights perspective:

Homelessness occurs as a result of a combination of structural, systematic, and individual/ relational factors. Addressing the multiple causes of homelessness through a coordinated effort will improve housing stability and reduce the risk of homelessness overall. Key populations are more vulnerable to structural inequality because of racism, sexism, colonialism, ableism, ageism, homophobia, and transphobia; for this reason prevention strategies must adopt an intersectional lens and anti-oppressive approach that recognizes the impact of systemic discrimination on the risk of homelessness. (p. 2)

Further, the authors note that Canada has been “slow to take on homelessness prevention”, and although there have been some valuable local initiatives, these have not been

broadly applied. They explain that the “reluctance to embrace homelessness prevention in Canada” is partly due to the “politics of scarcity” which suggests that “investment in prevention will divert resources from existing homelessness programs” (p. 3). However, Gaetz and DeJ (2017) explain that in actuality this is not the case, as in order to properly function, prevention involves multiple sectors that are outside the realm of the homelessness sector, including housing, social services, health, employment, education, and criminal justice sectors. Thus, investing in prevention must include targeting and addressing the structural drivers of homelessness.

Relating to the forthcoming discussion on homelessness as more than ‘houselessness’ (subsection 2.4), Parsell and Marston (2012) also explain that to prevent homelessness by preventing relative poverty, changes need to occur “further downstream than housing initiatives”—i.e., “eradicating relative poverty and assisting people to obtain financial resources (through minimum wage, full time employment, income taxation and welfare transfers) so that individuals can be more competitive in the housing market” (p. 38). The authors conclude that policy which focuses on poverty reduction possesses the capacity to achieve the sustainable prevention of homelessness, as he notes that moving towards eradicating poverty in order to “achieve primary homelessness prevention is consistent with the policy commitment to prevent the fundamental causes that give rise to homelessness” (p. 41). Given this information, it will be interesting to see how the relationship between poverty and homelessness appears within the documents analyzed for this study, and if the dimensions of primary prevention (addressing/eradicating poverty and increasing the supply affordable housing) are prevalent within the findings of this study.

Furthermore, in terms of understanding poverty, as was previously noted in Chapter 1 Akindola (2009) acknowledges that there is a lack of consensus regarding the definition of poverty, largely because the lived experiences of poverty vary so greatly. Akindola (2009) notes that while policy interventions have largely revolved around monetary definitions, this description is lacking, as poverty has many different dimensions. Thus, successful poverty reduction must expand beyond the monetary realm, as Akindola (2009) explains that although income is important, raising income alone is not a sufficient condition for poverty reduction. Successful poverty reduction, he argues, must involve understanding the dimensions of poverty through the “active participation of poor people in all stages of developing and understanding” (p. 122). The participation of affected populations as informants in the creation of a poverty reduction plan will be an interesting factor to consider within the findings of this research project.

### ***2.3. Homelessness & poverty policies & initiatives: International & Canadian contexts***

Here, I will discuss some of the best practices and solutions apparent in the literature that have been implemented in different countries and are aimed at addressing and resolving homelessness and poverty. These provide us with a point of comparison for the findings that arise from this research.

In his work, Szeintuch (2017) explores homelessness prevention policy in terms of Israel, the United States and Europe—he relays that homelessness prevention tactics are more likely to achieve success if “they are part of a coherent, long-term plan, and are supported by strong leadership, adequate resources, and policymaker commitment” (Burt, Pearson, & Montgomery, 2005 as cited in Szeintuch, 2017, p. 1150). Szeintuch (2017) also identifies three levels of prevention policies: primary, secondary, and tertiary, all of which “include multiple intervention

methods” (p. 1147). He also discusses the importance of addressing all three of these intervention levels. However, Szeintuch (2017) notes that “much remains to be learned about how to organize an effective homeless prevention and rapid rehousing system, as well as manage and mitigate the risk of homelessness” (p. 1150) and concludes that “when political will exists large-scale primary prevention is possible, even in an area perceived to be expensive and complex such as housing” (p. 1151).

Lucas (2017) explores federal homelessness policy in the context of the United States. He explains how the United States federal government implemented a large-scale initiative called ‘Opening Doors: The Federal Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness’ following the 2008 financial crisis in the US, which “launched homelessness back to the political center stage” (p. 277). Lucas (2017) relays how this initiative was “marked by an unprecedented increase in funding for locally implemented homelessness programs”, as well as “a dramatic reallocation of resources”, the “centerpiece solution” being the Housing First model which involves offering “short or long-term housing subsidization quickly and without preconditions rather than as an eventual step contingent on ‘housing readiness’ (e.g., mental stability or addiction recovery)” (p. 278). Among other issues, Lucas (2017) argues that this federal homelessness policy under the Housing First approach in the United States results in “resource misallocation”, “invites rent seeking”, and “perpetuates a homelessness industry that receives concentrated benefits at the expense of diffuse taxpayers, creating a tension between the desire to end homelessness and the desire to continue and expand homeless program via the federal budget” (p. 278). The Housing First policy approach will be further discussed below, in the context of British Columbia.

Macnaughton, Nelson, and Goering (2013) address homelessness in the BC context—specifically, the authors explored the ‘At Home’ housing project initiated in preparation for the

2010 Olympics in Vancouver, BC, which examined the ‘Housing First’ approach as means of ending homelessness for certain vulnerable subpopulations. The aim of the project was to provide housing and support to previously homeless individuals struggling with mental illness as well as substance use. In their analysis, the authors focus on the political phase of the housing project, looking at ‘policy entrepreneurship’, which involves “taking advantage of windows of opportunity, and helping to bring together...problems, politics, and policy” (p. 100). They note that “policy entrepreneurship... helps unify the often-fragmented worlds of mental health and housing-related policy making, and helps all parties move forward with cohesive, coherent action” (Macnaughton et al., 2013, p. 106). They also found that a “trusted insider was able to help advance an idea forward for funding in the political arena, even though only the ‘broad strokes’ of a policy solution were present (p. 106). However, Macnaughton et al. note that they do not address how the idea behind ‘At Home’ “was formulated more specifically in the policy arena to facilitate its adoption at the site level”, and so exploring how this initiative “catalyzes reform more broadly in the mental health and housing policy arenas” is an important issue that requires further examination (p. 106). The significance of this study is vital in that it points to the notion that BC is an incredibly important geographical site for exploring homelessness policy.

Interestingly, Stergiopoulos et al. (2019) recently completed a study that also involved the ‘At Home/Chez Soi’ initiative. They explored the long-term effects of rent supplements and mental health support services on housing and health outcomes of homeless adults with mental illnesses, through the Housing First intervention. As Stergiopoulos et al. (2019) explain, Housing First “differs from traditional approaches to housing for homeless adults with mental illness, which offer housing contingent on the achievement of sobriety or acceptance of psychiatric treatment”—rather, Housing First interventions “consider housing a human right and provide

immediate access to coordinated housing and recovery-oriented mental health support services, to facilitate a shift away from homelessness, engagement with health services, and enhance health outcomes, social and community integration and functioning, without preconditions” (p. 2). The authors also explain that homeless individuals “have a high burden of acute and chronic health conditions, mental and substance use disorders, poor quality of life, and premature mortality”, and further, “homeless people with mental illness in Canada face multiple barriers to accessing services, including poor availability and long wait times for intensive services, variable service quality, system fragmentation, stigma, and discrimination” (Stergiopoulos et al., 2019, p. 2). The Housing First program, which “provides rent supplements and mental health support services” ... “has emerged over the past two decades as an evidence-supported intervention for homeless adults with mental illness, and the implementation of Housing First interventions is increasing” (Stergiopoulos et al., 2019, p. 2). However, the authors note that although ‘Housing First’ is being increasingly implemented, little is known about its effectiveness in the long-term.

Thus, in this study Stergiopoulos et al. (2019) extended the At Home/Chez Soi controlled trial that was done in five Canadian cities, which showed that Housing First improved housing stability and other select health outcomes, and extended the trial at the Toronto site in order to “evaluate the long-term effects of the Housing First intervention on housing and health outcomes of homeless adults with mental illness over 6 years” (p. 1). Stergiopoulos et al.’s (2019) study found that the rent supplements and mental health support services, which are a part of Housing First, had an “enduring positive effect on housing stability for homeless adults with mental illness in a large, resource-rich urban centre” (p. 1) ... “especially for adults with higher support needs for mental health services” (p. 2).

In terms of this study's connection to policy implementation, these findings are of the utmost importance. As Stergiopoulos et al. (2019) note, their findings provide policy makers, health professionals, and stakeholders with “robust evidence on the long-term effects of Housing First”, which can help to guide the “policy and planning in areas in which homelessness is prevalent” as well as to “question the effectiveness of existing support services available for homeless adults with mental illness” (p. 2). These findings “highlight the unmet needs of homeless adults with mental illness and high support needs, even within a resource rich service delivery context”, while also showing the “importance of pairing housing and evidence-based mental health services to support housing stability” within a population, especially for those with high support needs for mental health services, such as homeless individuals (Stergiopoulos et al., 2019, p. 10). In this context, Stergiopoulos et al. (2019) note that “investing in strategies, programmes, and services that enhance access to high quality, inclusive health care, income, housing, and social services is a priority in all geographical areas with similar challenges” (p. 10).

Interestingly, a new initiative has been recently introduced by the Government of Canada—as of April 2019, the Federal Government has launched a ten-year strategy to address homelessness, called ‘Reaching Home’ (Gaetz & Redman, 2019). This new strategy was developed through both extensive community and expert consultations and will replace and address aspects of the previous ‘Housing First’ strategy (Gaetz & Redman, 2019). This means that the funding has been restructured in order to give communities more flexibility in regards how they allocate the Federal funds to address poverty and homelessness. Gaetz and Redman (2019) note that this is a significant shift from the previous strategy, where the “largest communities were required to invest a portion of their federal allocation on Housing First”

(Reflections on Reaching Home, para. 2). While this new strategy still acknowledges that Housing First is a vital intervention “that should be at the centre of community strategies”, the Reaching Home strategy gives “communities the opportunity to explore other complementary directions such as prevention” (Gaetz & Redman, 2019; Reflections on Reaching Home, para. 2).

Another study that explores the homelessness crisis in Canada discusses service and policy responses to the issue. Paradis (2016) notes that service and policy responses to homelessness have “tended to focus on providing material supports to people facing homelessness” and less so on addressing its root causes or its social dimensions (p. 100). Further, she suggests that typically, “service and policy responses confine people facing homelessness to a passive role as objects of policy-making and recipients of services” (Paradis, 2016, p. 101). Interestingly, the previously noted solution of implementing a housing strategy has been criticized in other research as well, which will be discussed further below.

Finally, Serge, Kraus, and Eberle (2006) provide an important discussion on what works in terms of policies and programs for the homeless population in Canada, looking at British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec. Based on their research Serge et al. (2006) suggest that, among other approaches, the “stabilization of the housing situation is a critical first step for homeless persons” (p. 75), “a continuum of [employment] programs [are] needed to address the diverse needs of people who are homeless” (p. 77), and a holistic approach of co-ordination and integration is important in order to address wider issues and create more sustainable solutions to homelessness. Further, they suggest that there is a “growing recognition of the need for housing, employment, and support to work together” on both the federal and community levels in order to combat homelessness (Serge et al., 2006, p. 78). While this study largely looks at federal government policy, it showcases the importance of creative solutions within homelessness

policy, and points to the need for a deeper focus on provincial government policies on poverty and homelessness in British Columbia specifically.

In terms of poverty reduction policies and strategies, research and discussion has largely been done in the international context (see Ramírez Herrera, 2019; Akindola, 2009; Dasgupta & Baschieri, 2010; Murray, Kousary, & Barton, 2009), exploring the utility of various poverty reduction policies in different countries. In the Canadian context, research has been done exploring provinces outside of BC. Benbow, Gorlick, Forchuk, Ward-Griffin, and Berman (2016) employed a critical discourse lens to analyze the policy document called ‘Realizing Our Potential: Ontario’s Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2014-2019’, in which they detailed significant factors that were missing from the strategy. Firstly, the authors note that the “neo-liberal underpinnings” of the strategy, which focused on “productivity and labor market participation”, left little room for an “understanding of poverty reduction from a human rights perspective and the non-economic causes and solutions to poverty (MacKinnon, 2013, as cited in Benbow et al., 2016, p. 106). Benbow et al. (2016) also acknowledge that Ontario’s poverty reduction strategy had a lack of “concrete implementation strategies for each goal and initiative” (p. 106), such as “deadlines, target dates, and thorough action and evaluation plans” (p. 100). Further, the importance of “having narratives of women living in poverty represented in policies affecting them” was noted (McKeen, 2012, as cited in Benbow et al., 2016). The “gender-neutral lens and lack of intersectional focus” within Ontario’s poverty reduction strategy was said to minimize “the commitment and relevance the strategy could have for mothers experiencing homelessness and women as a whole” (Benbow et al., 2016). Finally, the authors note that there was no discussion regarding how the “most excluded individuals, such as those living in extreme poverty and experiencing homelessness, can systematically exit poverty”, nor was there recognition of “the

discrimination and stigma compounding experiences of poverty and exclusion” (Benbow et al., 2016, p. 106). These findings were echoed by Smith-Carrier and Lawlor (2017), who in a similar study found that “no discourse of human rights, or of the rights to food, housing and an adequate standard of living [was] present” within Ontario’s poverty reduction strategy. This, the authors claim, absolves the government “from its responsibility to ensure these rights” (p. 122)—they explain that without the proper “monitoring and accountability mechanisms attached to a rights-based approach”, this poverty reduction strategy has a low chance of actually breaking the cycle of poverty (p. 123).

These conclusions from the analysis of Ontario’s poverty reduction strategy will be vital to keep in mind when assessing the results of this study, as it will be important to consider whether these concerns apply to poverty reduction strategies in BC as well, or, if the BC Liberals and the BC NDP addressed these issues within their strategies.

Finally, Plante (2019) explores the impact of poverty reduction strategies (PRS) on poverty levels within Canadian provinces. Plante found that the “enactment of first PRS through action plans has not generally been associated with reductions in poverty rates” (p. 129), though some province’s poverty rates did fall after introducing PRS (namely Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Manitoba). Despite this, Plante notes that “there have been just as many [provinces] that have seen poverty fortunes stall or become worse” (p. 130). Further, he notes that provincial “success stories” were “more muted when the depth of poverty was also taken into account” (p. 130). However, Plante explains that we can still be optimistic about the “unconditional promise of PRS”, as it has been suggested that poverty reduction strategy’s “ultimate promise may not lay with their immediate impact on poverty but rather with how they change institutional relationships and norms and introduce new opportunities for learning”,

which are likely to have longer lasting impacts (Notten & Laforest, 2016, as cited in Plante, 2016, p. 130).

#### ***2.4. Addressing homelessness as more than ‘houselessness’***

A theme that emerged from the literature on homelessness services and poverty reduction strategies is the need for homelessness initiatives to address and recognize homelessness as more than a lack of housing. For example, Minnery and Greenhalgh (2007) note that homelessness cannot be addressed through “single-focus initiatives” (p. 652), and they speak of the danger of homelessness being treated “merely as an absence of suitable housing”, as this leads to homelessness remaining in the margins of housing and social policy consideration (p. 653). Minnery and Greenhalgh (2007) also note that effective approaches to homelessness must “link the provision of shelter with social support and capacity building, in the process dealing with both socio-structural and individual causes of homelessness” (p. 653). Similarly, Cress and Snow (1996), within their aforementioned research on homeless social movement organizations, reflect on the homeless movement that emerged in the US in the 1980s, noting that little was done on the state or federal level to attempt to solve the homelessness issue, which they propose was in part because “policy initiatives did little more than expand the nation’s network of shelters” (Cress & Snow, 1996, p. 1091). Further, Pauly, Reist, Schactman and Belle-Isle (2011) discuss their proposed policy framework that involves applying harm reduction principles within the [Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness]’s strategy to end homelessness that embraces ‘housing first’—a “harm reduction approach to breaking the cycle of mental illness, substance use and homelessness” (p. 6). Along with addressing the importance of the availability of affordable and accessible housing, the policy framework also focuses on a number of different priorities, including a policy of engaging and including those affected by homelessness,

responding to the needs of specific populations experiencing homelessness (e.g. ethnic groups, substance users), and preventing homelessness through mental health promotion (Pauly et al., 2011). It will be interesting to see whether or not this theme is present within the policy narratives of both the BC Liberals and the BC NDP.

## ***2.5. Concluding remarks***

From my review, it is clear that while there is a variety of literature available that discusses homelessness and poverty reduction policies and prevention initiatives around the world, including in the Canadian context, the homelessness and poverty crisis in BC necessitates a deeper exploration of the policy and strategies put forth by the provincial government, in order to better understand their connection to the persisting homelessness and poverty issues in BC. Understanding the role of political parties and their characterization of homelessness and poverty as a social issue will provide new knowledge to the relevant and important topic of homelessness and poverty reduction policy. In addition, further exploring the Housing First initiative and the concept of ‘more than houselessness’ within BC public policy will likely result in pertinent findings that will shed light on the connection between policy implementation and homelessness and poverty issues.

### **3. Research Design & Data Analysis Methods**

This study involved undertaking a qualitative narrative policy analysis of provincial government public policy that has been implemented under both the BC Liberal government and the BC NDP government. The Qualitative Narrative Policy Framework (Q-NPF) served as the research design for this study and was employed as a deductive analytic strategy. Principles of grounded theory were also drawn upon and served as an inductive complement to the Q-NPF in the data analysis stage.

#### ***3.1. Research Design: Qualitative Narrative Policy Framework***

The Qualitative Narrative Policy Framework (Q-NPF), which stems from the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), was utilized in this study as a method of deductive reasoning and analysis. As Gray and Jones (2016) state, the NPF is a “theoretically deductive approach to the study of narrative in public policy” (p. 4), and the NPF’s “defining purpose is to empirically understand the role of policy narratives in shaping public policy” (p. 22). Gray and Jones (2016) also explain that while the NPF has traditionally been used by “applying primarily science-based quantitative methodologies in high salience policy areas” (see Shanahan, Jones, McBeth, & Lane, 2013; Jones, McBeth, & Shanahan, 2014), they believe that because of the NPF’s “theoretically robust” nature, and with a “slight recalibration”, the framework “can be modified to incorporate qualitative methods embracing alternate epistemologies to address policy areas where limitations on access and available samples restrict the framework’s applicability” (p. 22). This is demonstrated in Gray and Jones’ (2016) study, where they successfully employed the Q-NPF in order to analyze policy narratives in US campaign finance reform, noting that the incorporation of qualitative methods within the NPF is “critical for the framework’s overall development”, and provides “opportunities for more detailed description, inductive forms of

inquiry, and grounded theory development in policy areas where sample sizes, access, and salience may limit quantitative approaches” (p. 1). Thus, this framework aligned well with my study as I compared the policy narratives between two political parties and their characterization of poverty reduction and homelessness issues.

The NPF has two models of analysis: narrative form and narrative content (Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth, 2018). For this study, I will be completing a narrative content analysis. The NPF begins with a generalizable definition of ‘policy narratives’, defining them as consisting of a setting, characters, a plot, and a moral of the story (Jones et al., 2014; McBeth et al., 2014, as cited in Gray & Jones, 2016). A key component of the NPF is the understanding that within any policy narrative, there will be generalizable structural elements, meaning that narratives have specific and identifiable structures (Shanahan et al., 2018). The core NPF narrative components are explained as follows by Shanahan et al. (2018):

1. **Setting:** Space and time, meaning the space where the action of the story takes place over time. Settings can be understood as the spatial context of immediate surroundings, or as a broader “social-economic-geographic-political context” (Phelan & Rabinowitz, 2012).
2. **Characters:** Those who act or are acted upon within a narrative. Characters can be individuals, agencies, and/or groups. Heroes (the potential problem-solver of the policy issue), villains (the entity causing the policy issue), and victims (the entity being harmed by the villain) can also be defined. Allies and opponents can also be defined. These characters do not necessarily have to have human agency.
3. **Plot:** Organizes the action. Plot is the narrative element that links the characters to each other and to the setting of the story.
4. **Moral of the story:** The policy solution within the policy narrative, which is often seen as

the action of the ‘hero’ to protect the ‘victim’. This often culminates in a call to action.

Intermediary steps can also be offered as the moral of the story rather than specific policy solutions.

5. ***Belief system:*** The set of values or beliefs that aligns individuals, groups, coalitions, and societies. The NPF assumes that individuals are largely stable in their orientations towards values.
6. ***Strategies:*** Ways in which narrators shape policy realities by manipulating/controlling policy processes. This means that the policy narratives that are communicated are crafted with purpose in order to persuade, recruit, or to dampen or incite conflict.

Shanahan et al. (2018) explain that, while the aforementioned narrative elements are the “structural building blocks of narrative”, employing a policy narrative content analysis “infuses meaning into these narrative elements to create policy realities” (p. 336). In terms of the narrative elements, Shanahan et al. (2018) also explain that a policy narrative must meet the following expectations: it must have at least one character, and it must refer to the public policy of interest. Further, Gray and Jones (2016) explain that NPF research is divided into three separate levels of analysis that researchers can employ when using the NPF:

1. ***Macro-level analysis:*** Focuses on institutional and cultural policy narratives.
2. ***Meso-level analysis:*** Focuses on group and coalitional policy narratives.
3. ***Micro-level analysis:*** Focuses on the influence of policy narratives on individuals.

This study employed a meso-level analysis, as the unit of analysis was policy narratives of a group/coalition (McBeth, Jones, & Shanahan, 2014)—the BC Liberal and the BC NDP governments. Further, this study was “concerned with policy narratives from policy actors” (Shanahan et al., 2018, p. 340), the research focus being on “how policy actors construct and

communicate narratives to influence the policy process” (Shanahan et al., 2018, p. 334).

