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The Perceptions of Homeless Encampments and the Impact on Response Styles used in New  
York City

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## **ABSTRACT**

Homeless encampments have become more prevalent as an alternative living situation for the homeless community. These communities tend to encroach on public space, leading to a push from onlookers to ask government agencies to remove the encampments. The general perception of the homeless community and encampments determines the treatment that they receive. When reacting to encampments, there are two main methods used. Punitive methods are typically enforced by police and lead to criminalization and incarceration of the homeless, while outreach responses are typically enforced by departments specializing in homeless support services, providing resources and shelter in most instances. Using the New York City 311 data, New York Open Data, New York Police Department Open Data, and U.S. Census data, I analyzed the impact of tract demographics on where calls about encampments were directed. This helps reveal the complex relationships involved in interaction with the homeless community, leading to a better understanding of how to improve the quality of support and resources for the people experiencing homelessness.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

In a given night, more than 600,000 people experience homelessness in the United States, and many, up to 40%, must spend the night in public, urban spaces (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2023). In New York City specifically, 102,656 different homeless adults and children used the New York City Department of Homeless Services shelters within the 2022 fiscal year (Coalition for the Homeless 2023). This does not account for the population that chooses not to use the services, which is difficult to count due to the lack of visibility and trackability. Although many public charities provide shelter for those experiencing homelessness, some people experiencing homelessness do not feel as if there is adequate support provided within these spaces. Many find shelters to lack availability and resources, creating uncertainty in access to a reliable space to sleep, inadequate access to hygiene materials, or few resources for support. Others may find shelters to be lacking in mental support and safety. As homelessness is an extremely socially vulnerable situation, many avoid shelters due to mistrust, lack of privacy, embarrassment, or shame (Klop et al. 2018). Instead, they opt to use alternative spaces, typically available with public access to stay. This type of homelessness, dubbed “unsheltered homelessness” creates a particularly unique situation, as the people facing this need to look for spaces to rest, sleep, and exist.

Unsheltered homelessness has in turn led to people staying in public spaces, many in small areas that resemble a community. These communities are typically acknowledged as homeless encampments. Although each encampment will have a varying number of members,

structures, and resources, encampments are typically recognized as a public space where multiple people are staying, with personal belongings and structures remaining in the space for extended periods of time (Bowser 2024). As these encampments are typically highly visible, many nearby residents and onlookers react to the presence of encampments in dramatically different ways, particularly when the encampments are considered disruptive.

One option that is primarily used is contacting police or law enforcement. This typically leads to the removal of the encampment, alongside criminalizing the encampment members by charging them with “nuisance crimes,” that target people living in public spaces— such as loitering and panhandling (Herring 2019). On the other hand, some choose to reach out to available homeless services in their area, which typically provide support in terms of financial, physical, and mental wellness. These two courses of action though will lead to drastically different impacts on the homeless community and create a clear disparity between the two services.

In general, people who are female, white, older, and have a household income above \$75,000 are all more likely to initiate contact with police for reporting crimes or suspicious activity, as well as requesting medical assistance (Harrell and Davis 2020). Although less is known about calls to outreach responses, compassion to the homeless is frequently higher among the following groups: people who are younger, liberal, female, and have less financial wellbeing (Tsai et al. 2018).

To examine what neighborhood features are associated with perceptions of homeless encampments, I analyze 311 call data regarding encampment complaints for New York City tracts between 2020 and 2022. These data include calls regarding an encampment and an indicator of whether the NYPD or the New York Department of Homeless Services was selected



to respond. This allows me to differentiate between punitive and non-punitive perceptions used when reporting encampments. By understanding whether certain neighborhood features are associated with punitive or non-punitive receptions of homelessness and homeless encampments, we can better understand and access the responses to homelessness to provide adequate support to those individuals.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Homelessness and Homeless Encampments**

Homeless encampments, defined as an assembly of individuals who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness together, have become prevalent as a mediary space for those experiencing homelessness (Cohen, Yetvin, and Khadduri 2019). Elements of homeless encampments typically include tents, tarps, pallets, cardboard, and other materials that are typically found discarded in urban settings. These typically crop up in urban settings and are most often found in remote areas where people can isolate. Many are under bridges or alongside roadways, obstructing sidewalks and public space.

Homeless encampments have provided a nontraditional “neighborhood” where people experiencing homelessness can reside in close proximity. Many people experiencing homelessness favor these encampments to other housing options in their community, as they provide unique benefits, like access to a private and safe place to live, without the same rigidity of rules that may be present in a shelter (Finnigan 2021). Furthermore, there is a sense of social belonging and connection established, allowing those experiencing homelessness to have a support system that a traditional living community might otherwise provide (Dunton et al. 2020). A 1,342 percent increase in the presence of homeless encampments across the United States within a 10-year period– from 2007 to 2017– reinforces their importance and impact for those experiencing homelessness (Ardiente 2017). With the increase of encampments, there is also an increase in their visibility, leading to various differing public opinions as well as courses of action related to homelessness.

## Perceptions

Encampments have become a divisive topic within towns and cities, as once they grow large enough, they can be considered visibly, physically, or spatially disruptive to the public area they reside in. This results in complaints from others who also interact with the space. Many of these complaints are based on stereotypes and perceived causes of homelessness within the community, or the “social attribution” of the homeless from onlookers when witnessing the actions and presence of those who are homeless (Blasi 2000). Two main beliefs have emerged regarding causes attributed, typically categorized into intrinsic or structural.

Intrinsic causes typically view homelessness as a result of individualized scenarios, affected by personal experiences such as substance abuse, mental illness, or laziness. As the emphasis typically holds that the “fault” of experiencing homelessness rests on the individuals in the situation, people who hold this view typically see the solutions for homelessness as ones that the individual experiencing homelessness must carry out, like getting a job. Structural causes encompass larger societal problems that could impact someone’s ability to obtain and maintain housing. Ji notes four major structural causes that contribute to homelessness: severe poverty, economic conditions, lack of affordable housing, and the low level or reduction of entitlement benefits (2006). With a larger scope, those who highlight the structural causes of homelessness typically expect a widespread, systemic solution to address homelessness.