NPF studies fall within two general research design categories: experimental and quasi-experimental designs, and non-experimental designs. For this study, I employed an NPF non-experimental research design by completing a comparative study, as I compared the policy narratives of two political parties. Survey and interview methods are commonly used as data collection methods when utilizing the NPF, while content analysis is commonly used as a method of analysis—further, it was noted that the NPF has its roots in the method of content analysis (McBeth et al., 2005, as cited in Shanahan et al., 2018). As has been mentioned, for this study I utilized the method of content analysis.

It was useful to utilize this research framework when exploring the nuances of policy stances regarding poverty and homelessness for both the BC NDP and the BC Liberals. As Shanahan et al. (2018) explain, policy process research aims to understand the “complexity of temporal interactions between public policy and policy actors, events, contexts, and outcomes”, and employing the NPF allowed me to address the research question; what is the role of policy narratives in the policy process? (p. 332). Furthermore, Gray and Jones (2016) note that the NPF is useful when studying “the policy narratives of a select few stakeholders due to their importance as agenda setters or decision makers” (p. 22). Thus, utilizing the NPF was particularly beneficial as the focus of my study was on political parties, who fulfill the role of agenda setters and decision makers when in office.

### ***3.2. Data Collection***

In order to find the appropriate policy documents, I collected and analyzed publicly accessible government documents that outlined public policy which was proposed to address the various aspects of poverty reduction and homelessness. In order to source relevant government

documents, I first completed a purposive search by using the ‘search tools’ on the Government of British Columbia’s website. This tool allowed me to narrow my search by using the following key search words both exclusively and in combination with each other: ‘homeless’, ‘housing’, ‘poverty reduction’, ‘policy’, ‘strategy’, and ‘plan’. The search tools also allowed me to sort the findings by relevance and date and narrow my search by looking solely at government-related documents. This means that I was able to specifically search within the sampling timeframe for each political party, which is detailed below. The full list of search terms and the number of results that they yielded can be found in Appendix A. Due to the limitations in the scope of this study, temporal parameters were applied in order to make the data analysis process feasible, given the vast number of materials that arose from the utilized search terms. Thus, I sorted this search by ‘best match’ and reviewed the first five pages of each search. This limitation will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

In addition, I utilized the ‘search tools’ on the BC Housing website, using the same combinations of key search words as above: ‘homeless’, ‘housing’, ‘poverty reduction’, ‘policy’, ‘strategy’, and ‘plan’. The full list of these search terms can be found in Appendix B. I also completed an additional document search where I entered the combinations of the terms indicated above into Google’s online search engine. Here, Boolean searches were conducted in order to limit the search results, which are said to streamline the search process and narrow down the results to include only the most relevant material (Elston, 2020). To do this, I combined the above key search words with the Boolean operator of ‘AND’ (typical Boolean operators are AND, NOT, and OR). Using ‘AND’ as the Boolean operator limits searches to articles that contain both of the search terms (Elston, 2020). Thus, the following search terms were used: ‘homeless’, ‘housing’, and ‘poverty reduction’ were each searched for separately in combination

with the terms ‘policy’, ‘strategy’, and ‘plan’. The term ‘British Columbia’ was also included in each of these searches, as well as either the term ‘Liberal’ or ‘NDP’. Further, the corresponding years for each political party were included in the searches (e.g. AND 2015, AND 2016, etc.). An example of this search process is as follows: British Columbia AND Liberal AND homeless AND policy AND 2016. The full list of these Boolean search terms and the number of results that each search yielded can be found in Appendix C.

The purposive search method was utilized here because it provides a researcher with a non-random, non-probability sample (Lavrakas, 2008). In purposive sampling, subjective methods are utilized to decide which elements should be included in the sample (Lavrakas, 2008), which was useful and necessary for my research purposes because this was an additional step in ensuring that I could source important documents that may have been excluded from my systematic search.

### ***3.2.1. Data Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria***

I contained my search to include documents from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014 to July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017 for the BC Liberal Party, and July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017 to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019 for the BC NDP. This is because in 2017, the provincial election resulted in a hung parliament, meaning that a Liberal minority government was in office until July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017, and thereafter the BC NDP took office as a minority government, with support from the Green Party. Although the sampling timeframe was intended to be equal (January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 to July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017 for the BC Liberal Party, and July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017 to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019 for the BC NDP), it arose that important documents from the BC Liberals were published in the year 2014 that would have skewed the analysis if they were not included. Further, as the BC NDP only came into power mid-2017, the sampling timeframe for the NDP could not be extended to match the BC Liberal’s timeframe. Thus, the chosen

timeframe was used to ensure that documents from a similar timeframe were sampled for each political party. This also ensured that the information would be the most recent and relevant.

Documents needed to meet the following inclusion criteria in order to be included in this study:

- 1. The document was published between January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014 and December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019.*
- 2. The document was published by or in partnership with the Government of British Columbia.*
- 3. The document mandates a type of action/strategy to address poverty and/or homelessness.*
- 4. The document was created as a specific poverty or homelessness reduction policy/plan, or as a part of larger policy document that outlines strategies towards addressing poverty reduction and homelessness.*

In addition, the following exclusion criteria was created and utilized in order to select the documents that were to be included in this study:

- 1. Policy documents that were published by/with the federal government.*
- 2. Policy documents that were published by/with municipal governments.*
- 3. Documents published by/with advocacy organizations.*
- 4. Documents published by policy institutes.*
- 5. Budget reports/updates.*
- 6. News articles.*
- 7. Policy/program progress reports and evaluations.*
- 8. Homeless counts.*
- 9. Government mandates.*
- 10. Consultation reports.*

Given the limitations of this study in terms of time and scope, the use of purposive sampling, as discussed above, was necessary in order to select the most appropriate documents out of the large number of documents that were available from the search terms that were utilized. Thus, once each search was completed, the exclusion and inclusion criterion were

applied, and then purposive sampling was employed in order to source the most recent and relevant documents. Based on the first five pages of the Google results, BC government website, and BC Housing website searches, I initially reviewed twenty-one documents. From this initial sample, fifteen documents were excluded based on the above inclusion and exclusion criterion as well as purposive sampling. These excluded documents included budget reports/updates (N = 3), documents published by non-governmental policy institutes (N = 3), municipal government documents (N = 3), policy and program reports/evaluations (N = 1), government mandates (N = 1), documents published by/with advocacy organizations (N = 3), and homeless counts (N = 1). Through this process, I came to my final sample of six documents—three from the BC NDP and three from the BC Liberal party.

Analyzing government policy documents allowed me to explore and understand what each political party's poverty reduction and homelessness policies outline, and compare them using the Q-NPF in order to better understand the differences in the characterization of the poverty and homelessness crisis.

### ***3.3. Data Analysis Method: Content Analysis***

As was noted above, in order to complete a Qualitative Narrative Policy analysis, I completed a content analysis of public policy documents. This method was fitting for the purposes of this research project, as Krippendorff (2004) defines content analysis as a “research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (p. 18). Further, Bengtsson (2016) notes that studies utilizing content analysis can be of a “descriptive or exploratory nature based on inductive or deductive reasoning”, inductive reasoning being the “process of developing conclusions from collected data by weaving together new information into theories” (p. 9). Thus, the purposes of content

analysis align with my study because I employed an exploratory inductive strategy, where I did not begin my study with hypotheses, but rather I developed an understanding of the data through my research, in order to provide answers to my initial research questions. Furthermore, in terms of the sample size and units of analysis, content analysis allows for the sample size to be determined based on the informational needs to ensure that the research question(s) can be answered with sufficient confidence—there are “no established criteria when using content analysis for the size of a unit of analysis” (Bengtsson, 2016, p. 10). Bengtsson (2016) describes the four stages of analysis within content analysis, which informed my analytic process:

1. ***Decontextualization:*** Involves breaking down information into smaller meaning units, which facilitates the identification of concepts within the data.
2. ***Recontextualization:*** Involves checking whether all aspects of the content have been covered in relation to the aim of the research.
3. ***Categorization:*** Involves identifying themes and categories within the data.
4. ***Compilation:*** Involves the analysis and write-up process.

### ***3.4. Data Coding & Analysis***

As has been mentioned, I utilized both deductive and inductive coding processes in order to complete a content analysis of the public policy documents. I employed both the qualitative narrative policy framework and principles of grounded theory as methodological approaches to code and analyze the data, as will be detailed in the following sections. Within the data coding and analysis stages of my research, I utilized the qualitative software analysis computer program Atlas.ti (Version 8.4.4) to both deductively and inductively code the policy documents. This program allowed me to import the policy documents into the software program and input my codebook, which was developed from the NPF’s narrative elements. At the end of the coding

process, I had a total of 64 codes which were used to analyze the documents. The codebook that was utilized is detailed in Appendix D.

### ***3.4.1. Deductive Coding: Qualitative Narrative Policy Framework***

I chose to deductively code my data using the Qualitative Narrative Policy Framework because the Q-NPF, as previously discussed, proposes that narratives have specific and identifiable structural elements (Shanahan et al., 2018). Again, these narrative components are as follows: the setting, characters, plot, moral of the story, belief system, and narrative strategies. Utilizing a number of these structural elements allowed me to deductively code for specific information within the policy narratives. It is important to clarify that the Q-NPF was used as a means to initially categorize the data, and thus the deductive aspect of the Q-NPF involved utilizing the preconceived codes which guided the data analysis (these codes can be found in Appendix D).

In regard to the above narrative elements, as has been noted in NPF literature, the researcher is not required to utilize all of the narrative components of the NPF: in their exploration of NPF research design, Pierce, Smith-Walter and Peterson (2014) explored the narrative elements that occurred in past applications of the NPF in order to determine trends or patterns. They found that the focus was on the setting, the characters, and the moral of the story. Further, Pierce et al. (2014) acknowledged that although the use of characters is an important element of policy narratives, many of the applications they analyzed only identified one or two characters, while some did not identify any at all, which is antithetical to Shanahan et al.'s (2017) proposition which states that policy narratives must have at least one character. Thus, Pierce et al. (2014) conclude that future applications of the NPF should “not seek to identify all of the character types nor be forced to include a particular type if it is not pertinent to the study’s

focus” (p. 31). The authors also note that, in terms of the ‘moral of the story’, the applications they explored had variation in the “scope or specificity of the policy stance or judgement”, which “raises questions about the necessary components for identifying a policy narrative” (Pierce et al, 2014, p. 39) as traditionally it has been suggested that NPF applications should possess a specific policy solution (Shanahan et al., 2013; McBeth et al., 2014, as cited in Pierce et al., 2014). They concluded that the specificity of policy solutions is not a necessary condition for applying the NPF. Thus, it is clear that there is flexibility in terms of applying the various narrative elements of the NPF, and that this is a growing trend amongst NPF researchers.

Given this information, I chose to pre-define the ‘hero’ within the policy narratives (i.e. the problem-solver of the policy issue at hand) as the political party that is implementing the policy, as it can be assumed that because this group is responsible for creating effective policy for addressing poverty and homelessness, they would be viewed as the ‘hero’ in this scenario. Thus, I did not deductively code for the ‘hero’ narrative component in my analysis. Further, I chose to omit the ‘plot’ and ‘belief system’ narrative elements as they were not pertinent to my study as stand-alone components—rather, I found that information pertaining to the plot (i.e. how the victim and villain interact, and how they are linked to the setting) of the narrative and the belief system of the political party informed the settings and the narrative strategies of the political parties instead. Thus, the following narrative components and definitions guided the deductive portion of my analysis:

### **1. *Characters:***

- a. The victim: Who/what is harmed by homelessness and poverty.
- b. The villain: The factors that contribute to/are responsible for poverty and the homelessness crisis, e.g.: lack of housing, political parties.

2. ***Moral of the story:*** The ways in which the policy solution put forth by the political party will solve poverty and homelessness and benefit the victims of the policy narrative.
3. ***Setting:*** The political and social climate during the time in which the policy document was published.

The fourth component, detailed below, was analyzed inductively, as this narrative element was found to be more nuanced, and thus observations were made regarding the narrative strategies of the political parties, which informed the generalizations and conclusions made through the analysis.

4. ***Narrative Strategies:*** The ways in which narrators intentionally use the policy narrative elements to persuade and control the policy processes.

It is important to note that the ‘character’ codes I utilized—the ‘victim’ and the ‘villain’—are not necessarily human in their nature. As Shanahan et al. (2018) explain, the question of whether characters must have human agency has arisen in studies using the NPF. They conclude that they “[lean] towards the intention of the author of the narrative itself, which often is to treat abstract principles or non-human characters as having agency” (Shanahan et al., 2018, p. 335). They note that, for example, a form of governance like democracy can be seen as the ‘hero’, or global warming can be seen as the ‘villain’ (Shanahan et al., 2018, p. 335). Thus, “non-human characters” can “retain their character status” in many NPF applications (Shanahan et al., 2018, p. 335). Therefore, for the purposes of this study I chose to include both human and non-human entities within the definitions for the characters of ‘victim’ and villain’.

### ***3.4.2 Inductive Coding: Grounded Theory***

As Gray and Jones (2016) demonstrated in their examination of the policy narratives of US campaign finance reform, in addition to the application of NPF, I also applied principles of

grounded theory<sup>2</sup> (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to inductively code for emerging patterns, themes, and concepts within the coding and analysis portions of my study. Gray and Jones (2016) explain that the “value of grounded theory in qualitative data analysis is that it allowed codes to be developed as one reads and analyzes” their data, rather than “limiting the process of coding to only pre-determined concepts and patterns” (p. 10).

Principles of grounded theory were included in this study because, as Charmaz (1996) explains, grounded theory involves undertaking an inductive strategy and beginning research with individual cases. Charmaz (2006) also explains that her approach to grounded theory “assumes that any theoretical rendering offers an *interpretive* portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it” (p. 10). Further, grounded theory involves the “creation of analytic codes and categories developed from data, not from preconceived hypotheses” (Charmaz, 1996, p. 28); this aligns with my study because I used an exploratory inductive strategy, where I did not begin my study with hypotheses, but rather I developed an understanding of the data through my research. As Charmaz (2006) explains, qualitative coding is the “process of defining what the data are about” and is the first analytic step (p. 43). Here, coding means “categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data” ... the “codes show how you select, separate, and sort data to begin an analytic accounting of them” (p. 43). Charmaz suggests that as a researcher moves through the coding process, they should ask, “which theoretical categories might these statements indicate?” (p. 45).

Charmaz (2006) notes that initial coding is the first step of grounded theory, which involves the researcher remaining open to theoretical possibilities. Charmaz (2006) further explains this process of inductive coding: “initial codes are provisional, comparative, and

<sup>2</sup> Here, principles of grounded theory refers to utilizing elements of grounded theory in the inductive coding process, as described above, as opposed to conducting a study entirely rooted in grounded theory.

grounded in the data” ... “[t]hey are provisional because you aim to remain open to other analytic possibilities and create codes that best fit the data you have”... and “you gather data to explore and fill out these codes” (p. 48). These codes are “provisional in the sense that you may reword them to improve the fit”— part of this fit “is the degree to which they capture and condense meanings and actions” (p. 48). I began by using line-by-line coding, which includes going through each line of the written data (Glaser, 1978, as cited in Charmaz, 2006) and allows the researcher to remain “open to the data and to see nuances in it” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 50). Following this, I used axial coding in order to relate categories to subcategories (Corbin, 1990, 1998; Strauss, 1987, as cited in Charmaz, 2006). Axial coding is also used to specify the properties and dimensions of a category, and to reassemble the data in order to “give coherence to the emerging analysis” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60). Charmaz explains that axial coding can be used by developing subcategories of a category and showing the links between them as the researcher learns about what the categories represent. The subsequent categories, subcategories, and links reflect how a researcher makes sense of the data. Thus, I utilized axial coding in my study in order to explore subcategories and to further delineate the themes and concepts that emerged from the data.

Given the above information, I inductively coded for the various narrative elements using principles of grounded theory by searching for themes and information as they arose from the data, creating code categories, and improving the codes as was necessary. By drawing upon principles of grounded theory, through the data coding and analysis processes I developed “more abstract conceptual categories to synthesize, to explain and to understand” the collected data (Charmaz, 1996, p. 28). What differentiates the application of coding with grounded theory and coding with the NPF in my study is that the codes that emerge through utilizing principles of

grounded theory arise from a reading of the data, rather than “emanating from an earlier frame applied to them” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 45). Alternately, as has been discussed, the NPF applies a pre-defined coding framework. As such, merging these coding and analysis methods allowed me to begin with the narrative elements that are necessary to consider when studying policy narratives, and also allowed for coding categories to emerge as I studied the data, leading to the development of theoretical categories.

## **4. Results & Findings**

The following subsections present the results of my findings from the coding process. In each section, the results are discussed separately in terms of the findings pertaining to the BC Liberal party's narrative, and the BC NDP's narrative. The first section discusses the setting of the policy narrative for each political party. The second section discusses the characters within each party's narrative, and the third section discusses the policy solutions that each political party proposes. Lastly, the fourth section discusses the narrative strategies that were employed by each political party.

### **4.1. The Context of Poverty Reduction & Homelessness Policy in BC (The Setting)**

According to Gray and Jones (2016), the policy narrative element of the 'setting' consists of "policy-consequential facts", as well as "legal and constitutional parameters, geography, economic conditions, and others factors regularly deemed relevant by policy actors involved or associated with a public policy" (McBeth et al., 2014, p. 228, as cited in Gray & Jones, 2016, p. 4). Common themes that arose within the 'setting' narrative element consisted of presenting relevant statistics regarding homelessness and poverty, identifying values and mandates that the political party has adopted, and identifying past policy and program successes that inform the present policy being discussed. However, there were also noticeable differences in regard to how the BC Liberals and the BC NDP described the main points of the settings. While the Liberal party focused on the creation of more jobs and the economy in order to address poverty, the NDP stressed the importance of creating an inclusive, targeted poverty reduction strategy through multiple means. These settings will be detailed below, and further discussed in Chapter 5.

#### **4.1.1. The BC Liberal Party (2014 – 2017)**

The *Housing Matters Service Plan* (2014) implemented under the BC Liberal party identified their ‘mandate, vision, and values’ that informed their service plan:

Our mandate is to fulfill the provincial government’s commitment to the development, management and administration of subsidized housing ... Our mandate also includes responsibilities for the administration of the Homeowner Protection Act, which entails strengthening consumer protection for buyers of new homes and helping bring about improvements to the quality of residential construction. Our vision is housing solutions for healthier futures. Our values are integrity, respect, commitment, service and accountability. (p. 5)

Further, the policy document entitled *Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty* (2017) explained how the Liberal party planned to maintain momentum in working towards their goals of addressing poverty by creating jobs and growing the economy:

Government continues to take a steady, thoughtful, and targeted approach to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable in our society...growing the provincial economy and creating secure, well-paying jobs is the best path to security for families and individuals. (p. 16)

A strong provincial economy provides the financial capacity to invest in programs that can support the most vulnerable in society and provides increased opportunities through job creation. To fully access and take full advantage of these opportunities families need support and assistance. (p. 16)

The BC Liberals described how the ‘BC Jobs Plan’ is a strategy to “create jobs, grow the economy and reduce poverty by supporting Low Income Families in Transition (LIFT) to give people what they need to live the lives they want” (*Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty*, 2017, p. 2). This policy document also explained that the “best social program is a good paying job that provides people with dignity, respect and opportunity...People who can work want to be self-sufficient, support their families and contribute to their communities” (p. 2). Further, the document explained that this plan is the province’s “long-term vision for economic

success and job creation”, which has thus far made BC one of Canada’s “strongest and most diverse economies” (p. 2).

*Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty* (2017) also acknowledged the previous successes of the BC Liberal party, noting that when the BC Jobs Plan was launched (in 2011) it was a “roadmap for economic success and job creation” (p. 2). This policy document explained that “access to well-paying jobs has been a key factor in helping more low-income B.C. families than ever transition to employment” (p. 2), and that since the launch of the plan, BC has:

- *Jumped from 3rd to leading the country in economic growth.*
- *Moved from 9th place to leading the country in job creation with more than 220,000 jobs created, nearly 95% of those jobs are full time.*
- *Gone from the 4th lowest unemployment rate to the lowest unemployment rate in Canada at 5.1%. (February was the 9th consecutive month British Columbia has had the lowest unemployment rate in the country.)*
- *Seen a 20% increase in exports to over \$39 billion annually.*
- *Had a 13% increase in capital investment to \$77 billion annually.*

#### **4.1.2. *The BC NDP (2017 – 2019)***

The policy document *TogetherBC: British Columbia’s Poverty Reduction Strategy* (2019) noted that their strategy recognized the “power of collective action to make life better for people”, and “honours the commitment of British Columbians who, for years, have been advocating for government to take action on a challenge that, at its core, is solvable” (p. 6). It was also noted that *TogetherBC* is BC’s “first ever poverty reduction strategy” (p. 6), and it reflects the government’s commitment to “reducing poverty and making life more affordable for British Columbians” (p. 2). *TogetherBC* was described as “the beginning, not the end, of our work. It includes policy initiatives and investments designed to lift people up, break the cycle of poverty and build a better B.C. for everyone” (p. 2).

A message from the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction at the introduction of *TogetherBC* (2019) noted that there were “half a million people in B.C. living in poverty today” (p. 2). He explained that tangible progress on poverty reduction and a socially inclusive province can be made by working together. The Minister explained:

When I traveled around the province last year, listening to people share their experiences, it became clear how complex and deeply entrenched a problem this has become, and how urgently a poverty reduction plan is needed. It’s not just about a lack of financial resources. It’s about not having the same opportunities as other people. It’s about feeling invisible, diminished and devalued by society. It’s about being forced to make impossible choices, like whether to pay rent or buy food. It’s about the constant struggle that keeps people trapped, striving for a life that, too often, they can’t quite reach. (*TogetherBC*, 2019, p. 2)

Thus, the BC NDP’s poverty reduction strategy “aims to make life more affordable for people struggling to get by, through reducing costs and increasing incomes”, and focuses on “creating opportunities for people, by providing people with the supports they need to help break the cycle of poverty”, and “working toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, by confronting racism and addressing the continuing legacy of harmful policies” (p. 2).

The BC NDP also explained that “poverty reduction is about more than numbers: it’s about people” (*TogetherBC: British Columbia’s Poverty Reduction Strategy*, 2019, p. 9). With this acknowledgment, the NDP’s values within the *TogetherBC* (2019) strategy were indicated: “While our targets are expressed as statistics, an effective poverty reduction strategy needs to be rooted in empathy, understanding and inclusion” (p. 9). It was noted that the starting point for developing the poverty reduction strategy was statistical: as of 2016, there were more than 557,000 BC citizens living below the poverty line. *TogetherBC* (2019) described what this number means:

- *B.C. has one of the highest rates of poverty in the country and has had for decades. We have the second highest overall poverty rate in Canada.*

- *About 40% of people living below the poverty line are working.*
- *Indigenous peoples and people with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty.*
- *B.C. has one of the highest child poverty rates in the country, with approximately 99,000 children living in poverty in B.C.*
- *Children who live in single parent families are more than three times more likely to live in poverty than children in two parent families.*

In terms of homelessness, the BC NDP referred to the 2018 Report on Homeless Counts in B.C., which summarized findings from 24 homeless counts conducted in communities across British Columbia and indicated a total of roughly 7,655 individuals that are experiencing homelessness (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019). It is explained that of these individuals, “63% were sheltered and 37% were unsheltered; 20% were seniors (55+ years of age); 15% were youth (under 25 years of age); and, 38% of survey respondents identified as Indigenous” (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 28). The BC NDP also gave context to homelessness in BC and noted the issue as a priority for their government:

In the spring of 2018, the Province funded homeless counts in 12 B.C. communities. These results were combined with available data from 12 additional counts and shelters in 2017-2018. These counts identified 7,655 homeless individuals across the 24 communities participating. The majority were sheltered (63%). The three main barriers to accessing housing identified by survey respondents in the homeless counts were high rents (53%), low incomes (51%) and a lack of available, suitable housing (30%). (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019, p. 4)

The NDP policy documents also noted that another one of their priorities is “safe, affordable housing”, which they identified as “critical to affordability” and “overall quality of life”, yet they noted that it “has become the single-biggest challenge affecting British Columbians today”... “[i]n B.C., 14.9% of households are considered in core housing need” (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019, p. 3).

Lastly, the BC NDP explained that their government has research priorities relating to studying basic income for British Columbia in an effort to reduce poverty. Further, they

explained that the law requires their poverty reduction strategy to meet a number of requirements. This includes specifically addressing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The strategy must also consider the “unique needs of children, youth, women and persons of all genders, people living with disabilities, people living in rural and remote communities, immigrants and refugees, LGBTQ2S+ people, Indigenous peoples, seniors, people making low incomes, people fleeing from abuse, people living with mental illness and addiction and people of colour” (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 14).

#### **4.2. The Characters Within the Policy Context: The Victims & Villains**

To reiterate, within the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), the ‘characters’ are those who act or are acted upon within a narrative. Characters can be individuals, agencies, and/or groups, and do not necessarily have to possess human agency.

##### **4.2.1. *Who & What is Harmed by Homelessness and Poverty (The Victims)***

The ‘victim’ is described within the NPF as the entity that is being harmed by the villain; for the purposes of this research, the victim was defined as who or what is harmed by homelessness and poverty. Here, a similarity that arose was that both political parties portrayed marginalized/at-risk groups as those who are being subjected to the harms of poverty and homelessness. However, *who* the parties identified as being marginalized/at-risk differed: The Liberal party largely focused on Indigenous peoples and families/children. The NDP also focused on indigenous peoples and women and children fleeing violence, but also noted the intersectionality of poverty, explain that indigenous people, people of colour, refugees, and people with disabilities all face more barriers and high rates of poverty. Another similarity was that both parties noted societal costs of poverty and homelessness, though the characterization of

these costs also differed. Further, both political parties discussed people who use drugs, those with mental health issues, and differently abled individuals as being subjected to the harms of homelessness and poverty. However, the extent to which these vulnerable groups were discussed by each party differed. These differences will be further detailed in the below sections.

### ***Marginalized & At-Risk Groups***

Within the document outlining the BC Liberal's *Homeless Outreach Program* (2014), the primary target population of the program was explained to be people who are homeless, or at immediate risk of homelessness. The program was also said to target "individuals and families who are homeless or at immediate risk of homelessness due to crisis or transition"—this includes people who are leaving the corrections and hospital systems, women who have experienced violence or are at risk of experiencing violence, youths (including those who are leaving the care system), and people of Aboriginal descent (p. 2). Liberal policy documents also identified the "Aboriginal community" as an important point of focus for their government, as the "Aboriginal population is over-represented in housing need categories". It was also described that "Aboriginal people are over-represented among those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness", noting that the results of the 2011 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count indicated that 27 percent of the homeless individuals in Metro Vancouver identified themselves as an Aboriginal person (Housing Matters Service Plan, 2014, p. 10). Further, in terms of employment accessibility, the Liberal party noted that more resources would be focused on those who are struggling to enter the job market and/or those who face "unique challenges"—they identified these individuals as youth-at-risk, persons with disabilities, and Aboriginal youth, and noted that Aboriginal employment is a priority under their BC Jobs Plan (*Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty*, 2017, p. 3).

Policy documents implemented under the BC Liberals presented statistics that indicated the depth of the poverty and homelessness crisis in BC and the makeup of the homeless population itself: it was noted that the 2011 Census identified that “48.4 per cent of off-reserve Aboriginal households were spending 30 per cent or more on shelter costs” (Housing Matters Service Plan, 2014, p. 10). Further, Aboriginal people were said to be “overrepresented among those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness”... [f]or example, according to the results from the 2011 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, 27 per cent of the homeless individuals found in Metro Vancouver self-identified as an Aboriginal person” (Housing Matters Service Plan, 2014, p. 10).

Children living in poverty was another social issue that was identified as a victim of homelessness within Liberal policy documents. In the *Housing Matters Service Plan* (2014), it was noted that the ‘Transitional Supportive and Assisted Living’ section of the housing continuum addresses three major groups: women and children who are fleeing violence, individuals with special needs, and frail seniors. It was also noted that those experiencing social exclusion, joblessness, a breakdown of a relationship, or inadequate access to refugee settlement services can experience heightened challenges to finding appropriate housing (Housing Matters Service Plan, 2014).

Meanwhile, policy documents published under the BC NDP largely discussed the intersectionality of poverty, noting that poverty does not affect all people equally. It was explained that “indigenous people, people of colour, refugees, and people with disabilities all face more barriers and high rates of poverty” (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 13).

In terms of Indigenous populations, the policy documents implemented under the NDP recognized the need to invest in Indigenous housing, citing their creation of the Building BC:

Indigenous Housing Fund (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019; TogetherBC, 2019) as they noted that Indigenous families often face “exceptional challenges in finding housing that meets their needs” (Together BC, 2019, p. 40), and Indigenous peoples are more likely to live in core housing need compared to non-Indigenous people (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019). Further, it was detailed that in the 2018 BC Homelessness counts, 38% of the survey respondents who were experiencing homelessness identified themselves as Indigenous, and the proportion of respondents that identified as Indigenous was higher for unsheltered (42%) than sheltered respondents (32%) (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019; TogetherBC, 2019). It was also noted that Indigenous peoples and people with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty (TogetherBC, 2019). The characterization of Indigenous peoples as a marginalized population in terms of housing needs and homelessness representation was further described through the following statistics:

Indigenous people are more likely to live in core housing need than non-Indigenous people. In Census 2016, Aboriginal-identified households were more likely to report living in homes that are not adequate or suitable for their needs, and the problem is not new. The incidence of core housing need for off-reserve Aboriginal households in B.C. in 2011 was 22.8%, and for renter households it was 39.5%. (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019, p. 4)

In the 2018 B.C. Homelessness Counts, 38% of the survey respondents who were experiencing homelessness identified as Indigenous. According to the 2016 Census, Indigenous people accounted for six percent (6%) of B.C.’s total population. The proportion of respondents identifying as Indigenous was higher for unsheltered (42%) than sheltered respondents (32%). (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019, p. 5)

Further, the NDP policy documents indicated the need to embrace gender diversity, noting that “[t]ransgender, Two-Spirit, intersex and non-binary people often face discrimination in housing, employment, and access to services”, and “many minorities experience discrimination and stigma” within both their daily interactions and with the government

(TogetherBC, 2019, p. 35). They noted that this discrimination sees members of the LGBTQ2S+ community vulnerable to higher rates of homelessness and unemployment than other BC citizens.

Lastly, the NDP's *BC Housing Action Plan* (2019) indicated that women and their children who are fleeing violence are particularly vulnerable within the transition to housing:

For women and their children who receive shelter in transition houses when fleeing violence, the next steps in housing can be risky, but when second stage housing is available, the rate of departures into unstable housing is lower. (p. 5)

BC Housing supports more than 100 transition houses and safe homes for women – with or without children – who are at risk of violence, or who have experienced violence. The Building BC: Women's Transition Housing Fund will build and operate new transition houses, safe homes, second-stage and long-term housing for women and their children who have experienced violence. (p. 5)

### ***Societal Costs***

The Liberal party's *Housing Matters Service Plan* (2014) characterized the societal costs associated with poverty and homelessness as a victim of this social issue. This included presenting an estimated cost of homelessness to “the health, social, and justice systems”, which was said to be over \$55,000 per person per year (Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health & Addiction, Simon Fraser University, as cited in *Housing Matters Service Plan*, 2014).

In terms of the BC NDP, it was noted in *TogetherBC* (2019) that there are “costs to inaction” when it comes to poverty, as poverty and “chronic health conditions are interconnected”, which results in “costs that stretch across the system” ranging from healthcare, to policing, to social services (p. 42).

### ***People Who Use Drugs (PWUD) & Those with Mental Health Issues***

In terms of PWUD and those with mental health issues being a marginalized and/or at-risk population, the policy documents published under the BC Liberals did not specifically

address PWUD or those with mental health issues, however they noted that their government had committed to investing in 5,300 new units of affordable rental housing, 380 of which would house the homelessness as well as those suffering from mental health issues and PWUD (Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty, 2017).

In contrast, in the policy documents published under the BC NDP noted that one of the key priority areas that would inform the NDP's efforts to reduce poverty was mental health and addiction services, noting that people dealing with these issues reported difficulty accessing services, long waitlists, and a lack of supports. Further, it was noted that within the homeless population, frequent reasons that were cited for loss of housing included addiction or substance use (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019). It was also noted that the 2018 Building BC: Supportive Housing Fund would include investments towards building supportive housing for those who are homelessness or at risk of homelessness and have mental health issues, among other marginalized/at-risk groups (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019).

### ***Differently Abled Individuals***

Policy documents implemented under the BC Liberals indicated that homeless individuals with disabilities can have heightened challenges to finding appropriate housing, and thus require special needs housing such as supportive and assisted living (Housing Matters Service Plan, 2014).

Meanwhile, policy documents published by the BC NDP indicated that one of the priority action areas in their poverty reduction strategy was 'investing in social inclusion', where the government was "committed to building a better B.C. for people with disabilities" by working to break down barriers that often exclude people with disabilities from "being able to access opportunity and participate in their communities" (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 35). It was also noted

that one of the specific population groups that is “more likely to experience core housing need or homelessness” is persons with disabilities, whose incidence of living in households in core housing need is 19.3% compared to 11.5% for persons without disabilities (Statistics Canada 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability, as cited in BC Housing Action Plan, 2019, p. 3).

#### ***4.2.2. Contributing Factors to Poverty and Homelessness (The Villains)***

According to the NPF, the ‘villain’ narrative element is described as the entity causing the policy issue. For the purposes of this study, the villain was described as the factors that contribute to/are responsible for poverty and homelessness. Again, similarities and differences between the BC Liberals and the BC NDP arose here. One similarity was that both political parties framed an inaccessibility to service as a prevalent contributing factor to poverty and homelessness. However, the difference here was that the parties described this inaccessibility in different capacities. Another similarity was that both political parties identified addiction and mental health issues, the cost of housing/rent and a lack of housing as contributing factors to poverty and homelessness. However, the detail and extent to which these entities were discussed differed. Further, while both parties discussed low provincial wages and an inaccessibility to jobs as contributing factors, this was more clearly indicated by the NDP, while the Liberal party more so alluded to these factors and did not explicitly describe them as ‘villains’. Finally, a notable difference was that the NDP detailed discrimination and stigma against those experiencing poverty, and previous political parties and policies as entities that contributed to poverty and homelessness in BC, while the Liberal party did not indicate these as contributing factors. These similarities and differences will be further detailed in the following sections.

### *Inaccessibility to Services*

For both the BC Liberals and the BC NDP, a lack of access to services was framed as a factor that compounds the harms of homelessness and poverty. However, different service issues were focused on by each party. Within the policy documents, the services that were discussed in terms of inaccessibility included: inaccessibility to healthcare, a lack of financial security and supports, inaccessibility to education, inaccessibility to justice services, inaccessibility to social services, and a lack of supports for children and families.

Firstly, in terms inaccessibility to healthcare, the analyzed policy documents published under the BC Liberals did not indicate a lack of access to healthcare as a ‘villain’. In contrast, within the *TogetherBC* (2019) policy document, it was indicated by the BC NDP that access to healthcare was one of their government’s key priority areas to be addressed, noting that many individuals cannot afford necessary medicine, dental work, or medical services and supplies—it was also noted that the issue is even more so in remote and Indigenous communities.

In regard to the inaccessibility to financial security and supports, the analyzed policy documents published under the BC Liberals did not identify a lack of access to financial security and supports as a ‘villain’. However, policy documents implemented under the BC NDP did identify financial security and income supports as one of their key priority areas, as it was noted that government financial support services have “historically not kept pace with B.C.’s cost of living” (*TogetherBC*, 2019, p. 11).

Concerning a lack of access to education, the policy documents implemented by the BC Liberals did not directly identify a lack of access to education as a ‘villain’. However, because the Liberals promote their BC Jobs Plan as the ‘best social program’ (noted in their policy document *Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty*, 2017), which focuses on

education/training and thus employment opportunities, it could be reasonably concluded that the Liberal party sees a lack of access to education as a barrier to employment and thus a contributor to poverty (i.e. a ‘villain’). Meanwhile, the policy documents implemented under the BC NDP identified education and training as another one of their key priority areas in addressing poverty in BC, as it was explained that while education is often noted as essential to breaking the poverty cycle, the cost of education puts it out of reach for many families and individuals who are living in poverty (TogetherBC, 2019).

In terms of the inaccessibility to justice services, the analyzed policy documents published by the BC Liberals did not identify a lack of access to justice services as a ‘villain’. However, the policy documents published under the BC NDP identified a lack of access to justice services as a ‘villain’, as it was noted that access to justice in the form of unresolved legal issues “can cause serious and sustained financial and emotional issues for people living in poverty”, and further, “too often B.C.’s most vulnerable do not have access to the justice service that protect their safety and rights” (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 12).

Regarding the inaccessibility of social services, although the BC Liberals discussed increasing access to social services as a policy solution, they did not appear to frame a lack of social services as a ‘villain’ within the documents analyzed. Meanwhile, as mentioned above, the policy documents published by the BC NDP noted that mental health and addiction services/supports have shown to be difficult to access. The NDP policy documents also recognized that there is an “ongoing need identified for public services to modernize”, as improving access and integration of services would allow B.C.’s most vulnerable populations to take better advantage of services that the province provides (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 11).

Lastly, in regard to the lack of supports for children and families, within the policy document *Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty* (2017) implemented by the BC Liberals, it was noted that the “inability to access affordable, quality childcare is one of the biggest barriers to single parents returning to work or training” (p. 13). Meanwhile, policy documents published under the BC NDP explained that the “lack and cost of childcare has historically prevented many parents, particularly single mothers, from getting and keeping a full-time job” (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 11). As such, they indicated that supports for children and families is one of their key priority areas in addressing poverty.

### ***Addiction & Mental Health Issues***

BC Liberal policy documents noted that a combination of life events, including mental health issues and addictions, often result in challenges to finding appropriate housing for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness (Housing Matters Service Plan, 2014).

Meanwhile, policy documents implemented by the BC NDP indicated that for homeless individuals, frequently cited reasons for loss of housing included, among other things, addiction or substance use (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019). Further, those dealing with addiction and mental health issues were identified in terms of needing more effective supports in the form of program enhancements (TogetherBC, 2019). It was also noted that mental (and physical) challenges are “intensified through the experience of living in extreme poverty” (p. 42).

### ***Cost of Housing/Rent & Lack of Housing***

In the policy documents published by the BC Liberals, it was noted that “[c]hallenges to finding appropriate housing for people who are homeless are multi-faceted” and can be related to housing issues such as affordability and availability (Housing Matters Service Plan, 2014, p. 9).

The BC NDP policy documents detailed that within one of their key priority areas of

housing and homelessness, “[o]verwhelmingly, the most constant and pressing issue is the lack of affordable housing” (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 10). They also noted that the three main barriers to accessing housing identified by survey respondents in homeless counts were high rents, low incomes, and a lack of available, suitable housing. It was indicated that the “most frequently identified barrier to accessing housing was affordability, followed by a lack of housing that suited a person’s needs” (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019, p. 4).

### ***Discrimination & Stigma Against Those Experiencing Poverty***

The analyzed policy documents published under the BC Liberal party did not identify discrimination/stigma against those experiencing poverty as a ‘villain’.

In contrast, the policy documents published under the BC NDP addressed discrimination and stigma as one of their key priority areas (TogetherBC, 2019). It was explained that “discrimination and stigma are significant barriers preventing people from accessing opportunity and breaking the cycle of poverty” (p. 12). It was also noted that ‘social inclusion’ is a guiding principle for the NDP government in addressing poverty, as they found that people living in poverty felt cut off from their communities, and that discrimination and stigma make it more difficult for them to access services, find jobs, and access housing (TogetherBC, 2019).

### ***Political Parties & Previous Policies***

The analyzed policy documents implemented by the BC Liberals did not identify any political parties nor any previous policies as a ‘villain’.

Meanwhile, the policy documents published under the BC NDP indicated both past political parties and previous policies as ‘villains’. It was explained that the NDP’s poverty reduction strategy *TogetherBC* (2019) includes “an overhaul of unfair and unhelpful social assistance policies left in place by the previous government” (p. 7), noting that for 15 years the

government has ignored and underfunded social priorities. It was suggested by the NDP that for many years, little was done to address poverty in BC, and that decisions were being made in BC “for those at the top, instead of for everyone—decisions that left too many people behind” (p. 8). This inaction, it was suggested, has resulted in high poverty rates in BC that are greatly misaligned with the “wealth and prosperity” of the province.

In terms of homelessness, the NDP policy documents proposed that under the previous government, “homelessness was allowed to increase, leaving more people cold, hungry, and trying to survive on the street”. It was also noted that the previous government froze income assistance rates at too low of a number for a decade (p. 8).

Further, the impact that previous Government policies had on Indigenous peoples and communities was acknowledged:

Government policies that worked to suppress Indigenous culture, language, economies, and systems of governance have had lasting effects on the health, well-being, and wealth of Indigenous peoples in B.C. Despite these inequities, Indigenous communities remain strong and resilient. (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 17)

Thus, it was suggested that *TogetherBC* (2019) takes the initiative to “address harmful and mean-spirited policies” that do not properly support the goal of addressing poverty reduction and have not been effective in the past (p. 36). Further, it was noted that “given the extent of poverty in B.C. and its associated history of government inaction”, *TogetherBC* is built on “a core of ambitious, transformational policies that will have a substantive and lasting impact” (p. 18).

### ***Low Provincial Wages & Lack of Access to Jobs***

Although the policy documents published by the BC Liberal party did not directly describe provincial wages and/or a lack of access to jobs as a ‘villain’, *Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty* (2017) was proposed as the Liberal’s solution to lifting people out of

poverty in BC, and within the document it is explained that the barriers to employment that many people face can result in poverty. Thus, it can be reasonably assumed that the BC Liberal Party believes that a lack of access to jobs and job training is a ‘villain’ in the sense that it sustains the cycle of poverty.

Meanwhile, the BC NDP’s policy documents indicated that one of the key priorities that informed the NDP’s efforts to reduce poverty in BC was addressing employment and jobs, as they found that “many people spoke of being trapped in precarious employment, with low wages and unpredictable hours”, which makes it impossible to properly support themselves and their families (p. 11). Further, within *TogetherBC* (2019), it was noted that the NDP planned to increase the minimum wage for workers in BC.

#### **4.3. The Proposed Policy Solutions (Moral of the Story)**

According to the NPF, ‘moral of the story’ is described as the policy solution within the policy narrative, which is often seen as the action of the ‘hero’ to protect the ‘victim’. This often culminates in a call to action, and intermediary steps can also be offered as the moral of the story rather than specific policy solutions. For the purposes of this research, the ‘moral of the story’ was defined as; the ways in which the policy solution put forth by the political party will solve poverty and homelessness and benefit the victims of the policy narrative. It was shown that the BC Liberals and the BC NDP both largely focused on improving housing availability and affordability, enhancing access to services, fostering partnerships, collaboration, and community involvement, addressing marginalized groups, and improvements to policies, programs, and housing. Job creation and education as a policy solution stood out as the centre focus of the BC Liberals in terms of their poverty reduction strategy. The BC NDP also discussed job creation and education as one of their ‘priority action areas’ within their poverty reduction plan. Although

the BC Liberals and the BC NDP detailed their goals in terms of poverty reduction in different ways, it was shown that ‘breaking the homelessness cycle’ was an overarching goal of both political parties. The ways in which the political parties approached the above policy solutions differed, which will be further detailed below.