Intrinsic causes such as substance abuse, mental illness, and laziness are considered especially complex in their own right, and when combined with homelessness, it becomes harder to untangle. For example, sociologists argue that substance abuse in the homeless community can be explained through either the social selection model or social adaptation model. Social selection theory emphasizes that homelessness is one of many end results for the continual use of

substances (Johnson et al. 1997). This ideology acknowledges that substance abuse puts users at risk of becoming homeless, leaning into an intrinsic point of view, as it emphasizes the decision to use substances as the inciting factor of homelessness. Social adaptation theory instead states that substance abuse is a consequence of homelessness. This ideology highlights that substance usage is a coping mechanism for adverse living conditions, as a means of adaptation or escapism (Johnson et al. 1997). Both theories hold merit in explaining the complex connection between homelessness and substance abuse.

In the inverse manner, structural causes of homelessness like severe poverty, economic conditions, and lack of affordable housing, can also be broken down and explained in an intrinsic manner. Severe poverty can be exacerbated or even initiated through poor individual financial decisions, susceptibility to risk-taking, and mental health challenges (Achtziger 2022). The unclear directional path of the causes of homelessness therefore leads to a divisive debate on the way to interact with homeless individuals, and more importantly resolve homelessness. In actuality, the causes of homelessness tend to be a complex combination of intrinsic and structural reasons that interplay and connect to each other. More recently, perceptions have shifted toward this line of thought. Tsai et al. explain that in their study of 541 people on attitudes of homelessness “the majority of participants endorsed multiple causes of homelessness, including structural, intrinsic, and health factors.... Among structural, intrinsic, and health factors, the strongest causes that participants endorsed in each category were shortage of affordable housing, irresponsible behavior, and substance abuse, respectively” (2018). This understanding of the complex reasonings emphasizes a cultural shift toward compassion for the homeless and an expectation of varying responses for this community.

In terms of stigmatization, people tend to label, over attribute, and emphasize negative traits to people experiencing homelessness (Belcher and Forge 2012). Laziness, uncleanliness, and untrustworthiness are common perceptions and portrayals of homeless people. Viewing these people as “less than” the average human impacts the treatment received from both individuals and institutions that interact with homelessness. Theories of victimization can be applicable in understanding how others view and perceive the homeless community. Turner et al. (2018) argue that the dominant values of the United States— independence, responsibility, and free choice— can lead to victim blaming within the homeless community. In essence, by attributing negative outcomes to poor choice and reasoning, the societal commonplace makes people believe that the actions leading to and perpetuating homelessness are decided by the individual, diminishing the systemic impacts. This leads to a specific mistreatment, of ignoring and belittling.

Homeless people, especially those who resort to panhandling, face a level of degradation and rejection that is very similar to public humiliation (Lankenau 1999). As the social norm is to minimize this group of people, it causes people to turn a blind eye to them during times of mistreatment of others or dire need from those experiencing homelessness. Harris and Fiske (2006) found that groups that are stereotypically depicted as hostile and stereotypically depicted as incompetent also tend to be dehumanized, which positions those experiencing homelessness to be considered less than human. This perception can lead to further mistreatment, isolation, ostracization, and victimization, as their safety and wellbeing are more likely to be disregarded. Additionally, this perception leads to preemptive interactions to remove them from the spaces they reside. For example, although most who experience homelessness are not more likely to commit crimes – outside of crimes meant to criminalize those who live outdoors like loitering –

encampments are mostly opposed and removed in communities they reside in for concerns of public health, safety, and increased crime rates (Olsen and Pauly 2021, Rankin 2019, Loftus-Farren, 2011). Acknowledging this bias can therefore help implement laws, ordinances, policy, and procedures that will have an effective, but positive impact with homeless individuals and those that they interact with.

### **Community Impact**

Homelessness can also have a larger impact on the community surrounding encampments. With limited spatial mobility and a continuous need for access to services and goods, people experiencing homelessness are known to gather and remain in commercial or retail dense areas. The standing infrastructure of homeless encampments are likely to be seen as “deteriorating neighborhood conditions,” and onlookers generally perceive a lack of safety in these areas, causing people to avoid these spaces (Austin, Furra, and Spine 2002). Although these spaces still provide goods and services to those in the community, many residents who have more physical mobility may choose to go out of their way to avoid these spaces. This concentration of people experiencing homelessness can thus negatively impact the commercial businesses nearby. This can manifest in multiple ways, from lower patronage in stores near concentrated homeless populations, to a loss in store profits due to theft, to an increased cost to hire security staff or implementing security equipment (Howle 2018). This also can be impactful to the surrounding areas, devaluing the property, lowering the median income, increasing unemployment, and reducing attraction to the community (Alexander-Eitzman et. al 2013).

Therefore, this impact can cause adverse reactions and perceptions of the homeless population, creating a bias when deciding a method of response.

## **Response Style**

Although public acceptance and sympathy is continually shifting, it has led to two main pathways of reaction: punitive responses and outreach responses. Punitive responses involve removing or clearing encampments, and even criminalizing and arresting those experiencing homelessness. Outreach responses involve restorative measures that provide resources and support to those experiencing homelessness; this can even include sanctioning encampments and providing important resources such as running water.

On an institutional scale, local governments typically use two different organizations to carry out each response. For example, police typically execute punitive responses, in terms of arresting and criminalizing those without housing. On the other hand, services like the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development or the New York City Department of Homeless Services provide shelter housing, pathways to long-term housing, prevention support, and other resources. The choice of dispatching each organization depends heavily on the social perception of the situation by observers who call in to report, leading to a need to understand the varying societal perceptions of onlookers and observers of homelessness.