#### ***4.3.1 Improve Housing Availability & Affordability***

##### ***The BC Liberals***

The BC Liberals addressed housing solutions specifically for the homeless in the document *Homeless Outreach Program* (2014). This BC Housing program is also referred to as *HOP*, and it was explained that *HOP* connects individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to housing and services. The program was said to provide an opportunity for homeless individuals to find long term and stable housing, as well as provides rent supplements where applicable. A guiding principle of the program was said to be to provide “rapid access to housing and support services”, which is fundamental to their service delivery (p. 3). To participate in the program, housing readiness is not a requirement, and individuals do not have to accept any services in order to access or maintain housing. The goals of the program, as outlined in the *Homeless Outreach Program* document (2014), are as follows:

- 1. To provide people who are homeless or at immediate risk of homelessness with access to housing and support services in order to reduce the likelihood of continued homelessness*
- 2. To provide services that are focused on the particular circumstances of each client and that promote long term housing stability*

In the *Housing Matters Service Plan* (2014) policy document, it was explained that the Liberal’s housing service plan delivers “a range of programs and initiatives that help by making housing more accessible and affordable”, and responds to the needs “along the housing

continuum to benefit those in greatest need, including the homeless” (p. 2). Within the Liberal policy documents, the *Housing Matters Service Plan* (2014) is referred to as the Liberal’s “provincial housing strategy which affirms the provincial commitment to supporting those in greatest need” (p. 5)—this includes taking advantage of partnership opportunities to “create innovative affordable rental housing projects” and completing supportive housing projects for the homeless (p. 2). At the time of writing (2014), it was indicated that the Liberal party anticipated the creation of “over 1,000 new housing units this coming year” across the province (p. 2). It was also noted that the Liberal party would continue to provide rental assistance to low-income families and seniors in order to help achieve housing affordability. Further, it was indicated that one of the Liberal party’s fiscal planning focuses (for the 2014/15 year) was to improve rent assistance programs and take “further steps to prevent homelessness by targeting rent supplements to vulnerable populations” (p. 2). Aboriginal housing was also identified as a ‘strategy’ in the *Housing Matters Service Plan*, as it was noted that Aboriginal housing need was to be addressed “through a strong Aboriginal housing sector” (p. 5). In terms of government assisted housing, this ranged from emergency shelter to rental assistance within the private market. The Liberal party noted that in partnership with hundreds of housing providers, they proposed that “100,880 households in 200 communities will be assisted through subsidized housing in 2014/15” (p. 9).

In terms of homelessness, emergency shelter and housing for the homeless was identified as a section on the housing continuum, serving people who are “homeless, at risk of homelessness, and require housing with integrated supports” (p. 9). A key strategy in responding to the needs along the housing continuum was to respond to housing needs in communities through “implementing measures to break the cycle of homelessness through the development of

new supportive housing projects, homeless outreach, rent assistance and the provision of emergency shelter” (p. 26). It was indicated that from 2014-2017, a key priority of the Liberal party was to “complete the construction of planned supportive housing for the homeless/at risk to continue to stabilize and reduce the incidence of homelessness in communities throughout B.C.” (p. 26).

The Liberal party’s policy documents demonstrated that affordable housing was within the Liberal’s poverty reduction initiative, calling the *Housing Matters Service Plan* the most progressive housing strategy in Canada (Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty, 2017, p. 9). In terms of housing and homelessness, it was noted that access to affordable housing continues to be a challenge for BC families, which the BC Liberal government planned to address by “increasing its investments in affordable and rental housing, rental assistance and subsidized housing, and tax deferral for families with children” (p. 10). At the time of writing, the BC Liberal government had committed to investing an “additional \$920 million to create nearly 5,300 new units of affordable rental housing, including 380 units to house the homeless and those suffering from mental health or substance abuse” (p. 10).

### *The BC NDP*

As for the policy documents implemented by the BC NDP, one of the priority action areas that was outlined in *TogetherBC* (2019) was to make housing more affordable in BC, which included increasing support for renters and increasing the supply of affordable homes. Support for renters came from restricting rent increases, ending geographic rent increases, closing the fixed-term lease loophole which limited housing security, improving rental assistance, raising the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters rates, and making the Residential Tenancy Branch more effective and responsive. The supply of affordable homes was to be increased by

building affordable mixed income housing with the Building BC: Community Housing Fund, which the NDP noted they would invest \$1.9 billion in over 10 years to build 14,000 affordable rental homes, by investing \$1 billion on improving, maintaining, and renovating already existing affordable community housing (p. 27) . It was also detailed that the NDP introduced targeted programs in 2018 in order to build 1,750 new homes on- and off-reserve for Indigenous peoples and 1,500 new homes for women and children who are fleeing violence (p. 27). The NDP government noted that they have also “taken action to prevent families from being forced into poverty because of manufactured home park redevelopment” (p. 27).

The NDP’s plans for ‘action on homelessness’ were also specifically addressed in *TogetherBC* (2019), as it was noted that “homelessness is inextricably linked with poverty” (p. 28). It was explained that in order to address the urgency of the housing and homelessness crisis, the 2017 budget update and 2018 budget included many major investments, which included:

- *2,000 supportive modular homes for those experiencing homelessness over three years through the Building BC: Rapid Response to Homelessness program (\$291 million)*
- *2,500 supportive homes over 10 years for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness through the Building BC: Supportive Housing Fund (\$1.2 billion)*
- *1,750 homes over 10 years for Indigenous peoples through the Building BC: Indigenous Housing Fund (\$550 million)*
- *1,500 spaces of transition and second-stage housing over 10 years for women and children escaping violence through the Building BC: Women’s Transition Housing Fund (\$734 million)*
- *14,000 mixed-income homes over 10 years, 70% at below market rental rates, through the Community Housing Fund (\$1.9 billion)*
- *Expanded eligibility and increased benefits under the Rental Assistance Program and Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters to help an estimated 35,000 families stay stably housed*

- *The first-ever provincial report on homeless counts, providing a snapshot of the demographics and service needs of people experiencing homelessness* (p. 28)<sup>3</sup>

Within the policy documents, the NDP's 'new approach' to homelessness was detailed, which included continuing to work to build homes for those experiencing homelessness with Budget 2019, which "includes additional funding for supportive modular housing" (p. 29). It was also stated that in order to "further guide action on homelessness", the NDP launched the Office of Homelessness Coordination to better their approach to address and prevent homelessness (p. 29). Affordability was one of *TogetherBC*'s (2019) guiding principles introduced by the NDP in their effort to reduce poverty, as it was noted that poverty and a lack of affordability are interconnected, and so for those living in poverty, financial security begins with addressing affordability—among other things, this includes affordable homes.

Further, the *BC Housing Action Plan* (2019) detailed that the NDP launched the 'HousingHub' within BC Housing in order to "bring partners together to create affordable rental housing and homeownership options for middle-income households" (p. 7). The NDP's *BC Housing Action Plan* also detailed that more than \$990 million would be invested over 10 years towards protecting, renewing, and expanding social and community housing. \$217.2 million was to be invested within the next three years (from 2019 onwards), and contributions of \$108.6 million would be matched by the Government of Canada and the Province of BC, which the NDP planned to invest into two initiatives: the BC Priorities Housing Initiative, and the Canada Community Housing Initiative. The NDP also detailed the 'Provincial Rental Supply Program' (under the BC Priorities Initiative) which was to "support the development of new Community Housing delivered by HousingHub", and the funding will support the construction of more than

<sup>3</sup> The dollar amounts in this citation were taken from the BC Housing Action Plan (2019).

600 new units of rental housing, which will be “owned and operated by the community housing sector and affordable for middle-income households” (p. 10). The NDP policy documents explained that through the NDP’s housing initiatives and investments, “BC Housing will maintain at least 34,491 units of social and community housing, while also expanding the supply of housing for low to middle income households” (p. 14).

To further expand on their introduction of the ‘Rapid Response to Homelessness’ (RRH) program, the NDP released the *Rapid Response to Homelessness: Supportive Housing Program Framework* in 2017. This document explained that the *RRH* was created as an “immediate response to the growing issue of homelessness” in BC, with the goal of creating new housing units with support services for those who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless (p. 2). The *RRH* was described to be an “immediate housing option” with crucial support services for vulnerable individuals, and it utilizes “construction techniques such as modular design to expedite production and rapidly create new, provincially-owned housing units”, which have the benefit of being able to be relocated to different sites in the future if needed (p. 2). The project sizes will “average approximately forty to fifty units, depending on community needs, and will include features such as communal amenity spaces, laundry, kitchen and social gathering spaces” (p. 4). The overall goal of the program was said to be to “[b]reak the cycle of homelessness by providing safe, affordable housing and the supports needed” to assist residents in remaining stably housed (p. 3). It was explained that housing residents will “typically pay a fixed rent”, which would be set at the “shelter component of income assistance” (p. 6).

#### **4.3.2. Enhance Access to Services**

*The BC Liberals*

Support services under the BC Liberals were shown to be largely integrated into their housing services. Detailed within their *Homeless Outreach Program* document (2014, p. 3), some of the principles that guided the program's service delivery were described as follows:

- *Program services are accessible and focus on client strengths as well as needs*
  - *Services are accessible to anyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness, regardless of ethno-cultural background, religious beliefs, physical ability, mental health status, gender identity or sexual orientation.*
  - *Service providers will be informed about the diversity of sexual orientation and gender identities. Service providers will ensure access to outreach services for clients of all sexual orientations and gender identities, and create an atmosphere of dignity, safety and respect.*
  - *A range of service approaches may be required to assure access to a diverse target population (e.g., approaches ranging from abstinence to harm reduction).*

Further, it was detailed that BC Housing's *Homeless Outreach Program* aimed to connect people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness not only to housing, but also to income assistance and community-based support services. Here, the outreach services were to be provided by non-profit organizations in communities across BC, who were to "directly engage and assess clients, assist them with personal goals, and connect individuals and families with housing and community based support services" (p. 2). One goal here was said to be to "provide services that are focused on the particular circumstances of each client and that promote long term housing stability" (p. 4). Among other things, the role of BC Housing in terms of support services was to fund service providers and establish "service agreements for the provision of program services", monitor and evaluate services, and work alongside service providers (p. 5). Program services for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness included developing a case plan for each individual, referring them to appropriate housing options, referring them to

income assistance, referring them to support services, and accompanying them to appointments when appropriate. When individuals were placed in housing, they were to be assisted by service providers in maintaining their housing and ability to live independently—service providers provided rent supplements when appropriate, provided tenancy support and skills training, and provided follow-up and ongoing support to tenants.

Within the *Housing Matters Service Plan* (2014), the BC Liberals focused on the need for stable housing that is integrated with support services for those who are experiencing homelessness. They explained that “BC Housing engages in innovative service partnerships that integrate housing and support services to meet tenants’ needs and ensure stable tenancies” (p. 12). It was also noted that, in terms of transitional and supportive assisted living for those who require additional supportive services (e.g. those with severe physical disabilities, developmental disabilities, chronic mental illness, and/or drug and alcohol dependencies), additional programs were in place to “help clients move towards independence and self-sufficiency, where possible, while ensuring adequate supports are in place” (p. 9).

The Liberal policy documents also discussed mental health and substance use services, noting that the Liberal government was “addressing the challenges of child and youth mental-health and substance-use issues in all communities throughout the province through targeted programs and investments” (*Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty*, 2017, p. 12). It was also noted that the Liberal government planned to expand its supports and services to assist children and youth in BC and “help connect kids more quickly to the services they need”—it was described that this would be done by hiring 120 new mental health practitioners, funding highly specialized substance-use treatment beds, and expanding the number of Foundry integrated youth services centres in BC, “among other initiatives” (p. 13).

The Liberal's BC Jobs Plan was largely discussed, and it was noted that for BC citizens who required extra supports, the government must ensure that these individuals have access to a "strong system of targeted supports and comprehensive program that promote self-development, community attachment and give people a helping hand to get back on their feet" (p. 2), so that they are able to participate in job opportunities. It was also noted that within the BC Jobs Plan, in terms of employment and training, the B.C. Single Parent Employment Initiative was a social service that "provides single parents on income or disability assistance with up to 12 months of funded training or aid work experience for jobs that have been identified as in demand"...the program also "pays the full costs of child care and covers the cost of transportation during training" (p. 9). It was also detailed that the BC Liberal government aimed to "reduce or eliminate the financial burden of health care and services for low-income families" (p. 12).

#### *The BC NDP*

The policy documents published under the NDP noted that the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction "exists to provide services to people trying to overcome social and economic barriers"... "these services should make life better for people", and allow them to gain access to the supports they need (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 36). It was also indicated that the NDP aimed to improve services and supports and "shift the culture to one of empathy, dignity, and respect" (p. 36).

The NDP policy documents also indicated that a BC Child Opportunity Benefit would be introduced by the NDP, as "families with children face higher costs that can make it harder to make ends meet" (p. 20). It was also noted that childcare would be made more available and more affordable through the ChildCareBC plan, which would "bring down the costs of child care for more families and create new licensed child care spaces throughout the province"—the NDP

planned to invest \$1 billion over three years in order to achieve this goal (p. 21). Further support for programs and service for families, children, and youth were also indicated such as fair Pharmacare. Supporting children who are in the home of a family member was also discussed as an area for service improvement, as it was noted that “there has been a significant difference in the kind of supports that foster families get, versus the supports given to relatives caring for children”—it was also noted that “better supporting extended families to care for children will decrease the number of Indigenous children in care, and help keep them close to their families and in their communities” (p. 41).

Similar to the BC Liberal policy documents, the policy documents published under the BC NDP indicated that support services were also largely integrated into the NDP’s housing services. In regard to the NDP’s housing approach, it was noted that the homes that were built included 24/7 supports and services for those who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019; Rapid Response to Homelessness, 2017; TogetherBC, 2019). It was also noted that once housing was provided for an individual, stability was of the utmost importance, which was addressed by providing the individual with the necessary supports to ensure that their “experience with homelessness is a one-time occurrence” (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019, p. 4). It was also explained that the programs and activities that would be used to achieve the NDP’s housing targets and goals would “create livable and inclusive communities by supporting housing that is affordable and easily accessible to health services, education, early learning and child care facilities, employment opportunities, and public transit” (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019, p. 14).

The *Rapid Response to Homelessness* program was also described as integrating support services within the housing units built for homeless individuals. The housing and supports were

said to be both accessible and resident-focused, meaning that the supports are accessible to all eligible residents “regardless of ethnocultural background, religious beliefs, disability, mental health status, gender identity or sexual orientation”... “a range of services will be available to ensure access for a diverse population” (Rapid Response to Homelessness, 2017, p. 2). Further, it was described that operators within the program were to offer a “variety of programs and support services, tailored to the operator’s mandate and the unique needs of residents”. The following core services were said to be provided to assist residents in maintaining housing stability and to enhance access to additional community-based supports and services:

- *24/7 staffing*
- *Meals, provided as often as specified in the RRH Operator Agreement, and that meet the standards of Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide*
- *No-cost laundry facilities accessible to Residents, either on-site or off-site*
- *Support for Residents to maintain their residencies, including but not limited to directly assisting with room de-cluttering, rent payment and repayment plans*
- *Individual or group support services such as life skills, community information, social and recreational programs*
- *Connecting Residents to community supports and services such as education and employment opportunities, health and wellness services, and life skills*
- *Other supports designed to assist Residents in meeting their personal and housing goals, including culturally specific programs*
- *Case Planning and Resident needs assessment, including the Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT)*
- *Assistance in accessing Income Assistance, Pension Benefits, Disability Benefits, obtaining a BC Identification Card, or establishing a bank account as appropriate (p. 6)*

In terms of expanding access to mental health and addictions services, the policy documents published under the BC NDP noted that the NDP planned to expand hardship

assistance for BC citizens, meaning that the government would expand access to “special care facilities and substance-use treatment for those on hardship assistance, who might otherwise not have access to the care they need”... further, “expanding access to these supports will help people address their health needs so they can heal and stabilize” (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 37). It was also indicated that the NDP planned to expand access to PPMB programs (Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers) by expanding eligibility and removing restrictions to the program that had prevented access for people with addictions. It was noted that additional enhancements to these programs would be made in order to provide “more effective supports for people with significant barriers, including supports for mental health and addictions” (p. 38).

#### ***4.3.3. Fostering Partnerships, Collaboration, & Community Involvement***

##### ***The BC Liberals***

Within the policy documents implemented under the BC Liberals, partnerships were emphasized as having importance within housing strategies in terms of liaising with community-based service providers in order to maintain the provided services, and outreach service providers developing partnerships and liaising with other service providers in order to enhance service delivery (Housing Matters Service Plan, 2014; Homeless Outreach Program, 2014). Here, service providers were to “ensure optimal service delivery to clients by promoting linkages and partnerships with other service providers” (Homeless Outreach Program, 2014). It was also noted that, in terms of the Liberal’s housing service plan, through their ‘Community Partnership Initiatives’ the Liberals would “continue to take advantage of partnership opportunities to create innovative affordable rental housing projects for low- and moderate-income households” (Housing Matters Service Plan, 2014). Further, a key housing strategy that was identified was to facilitate “innovative partnerships to create new affordable housing options along the continuum

through a range of programs”, and to work with ministries and sector partners to “analyze province-wide demographic trend and identify critical housing gaps” (p. 26).

BC Housing was described under the Liberal party as being in partnership with delivery partners such as non-profit housing societies, housing co-operatives, and group home operators, as well as private operators to provide rent supplements for low-income seniors and those with disabilities (Housing Matters Service Plan, 2014). They were also said to engage in “innovative service partnerships” with other levels of government, health authorities, and Community Living BC, for example (p. 12). Contributing partners, such as federal and municipal governments and contributions from the non-profit housing sector, are said to be required for investment in new social housing. It was also noted that the Liberal party works with industry and regulatory partners, policy partners, and sector and consumer organizations. It was noted that their “partners have the expertise to identify the appropriate housing needs of their client groups and to deliver the support services needed for successful tenancies” (p. 8). Collaboration with other provinces and territories in Canada who are experiencing similar issues was also noted.

Further, it was noted that, “while partnerships and programs exist specifically to support Aboriginal households, Aboriginal individuals and families are also supported by all programs across the housing continuum” (p. 10). The need to enhance Aboriginal partnerships was identified as a ‘strategic priority’ and an important point of focus within the *Housing Matters Service Plan* (2014). It was noted that “BC Housing works with the Aboriginal housing sector to enhance partnerships to address Aboriginal housing need and increase self-reliance within the sector” (p. 28). The policy documents explained that the Liberal party would “continue to support and strengthen existing partnerships with the Aboriginal community to ensure positive

outcomes”, during the service planning period, and identify new areas of collaboration with Aboriginal communities (p. 28).

The Liberal party’s ‘Community Initiatives’, were discussed, and it was acknowledged that the Liberal party had become increasingly aware “that poverty cannot be addressed by a single plan, level of government, or group”, which is why a “multi-sector approach” that includes local governments, community partners, the provincial government, the business sector, and stakeholders would “provide the best opportunity” to address “unique challenges and barriers that families face” (Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty, 2017, p. 15). Here, it was described that in 2012, the Liberal party launched the ‘Community Poverty Reduction Strategies’ in order to recognize the negative and long-term impacts of poverty and to collaboratively work to address them. This initiative was said to encourage participating communities to learn new ways to collaborate, build on the assets and resources that already exist in their communities, and “work together to improve the lives of people living in poverty” (p. 15). Lastly, it was described that the Liberal party was working with the BC Non-Profit Housing Association in order to focus on:

- *Research and analysis for the purpose of developing tools and strategies to support non-profits with the transitional impact of expiry of operating agreements, and to help ensure financially sustainable operating models*
- *Initiatives that will support non-profit housing providers to carry out portfolio/capital planning and energy management*

### The BC NDP

The policy documents published by the BC NDP note the need for partnerships and collaboration across many different sectors and groups—it was acknowledged that the NDP’s “ambitious goals can only be reached through committed partnership” ... “between governments,

across communities, and with the people whose voices have been ignored for too long” (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 6). Further, it was explained that the NDP’s poverty reduction strategy “brings together solutions to poverty from across government and across society, as the poverty situation in BC requires “solutions from all levels of government, First Nations, businesses, community organizations and individuals” (p. 6). This notion of working together is further demonstrated in the following quotation:

The partnerships that we’ve pursued on housing, child care and reconciliation show how much more we can achieve when we work together to build a better British Columbia. When it comes to complex issues like poverty, reconciliation and the housing crisis, no single sector can tackle these challenges alone. Over the next five years, we will expand on our work to date and pursue further partnerships, initiatives and investments to make life better for people in B.C. (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 8)

It was evident that a priority for the NDP government was to include and address the ideas and concerns of BC citizens and affected populations through extensive engagement with BC communities—the *TogetherBC* poverty reduction strategy was said to have been guided by the input, debates, and discussions from this engagement. The NDP asserted that this would contribute to a more “diverse, equitable, and prosperous province” (p. 6). At the outset of *TogetherBC*, it was noted that the BC NDP wanted to hear from people with “lived experience of poverty” (p. 4). Further, the BC NDP held “poverty reduction consultations” both in-person and online, which allowed thousands of people to join the conversation and share their ideas, personal experiences, and “stories of struggles and successes” (p. 9). This allowed the BC NDP government to hear from those who are living in poverty, as well as their friends, families, and

advocates<sup>4</sup>. It also allowed them to hear from community organizations, service providers, local governments, Indigenous peoples, businesses, and industry associations and unions. All of these groups and individuals were able to share their experiences of poverty and/or their ideas regarding how to address and solve poverty. The NDP government wanted to ensure that those with lived experience were able to participate in the meetings, and so special efforts were made to ensure that “venues were accessible, people could afford to get to them”, and childcare was accessible (p. 10). They also “hosted a website where people could contribute their thoughts, sponsored 100 small-group discussions for community organizations, and accepted written submissions about poverty reduction” (p. 10).