### *Punitive responses*

New York City has banned encampments in all spaces, relying on a reporting system through their 311 service, from residents in the city. With this system, the local government

promises local officers to address and confirm the encampment within four hours, who will then complete a “sweep” to remove the encampment (NYC311). Almost 5,000 of these sweeps were conducted in 2021 in New York City alone (Cregan 2022). These sweeps do little to address the problem of homelessness, as many encampments return soon after they are asked to move (Herring 2019). Functionally, these sweeps instead can further entrench people in homelessness, as interaction with police may lead to criminalization.

As a method of deterrence, punitive programs, or methods of criminalization for the homeless, are designed to attempt to combat visible unsheltered homelessness. Criminalization is considered one of the most expensive approaches with the least desirable or effective outcomes (Tars 2019), and it is estimated that a chronically homeless person costs taxpayers about \$36,000 per year (Chapman 2024), with criminalization costs contributing greatly to that cost. It can occur through multiple different practices, such as citing, sweeps, ticketing, or even incarceration. All of these can lead to a criminal record that can further exacerbate the experience of homelessness. With an increase in anti-homeless legislation, people experiencing homelessness are at a higher risk of arrest for misuse of public space, failure to pay public transit fees, panhandling, and other “nuisance” offenses. (Lee et al. 2010, Ballew 2016). These offenses disproportionately lead to arrests for individuals experiencing homelessness as well. Furthermore, chronic homelessness can lead to more serious crime offenses, especially when paired with common auxiliary struggles like unemployment, substance abuse, or mental health problems. In a research brief examining data on arrests of homeless individuals in New York City in 2013, charges for property crime, trespassing, and sale or possession of illegal drugs were more prevalent among people experiencing homelessness, most likely in an effort for means of survival (Peterson 2015).



These charges and offenses further entrench those experiencing homelessness into financial disparity and into an even more vulnerable state. Rankin (2019) notes that without financial resources, homeless people are unable to pay legal fees or police fines, leading to further fines and debt. With a lack of physical address, individuals experiencing homelessness also may not even be aware of outstanding civil infractions which can then snowball into larger charges, misdemeanors, or provisions like warrants for failure to appear. With these charges, homeless individuals can become ineligible for care in shelters or other benefits and support provided to the community (Skinner 2016). Even if services are not impacted by criminal records, arrests lead to decreased use of beneficial services in the future, as people who have had contact with the criminal justice system avoid places that keep detailed records, such as healthcare centers, educational systems, or even occupational offices (Brayne 2014).

Additionally, homeless individuals experience recurring criminalization: “Over 60% of homeless arrestees had prior misdemeanor convictions and over 40% had prior felony convictions, compared to 36% and 25% among arrestees who were not homeless. About two thirds of street and shelter homeless arrestees had prior bench warrants, compared to 40% of those who were not homeless. Homeless arrestees were also more likely to have open cases at the time of their arrest (28% of the street homeless and 30% of the shelter homeless), compared to those who were not homeless (21%)” (Peterson 2016). With a continuous cycle of rearrests and escalation through the criminal justice system, it can easily nullify any progress that individuals try to make to improve their situations in regard to homelessness, employment, or poverty, especially as criminal records can impact housing opportunities and occupational opportunities.

The concept of simultaneous over- and under-policing in homeless communities may contribute to excessive criminalization. Boehme, Cann, and Isom describe that marginalized communities “are harassed and targeted by police, as their actions and communities are under constant surveillance and scrutiny. Yet, their communities are also largely unprotected, neglected, and ignored when police are needed most” (2020). When this paradox is applied to the homeless community, it reinforces the too common phenomenon of excessive criminalization while the needs of the community are neglected and ignored. For example, police may respond effectively to calls regarding the disruptiveness of the encampment to the general public and work to remove them. However, police may be lower to respond to calls from inside encampments, delaying the provision of much-needed support or help to members residing in the space. Additionally, knowing that the police are likely to criminalize the presence of the encampments rather than help individuals with concerns, those living in the encampments may be reluctant to call police all together. This situation fosters legal cynicism, a cultural framework where police are considered unresponsive (Kirk and Papachristos 2017). This is a potential driver of crime, as the reluctance of police enforcement leads to continued normalization of crime in these communities. The ensuing and consequential legal cynicism could contribute to a lack of help seeking in encampments even help seeking behaviors (Brayne 2014).

Even though encampments evolved as an intermediary solution for individuals experiencing homelessness in the US, governments and cities began to create more laws, ordinances, and bans to eliminate this practice. Between 2006 to 2019, the National Homeless Law Center found that “city-wide bans on camping have increased by 92%, on sitting or lying by 78%, on loitering by 103%, on panhandling by 103%, and on living in vehicles by 213%” in 187 US cities (Tars 2021). This increase in ordinances can normalize the removal and reduction of

encampments to residents, making it a societal commonplace to see these communities as a nuisance. As a social and public health issue that relies heavily on outside volunteers to provide support and resources, social perception is critical to understanding the types of responses used to interact with people without housing.

Criminalization of the homeless typically begins with resident-initiated contact with police, meaning an observer seeks out police and reports a concern. Police are then dispatched to interact with the individual experiencing homelessness and to handle the complaint made by the observer (Herring 2019). In 2018, through the Bureau of Justice Statistics Police-Public Contact Survey, Harrell and Davis (2020) found that many sociodemographic identities were significant in initiating contact with police; people who are female, white, older, and have a household income above \$75,000 are all more likely to initiate contact with police. Inversely, those who are male, racial minorities, and are younger are less likely to initiate contact. Seniors, those 65 and older, are more likely to have positive attitudes about police, supporting additional policing as well (Goldstein 2021). Brick, Taylor, and Esbensen also find that children, especially younger youth are likely to have pro-police attitudes, especially if police are also involved in a positive way in the community, leading to a higher chance of resident-initiated contact (2009).