Fostering partnerships with Indigenous communities through reconciliation was acknowledged as a key topic for the NDP government within the foundation of *TogetherBC* (2019)—one of the policy document’s “guiding principles” that was outlined is that of reconciliation: it was explained that BC is “working in partnership with Indigenous peoples to help end the ongoing systemic racism, discrimination and displacement Indigenous peoples have experienced for generations” and “continue to experience today”, which are “barriers to opportunity and economic security that need to be faced collectively” (p. 17). In order to ensure that their poverty reduction strategy properly reflected the needs and priorities of Indigenous peoples, and to further their efforts toward reconciliation, the NDP government directly engaged with Indigenous communities to ensure that their perspectives were heard (p. 10). Further, in recognizing the need for “strong Indigenous representation”, the BC NDP appointed six members who represent Indigenous organizations and First Nations to the Minister’s Advisory

<sup>4</sup> The Report entitled ‘What We Heard About Poverty in B.C.’, which outlines the findings from the consultations, can be found here: [https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/242/2018/07/WWH\\_Report-PovertyReductionStrategy\\_FINAL.pdf](https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/242/2018/07/WWH_Report-PovertyReductionStrategy_FINAL.pdf)

Forum on Poverty Reduction—these members will “continue to advise government” as BC moves forward with the NDP’s poverty reduction strategy (p. 13). It was also noted that the BC NDP government would be “mindful of incorporating Indigenous perspectives into all services and supports offered by the Province” to ensure that they are “welcome, culturally safe, and non-discriminatory”, as the government acknowledged that the unique constitutionally protected “rights, interests, and circumstances” of Indigenous peoples must be considered in the implementation of all government policies (p. 13). It was also noted that the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction met with the First Nations Leadership Council and provided the necessary funds to “facilitate engagement in rural and remote Indigenous communities” (p. 10). Further, the NDP government partnered with Métis Nation BC which “held seven regional meetings”, the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres helped government reach urban Indigenous peoples” with 27 additional meetings around BC, and the First Nations Health Council hosted a roundtable meeting with the Minister (p. 10). The NDP also acknowledged the need to address BC (and Canada’s) history of colonialism in order to pursue reconciliation with Indigenous peoples:

Addressing the ongoing symptoms of colonialism is fundamental to this poverty reduction strategy. Taking action to address this systemic social and economic injustice is also an important part of government’s active commitment to pursue reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 17)

It was also explained that TogetherBC formalized the “ongoing cross-government efforts that have been underway since fall of 2017”, as the strategy brings together actions that are being taken across the government, combines them with new initiatives that were announced in Budget 2019, and “leverages federal contributions and programs” (p. 18). The NDP’s approach to poverty reduction was described as being “holistic” and co-ordinated” (p. 18). They reiterated the need to “work together across all levels of government, with business, our communities and

as individuals” in order to share the effort in the commitment to lifting people out of poverty (p. 43).

In order to address and take action on homelessness, the *TogetherBC* policy document explained that the province would continue to perform Provincial Homeless Counts by working together with communities throughout BC to conduct local counts and coordinate the upcoming provincial count for 2020. Within this document, it was also noted that targeted interventions would be utilized in order to take further action on homelessness, as the Office for Homelessness Coordination would “work with partners across government and in the community to better understand the needs in our communities and help make sure people aren’t falling through the cracks” (p. 30). It was also noted that one of the goals within the NDP government’s approach to addressing homelessness was ‘Working Better Together’, a goal that aims to co-ordinate actions “across provincial and local government and with community partners”, which includes “being clear about responsibilities and making sure responses to homelessness are effective in every part of the province” (p. 29).

Further, it was noted that within the BC Budget, the NDP planned to invest in the “first-ever provincial report on homeless counts”, which would provide “a snapshot of the demographics and service needs of people experiencing homelessness” (p. 28). Outlined in the Rapid Response to Homelessness program framework (2017), it was noted that in 2017, the BC NDP announced the *Rapid Response to Homelessness* (RRH) as “an immediate response to the growing issue of homelessness across the province” (p. 2). By “partnering with non-profit organizations, government authorities and community groups”, BC Housing under the NDP would create new housing units with support services for individuals who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness (p. 2). This policy document also outlined the fact

that BC Housing works with project partners to work towards “achieving predetermined goals and targets” (p. 3), and a main objective of the project was to “support communication, partnerships and collaborative initiatives across the supportive housing sector” (p. 4). Further, it was explained that collaboration among project partners was a guiding principle of the *RRH* program framework. It was detailed that project partner collaboration is meant to improve program effectiveness in the following ways:

- *Program effectiveness is enhanced through open and collaborative working relationships among operators, partner agencies, landowners, other government agencies and BC Housing*
- *Program delivery is responsive to community needs and funding reflects local needs assessments, strategic plans, best practice research and evidence-based analyses*
- *Projects are prioritized in communities where support from municipalities and other project partners is maximized (p. 3)*

Within the policy documents implemented under the BC NDP, partnerships and collaborative efforts were also detailed largely as a part of the NDP’s housing strategies (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019; TogetherBC, 2019). It was outlined that BC Housing “works closely and engages with local governments” to attain their goal of addressing the “need for more affordable housing and to preserve and modernize existing housing” (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019, p. 8). Further, the *BC Housing Action Plan* relayed the NDP’s aim of forging “[n]ew and innovative partnerships with community organizations and First Nations” which also “help to contribute towards increasing affordable housing supply and resolving local housing issues” (p. 8). Under the NDP government, BC Housing is said to work alongside “local governments, provincial health authorities and local community and service organizations” in order to identify opportunities for “secure, safe and affordable housing developments” (p. 14). Similar to the poverty reduction consultations described above, it was also noted that BC Housing works with

local government and the community to “engage on new developments, including community consultations, open houses, town halls, and other pre-development opportunities—these are said to “promote inclusive communities and increase awareness of the positive impact and outcomes of new housing programs and investment among stakeholders, partners, and the general public” (p. 15). Further, the ‘Building BC: Community Housing Fund’ (which invested \$1.9 billion to build and operate 14,350 rental housing units) involves partnerships with municipalities, non-profit housing providers, housing co-ops, and Indigenous organizations (p. 7).

BC Housing, under the NDP government, also works alongside housing providers in order to “extend subsidy agreements to preserve the affordability of units for low income households” (p. 11). They were also said to collaborate with the Aboriginal Housing Management Association, where BC Housing is to provide funding to extend funding agreements under the Urban Native housing program. Further, BC Housing’s strategies are outlined, which support their service plan goal of supporting a strong non-profit and co-op housing sector. These strategies were outlined as follows:

- *Review existing social housing operating agreements and programs to provide greater flexibilities and tools to non-profits to support long-term sustainability*
- *Collaborate with sector organizations, including BC Non-Profit Housing Association, Co-op Housing Federation of BC, and Aboriginal Housing Management Association, to identify ways that BC Housing can further support sector capacity through education, training and research*
- *Work with housing providers to improve their financial, operating and governance practices and to ensure that housing providers have the tools needed to successfully deliver existing housing, as well as opportunities brought about by new provincial government investment in affordable housing*

- *Enhance the review and performance reporting framework for non-profit partners to reflect the complexity of delivering housing and to consider future risks and impacts on performance and sustainability* (p. 11)

#### **4.3.4. Job Creation & Education**

##### *The BC Liberals*

As has been previously discussed, it was evident that the BC Liberal party placed a strong focus on job creation and education/training as a policy solution within their narratives. This is evident in their description of the BC Jobs Plan—which is encompassed in the *Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty* policy document (2017)—as they described the plan as ‘the best social program’ (p. 2). Here, it was acknowledged that “a strong provincial economy provides the financial capacity to invest in programs that can support the most vulnerable in society and provides increased opportunities through job creation” (p. 16).

It was demonstrated that the BC Liberal party largely focused their employment and education initiatives towards BC families: the BC Liberals acknowledged that they had a plan to “create jobs, grow the economy and reduce poverty” through supporting Low Income Families in Transition (LIFT) in order to “give people what they need to live the lives they want” (p. 2). Further, they noted that they believed the “best social program is a good paying job that provides people with dignity, respect and opportunity” (p. 2). Through the BC Jobs Plan, the Liberal government claimed that they would put initiatives in place in order to remove barriers so that more people can participate in BC’s growing economy, as they noted that access to well-paying jobs has been a “key factor in helping more low-income B.C. families than ever transition to employment” (p. 2). On this topic, it was also noted that:

The B.C. Jobs Plan is the foundation for creating secure, well-paying jobs. Helping low-income B.C. families access jobs is one of the best ways to help lift children out of poverty and provide them with a more secure future. (*Lift: A Plan to Support People and*

Reduce Poverty, 2017, p. 4)

Further, employment and training were identified as components of the Liberal party's 'Poverty Reduction Initiative' (p. 9). Here, it was explained that the B.C. Single Parent Employment Initiative (SPEI) was introduced to provide "single parents on income or disability assistance with up to 12 months of funded training or paid work experience for jobs that have been identified as in demand"...further, this program would pay for the full costs of childcare as well as transportation during the training (p. 9). Childcare and transportation costs would continue to be covered for up to a year after the individual enters the workforce. It was also noted that the BC Liberal government was making 'targeted investments' in order to support families and children and to remove barriers to securing employment. Some of these investments were: investing in labour market education and training, helping working families with childcare, and low tax rates for working parents. Further, it was noted that the Liberal government would continue to make additional investments to enhance existing programs aimed at supporting low-income families. Although the focus here appeared to largely be on assisting families with children in BC, the Liberal party did also acknowledge the following:

In Budget 2017, government will provide an additional \$796 million over three years for programs that support families, individuals and children in need — including \$199 million to increase disability assistance by \$600 per year for more than 100,000 British Columbians. (Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty, 2017, p. 16)

In terms of investments towards employment and labour market programs, it was explained that (in 2017) the BC Liberal government would invest nearly \$6 billion into education and training. Through the 'B.C. Jobs for Skills Blueprint', the government had been taking action towards achieving their goal to put BC citizens at the forefront of the job market by ensuring that they have the proper training. It was noted that:

Investments in skills training help low-income British Columbians build and diversify their skills and abilities giving them a greater opportunity to fulfill their career aspirations. A number of training opportunities are provided by the provincial government through the Canada-B.C. Job Fund Agreement (p. 3)

Under the Agreement's Employment Services and Supports program funding is made available for skills and training programs to help vulnerable and under-represented British Columbians including youth. Each specific program is tailored to prepare the individual for entry into the workforce or return to work. In 2016-17 the provincial government received \$43.4 million for these programs (p. 3)

It was also acknowledged that educational financial assistance would be a focus, as it was noted that children "who have been in the care of the province experience unique challenges in accessing education and training" ... therefore, "[y]outh formerly in government care access financial assistance, tuition waivers and bursaries" (p. 4). Furthermore, it was noted that "[u]pfront, repayable 'Adult Upgrading Grants' were available to eligible, low-income post-secondary students to assist with the financial costs of post-secondary schooling (p. 4)

Lastly, on the topic of enhancing Aboriginal partnerships, it was described that the Liberal government aimed to "[e]nsure that there are other lasting benefits to the Aboriginal communities that we work with through a range of initiatives such as housing-related training and employment" (Housing Matters Service Plan, 2014, p. 28).

### *The BC NDP*

The BC NDP indicated that two of their 'priority action areas' within the *TogetherBC* policy document (2019) were expanding access to education and training and creating more opportunities and jobs. It was explained that access to education and training would involve eliminating interest on BC Student Loans in order to lessen the financial burden for graduates. Skills training for older workers (55+), who the NDP noted often face discrimination in the job market, would also be implemented by providing training and supports through mentoring,

counselling, wage subsidies, and work experience. Skills development for those who require extra supports was also described:

Skills Training for Employment (STE) programs in B.C. provide important supports to those who face extra barriers to success. Government is investing \$26.8 million per year in six of these programs, targeted to those most in need, including programs for survivors of abuse, workers 55 and over, Indigenous workers, young adults, young adults at risk (including former youth in care), and people with multiple barriers (p. 32)

Further, it was explained that tuition-free ‘Adult Basic Education and English Language Learning’ would continue to be supported by the BC NDP government, with \$16.5 million in funding over three years allocated towards the program in Budget 2019. Finally, the BC NDP planned to invest in trades training to “better support British Columbians of all backgrounds who want to enter trades”—\$3 million was allocated in Budget 2019 to invest in the Industry Training Authority in order to help provide more “hands-on support for apprentices, employers, and Indigenous communities” (p. 33).

In terms of creating more opportunities, and thus more jobs, the BC NDP described four different ways that they planned to address this ‘priority action area’: first, they planned to make changes to ‘WorkBC’ in order for it to work better for those in need—this would offer better services for those who require additional support to re-enter the workforce, increase access to training opportunities and help these individuals find well-paying jobs (p. 33). The NDP also planned to continue to work with their partners to create new opportunities for people with disabilities by “identifying new ways to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities and to reduce stigma around disabilities in the workplace” (p. 33). It was also noted that the NDP planned to improve employment standards to “reflect the changing nature of work, and to make sure that these standards are applied fairly and consistently to all workplaces” (p. 33). The \$14 million allocated towards this goal would also support the implementation of the

‘Temporary Foreign Works Protection Act’. Finally, it was described that the NDP planned to create better protection for temporary foreign workers to help ensure that temporary foreign workers are not “pushed into poverty by employers that break the rules” (p. 33).

It was also described that one of *TogetherBC*’s ‘guiding principles’ was that of ‘opportunity’—here, it was noted that in order to reduce poverty, one must address the ways in which people are held back from opportunities. With this acknowledgment, the *TogetherBC* policy document noted the following facts:

British Columbia has the lowest unemployment rate in the country, yet the province still has a high rate of poverty. This disconnect reflects a deficit in regional economic development, unfair wages and a backlog of unmet need for access to basic education and skills training. (p. 16)

Breaking the cycle of poverty means ensuring that people living in poverty — and their children and grandchildren — have access to opportunity. That means giving people access to education and skills training so they can reach their potential. And it means making sure that workers of all kinds in B.C. have fair wages and fair working conditions, so they can get ahead, not just get by. (p. 16)

Too many people are denied opportunity because of physical, social, financial, and structural barriers. By tackling these barriers so that everyone has a chance to succeed, we can increase access to opportunity and lift people out of poverty. (p. 16)

The NDP policy documents also noted the interconnectedness of supportive housing and access to support services and opportunities. It was noted in the *BC Housing Action Plan (2019)* that the programs and activities used to achieve the NDP’s housing targets and outcomes would “create livable and inclusive communities by supporting housing that is affordable and easily accessible to “...education, early learning and child care facilities, employment opportunities and public transit” (p. 14). Further, it was explained that:

BC Housing works with local governments, provincial health authorities and local community and service organizations to identify opportunities for secure, safe and affordable housing developments that consider access to the amenities needed by

residents to maintain successful housing outcomes”, such as “social services, education and employment opportunities.” (p. 14)

The unprecedented level of housing development across B.C. will increase the demand for skilled workers and subsequently promote the creation of new jobs. As well, BC Housing makes efforts to promote skill development in the housing sector. BC Housing collaborates with housing sector organizations, including BC Non-Profit Housing Association, Co-op Housing Federation of BC, and Aboriginal Housing Management Association, to identify ways that BC Housing can further support sector capacity through education, training and research. Through the delivery of programs and business activities, BC Housing leverages opportunities to promote employment, skills training and business development for Indigenous peoples.” (p. 15)

Finally, in terms of responding to homelessness in BC, it was noted that one of the support services offered through the *Rapid Response to Homelessness* program was that operators would connect residents to “community supports and services such as education and employment opportunities...and life skills” (Rapid Response to Homelessness, 2017, p. 6).

#### ***4.3.5. Addressing Marginalized Groups***

##### ***The BC Liberals***

The BC Liberals described an enhancement to BC Housing’s *Homeless Outreach Program* (HOP) called the ‘Homeless Prevention Program’ (which was active in some communities as of 2014), which included “additional preventive measure to help individuals and families who are at immediate risk of homelessness due to crisis or transition” (Homeless Outreach Program, 2014, p. 2). This enhancement includes “additional rent supplements and supports that specifically target people leaving the corrections and hospital systems, women who have experiences violence or are at risk of violence, youth (including those leaving the care system), and people of Aboriginal descent” (p. 2). Further in terms of homelessness housing, it was noted that of the nearly 5,300 new units of affordable rental housing that the Liberal

government planned to create, 380 units would be dedicated to housing the homeless and those suffering from mental health or substance use issues.

As has been previously discussed, the Liberal party's housing plan was said to promote priority assistance for BC's "most vulnerable citizens", as well as support Aboriginal housing need through a "strong Aboriginal housing sector" (Housing Matters, 2014, p. 5). It was discussed that BC Housing would work with the Aboriginal housing sector as this was identified as a priority area for BC housing, as it was recognized that Aboriginal peoples were more likely to "be in core housing need and are significantly over represented within the homeless population" (p. 28). It was also noted that in 2012, BC Housing "transferred the administration of all Aboriginal social housing programs including emergency shelters and the Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Program to the Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA)" (p. 10). The Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Program was defined in Housing Matter's (2014) Glossary of Terms as follows: "Homeless outreach workers directly engage homeless Aboriginal people living on the street and provide access to housing, income assistance, and community-based support services to help break the cycle of homelessness" (p. xi). However, this outreach program was not further discussed in any of the policy documents.

Transitional supportive and assisted living was also discussed in *Housing Matters* (2014), as this part of the 'housing continuum' was said to serve three major groups: women and children fleeing violence, individuals with special needs, and frail seniors. Here, it was noted that supportive and assisted living was available for those in need of additional supportive service that included the provision of on-site or off-site support services. This was said to include those who were living with "severe physical disabilities or mobility issues, developmental disabilities, chronic mental illness, those living with HIV/AIDS, and drug and alcohol dependencies" (p. 9).

In regard to employment and education, there were concerted solutions to improve education and career prospects for marginalized groups. As was previously discussed, the BC Liberal government explained that an aspect of the ‘BC Skills for Jobs Blueprint’ was to focus more resources on “those who are struggling to gain a foothold in the job market or who face unique challenges”, such as “youth-at-risk, persons with disabilities and Aboriginal youth” (Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty, 2017, p. 3). Aboriginal employment was also said to be a priority under the BC Jobs Plan:

Aboriginal employment is a priority under the B.C. Jobs Plan and Skills for Jobs Blueprint as the provincial government aims to add 15,000 new Aboriginal workers by 2024. Through the Aboriginal Skills Training Development Fund B.C. is investing up to \$30 million over three years to support skills training for Aboriginal people, many of whom face unique barriers to accessing skills training and employment (p. 3)

#### *The BC NDP*

The BC NDP noted at the outset of the *TogetherBC* poverty reduction strategy (2019) that a strong focus of the policy document was to tackle discrimination and stigma, and to bring down “unfair barriers that hold people back” (p. 7). This goal was evident throughout the policy document, as the following quotation demonstrates the NDP’s acknowledgement of marginalized groups:

Poverty doesn’t affect all people equally. Indigenous peoples, transgender people, people of colour, refugees, and people with disabilities all face more barriers and higher rates of poverty. Poverty is an intersectional problem. (p. 13)

As has been discussed, reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and communities was a key point that guided the foundation of the NDP’s poverty reduction strategy, which appeared to involve acknowledging Indigenous people as a marginalized group who often face additional barriers in society. In their effort to address this, the following commitment was described:

As work continues, government is mindful of incorporating Indigenous perspectives into all services and supports offered by the Province, ensuring they are welcoming, culturally safe, and non-discriminatory. This work is part of government's recognition that Indigenous peoples have unique constitutionally protected rights, interests and circumstances that must be considered in the implementation of all government policies, including those contained in this poverty reduction strategy. (p. 13)

Further, it was recognized that Indigenous people have specific housing needs, and Indigenous families “too often face exceptional challenges in finding housing that meets their needs”—thus, the NDP government planned to invest \$550 million to build 1,750 new homes for Indigenous peoples through the Building BC: Indigenous Housing Fund (Together BC, 2019, p. 40; BC Housing Action Plan, 2019). It was also outlined that the NDP would invest in Aboriginal Friendship Centres, as these help Indigenous peoples access housing, education, employment, child-care and other services, and help connect Indigenous peoples to culture and community (p. 40).

It was also noted that the NDP planned to bring back the BC Human Rights Commission, which they proposed would “help reduce poverty and improve inclusion by identifying ways to tackle racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism and other forms of discrimination and violence that make life more difficult for people from marginalized communities” (p. 14). The NDP also acknowledged that their poverty reduction strategy would consider the “unique needs” of “children, youth, women and persons of all genders, people living with disabilities, people living in rural and remote communities, immigrants and refugees, LGBTQ2S+ people, Indigenous peoples, seniors, people making low incomes, people fleeing from abuse, people living with mental illness and addiction and people of colour” (p. 14).