On the other hand, person-initiated contact includes being stopped by police or by being arrested (Harrell and Davis 2020). If continuously experiencing this, the homeless community may come to expect punitive responses when approached by police. Additionally, “persons ages 18 to 24 were most likely to have any contact with police (30%) and to experience police-initiated contact (19%)” (Harrell and Davis 2020). These two groups may be less likely to want to interact with police.

Some argue that these methods of criminalization are necessary. For instance, Clarke and Parsell (2019) note that the use of police presence and CCTV allows for more information and evidence, possibly to protect people from further victimization and to provide a secondary resource in cases where it may be deemed necessary. Other sociologists acknowledge that punitive programs may also improve quality of life for residents of a city, in terms of sanitation and public health, as having individuals who are monitoring these aspects will encourage residents to be mindful or careful (Herring 2021, Sleiman and Lippert 2010).

### *Outreach responses*

The local government of Portland, Oregon, in contrast, proposes an alternate solution: an allotted space where encampments may exist, providing a lot, restrooms, showers, and meals to those staying in the space (Oregon Public Broadcasting 2023). This is one example of outreach responses: methods used to improve health, safety, and access to resources to those experiencing homelessness. These varying solutions create differing impacts on the population, making social statements on their acceptance and very presence in the urban spaces.

Typically, outreach responses reference help seeking behaviors or supportive resources provided. Some examples include providing shelter, medical care, food, addiction rehabilitation, or other resources, as well as relocation and long-term housing solutions (Lee et al. 2010). These programs aim to provide stability and help to reduce the strain of homelessness. On average, 66,195 people are estimated to stay in shelters daily, with an average stay length of 750 days for adult families and 412 days for single adults (NYC Mayor's Office of Operations 2023). Additionally, many shelters continue to work with institutions such as the Department of Homeless Services or the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development to

ensure a smooth transition from shelters to permanent, long-term housing. Besides the physical resources provided, shelters provide spaces for positive social interactions, humanizing those experiencing homelessness and removing the stigma and shame associated with homelessness and asking for help (Lankenau 1999).

The efficacy of these interventions is widely debated though, as they do not impact all of the community positively. First, outreach responses are not fully utilized by the homeless community to the extent that one would expect. For example, shelters have limited access and capacity in most cases, meaning that shelters have the difficult decision to turn people away who need services (Herring 2021). Because of prior experiences of being turned away, people experiencing homelessness may also be jaded and unwilling to return and ask for help, continuing to live unsheltered. Many shelters also have strict rules and expectations for potential residents, regarding drug usage, animal occupancy, felony or criminal charges, and other restrictions (Skinner 2016). These could easily make many members of the community ineligible for services, revoking any opportunity for initial benefits or ways to improve their current conditions. Additionally, homeless individuals may feel as if short term stays offered by many shelters do not provide enough support, leading them to be unhelpful in the long run (Bond 2021). Violence and crime are also noted within shelters, as many have a lack of privacy or safe spaces to protect possessions of those residing within the shelters (Kerman et al. 2023).

### *Influencing Perceptions*

As the choice of response methods for homelessness can be based on private perceptions, understanding what can influence perceptions helps sociologists understand what may help change the most common methods of response. Toro and McDonel (1992) found that the

sociological demographics that most impact perceptions of homelessness are age, political ideology, gender, and financial well-being. People who are younger, liberal, female, and have less financial wellbeing are more likely to express sympathy and support for the homeless community. Increased levels of education have been linked to higher acceptance of homelessness, but surprisingly reduces support for providing financial aid to the homeless community (Phelan et al. 1995)– possibly because those who are educated understand that “equal opportunity does not always result in equal outcomes” (Tsai et al. 2018). Morgan, Goddard, and Givens (1997) also confirmed most of these findings, as well as noted that those who identify as a racial minority have been found to support and help those who are experiencing homelessness as well as those who practice religion. Lastly, those who have had contact and previous experience with homelessness in their lives are more likely to be willing to support and help those who are homeless (Lee, Farrell, and Link, 2004).

## Chapter 3

### Hypotheses

The general societal perceptions of the homeless community impact the treatment and method of response received. Links to age, education, race, SES, and personal experience are paths that have previously been explored. Despite this, there are many other avenues to further pursue to understand the choice of response and the further impact it has on the community. To understand the impacts of perception on response choices in a detailed manner, I specifically explore New York City, which has a known homeless community and is notorious for the use of encampments. My hypotheses are as follows:

1. *Neighborhoods with a shelter present are more likely to utilize outreach responses and less likely to utilize police responses.*

The presence of shelters may indicate that people in the community have personal experience interacting with homelessness, leading to more sympathetic views. Shelters in the community also may bring more visibility to outreach responses as an alternative option to police intervention.

2. *Neighborhoods with residents of lower socioeconomic status will be more likely to utilize outreach responses and less likely to utilize police responses.*

People with lower financial wellbeing may be more sympathetic to the homeless as they understand the issue of financial instability more intimately than those with higher financial stability.

3. *Neighborhoods with more residents who identify as a racial minority will be less likely to utilize outreach responses and less likely to utilize police responses.*

People who identify as racial and ethnic minorities are more hesitant to call police and may face language barriers or lack of knowledge about resources that are provided to the homeless.

4. *Neighborhoods with more residents who face housing insecurity will be more likely to utilize outreach responses and less likely to utilize police responses.*

Those who experience housing insecurity likely will have some empathy and understanding for the homeless community. The people in these neighborhoods may have even experienced homelessness themselves, leading to understanding the negative impacts of criminalization. Therefore, they may be more likely to point others toward outreach responses.

5. *Neighborhoods with residents who are attending universities will be more likely to utilize outreach responses and less likely to utilize police responses.*

Communities valuing education will likely be accepting of the homeless community and may not feel the need to get involved with the police to help the homeless. They may understand the negative impacts of the criminalization of police. Additionally, those who are in university are typically aged 18-22, who may hold more negative views of policing, due to increases police-initiated contact. They also may have more sympathetic views of the homeless.

6. *Neighborhoods with older populations and younger populations will be less likely to utilize outreach responses and more likely to utilize punitive responses.*

As older communities tend to be a large interest group in pro-police perceptions, they may feel more inclined to call police. On the other hand, younger populations (under 18), may also hold pro-police perceptions; due to the efforts of police departments to



encourage children to view police as a safe group of people to rely on. Alternatively, parents and adults may be more likely to be concerned about the safety of children, leading them to be more willing to call police.

7. *Communities with higher crime rates population will be less likely to utilize outreach responses and more likely to utilize punitive responses.* As communities are concerned about physical safety, they will tend to view the homeless as perpetrators of these activities. Additionally, police presence may be higher in these spaces, leading to higher visibility and ease of access to enforce punitive responses. The entrenchment of over- and under- policing paradox of marginalized communities further criminalizes the homeless as well.
8. *Communities with more daytime activity will be less likely to utilize outreach responses and more likely to utilize punitive responses.* Communities that have high daytime activity, like shopping centers, schools, and other public spaces will be more invested in the perception of a clean and safe environment. Therefore, they would be more interested in penalizing those who are a disruption to this perception, like the homeless community.

## Chapter 4

### Data and Methods

To consider the choice of punitive and outreach responses, I use NYC Open Data to view 311 call data. NYC Open Data is collected by New York City agencies and organizations, including the city's government, and is available for public use free of charge. 311 is a government service and organization that provides opportunities for residents to “make service requests, file complaints, and get additional information about the City” (NYC Open Data 2022). It is used for non-emergent situations and most utilized for illegal parking, noise complaints, heating issues, and encampment presence. It also collects data on what government agencies each complaint is referred to. I specifically filter calls about homeless encampments to view. The dataset is from January 2020 to June 2023. Each call represents one specific call regarding the presence of an encampment, and with NYC Open Data providing information about location and circumstances of each incident (e.g. encampment). Using this information, I enter the latitude and longitude assigned to each reported encampment into the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) API documentation website (FCC 2023) to identify the Census tract that each encampment was located. I aggregate calls to each census tract level, which creates a neighborhood-level count of homeless encampments. In my analyses, I compare the locations of calls and organize them by census tract to then apply census tract demographics from the American Community Survey. The NYC Open Data also keeps records of businesses and schools in New York City. Additionally, I utilize NYPD Open Data for crime rates in these census tracts. Lastly, I consider the CDC Social Vulnerability Data, which relies on census data, and analyzes factors of marginalized groups that can be viewed by census tracts. Importantly, because my unit of analysis is the census tract, I cannot make interpretations about individual callers to the 311 system.

**Sample**

My sample includes the New York City tracts delineated by the United States Census. As a general grouping of New York City residents, it provides a simple way to consider neighborhoods. Rather than using the five boroughs of New York City (Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island), or zip codes, this method provides more statistical uniformity and many smaller groups to analyze. In total, there are 2,168 tracts, and they have an average population of 4,000 people and an average acreage of 90 acres (New York City Census FactFinder). Eight tracts were removed from the data, leaving 2,160 cases total.

**Outreach Responses**

To track outreach responses, I use the number of calls directed to the Department of Homeless Services. These calls are typically used in circumstances to provide support for the homeless. The Department of Homeless Services aims to “prevent homelessness before it occurs, reduce street homelessness, and assist New Yorkers in transitioning from shelter into permanent housing. DHS remains committed to meeting its legal mandate to provide temporary emergency shelter to those experiencing homelessness in a safe and respectful environment” (New York City Department of Homeless Services).

**Punitive Responses**

When considering punitive responses, I use the number of calls directed to the police. Protocol for 311 reports of encampments state that local police will be dispatched within 4 hours

to investigate the claim. Once that occurs, the police are instructed to contact the Department of Homeless Services with findings, who then engage with the individuals if necessary (NYC311). Contact with police still entails citations for the homeless, and many people may have to relocate before DHS can intervene.

## **Shelters**

The shelters included in the data come from a directory of drop-in shelters provided by the Department of Homeless Services. Drop-in shelters “provide hot meals, showers, laundry facilities, clothing, medical care, recreational space, employment referrals, and other social services” (New York City Department of Homeless Services). They are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There are seven total listed, which creates a small sample size compared to the number of tracts present in the data.

## **Socioeconomic Status, Racial Minority Identity, Housing Insecurity**

To consider vulnerable community characteristics, I use the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention / Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry Social Vulnerability Index. According to the Agency for Toxic Substances, “the CDC/ATSDR SVI is a database that helps emergency response planners and public health officials identify, map, and plan support for communities that will most likely need support before, during, and after a public health emergency (2024). Using census tracts, it considers and ranks 16 social factors and groups them into four categories: socioeconomic status, household characteristics, racial and ethnic minority status, and housing type & transportation. Socioeconomic status includes the following factors:

below 150% poverty, unemployment, housing cost burden, no high school diploma, and no health insurance. Racial and ethnic minority status includes the following factors: Hispanic or Latino (of any race); Black and African American, Not Hispanic or Latino; American Indian and Alaska Native, Not Hispanic or Latino; Asian, Not Hispanic or Latino; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, Not Hispanic or Latino; Two or More Races, Not Hispanic or Latino; and Other Races, Not Hispanic or Latino. Lastly, housing type & transportation include the following factors: multi-unit structures, mobile homes, crowding, no vehicle, group quarters. These data are interpreted as percentiles in comparison to other tracts in the census, revealing the proportion of tracts in the United States that are equal or lower when considering social vulnerability. Higher percentiles indicate higher social vulnerability in the specific regard. I chose to leave out the household characteristics in favor of more specific variables surrounding age and education.

### **Age and Education**

To consider the percentage of specific characteristics of individuals in the tract, I used census data. For age, I utilized two varying age demographics, age 65 or older and age 17 or younger. Those who are aged 65 or older will give me insight into the older population within tracts, who are known to be more likely to contact police. Those who are aged 17 or younger will give me insight into the youth within tracts, who are more likely to be sympathetic to the homeless community. When looking into the education level of tracts, I used the census variable that considers the percentage of people attending university in a tract. This will acknowledge the 18-24 age group as well, since this is the most common ages for those attending university.