As has been noted, the NDP government planned to continue to work to create new employment opportunities for people with disabilities and to reduce stigmas surrounding

disabilities. Further in terms of addressing individuals with disabilities, the NDP noted that part of their goal of ‘investing in social inclusion’ was to develop comprehensive accessibility legislation that would address the barriers that prevent those with disabilities from being able to access opportunities and participate in their communities—this legislation would “help bring down barriers that exclude people with disabilities from full participation” (p. 35). The ‘Home Adaptations for Independence’ program was also described as a means of benefitting “low income homeowners or renters anywhere in British Columbia who have a permanent disability or loss of ability”—the program would promote continued safe and independent living at home (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019, p. 5).

Further, the Building BC: Supportive Housing Fund was said to be investing \$1.2 billion to build and operate 2,500 units of supportive housing not only for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, but it would specifically address seniors, people with disabilities, and those with mental health issues. Further in terms of homelessness, it was stated that the operators of the Rapid Response to Homelessness program would adopt practices to ensure the safety of transgendered individuals, and a range of services and supports within the program would be available to ensure access for a diverse population (Rapid Response to Homelessness, 2017).

As a part of the NDP’s effort to understand “the needs of diverse groups” and as a means of addressing systemic barriers, ‘Gender Based Analysis Plus’ (GBA+) was also introduced—it was explained that this lens would be used “across governments to assess how diverse groups will be impacted by policies, programs, and budgets” (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 13). GBA+ was said to go “beyond gender to consider factors like Indigeneity, ethnicity, religion, LGBTQ2S, income, geography, age and ability”, and was also “embedded in the Poverty Reduction Strategy

Act” (p. 14). Further, it was explained that Transgender, Two-Spirit, intersex and non-binary people often face discrimination in housing, employment and access to services (p. 35).

#### ***4.3.6. Improvements to Policies, Programs, & Housing***

##### ***The BC Liberals***

It was described in the *Homeless Outreach Program* document (2014) that the BC Liberals would utilize reporting and monitoring as a means of measuring progress and improving service delivery for homeless individuals. Regular monitoring that engages both providers and clients would allow both to work with BC Housing in order to identify the successes and challenges of program delivery. Presumably, this would result in improvements to homelessness housing programs. Further in terms of housing, it was noted that within the Liberal’s strategic priority of responding to housing needs and creating affordable housing, an aspect of this was that BC Housing would work to ensure that the existing supply of social housing was maintained, rehabilitated, and renewed, which included renovating and maintaining housing stock. Further, it was said that they would implement “refreshed Housing Matters BC policy directions through new and enhanced initiatives” (Housing Matters, 2014, p. 6).

It was also stated that many “improvements have been made to income and disability assistance to better focus support for parents of low-income families to successfully transition to work” (Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty, 2017, p. 11).

##### ***The BC NDP***

Firstly, the need to modernize access to public services was acknowledged by the BC NDP, as they noted that this was necessary in order to meet the diversity of BC’s population, improve both online and in-person access, and improve the integration of services so that vulnerable populations are able to better utilize services (TogetherBC, 2019). It was also

explained in *TogetherBC* that the NDP planned to eliminate policies that have held people back—it was noted that the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction had already “committed to improving service wait times, people receiving disability assistance now [had] a transportation supplement so they can once again get an annual bus pass, and crisis supplements for food [had] been doubled” (p. 36). With this, they noted that these enhancements are “just the beginning of a series of changes the ministry will make” (p. 36).

Policy enhancements within the NDP’s actions to address homelessness were also detailed, as it was explained:

Along with the \$26 million announced in Budget 2019 to remove administrative barriers to accessing income and disability assistance, government is investing more than \$10 million to ensure policies and procedures do not contribute to — or fail to prevent — homelessness. Beginning in summer 2019, government is removing several restrictions on access to the moving supplement for people on income or disability assistance. This will help more people moving to lower-cost housing or moving closer to work, services, or family and friends” ... “We are also eliminating the “transient” category to ensure that a person without a fixed address is eligible to receive the same supports, general supplements and earned income exemptions as other income assistance clients. (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 30)

In terms of housing, it was noted that the ‘Capital Renewal Funding Program’ would be used to “prevent the deterioration of existing affordable housing stock and to carry out energy performance upgrades”—this would ensure that there is lasting stock of affordable housing for homeless and low-income individuals (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019, p. 10). Further, it was explained that under the BC NDP, in order to achieve their goal of supporting a strong non-profit and co-op housing sector, BC Housing would use the following strategies to improve their housing strategies:

- *Review existing social housing operating agreements and programs to provide greater flexibilities and tools to non-profits to support long-term sustainability.*

- *Collaborate with sector organizations, including BC Non-Profit Housing Association, Co-op Housing Federation of BC, and Aboriginal Housing Management Association, to identify ways that BC Housing can further support sector capacity through education, training and research.*
- *Work with housing providers to improve their financial, operating and governance practices and to ensure that housing providers have the tools needed to successfully deliver existing housing, as well as opportunities brought about by new provincial government investment in affordable housing.*
- *Enhance the review and performance reporting framework for non-profit partners to reflect the complexity of delivering housing and to consider future risks and impacts on performance and sustainability. (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019, p. 11)*

It was detailed that the BC NDP would increase and harmonize BC’s minimum wage, which would largely benefit many BC citizens, but particularly “people in low-paying jobs and who live below the poverty line”. Finally, the NDP planned to address and improve affordability by renewing programs and improving and modernizing approaches, as affordability was identified as one of their ‘priority action areas’.

#### **4.3.7. Overall Goals & Intended Results**

##### *The BC Liberals*

Breaking the homelessness cycle was shown to be an overarching goal of both the BC Liberals and the BC NDP. This is demonstrated within the goals of the *Homeless Outreach Program* (2014) under the BC Liberals, which were outlined as such:

- 1. To provide people who are homeless or at immediate risk of homelessness with access to housing and support services in order to reduce the likelihood of continued homelessness*
- 2. To provide services that are focused on the particular circumstances of each client and that promote long term housing stability (p. 4)*

Furthermore, program services within the *Homeless Outreach Program* were said to have the aim of assisting clients in achieving housing stability, wellness, and self-reliance. Another objective of the program was for service providers to help clients maintain their housing and their ability to live independently.

Further in terms of housing, the Liberal party identified their mandate as such: “to fulfill the provincial government’s commitment to the development, management and administration of subsidized housing”; meanwhile, their vision was “housing solutions for healthier futures” (Housing Matters, 2014, p. 5). Within their strategy of responding to housing needs, it was noted that they would implement “measures to break the cycle of homelessness through the development of new supportive housing projects, homeless outreach, rent assistance and the provision of emergency shelter” (p. 26). Here, it was noted that “[o]ver the next three years a key priority will be to complete the construction of planned supportive housing for the homeless/at risk to continue to stabilize and reduce the incidence of homelessness in communities throughout B.C.” (p. 26).

In terms of positive implications that poverty reduction would have on BC, it was noted that “British Columbians prosper when all of us are able to participate in the economy”, which was said to be the “fundamental concept driving B.C.’s workforce, skills training and job readiness programs” (Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty, 2017, p. 3). This further demonstrates the Liberal’s belief in the utility of increasing access to jobs and education in order to address poverty.

### *The BC NDP*

As was mentioned, breaking the cycle of homelessness was shown to be an overall goal of both political parties. This was evident throughout the BC NDP’s policy documents. The NDP acknowledged that their efforts to reduce poverty needed to address the cycle of poverty, asking the question, once people are in poverty, how do they get out? This inquiry, they explained, was “at the heart of [their] strategy” and the principles upon which it was created (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 15). Within their approach to addressing homelessness, it was explained that the Office of

Homelessness Coordination would “move beyond reactive emergency responses to homelessness” and towards an effective approach that prevents homelessness in the first place—this involves, among other things, stability, as it was explained that once a person is housed, they would be given the proper supports in order to ensure that their experience with homelessness is a one-time occurrence (p. 29). Prevention and immediate response were also noted here as important facets to reducing the occurrence and length of homelessness, which would help to prevent chronic homelessness (i.e., the cycle of homelessness). The objective of breaking the cycle of homelessness was further echoed in the *Rapid Response to Homelessness* (RRH) program framework, as the overall goal of the RRH program was described as follows:

Break the cycle of Homelessness by providing safe, affordable housing and the supports needed to help Residents remain Housed appropriately. (Rapid Response to Homelessness, 2017, p. 3)

Furthermore, the various support services that are offered through the RRH program were said to assist residents in achieving and maintain stability in housing, and foster resilience against homelessness (p. 6).

The overall goal of *TogetherBC*'s poverty reduction strategy (2019) was outlined as such: the strategy was said to represent a “starting point” for delivering on the targets that were introduced in the 2018 ‘Poverty Reduction Strategy Act’, which were: to achieve a 25% reduction in BC’s overall poverty rate, and a 50% reduction in the child poverty rate by 2024 (p. 6). In terms of the expected results and outcomes of the NDP’s housing strategies, it was noted that through the program outlined in the *BC Housing Action Plan* (2019), BC Housing aimed to support almost 40,000 households by “maintaining and expanding social and community housing across the province” (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019, p. 12).

In terms of poverty reduction policy solutions having positive implications for society, it was suggested that there are “good economic reasons to reduce poverty”—here, it was noted that

when the incomes of those living in poverty are increased, that money goes directly back into the local economy, because every “dollar of support that goes to people in need gets spent on groceries, gas, clothing, goods and services” (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 42). Further, it was explained that the “policies and initiatives outlined in [TogetherBC] are all contributing to our effort to reduce poverty in B.C.”, and together they will “put hundreds of millions of dollars a year into the pockets of people living in poverty”, which means “hundreds of millions of dollars going back into our communities — an investment that multiplies while creating a positive impact for all British Columbians” (p. 42).

#### **4.4. Narrative Strategies**

Within the NPF, ‘narrative strategies’ are described as the ways in which narrators shape policy realities by manipulating and controlling policy processes. This means that the policy narratives that are communicated are crafted with purpose in order to persuade, recruit, or to dampen or incite conflict. For the purposes of this research, ‘narrative strategies’ were defined as the ways in which narrators intentionally use the policy narrative elements to persuade and control the policy processes.

##### **4.4.1. The BC Liberal Party**

As will be detailed below, it was shown that the two most dominant narrative strategies that were used by the BC Liberals consisted of *promoting past successes* and *strengthening economic prosperity*.

The BC Liberal party promoted their plan called *Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty* (2017), which encompasses their BC Jobs Plan, as the ‘best social program’ (p. 2). They focused on the BC Jobs Plan’s past successes and its capacity to create jobs and employ

more BC citizens, reduce poverty and grow the economy. The following quotations from this document demonstrate this strategy:

We know that the best social program is a good paying job that provides people with dignity, respect and opportunity. People who can work want to be self-sufficient, support their families and contribute to their communities. (p. 2)

Growing the provincial economy and creating secure, well-paying jobs is the best path to security for families and individuals. (p. 16)

A strong provincial economy provides the financial capacity to invest in programs that can support the most vulnerable in society and provides increased opportunities through job creation. To fully access and take full advantage of these opportunities families need support and assistance. (p. 16)

For British Columbians who need extra supports, we must ensure they have access to a strong system of targeted supports and comprehensive programs that promote self-development, community attachment and give people a helping hand to get back on their feet. (p. 2)

Further, the following quotations from *Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty* (2017) demonstrate the BC Liberal Party's narrative strategy of outlining the BC Jobs Plan's previous successes, indicating its utility:

Five years ago we launched the B.C. Jobs Plan. It was our roadmap for economic success and job creation. This plan has made British Columbia one of Canada's strongest and most diverse economies. (p. 2)

Since the Province's Employment Program of B.C. launched in 2012, about 109,000 people receiving income assistance or Employment Insurance have found employment, with 85% of those jobs being full time. (p. 3)

In terms of the BC Liberal Party's housing strategy, it was indicated that the Liberal party's vision was to create housing solutions in order to create a healthier future in BC. Further, it was noted that "[e]very aspect of BC Housing's business is centered on our clients", and that

the Liberals endorse a “provincial commitment to supporting those in greatest need” (Housing Matters Service Plan, 2014, p. 12).

#### **4.4.2. The BC NDP**

As will be discussed in the following section, it was found that the three most dominant narrative strategies that were employed by the BC NDP were: *focusing on their innovative, ‘landmark’ policies and programs, discrediting/criticizing past government efforts, and utilizing themes of togetherness and community.*

The focus on the innovativeness of the NDP’s poverty reduction strategy was indicated in *TogetherBC* (2019), as it was noted that the *TogetherBC* poverty reduction strategy was the first of its kind in British Columbia, indicated by the following quotations:

Until now, British Columbia has been the only province in Canada without a poverty reduction strategy. The result of this failure to act is high poverty rates that are greatly out of step with the wealth and prosperity of our province. (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 8)

British Columbia’s first ever poverty reduction strategy, *TogetherBC*, recognizes the power of collective action to make life better for people. (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 6)

To guide action on homelessness, B.C. has launched the Office of Homelessness Coordination, to move beyond emergency responses to homelessness and towards a coordinated approach that prevents people from becoming homeless in the first place. The actions of the Office of Homelessness Coordination are guided by B.C.’s first ever provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy, released in March 2019. (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019, p. 4)

In addition to self-applauding their efforts of creating landmark policy and program frameworks for poverty reduction, the NDP also criticized policy attempts made by the previous Liberal government and languished the actions of the past government as ineffective for addressing poverty and homelessness. The following quotations from *TogetherBC* (2019) demonstrated this:

For too long, decisions in British Columbia were made for those at the top, instead of for everyone — decisions that left too many people behind. (p. 8)

TogetherBC takes important steps to address harmful and mean-spirited policies. (p. 36)

After so many years of inaction, we knew how great the need is, and how urgent. That's why our government took immediate action on some of the most pressing affordability issues facing people in the province. (p. 4)

Given the extent of poverty in B.C. and its associated history of government inaction, TogetherBC is built on a core of ambitious, transformational policies that will have a substantive and lasting impact. (p. 18)

Further, in their discussion of investing in Aboriginal Friendship Centres to support reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, the NDP government pointed out that previous government did not fully support these organizations:

For too long, these important organizations were not given steady and stable support from government. That changed with Budget 2018, which saw the valuable, low-barrier and inclusive work done by Friendship Centres supported with reliable dedicated funding for the first time in B.C. history. (Together BC, 2019, p. 40).

Within the *BC Housing Action Plan* (2019), the NDP indicated that their housing development plan for BC is at an 'unprecedented level', presumably compared to previous housing strategies. The BC NDP also call their federal-provincial investment in housing "historic" (p. 3), which seems to further portray the strategic message that previous policies and initiatives (by previous governments) were lacking.

The third narrative strategy that the NDP employed seemed to amalgamate the two other narrative strategies: the NDP built upon their focus on the inactions of the previous government by utilizing themes of togetherness and community to portray their message, using the following quotations to further discredit past government efforts and promote their innovative strategy:

British Columbians want to live in a province where we lift people up instead of pushing them down, and where we work together to make things better for everyone, rather than

leaving people to fend for themselves. After so many years when so little was done to address poverty in B.C., solutions are not easily put in place and come at significant cost. (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 25)

The way we have dealt with poverty in the past is not effective. We must find a new way forward and this strategy is where we begin. Together we can make a real difference in the lives of people, by halting growing inequality, and tackling discrimination that hurts people and holds them back. (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 3)

After a decade and a half of government ignoring and underfunding social priorities, there are no quick fixes. There is much work to do. TogetherBC is an important step, but it's just the beginning. Together, we can build on this strategy, and build a better, more equal province, where no one is left behind. (TogetherBC, 2019, p. 3)

## 5. Discussion & Analysis

As was previously noted, research into the policy process is aimed at understanding the “complexity of temporal interactions between public policy and policy actors, events, contexts, and outcomes” (Shanahan et al., 2018, p. 332). Employing the Q-NPF allowed me to explore the role of policy narratives within the policy process and provided a well-fitting framework to analyze the nuances of the policy positions of the BC Liberals and the BC NDP regarding poverty reduction and homelessness. Thus, this study resulted in pertinent findings that addressed my initial research inquiries, shaped opportunities for future research, and made methodological contributions in regard to the NPF and the utility of the Q-NPF.

### 5.1. Addressing the Research Questions

The findings from my research provided insight and answers into the research questions that were posed at the outset of this study. To reiterate, the questions that guided my research were as follows:

1. *Does the characterization of poverty and the homelessness crisis within policy narratives differ between the BC Liberal government and the BC NDP government? If so, how?*
2. *What narrative strategies do the two government parties adopt to promote their policy positions on homelessness and poverty reduction? In what ways do these policy narratives differ?*
3. *Are there policy-related reasons for why poverty and homelessness persist?*

Insights into the first two inquiries became evident through my findings and will be discussed below. To summarize, in regard to the first inquiry, it was found that yes, the characterization of the poverty and homelessness crises within the policy narratives of the BC Liberal government and the BC NDP government differed. These differences are detailed in the

discussions below. In regard to the second inquiry, it was found that the narrative strategies between the Liberal party and the NDP did indeed differ; these strategies are discussed below in section 5.3.2.

Finally, in regard to the third inquiry, based on the results from this study it is difficult to confirm what the implications of the narrative strategies are without further corroborating evidence. However, reasonable assumptions can be made based on the findings of this study in regard to the policy implications of the narrative strategies. For example, it could be logically concluded that because the BC Liberal party implemented strategies and policies aimed to solve homelessness and poverty during their time in office, but homelessness and poverty were still prevalent and urgent issues that needed to be addressed once the BC NDP came into office, that perhaps the Liberal party's policies were lacking, and thus there are likely policy-related reasons for why these social issues persist. However, it is also important to note that federal governments have a vital role in creating housing-related policies and programs as well, which has not been explored in this thesis and would be an interesting area for further research.

## ***5.2. Similarities & Differences Within the Policy Narratives***

Similarities and differences between the BC Liberals and the BC NDP were evident when analyzing their narratives. These included differences and similarities in regard to how each party framed the 'characters' in their narratives (the victims and the villains), as well as how the 'moral' of the narrative was put forth—i.e., the solutions to the issue at hand; poverty and homelessness. The differences and similarities in terms of each political party's 'setting' and 'narrative strategies' will be discussed in section 5.3.

In terms of similarities, the BC Liberal party and the BC NDP both portrayed marginalized and at-risk groups as those who are being subjected to the harms of poverty and

homelessness, i.e. as ‘victims’ within the narratives. However, the differences were demarcated by *who* each party focused on within these groups differed. For instance, the Liberal party focused in particular on Indigenous peoples and families/children, and largely discussed children and youth in poverty. They noted that Aboriginal people are overrepresented amongst those who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless (Housing Matters Service Plan, 2014). In comparison, the NDP explained that poverty affects all people differently, and noted that Indigenous peoples, people of colour, refugees, and people with disabilities all face additional barriers and higher rates of poverty (TogetherBC, 2019). This exemplifies the aspect of intersectionality in terms of poverty and homelessness that *TogetherBC* focuses on, which the Liberal party did not address. Additionally, the NDP also largely focused on Indigenous peoples, noting that these populations are more likely to live in core housing need compared to non-Indigenous people, and that Indigenous peoples were overrepresented within the homeless population in BC. Both political parties acknowledged the importance of strengthening partnerships with Indigenous groups in order to address their specific needs, and they addressed this within their strategies. The NDP also noted the importance of including reconciliation efforts within their partnerships with Indigenous organizations, as reconciliation was indicated as one of the guiding principles of *TogetherBC*. Direct engagement with Indigenous communities was also done in order to properly address their needs and priorities within *TogetherBC*.

There are also political differences and similarities in the ways in which the villain (i.e. the factors that contribute to/are responsible for poverty and the homelessness crisis) is narrated within policy documents. One notable finding was that both parties framed a lack of access to services as a prevalent contributing factor to poverty and homelessness; however, similar to the victim narrative, differences were demarcated by specific service issues. For example, the BC

NDP focused on addressing the lack of access to healthcare, financial security and income supports, education and training, access to justice services, and supports for children and families as key areas in addressing poverty. Meanwhile, while the BC Liberals did not directly identify a lack of access to education as a ‘villain’, their focus on the BC Jobs Plan within their strategy *Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty* (2017)—which largely discusses education and training to eradicate poverty—indicates that the Liberals view a lack of access to education and jobs training as a contributing factor to poverty, i.e., a ‘villain’. The Liberal party also placed a focus on the lack of supports for children and families, discussing the lack of childcare as a barrier to parents being able to participate in the workforce.

Another notable finding was that, in relation to one of their narrative strategies which will be discussed below, the NDP largely framed the previous political party (the BC Liberals) and their affiliated policies as a ‘villain’, whereas the Liberal party did not take this same approach. The NDP continuously addressed the ‘unfair’ and ‘unhelpful’ social assistance policies that were implemented by the previous government and criticized the harmful inactions of the previous government in regard to homelessness and Indigenous peoples and communities.

In terms of proposed solutions (the ‘moral’ of the story) for poverty and homelessness, one notable difference was the matter in which the Liberal party promoted economic-based solutions, such as job creation and enhance education. This is consistent with both the Liberal party’s framing of the ‘villain’, and their narrative strategy. While the NDP identified job creation and education as a priority area within their poverty reduction plan, their strategies were more dispersed and focused on several areas of action. Furthermore, it was clear that both parties had the overarching goal of breaking the cycle of homelessness and poverty through their strategies and programs.

Further, an overarching difference between the BC Liberals and the BC NDP was that the NDP published BC's first ever poverty reduction strategy. The Liberals did not publish any similar documents while in office—the 'closest' was their strategy entitled *Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty* (2017), which was the Liberal party's solution to poverty as recently as the 2017 election.