## **Crime**

The data related to crime in New York City are from New York Police Department Open Data, I separated the data into violent crimes and property crimes. Violent crimes include assault, rape, homicide, and robbery. Property crimes include auto theft, burglary, theft, and arson. Drug crimes were initially included, but due to a high variance inflation factor (VIF), they were removed from the final regression models. The initial data are counted in events. I created rates based on the tract daytime population and multiplied by 1000 to find the rate in each tract per 1000 people.

## **Daytime Activity**

Daytime activity refers to the presence (or lack) of people in spaces during times of normal business activity. Some standard spaces that influence daytime activities are schools and businesses. Schools increase the number of children and young people in a tract. This also increases the amount of social concern and calls for safety in these spaces. Businesses attract many people in need of goods and services. They also bring in workers consistently who commute from other tracts. Additionally, daytime population is a measure of the amount of people typically in a tract during business hours and is also referred to as commuter-adjusted population. It is measured by taking the total resident population plus the total workers working in the area minus the total workers living in area. Understanding where people spend a majority of their time creates a clearer picture of when people may interact with homeless encampments.

**Control Variables**

The control variables include the tract demographics like size and population. Size is measured in square miles. Total population refers to the residence of specific tracts. Using these variables ensures that size variations in tracts do not influence the models created.

**Encampments**

Each call in the dataset references the presence of an encampment. Therefore, using the total amount of calls is the best indication or count of the total number of encampments within New York City. By considering tracts with active homeless communities through encampments, it provides insight into where these places consistently remain despite response methods.

## Chapter 5

### Results

#### *Characteristics and Trends:*

Through the descriptive statistics (Table 1), the current methods and commonplaces of homeless encampment perceptions are clarified. In total, there were 49,554 police calls and 2,458 service calls were made about encampments throughout New York City. Of the 2160 tracts there were 378 tracts, or 17.5% of tracts, that did not utilize police calls regarding encampments. 1782 tracts or 82.5%, had one or more calls to the police about encampments. 1459 tracts, or 67.5% of tracts, did not utilize service calls. 701 tracts, or 32.5% of tracts, utilized service calls. On average, there were 22.940 calls made to the police per tract, and there were 1.140 calls made to the Department of Homeless Services. In total, only seven shelters are recognized in the data, meaning 2153 tracts do not have a shelter. On average, the tracts in New York City are in the 59<sup>th</sup> percentile relative to other tracts in the census when considering the Socioeconomic Status Index. For the Racial Minority Status Index, New York City on average falls into the 71<sup>st</sup> percentile, and for the Housing Type & Transportation Index, New York City falls in the 63<sup>rd</sup> percentile. Almost 8% of people attend university on average in each tract. There is less than one school and about three businesses in the average tract.



Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables per Tract

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Frequency of Occuring	Percent of Occuring	Frequency of not Occuring	Percent of not Occuring
Service Calls	1.140	3.414	0.000	50.000				
Police Calls	22.940	34.463	0.000	245.000				
Shelter Present					2153.000	99.700	7.000	0.300
SES Index	0.596	0.273	0.000	1.000				
Minority Status Index	0.712	0.200	0.000	1.000				
Housing Index	0.630	0.266	0.000	1.000				
% Population over 65	14.480	7.262	0.000	92.211				
% Population under 17	20.358	7.812	0.000	65.074				
% Population Attending University	7.599	5.413	0.000	87.836				
Violent Crime Rate (per 1000 people)	7.229	7.139	0.000	80.570				
Property Crime Rate (per 1000 people)	28.298	24.359	0.000	333.330				
Number of Business Licenses	3.050	3.549	0.000	69.000				
Number of Schools	0.900	1.455	0.000	13.000				
Daytime Population	2508.120	2056.969	29.000	41539.000				
Area (Square Miles)	0.138	0.278	0.015	7.073				
Total Population	3910.380	2241.754	0.000	28272.000				
Total Calls	24.080	37.006	0.000	295.000				

### *Correlation*

Looking at the correlation between variables (Table 2) provided preliminary insights into the possible connection between types of calls and the demographics of tracts. Both service calls and police calls have a significant correlation with all included variables except for percent of population attending university, violent crime, and area at an alpha level of 0.01. The highest correlation (disregarding total calls) is between the Socioeconomic Status Index and the Racial Minority Status Index at 0.761. The next highest correlation is between police calls and service calls at 0.723. The Socioeconomic Status Index is significantly correlated with many variables, including both types of calls, both age variables, schools, businesses, daytime population, and area at an alpha level of 0.01. Minority Status Index is significantly correlated with all variables except for shelter present, population attending university, and property crimes at an alpha level of 0.01. Daytime population is also significantly correlated with all variables, with property crime and population over 65 significant at an alpha level of 0.05 and the rest significant at an alpha level of 0.05.