A core difference between the BC Liberal Party and NDP was the stark absence of mental health and addiction supports in Liberal policy documents. Findings from the literature review pointed to the importance of mental health supports in regard to addressing poverty and homelessness; for example, Stergiopoulos et al. (2019) noted the "importance of pairing housing and evidence-based mental health services to support housing stability" within a population, particularly for those with high support needs for mental health services, such as homeless individuals (p. 10). Thus, it was expected that there would be a greater focus on mental health supports. The BC Liberals did note that those with mental health and substance use issues would be addressed in terms of housing and acknowledged that these are issues for those in poverty or experiencing homelessness. In comparison, the NDP overtly proposed solutions in terms of addressing mental health and addictions issues and noted this as one of their key priority areas within TogetherBC. These differences are further discussed in section 5.3.2 in connection to the existent literature.

Another notable difference was that the BC NDP clearly placed an importance on the inclusion of those who are affected by poverty and homelessness. Extensive engagement with BC communities allowed the NDP to hear the concerns and input of BC citizens, and thus, take these into account when developing their poverty reduction strategy. The NDP stated that this was done in order to develop a more diverse and equitable province. Meanwhile, there was no

indication that the Liberal party employed a similar process to inform their strategies. This is further discussed in section 5.4.2. in connection to findings from the literature.

### **5.3. *Setting & Narrative Strategies: Liberals versus NDP***

#### ***5.3.1. Setting***

As was previously noted, the ‘setting’ of a policy narrative establishes the political, legal, geographic, and economic contexts of the policy at hand, among other factors that are deemed relevant by the policy actors involved, or by those associated with the public policy (McBeth et al., 2014, as cited in Gray & Jones, 2016). In the case of this study, the established context of poverty reduction and homelessness policy in BC served as the ‘setting’ within the policy narratives of the BC Liberals and the BC NDP. There were notable themes that arose regarding the ‘setting’ that was established by both the Liberals and the NDP, such as identifying values and mandates that the political party has adopted, presenting quantitative data and statistics regarding homelessness and poverty, and identifying past policy and program successes that inform the present policy being discussed. These will be further discussed below.

The BC Liberal party clearly identified their mandate, vision, and values that informed their *Housing Matters Service Plan*, noting that their mandate was to fulfill the commitment to the development, management, and administration of subsidized housing in BC, their vision was “housing solutions for healthier futures”, and their values were said to be integrity, respect, commitment, service, and accountability (Housing Matters Service Plan, 2014). Also notable is the language that was used to describe their actions in addressing poverty in BC—they claimed that their government was taking a “steady, thoughtful, and targeted approach to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable” (Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty, 2017, p. 16). In comparison, the BC NDP acknowledged that any effective poverty reduction strategy needed

to be “rooted in empathy, understanding and inclusion” (TogetherBC: British Columbia’s Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2019, p. 9). They also pointed towards the solvability of poverty in BC, and noted that among other things, addressing homelessness and establishing safe, affordable housing were both priorities for the BC NDP.

As was mentioned, relevant statistics regarding homelessness and poverty were also used in order to establish the ‘setting’ of the policy narratives. In terms of statistics, policy documents published under the BC NDP provided a plethora of numbers to showcase the breadth and depth of poverty and homelessness in BC. This was done in order to contextualize the starting point for developing their poverty reduction strategy. They noted that as of 2016, there were upwards of 557,000 individuals in BC living below the poverty line. They explained that this meant BC had the second highest overall poverty rate in Canada, as well as one of the highest child poverty rates in Canada with 99,000 children living in poverty in BC, among other things. In terms of homelessness in BC, the NDP pointed to the most recent (at the time) report on Homeless Counts in BC, published in 2018. This report found that approximately 7,655 individuals were experiencing homelessness in BC (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019). With this, they noted the makeup of this population—38% identified as Indigenous, while 20% were 55 and older, and 15% were younger than age 25. The NDP also acknowledged the three main barriers to accessing housing that were identified through the homeless counts—these were found to be high rent costs, low incomes, and a lack of available, suitable housing (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019). This information was utilized to give context to homelessness in BC, and to inform their poverty reduction strategy.

Meanwhile, the BC Liberals used statistics to demonstrate how their BC Jobs Plan has been successful in the past, which appears to give justification to its continued use and

incorporation into their strategy entitled *Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty* (2017). It was explained that the use of the BC Jobs Plan, which created greater access to well-paying jobs, had been a key factor in assisting more low-income families in BC than ever transition to employment. The Liberal party identified multiple successes that have occurred since the implementation of the BC Jobs Plan, including; BC moved from 3<sup>rd</sup> to leading the country in economic growth, moved from 9<sup>th</sup> to leading the country in regard to job creation, and BC moved from the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest employment rate to the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. These statistics were true as of 2017. Notable here is that the BC Liberal party appears to focus on economic growth and job creation as a means of reducing poverty in BC, as they claimed that the “best social program is a good paying job” (*Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty*, 2017, p. 2). This appears to be in contrast to the BC NDP who, as demonstrated above, focused on the current severity of the poverty and homelessness issues in BC, and used relevant statistics as a starting point for their poverty reduction strategy.

Both political parties relied on quantitative data and statistics to indicate their past successes (as the Liberal party did), and to demonstrate the depth and breadth of homelessness and poverty in BC (as the NDP did). It appears that the utilization of data and statistics served as the rationale for homelessness and poverty reduction policies—based on the reliance of quantitative data and statistics, it is evident that the prevalence and magnitude of homelessness and poverty alone are the key factors driving poverty reduction and homeless policy in BC.

### 5.3.2. Narrative Strategies

As has been previously discussed, within the NPF, ‘narrative strategies’ are shaped by the narrators of the policy and are crafted with purpose—as was indicated in Chapter 3, for this

study, ‘narrative strategies’ were defined as the ways in which narrators intentionally use the policy narrative elements to persuade and control the policy processes.

As indicated in Chapter 4, it was found that the two most dominant narrative strategies used by the BC Liberals were 1) promoting past successes and 2) strengthening economic prosperity, which aligns with the ways in which the Liberals constructed the setting of their policy narrative. As noted, the BC Liberal’s plan entitled *Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty* (2017) encompasses their BC Jobs Plan, which they claimed to be the best social program, as they proposed that the plan has the ability to create well-paying and secure jobs, employ more BC citizens, grow the provincial economy, and reduce poverty. They noted that the BC Jobs Plan had, since its launch, made BC “one of Canada’s strongest and most diverse economies” (*Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty*, 2017, p. 2). It could be surmised that there are potential impacts to the strategy of focusing on the strengthening of economic prosperity as a means to address poverty and homelessness. For example, this strategy has a presumption of equitable access to participation in the economy. Focusing on economic policies and strategies to address these social issues has overt neoliberal undertones, which is antithetical to any policies that aim to address issues regarding marginalized and disadvantaged populations. Further, it could be argued that placing the focus on economic prosperity deflects from the real issue, as it factors out structural barriers, mental illness, indigeneity, displacement, racism, etc.

In regard to the BC NDP’s narrative strategy, it was found that the three main narrative strategies employed by the BC NDP were 1) focusing on their innovative, ‘landmark’ policies and programs, 2) discrediting/criticizing past government efforts, and 3) utilizing themes of togetherness and community. The NDP continuously used language that reiterated the fact that

their poverty reduction strategy, TogetherBC, was the first ever of its kind to be launched in BC. With this, there was also a strong focus on the NDP's seemingly innovative policies, which were referred to as 'transformational' and 'ambitious' (TogetherBC, 2019). Further, these descriptions were in comparison to the previous government's actions, or rather, their inactions. The NDP appeared to approach their policy through a critical framework and took on a narrative strategy that was not apparent in the Liberal party's policy documents; that of criticizing the ineffectiveness of the Liberal's policies regarding poverty and homelessness. This strategy essentially politicizes a social issue rather than discussing it within the confines of what the issue truly is—a social dilemma. It could be hypothesized that this is because the Liberal party had been in power for so long (2001 – 2017), and thus they did not have the same need to denounce any opposing powers within their narrative strategies. If there was more political turnover, would this be a more commonly used narrative strategy for both parties? This would allow us to better understand whether this is a strategy specific to the NDP, or rather, a newly elected political party's narrative strategy. Further, the NDP's utilization of the themes of togetherness and community that were encompassed within TogetherBC appeared to be amalgamated with the two previously discussed strategies. This was demonstrated in the ways in which the NDP built upon their critiques of the inactions of the BC Liberal government by putting forth themes of togetherness and community to promote their poverty reduction strategy. Hence the strategy's name, '*TogetherBC*', the NDP focus on making a 'real' difference together, building a better, equal province together, and working together to lift people up and create better lives for all.

#### ***5.4. Comparisons to Existent Research & Practices***

##### ***5.4.1. Housing First Strategies & More Than 'Houselessness'***

As was discussed in Chapter 2, the ‘Housing First’ model was found to be prevalent within housing solutions for homelessness and poverty, both in the US and Canada (Lucas, 2017; McNaughton et al., 2013; Stergiopoulos et al., 2019). To reiterate, ‘Housing First’ involves providing individuals with either short or long-term housing subsidization promptly and without any preconditions, as opposed to offering housing as an eventuality that is contingent on ‘housing readiness’—e.g., addiction recovery (Lucas, 2017). None of the documents from either party explicitly mentioned the use of the ‘Housing First’ model; however, there was a large focus on the aspect of housing in terms of access, availability, and affordability, and it was noted that preconditions were often not necessary to access housing. This was demonstrated within the Liberal party’s *Homeless Outreach Program* (HOP), which provides opportunities for homeless individuals to locate long-term and stable housing. HOP was said to provide rapid access to housing and support services, and housing readiness was not a requirement to participate in the program—individuals were not required to meet any preconditions, nor were they required to accept any services in order to access and maintain the housing, which aligns with the Housing First model.

Amongst their other programs aimed at increasing affordable housing supply and access, the BC NDP’s *Rapid Response to Homelessness (RRH): Supportive Housing Program Framework* (2017) was created to act as an immediate response to the homelessness issue in BC and had the goal of implementing new housing units with integrated support services. Aligning with the values of the Housing First model, this program was said to be an immediate housing option for homeless individuals or those at risk of homelessness.

Tied in with the prevalence of ‘Housing First’ is a theme that emerged within the literature on homelessness services and poverty reduction strategies; that of addressing

homelessness as more than ‘houselessness’ (Minnery & Greenhalgh, 2007; Cress & Snow, 1996; Pauly et al., 2011). It was evident that for both of the political parties, support services were largely integrated into their housing services. This can be seen as a reflection of addressing homelessness as more than ‘houselessness’.

For the BC Liberals, support services were said to consist of not only access to housing, but they also aimed at connecting individuals to income assistance and community-based support services in order to promote long-term housing stability. Further, their *Housing Matters Service Plan* (2014) focused on stable housing with integrated support services. Here, transitional and supportive assisted living was said to include additional support services for those who required it, for example those with physical disabilities, developmental disabilities, mental illness, and/or drug dependencies. Additional programs were also said to be in place which aimed to assist individuals in moving towards independence and self-sufficiency.

It was also evident that for the BC NDP, support services were largely integrated into their housing services and programs. Homes that were built were said to include 24/7 supports for those who were homeless or at-risk of homelessness (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019; Rapid Response to Homelessness, 2017; TogetherBC, 2019). Similar to the Liberal party, stability through housing and support services was found to be extremely important for the NDP—necessary supports were to be provided to ensure that an individual’s experience with homelessness was a one-time occurrence. One of their programs, the aforementioned *Rapid Response to Homelessness Program Framework*, integrated support services within housing units. These services were said to be accessible to all eligible residents, regardless of their background, beliefs, abilities, health, gender, or sexuality. The unique needs of the residents were to be addressed here in order to provide the appropriate programs and support services

necessary. In addition to ensuring housing stability, the goal was also to improve access to additional community-based supports and services.

It is evident that both political parties made efforts to address additional factors, aside from housing, that are intertwined with poverty and homelessness. The above examples provide a clear foundation to recognize that both political parties acknowledge the interconnectedness of homelessness and poverty, and thus the need to address the issues together. Thus, it can be concluded that neither the BC Liberals nor the BC NDP view poverty and homelessness as one-sided issues, and thus they aimed to address them by integrating additional support services into their housing strategies in order to promote long-term stability. This is consistent with the findings in the literature that note support services and interventions as important focuses within policy in order to eradicate poverty and thus prevent homelessness (Parsell & Marston, 2012; Minnery & Greenhalgh, 2007; Cress & Snow, 1996; Pauly et al., 2011).

#### *5.4.2. BC Strategies versus International & Canadian Practices*

The existent literature on poverty and homelessness policy, which was previously discussed in Chapter 2, indicated many best practices and strategies that address these issues and have been implemented in different countries. These were found to be a useful point of comparison when analyzing the practices put forth by the BC Liberal party and the BC NDP.

To begin, Szeintuch (2017), whose research looked at Israel, the United States, and Europe, explained that homelessness prevention tactics were more likely to succeed if they were a part of a long-term and coherent plan, and supported by strong leadership and adequate resources as well as policymaker commitment (Burt, Pearson, & Montgomery, 2005 as cited in Szeintuch, 2017, p. 1150). The findings from my study indicated that both the BC Liberals and the BC NDP implemented a type of long-term strategy to address homelessness and poverty,

both of which involved partnerships with other organizations and levels of government, which points towards the presence of strong leadership. It could be concluded that policymaker commitment was also indicated, as the BC NDP laid out clear poverty reduction goals in *TogetherBC* (2019): to achieve a 25% reduction in BC's overall poverty rate, and a 50% reduction in the child poverty rate by 2024 (p. 6). Further, in regard to the expected outcomes of the NDP's housing strategies, it was noted that through their *BC Housing Action Plan* (2019), they aimed to support almost 40,000 households by "maintaining and expanding social and community housing across BC. The BC Liberal party indicated broader, slightly indistinct goals in terms of timelines, as they noted in their *Housing Matters* document (2014) that over "the next three years, a key priority will be to complete the construction of planned supportive housing for the homeless/at risk to continue to stabilize and reduce the incidence of homelessness in communities throughout B.C." (p. 26). While this is of course an important goal to indicate, the inclusion of clear timelines points towards a clearer approach, and with this, policymakers can be held accountable to their commitments.

Further, Stergiopoulos et al.'s (2019) research highlighted the unmet needs of homeless individuals with mental illnesses and higher support needs, and also demonstrated the importance of combining both housing and evidence-based mental health services in order to support housing stability (p. 10). As was previously mentioned, the BC Liberal party had relatively minor discussions regarding mental health and addictions in comparison to the BC NDP—these were identified as issues for those in poverty or facing homelessness, but were not largely expanded on in terms of how they were to be addressed. However, it is possible that these discussions were in separate documents that do not discuss homelessness and poverty, and thus were not included in this study. When mental health and substance use services were discussed,

the Liberal party focused on addressing child and youth mental health and substance use issues in BC. It was also noted that, in terms of housing, of the nearly 5,300 units of affordable rental housing that the Liberal government planned to create, 380 units would be dedicated to housing the homeless and those suffering from mental health or substance use issues. The BC Liberal party also acknowledged that dealing with mental health issues and addictions often results in challenges to finding appropriate housing for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness (Housing Matters Service Plan, 2014), however they did not expand on this.

Meanwhile, the NDP indicated clearer methods for addressing mental health and addictions issues in regard to poverty and homelessness. They indicated that they planned to expand access to Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers programs, in order for people with addictions to have increased eligibility and access to the programs. It was also noted that additional enhancements to these programs would be made in order to provide those with significant barriers, including mental health and addictions, with more effective supports. In addition, it was noted that the Building BC: Supportive Housing Fund would invest \$1.2 billion to build and operate 2,500 units of supportive housing for homeless individuals or those at risk of homelessness, specifically targeting those with mental health issues among other marginalized/at-risk groups (BC Housing Action Plan, 2019). Further, it was described by the NDP that one of their 'key priority areas' within their efforts to reduce poverty was mental health and addictions services, as they noted that individuals dealing with these issues reported difficulties in accessing services, long waitlists, and a lack of supports, and that those dealing with these issues required more effective supports in terms of program enhancements (TogetherBC, 2019). They also indicated that frequent reasons that were given for a loss of housing within the homeless population included addiction or substance use (BC Housing Action

Plan, 2019), which points towards the importance of addressing these issues within homelessness eradication policies and strategies. However, it is vital to note that this is BC Housing's stance on the issue, which fails to address the complex relationship between homelessness and substance use. Often, substance use is a response to other traumas such as loss, abuse, and unemployment, which precede homelessness and are more likely to be root causes. Thus, the complex interconnectedness between homelessness and substance use requires a deeper understanding and exploration.

Paradis (2016) explored homelessness in Canada, looking at service and policy response to the homelessness crisis. She noted that typically, service and policy responses have confined homeless individuals or those at risk of homelessness to a "passive role as objects of policy-making and recipients of services" (p. 101). It was evident that the BC NDP considered this issue when formulating their poverty reduction strategies, as it was described in *TogetherBC* (2019) that their goals could only be reached through partnerships, not only with governments and communities, but with those "whose voices have been ignored for too long" (p. 6). Thus, the NDP clearly aimed to include and address the concerns of both BC citizens and marginalized populations through extensive engagement, as the *TogetherBC* poverty reduction strategy was informed by input, debates, and discussions that occurred throughout BC.

Furthermore, Serge et al. (2006), who looked at homelessness policies and programs within Canada, suggested that amongst other approaches, stabilizing the housing situation is a crucial first step for homeless individuals, and a continuum of employment programs are necessary in order to address the diverse needs of those who are homeless. In addition, the authors suggested that there is an increasing recognition of the need for housing, employment, and support to work in unison on different levels in order to fight against homelessness. It is

evident that both political parties aimed to stabilize housing in BC as a critical first step in addressing homelessness and poverty. Further, as has been discussed, both political parties addressed their employment and education strategies, but the BC Liberal party used their BC Jobs Plan, encompassed in *Lift: A Plan to Support People and Reduce Poverty* (2017), as a means to address poverty, as they saw their Jobs Plan as the ‘best’ social program. However, Benbow et al. (2016), in their analysis of Ontario’s 2014-2019 poverty reduction strategy, the authors noted that the strategy largely focused on productivity and labour market participation, which left little room for an “understanding of poverty reduction from a human rights perspective and the non-economic causes and solutions to poverty (MacKinnon, 2013, as cited in Benbow et al., 2016, p. 106). This calls into question the emphasis that the Liberal party put on utilizing their BC Jobs Plan as their guiding social program, and focusing their strategies toward lifting people out of poverty largely through increasing employment. There are barriers many individuals face that must first be addressed before one can engage in educational endeavours, and as Benbow et al. noted, non-economic reasons that one may be living in poverty. A lack of focus on factors such as these could result in employment opportunities being a short-term solution instead of finding a combination of long-term solutions that could result in breaking the cycle of poverty and homelessness.

Benbow et al. also noted the importance of having the narratives of women who have or are living in poverty represented within policies that affect them, as they found Ontario’s strategy to have a gender-neutral lens and a lack of intersectional focus. It was evident that the BC NDP aimed to address this issue: Aside from the aforementioned inclusion of affected populations in their planning of their poverty reduction strategy, it was also noted that among other groups, the *TogetherBC* strategy considers the unique needs of women and persons of all

genders. Further, the NDP acknowledged that poverty is an intersectional issue that affects all people differently. Moreover, in their *BC Housing Action Plan (2019)* it was indicated that women and children fleeing violence were particularly vulnerable groups in terms of transitioning to housing, which they aimed to address by creating more safe homes, transition houses, and second-stage and long-term housing through the Building BC: Women's Transition Housing Fund. Through this fund, 1,500 spaces of transition and second-stage housing were said to be built over 10 years for women and children escaping violence. Some similarities were found with the BC Liberal party, as they indicated that their *Homeless Outreach Program (2014)* targeted those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, which was said to include women who have experienced violence or are at risk of experiencing violence, among other vulnerable groups. Their *Housing Matters Service Plan (2014)* also included women and children who are fleeing violence under their 'Transitional Supportive and Assisted Living' section of the housing continuum. This means that supportive and assisted living was available for those who were in need of further support services.

Furthermore, Benbow et al. noted that there was a lack of recognition of the discrimination and stigma that individuals experience, which compounds the experiences of both poverty and exclusion. It was evident that the BC NDP aimed to address this within their poverty reduction strategy, as it was indicated early on in the *Together BC (2019)* strategy that a key priority area of theirs was to address discrimination and stigma through their policies and programs. Part of this included creating new employment opportunities for those with disabilities in order to reduce stigmas around disabilities and address social inclusion. It was also indicated that there was a need to embrace gender diversity, as members of the LGBTQ2S+ community often face discrimination in regard to housing, accessing services, and employment

opportunities. Furthermore, they noted that many minorities experience discrimination and stigma within their daily lives and their interactions with the government (TogetherBC, 2019). It was acknowledged by the NDP that discrimination and stigma must be addressed because they are significant barriers in preventing individuals from accessing opportunities, and breaking the cycle of poverty (TogetherBC, 2019).