Table 2. Correlation Table of Variables

	Service Calls	Police Calls	Shelter Present	SES Index	Minority Status Index	Housing Index	% Population over 65	% Population under 17	% Population Attending University	Violent Crime Rate (per 1000 people)	Property Crime Rate (per 1000 people)	Number of Business Licenses	Number of Schools	Daytime Population	Area (Square Miles)	Total Population	Total Calls
Service Calls																	
Police Calls	.723**																
Shelter Present	.060**	.104**															
SES Index	-.098**	-.153**	-0.007														
Minority Status Index	-.065**	-.128**	-0.010	.761**													
Housing Index	.129**	.236**	0.039	.306**	.242**												
Population over 65	-.087**	-.152**	-0.027	-.267**	-.231**	-.172**											
Population under 17	-.135**	-.198**	-0.018	.417**	.250**	0.037	-.218**										
Population Attending University	0.022	0.015	0.002	-0.004	-.052**	.076**	-.093**	-.114**									
Violent Crime Rate (per 1000 people)	0.014	0.023	0.003	.463**	.393**	.230**	-.265**	.163**	-0.036								
Property Crime Rate (per 1000 people)	.084**	.164**	.058**	0.009	0.009	.144**	-.136**	-.120**	-0.032	.460**							
Number of Business Licenses	.141**	.252**	.066**	0.027	.080**	.188**	-.110**	-.067**	-0.013	0.025	.131**						
Number of Schools	.114**	.129**	0.010	.136**	.091**	.195**	-.063**	0.037	-0.016	.078**	-0.003	.102**					
Daytime Population	.200**	.315**	.089**	-.088**	-.103**	.286**	-.055**	-.147**	.079**	-.154**	-.042**	.343**	.304**				
Area (Square Miles)	-0.011	-0.032	0.012	-.097**	-.131**	-.147**	-0.022	-.137**	-.077**	-.124**	-.065**	0.014	0.006	.402**			
Total Population	.109**	.164**	0.003	.052**	.060**	.315**	0.018	.103**	0.016	.074**	0.008	.225**	.221**	.399**	-0.024		
Total Calls	.765**	.998**	.102**	-.152**	-.125**	.232**	-.149**	-.196**	0.016	0.023	.160**	.248**	.131**	.312**	-0.031	.162**	

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### Regressions

I ran two Poisson regression models, since the call data are counts with a true zero and are not continuous (Long 1997). One Poisson model had service calls as the dependent variable and the second had police calls as the dependent variable. With this, I was hoping to gain some

**Table 3. Poisson Regression of Service Calls**

Parameter	B	Std. Error	Sig.	Exp(B)
(Intercept)	-0.808	0.1532	0.000**	0.446
Police Calls	-0.009	0.0034	0.009**	0.991
Shelter Present	-0.084	0.1811	0.644	0.920
SES Index	-0.317	0.1484	0.032*	0.728
Minority Status Index	0.426	0.1920	0.026*	1.531
Housing Index	0.767	0.1095	0.000**	2.152
% Population over 65	-0.014	0.0036	0.000**	0.986
% Population under 17	-0.025	0.0031	0.000**	0.975
% Population Attending University	-0.002	0.0038	0.515	0.998
Violent Crime Rate (per 1000 people)	-0.002	0.0010	0.082	0.998
Property Crime Rate (per 1000 people)	0.002	0.0040	0.534	1.003
Number of Business Licenses	0.006	0.0053	0.241	1.006
Number of Schools	-0.023	0.0131	0.073	0.977
Daytime Population	-2.649E-05	1.1107E-05	0.017*	1.000
Area (Square Miles)	0.065	0.1073	0.543	1.068
Total Population	3.606E-05	9.8419E-06	0.00**	1.000
Total Calls	0.026	0.0029	0.00**	1.026

clarity on what variables are most significant in each style of call and if the patterns in the correlation were still present in a multivariate test with controls. The dependent variable in each model is the log-odds of the count. I then exponentiated the B-value to figure out the magnitude of change. I calculated the percentages for ease of reference, by multiplying the exponentiated B-value by 100.

With service calls as a dependent variable, there were many significant variables that contributed. Police calls, housing index, percent of population over 65, percent of population under 17, total population, and total calls are all significant at a p-value of 0.01. Socioeconomic status index, minority status index, and daytime population are all significant at a p-value of 0.05.

The following variables decrease the number of service calls: police calls, SES index, percent of population over 65, percent of population under 17, and daytime population. Each increase in police calls is associated with a 9% decrease in service calls, while controlling for all included variables. Each percentile increase in SES index is associated with 27.2% decrease in service calls, while controlling for all included variables. Each percent increase in the population over 65 is associated with a 1.4% decrease in service calls. Each percent increase in the population under 17 is associated with a 2.5% decrease in service calls. Each increase in 1000 people in daytime population is associated with a <0.1% decrease of service call.

The following variables increase the number of service calls: Minority Status Index, Housing Index, total population, and total calls. Each percentile increase in the Minority Status Index is associated with 53.1% increase in service calls, while controlling for all included variables. Each percentile increase in the Housing Index is associated with 115.2% increase in service calls, while controlling for all included variables. With each 1000 persons increase in

total population, there is an associated increase of <0.1% of service calls, while controlling for all included variables.

Table 4. Poisson Regression of Police Calls

Parameter	B	Std. Error	Sig.	Exp(B)
(Intercept)	2.099	0.0331	0.000**	8.158
Service Calls	-0.064	0.0009	0.000**	0.938
Shelter Present	-0.409	0.0421	0.000**	0.664
SES Index	0.139	0.0319	0.000**	1.149
Minority Status Index	0.017	0.0397	0.677	1.017
Housing Index	0.537	0.0235	0.000**	1.712
% Population over 65	-0.007	0.0008	0.000**	0.993
% Population under 17	-0.013	0.0007	0.000**	0.987
% Population Attending University	-0.003	0.0009	0.001**	0.997
Violent Crime Rate (per 1000 people)	0.001	0.0002	0.000**	1.001
Property Crime Rate (per 1000 people)	-0.008	0.0009	0.000**	0.992
Number of Business Licenses	-0.001	0.0012	0.646	0.999
Number of Schools	0.028	0.0029	0.000**	1.029
Daytime Population	-1.799E-05	2.6240E-06	0.000**	1.000
Area (Square Miles)	-0.031	0.0252	0.225	0.970
Total Population	3.457E-05	2.1036E-06	0.000**	1.000
Total Calls	0.022	0.0001	0.000**	1.022

With police calls as a dependent variable, there were more significant variables that contributed. All variables--except Minority Status Index, number of business licenses, and area--are all significant at a p-value of 0.01. The following variables decrease the number of police calls: service calls, shelter presence, percent of population over 65, percent of population under 17, percent of population attending university, property crime rate, and daytime population. Each increase in service calls is associated with a 6.2% decrease in police calls, while controlling for all included variables. The presence of shelters in a tract is associated with a 33.6% decrease in police calls, while controlling for all included variables. Each percent increase in the population over 65 is associated with a 0.7% decrease in police calls. Each percent increase in the population under 17 is associated with a 1.3% decrease in police calls. Each percent increase in the population attending university is associated with a 0.3% decrease in police calls. A one unit increase in the rate of property crime per 1000 people is associated with a 0.8% decrease in police calls. Each increase in 1000 people in daytime population is associated with a <0.1% decrease in police calls.