The document-searching phase of this study indicated that homelessness policy and strategies are often intertwined within poverty reduction policy and strategies (Sharam & Hulse, 2014; Fitzpatrick, 2005; Parsell & Marston, 2012). This interconnectedness of homelessness and poverty was demonstrated within the policies and programs that were implemented by both the BC Liberals and the BC NDP; although this study looked at some documents that discussed programs and strategies that solely addressed homelessness, other documents addressed homelessness within a larger poverty reduction strategy. Parsell and Marston (2012) suggest that policy that focuses on poverty reduction has the capacity to achieve long-term prevention of homelessness. The authors explained that primary prevention through societal changes can improve individual's material conditions so that they no longer experience poverty, and further, primary prevention should also focus largely on increasing the supply of and access to affordable housing. They also suggested that in order to prevent homelessness by preventing poverty, further changes need to occur aside from housing initiatives, indicating the need for a more holistic approach to addressing these issues; this relates back to addressing homelessness as more than 'houselessness'. The changes that Parsell and Marston (2012) suggest included assisting people in obtaining financial resources through changes to minimum wage, increasing full time employment, welfare transfers, etc. Elements of Parsell and Marston's primary prevention techniques were evident in both the Liberal and NDP's policies and programs: As was previously

mentioned, both parties integrated social support and services into their housing initiatives in order to prevent the reoccurrence of homelessness and to provide individuals with the necessary tools to eventually become self-sufficient. While both parties addressed issues such as minimum wage, employment and education opportunities in their policies, it was evident that the Liberal party favoured increasing employment and education opportunities through their BC Jobs Plan as a means to address poverty and homelessness in BC.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

### 6.1. Conclusion

The intent of this study was to analyze the differences between the BC NDP and the BC Liberal party in terms of their policy strategies in regard to the issues of poverty and homelessness in BC. Utilizing the Qualitative Narrative Policy Framework and content analysis as methodological approaches to analyze the policy recommendations and implementations of these political parties revealed how the parties framed poverty and homelessness issues. As has been demonstrated, this resulted in pertinent findings for the three research questions that guided this study: i) Does the characterization of these issues within policy differ between the BC NDP and the BC Liberals, and if so, how? ii) What narrative strategies did each political party use to promote their policy positions on poverty and homelessness, and how did these differ? iii) Are there policy-related reasons for the continuation of poverty and homelessness in BC? As has been discussed, it was found that the characterization of poverty and homelessness within policy narratives does indeed differ between the political parties—while there were similarities between the political parties, many differences also arose. Further, it was found that the political parties employed significantly different narrative strategies to promote their policy positions. Finally, in regard to the third inquiry, evidence to sufficiently answer this question was found to be more nuanced and requires further research, however, assumptions were able to be made that pointed towards the notion that there are policy-related reasons for the continuation of poverty and homelessness in BC. Employing the Qualitative Narrative Policy Framework for this study resulted in pertinent and useful findings and was fitting for the type of data that was analyzed, which demonstrates the utility of this framework for future similar studies. There were limitations to this study in regard to its sample size, sampling location, and intercoder reliability.

Therefore, future research could address these limitations by expanding on the inclusion criteria, exploring additional provinces or countries in terms of poverty reduction and homelessness policies, and including additional research members within the coding stage of the study to increase reliability. This study shed light on the differences between the BC NDP and the BC Liberals in terms of their policy strategies in regard to poverty reduction and homelessness, and provided pertinent and insightful findings that have the potential to inform future studies within this research area.

## ***6.2. Contributions to the Qualitative Narrative Policy Framework***

As was noted at the outset of this paper, the Qualitative Narrative Policy Framework (Q-NPF) stems from the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), which has traditionally been used through the application of mainly science-based quantitative methodologies within “high salience policy areas” (Gray & Jones, 2016, p. 22). However, it was also noted that Gray and Jones (2016) viewed the NPF as being ‘theoretically robust’ in its nature, and thus they believed that with some slight changes, the NPF “can be modified to incorporate qualitative methods embracing alternate epistemologies to address policy areas where limitations on access and available samples restrict the framework’s applicability” (p. 22). This study demonstrated the applicability and utility of the Q-NPF, as using this framework for my qualitative study indicated that the Q-NPF is well-suited for studies that aim to analyze opposing strategies towards a political or social issue. In addition, this study has indicated that the use of the Q-NPF can result in detailed findings and that may not have been discovered using the traditional NPF. As Gray and Jones (2016) suggested, incorporating qualitative methods within the NPF is a crucial step in order to expand the overall development of the framework. Thus, this study has contributed to the expansion and advancement of the NPF, as it proved the Q-NPF to be a useful and applicable

research method that yields insightful findings. Finally, this study has followed the contributions made by Gray and Jones (2016) as it has demonstrated that the NPF is versatile and applicable to qualitative inquiry and does not need to be restricted to its traditional quantitative roots.

### **6.3. *Future Research Considerations***

Addressing the aforementioned limitations in future research would potentially provide researchers with even greater insight into poverty reduction and homelessness policy narratives. Further, this study highlighted additional areas of study that would likely result in pertinent findings. First, future research efforts could explore poverty and homelessness in different Canadian provinces, looking at the political parties in office in these provinces, and their corresponding policies regarding these social issues. This would provide a researcher with interesting points of comparison, as homelessness percentages and strategies vary from province to province. Such research could involve a comparative study looking at the homelessness policies in different Canadian provinces in order to explore what is most effective in terms of addressing homelessness. Thus, this research could shed further light on best practices regarding poverty and homelessness reduction strategies.

In addition, further research could look specifically at Vancouver's homelessness issue, as Vancouver continues to experience rising homelessness numbers, and had the highest number of homeless individuals in BC according to the 2018 BC Homeless Counts—a staggering 3,605 individuals out of the 7,655 provincially-counted homeless individuals were found to be homeless (both sheltered and unsheltered) in the Metro Vancouver area. Thus, analyzing both poverty and homelessness at this municipal level could lead to pertinent findings regarding municipal policies and their utility, as opposed to provincial-level policies.

As was previously noted, the BC Liberal party is unique in that it more closely resembles the Conservative parties in Canada rather than the other Liberal parties, and so this study provided a glimpse into more conservative policy views regarding homelessness and poverty reduction. Thus, future research could explore how closely the BC Liberals reflect the policy positions of the other Liberal parties and the Conservative parties elsewhere in Canada.

Finally, future research could explore the success of the BC NDP's poverty reduction strategy once it has been completely implemented and outcomes are able to be measured. This could be done in comparison to the outcomes during the BC Liberal party's time in office, in order to compare the results of each political party's policies and strategies to address poverty and homelessness. Research of this nature could provide an opportunity to build on my third research inquiry, which asked whether there are policy-related reasons as to why poverty and homelessness persist in BC, as measuring the outcomes of these differing strategies and policies could provide an interesting point of comparison to shed light on this question. Finally, as this study demonstrated the utility of the Qualitative Narrative Policy Framework, discussed above, similar studies would benefit from using this framework when analyzing the narratives of key players in similar policy domains.

#### ***6.4. Research Limitations***

There were four apparent limitations for this study. The first limitation is concerning the criterion through which I selected my sample of documents. As I chose the documents that comprised the sample size from specific data criterion and used only publicly accessible documents, there is a possibility that documents internal to government may have been excluded. Second, because the documents I chose specifically aligned with my inclusion/exclusion criteria, there could have been other relevant documents outside of this

criterion excluded from analysis yet still pertinent to homelessness and poverty reduction. Thus, in future studies, the inclusion and exclusion criteria could be broadened in order to consider additional documents and potentially gain further insight into the topic of study.

The third potential limitation is regarding the sampling frame of the research, as this study was restricted to analyzing documents from two political parties in BC. This is important to note, as discussions surrounding the social issues of poverty and homelessness are also prevalent within the narratives of actors aside from political parties, such as advocacy organizations and policy institutions. As such, this study excluded other potentially informative narratives. Finally, the fourth limitation is concerning a lack of intercoder reliability. Intercoder reliability is the “widely used term for the extent to which independent coders evaluate a characteristic of a message or artifact and reach the same conclusion” (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002, p. 589). Given that I was the sole coder for this study, there is a potential of biased coding as coding independently does not provide any basis on which to confirm the consistency and validity of the selected codes. Including additional coders would have added to the credibility of my findings, however, given the scope and resources of this study, multiple coders was not a feasible possibility. It is recommended for future studies to address this limitation by involving additional researchers within the coding stage.

## 7. Postscript

I find it crucial to note that significant events have occurred, and are still occurring, towards the end of my writing of this thesis. Global racial tensions are at a high not seen since perhaps the Civil Rights Movement itself, and rightfully so—the continued systemic oppression of Black people, anti-Black racism, racist police practices, police brutality, and transphobia against Black Trans folks have come to the forefront. This has caused a global wave of protests and calls for a complete systemic restructuring and redistribution of resources. Concurrently, the COVID-19 global pandemic has transcended nearly every aspect of our lives, while simultaneously highlighting existing race and class health inequities. This historical moment, through the confluence of these highly salient events, highlight the specific importance of anti-black racism and how this shapes the lived reality of Black people in Canadian society.

Unfortunately, this has not yet been reflected in the policy approaches that I've examined, nor has there been an effort to specifically address Black individuals within the poverty and homelessness reduction frameworks and policies that I analyzed. In Vancouver in particular, the intentional displacement of Black communities has come to light, as the 1971 construction of the Georgia viaduct destroyed Hogan's Alley, which was home to Vancouver's first concentrated Black community (Vancouver Heritage Foundation, 2017). This intentional displacement and housing discrimination towards Black people in B.C. must be addressed in future research, and further, public policies should address how funding will be redistributed to these communities in order to remedy this displacement. Indigenous peoples, people of colour, refugees and marginalized groups were mentioned within the documents, and addressing the unique needs of these groups is of the utmost importance. However, the above example demonstrates that there is not a 'one size fits all' approach to addressing the needs of Black,

Indigenous, and peoples of colour's communities—as oppressions may be rooted in the same structures, their intended effects are experienced differently, and thus necessitate unique approaches in regard to social services, housing, and other homelessness and poverty reduction solutions.

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic has showcased the vulnerabilities of homeless populations, as those experiencing unsheltered homelessness may be at a higher risk for infection when there is community spread of COVID-19 (Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention, 2020). Public health officials have called for citizens to 'shelter at home', frequently wash their hands, and use sanitizing products in order to lessen the spread and transmission of the virus. These requests present obstacles for homeless populations, as it is impossible to safely 'shelter at home' when one does not have a traditional indoor home, or when one has been forcibly displaced from their space (i.e. from tent cities). This presents opportunities for future research and policies to better plan for health emergencies to ensure that already marginalized groups are not disproportionately impacted. The pandemic has also highlighted racial health inequities—US data collection concerning COVID-19 has shown that Black and Latino patients have been much more likely to die from the virus, while a 2018 Health Canada report found that significant health inequalities existed for racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, and Indigenous peoples before the current pandemic (Watson, 2020). This has highlighted the fact that underlying structural inequities that have exacerbated the escalation of the virus must be addressed in order to be able to tackle a pandemic such as COVID-19 (Whyte & But, 2020)—these underlying inequities include front-line work that puts racialized people at greater risk of infection, likelihood for homelessness, participation in the gig economy, living in smaller homes that make it difficult to

self-isolate, barriers to accessing information, and having an overall lower socio-economic status (Whyte & But, 2020).

These events demonstrate how essential it is for analysts and researchers to “measure the disparate impacts of policies on different races and socio-economic groups” (Wyton, 2020, para. 2)—the racial health inequities that have always existed but were highlighted because of COVID-19, along with the public attention regarding systemic and anti-Black racism, have underlined the need to address this information gap (Wyton, 2020). Homeless and impoverished individuals’ vulnerability to economic displacement, public health threats, and racial violence is not a new phenomenon. Though the BC NDP has made strides in addressing poverty as intersectional, this particular moment shows us that there is room to go further in addressing the specific vulnerabilities and intersectional realities of Black folks. This is beyond the scope of this paper, but an interrogation of what a truly intersectional approach looks like is necessary, and my hope is that future research and policies will address this critical aspect of effective intervention. While I cannot adequately address the implications of these developments, I would be remiss not to call attention to the interlocking nature of these vulnerabilities and how they have highlighted racial inequities.

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## APPENDIX A. Government of BC Website Search Terms & Results

Search Term	# of Results Yielded (01/01/14 – 07/18/2017)	# of Results Yielded (07/19/2017 – 12/31/2019)
Homeless	Gov. of BC Website: 4,710	Gov. of BC Website: 2,650
Homelessness	Gov. of BC Website: 4,930	Gov. of BC Website: 2,650
Poverty reduction	Gov. of BC Website: 4,830	Gov. of BC Website: 3,010
Housing	Gov. of BC Website: 13,200	Gov. of BC Website: 34,900
Homeless policy	Gov. of BC Website: 4,880	Gov. of BC Website: 2,480
Homeless strategy	Gov. of BC Website: 4,670	Gov. of BC Website: 2,530
Homeless plan	Gov. of BC Website: 4,920	Gov. of BC Website: 2,550
Poverty reduction policy	Gov. of BC Website: 4,830	Gov. of BC Website: 2,770
Poverty reduction strategy	Gov. of BC Website: 4,820	Gov. of BC Website: 2,740
Poverty reduction plan	Gov. of BC Website: 4,830	Gov. of BC Website: 2,760
Housing policy	Gov. of BC Website: 9,060	Gov. of BC Website: 6,000
Housing strategy	Gov. of BC Website: 8,100	Gov. of BC Website: 5,350
Housing plan	Gov. of BC Website: 11,000	Gov. of BC Website: 6,900

## APPENDIX B. BC Housing Website Search Terms & Results

Search Term	# of Results Yielded
Homeless	BC Housing Website: 648
Homelessness	BC Housing Website: 1,547
Poverty reduction	BC Housing Website: 271
Housing	BC Housing Website: 2,474
Homeless policy	BC Housing Website: 1,101
Homeless strategy	BC Housing Website: 813
Homeless plan	BC Housing Website: 1,097
Poverty reduction policy	BC Housing Website: 713
Poverty reduction strategy	BC Housing Website: 450
Poverty reduction plan	BC Housing Website: 783
Housing policy	BC Housing Website: 2,483
Housing strategy	BC Housing Website: 2,477
Housing plan	BC Housing Website: 2,487

## APPENDIX C. Google Boolean Search Terms & Results

Search Term	# of Results Yielded
British Columbia AND Liberal AND homeless AND policy AND 2014	1,290,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND homeless AND policy AND 2015	1,250,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND homeless AND policy AND 2016	1,340,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND homeless AND policy AND 2017	1,070,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND homeless AND strategy AND 2014	1,040,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND homeless AND strategy AND 2015	1,320,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND homeless AND strategy AND 2016	1,090,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND homeless AND strategy AND 2017	1,040,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND homeless AND plan AND 2014	1,130,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND homeless AND plan AND 2015	1,210,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND homeless AND plan AND 2016	938,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND homeless AND plan AND 2017	2,230,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND housing AND policy AND 2014	3,150,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND housing AND policy AND 2015	2,860,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND housing AND policy AND 2016	2,900,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND housing AND policy AND 2017	2,360,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND housing AND strategy AND 2014	1,500,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND housing AND strategy AND 2015	2,190,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND housing AND strategy AND 2016	1,670,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND housing AND strategy AND 2017	2,560,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND housing AND plan AND 2014	2,960,000

British Columbia AND Liberal AND housing AND plan AND 2015	3,610,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND housing AND plan AND 2016	2,940,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND housing AND plan AND 2017	2,210,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND poverty reduction AND policy AND 2014	1,500,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND poverty reduction AND policy AND 2015	1,500,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND poverty reduction AND policy AND 2016	1,860,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND poverty reduction AND policy AND 2017	1,460,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND poverty reduction AND strategy AND 2014	1,710,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND poverty reduction AND strategy AND 2015	1,430,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND poverty reduction AND strategy AND 2016	1,400,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND poverty reduction AND strategy AND 2017	902,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND poverty reduction AND plan AND 2014	2,010,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND poverty reduction AND plan AND 2015	2,170,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND poverty reduction AND plan AND 2016	1,590,000
British Columbia AND Liberal AND poverty reduction AND plan AND 2017	1,490,000
British Columbia and NDP AND homeless AND policy AND 2017	83,500
British Columbia and NDP AND homeless AND policy AND 2018	83,800
British Columbia and NDP AND homeless AND policy AND 2019	101,000
British Columbia and NDP AND homeless AND strategy AND 2017	82,900
British Columbia and NDP AND homeless AND strategy AND 2018	87,400
British Columbia and NDP AND homeless AND strategy AND 2019	76,700
British Columbia and NDP AND homeless AND plan AND 2017	93,400
British Columbia and NDP AND homeless AND plan AND 2018	116,000

British Columbia and NDP AND homeless AND plan AND 2019	139,000
British Columbia and NDP AND housing AND policy AND 2017	204,000
British Columbia and NDP AND housing AND policy AND 2018	124,000
British Columbia and NDP AND housing AND policy AND 2019	247,000
British Columbia and NDP AND housing AND strategy AND 2017	247,000
British Columbia and NDP AND housing AND strategy AND 2018	193,000
British Columbia and NDP AND housing AND strategy AND 2019	192,000
British Columbia and NDP AND housing AND plan AND 2017	215,000
British Columbia and NDP AND housing AND plan AND 2018	154,000
British Columbia and NDP AND housing AND plan AND 2019	237,000
British Columbia and NDP AND poverty reduction AND policy AND 2017	80,600
British Columbia and NDP AND poverty reduction AND policy AND 2018	86,700
British Columbia and NDP AND poverty reduction AND policy AND 2019	82,000
British Columbia and NDP AND poverty reduction AND strategy AND 2017	83,100
British Columbia and NDP AND poverty reduction AND strategy AND 2018	60,700
British Columbia and NDP AND poverty reduction AND strategy AND 2019	67,300
British Columbia and NDP AND poverty reduction AND plan AND 2017	86,600
British Columbia and NDP AND poverty reduction AND plan AND 2018	75,700
British Columbia and NDP AND poverty reduction AND plan AND 2019	72,900

## Appendix D. Codebook

NPF Components	Definition	Code Groups
<b>Character: Victim</b>	Who/what is harmed by homelessness and poverty	VICTIM_LIB_Marginalized/at risk groups (POC, women, Indigenous pops.) VICTIM_LIB_Societal costs VICTIM_LIB_Substance users VICTIM_LIB_Those w/ disabilities VICTIM_LIB_Those w/ mental health issues VICTIM_NDP_Marginalized/at risk groups (POC, women, Indigenous pops.) VICTIM_NDP_Societal costs VICTIM_NDP_Substance users VICTIM_NDP_Those w/ disabilities VICTIM_NDP_Those w/ mental health issues
<b>Character: Villain</b>	The factors that contribute to/are responsible for poverty and the homelessness crisis, e.g.: lack of housing, addiction, political parties	VILLAIN_LIB_Access to healthcare VILLAIN_LIB_Addiction issues VILLAIN_LIB_Cost of housing/rent VILLAIN_LIB_Discrimination/stigma against those experiencing poverty VILLAIN_LIB_Financial security/supports VILLAIN_LIB_Lack of access to education VILLAIN_LIB_Lack of access to justice services VILLAIN_LIB_Lack of housing VILLAIN_LIB_Lack of social services VILLAIN_LIB_Lack of supports for children/families VILLAIN_LIB_Mental health issues VILLAIN_LIB_Political parties VILLAIN_LIB_Previous policies VILLAIN_LIB_Provincial wages/access to jobs VILLAIN_NDP_Access to healthcare VILLAIN_NDP_Addiction issues VILLAIN_NDP_Cost of housing/rent VILLAIN_NDP_Discrimination/stigma against those experiencing poverty VILLAIN_NDP_Financial security/supports VILLAIN_NDP_Lack of access to education VILLAIN_NDP_Lack of access to justice services

		<p>VILLAIN_NDP_Lack of housing  VILLAIN_NDP_Lack of social services  VILLAIN_NDP_Lack of supports for children/families  VILLAIN_NDP_Mental health issues  VILLAIN_NDP_Political parties  VILLAIN_NDP_Previous policies  VILLAIN_NDP_Provincial wages/access to jobs</p>
<p><b>Moral of the Story</b></p>	<p>The ways in which the policy solution put forth by the political party will solve poverty and homelessness and benefit the victims of the policy narrative</p>	<p>MORAL_LIB_Access to/availability of affordable housing  MORAL_LIB_Addiction/mental health services  MORAL_LIB_Addressing marginalized groups  MORAL_LIB_Breaking the homelessness/poverty cycle  MORAL_LIB_Expanding access to jobs/job training, job creation, and education  MORAL_LIB_Expanding access to social/support services  MORAL_LIB_Improvement/modernization of services/housing  MORAL_LIB_Inclusion/engagement of affected populations  MORAL_LIB_Partnerships/collaboration (e.g. community, gov.)  MORAL_LIB_Policy/program enhancements  MORAL_LIB_Positive implications for society/community  MORAL_LIB_Rent/income assistance  MORAL_NDP_Access to/availability of affordable housing  MORAL_NDP_Addiction/mental health services  MORAL_NDP_Addressing marginalized groups  MORAL_NDP_Breaking the homelessness/poverty cycle  MORAL_NDP_Expanding access to jobs/job training, job creation, and education  MORAL_NDP_Expanding access to social/support services  MORAL_NDP_Improvement/modernization of services/housing  MORAL_NDP_Inclusion/engagement of affected populations</p>

		<p>MORAL_NDP_Partnerships/collaboration (e.g. community, gov.)</p> <p>MORAL_NDP_Policy/program enhancements</p> <p>MORAL_NDP_Positive implications for society/community</p> <p>MORAL_NDP_Rent/income assistance</p>
<b>Setting</b>	The political and social climate during the time in which the policy document was published	<p>SETTING_LIB</p> <p>SETTING_NDP</p>
<b>Narrative Strategies</b>	The ways in which narrators intentionally use the policy narrative elements to persuade and control the policy processes	Note: This code did not have additional sub-codes, as this narrative element was found to be more nuanced and information was collected inductively (See Chapter 3, p. 40)