The following variables increase the number of police calls: Socioeconomic Status Index, Housing Index, violent crime rate, number of schools, total population, and total calls. Each percentile increase in SES index is associated with a 14.9% increase in police calls, while controlling for all included variables. Each percentile increase in the Housing Index is associated with a 71.2% increase in police calls, while controlling for all included variables. A one unit increase in the rate of violent crime per 1000 people is associated with a 0.1% increase in police calls. Each additional school in a tract is associated with a 2.9% increase in police calls. With each 1000 persons increase in total population, there is an associated increase of <0.1% of police calls, while controlling for all included variables.

*In Relation to Hypotheses*

1. *Neighborhoods with a shelter present are more likely to utilize outreach responses and less likely to utilize police responses.*

Regression results do not fully support the hypothesis as shelter presence is not significant in number of service calls. Regression results support the second half of the hypothesis, as the presence of shelter is significant in police calls and decreases the number of calls.

2. *Neighborhoods with residents of lower socioeconomic status will be more likely to utilize outreach responses and less likely to utilize police responses.*

Regression results do not support the hypothesis as tracts with higher SES scores are less likely to make service calls and more likely to make police calls at statistically significant levels. Inversely, lower SES index scores are more likely to make service calls and less likely to make police calls at statistically significant levels.

3. *Neighborhoods with more residents who identify as a racial minority will be less likely to utilize outreach responses and less likely to utilize police responses.*

Regression results do not support the hypothesis as tracts that score higher in the Minority Index are associated with increased number of service calls, and it is statistically significant. The Minority Index is not statistically significant when considering police calls.

4. *Neighborhoods with more residents who face housing insecurity will be more likely to utilize outreach responses and less likely to utilize police responses.*



Regression results support part of the hypothesis as tracts that score higher on the Housing Index are associated with higher numbers of service calls at a statistically significant level. These tracts are also associated with higher numbers of police calls at a statistically significant.

5. *Neighborhoods with residents who are attending universities will be more likely to utilize outreach responses and less likely to utilize police responses.*

Regression results support part of the hypothesis. Tracts with higher populations attending university are associated with a decreased amount of both kinds of calls.

6. *Neighborhoods with older populations and younger will be less likely to utilize outreach responses and more likely to utilize punitive responses.*

Regression results do not fully support the hypothesis. When considering tracts' population under 17 and over 65, both are associated with decreased police and service calls at a statistically significant level.

7. *Communities with higher crime rates population will be less likely to utilize outreach responses and more likely to utilize punitive response.*

Regression results do not support the hypothesis fully. Although increased crime rates increase the number of police calls for violent crimes, it decreases the number of calls for property crimes.

8. *Communities with more daytime activity will be less likely to utilize outreach responses and more likely to utilize punitive responses.*

Regression results do not support the hypothesis fully as daytime population reduces the number of calls to both police and service organizations at statistically significant levels. Business licenses were not significant in either Poisson

regression, but schools are associated with increased police calls at a statistically significant level.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Discussion**

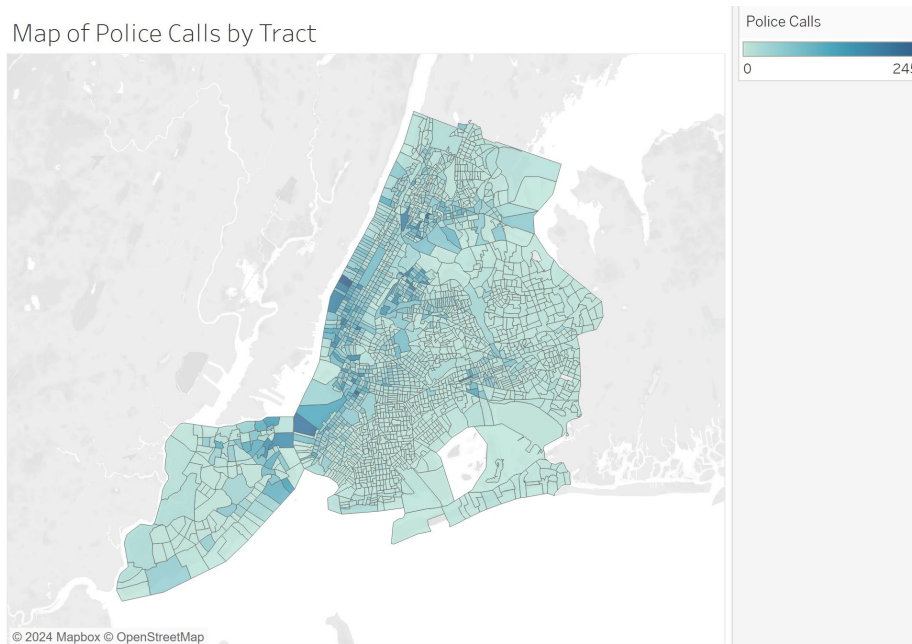
In previous research, many focused on the impact of each punitive or outreach responses on the homeless community. Instead of following this trend, I aim to understand neighborhood-level factors that may influence neighborhood residents to choose each specific response method.

First, I find that punitive and outreach responses are not mutually exclusive. Although they seem to work against each other, they are closely related. The encampment protocol in NYC is to first dispatch police to confirm the presence of the encampment and then send the DHS to provide resources. Despite that, there is a huge disparity in the number of service calls received, revealing the societal commonplace of punitive responses occurring before outreach responses.

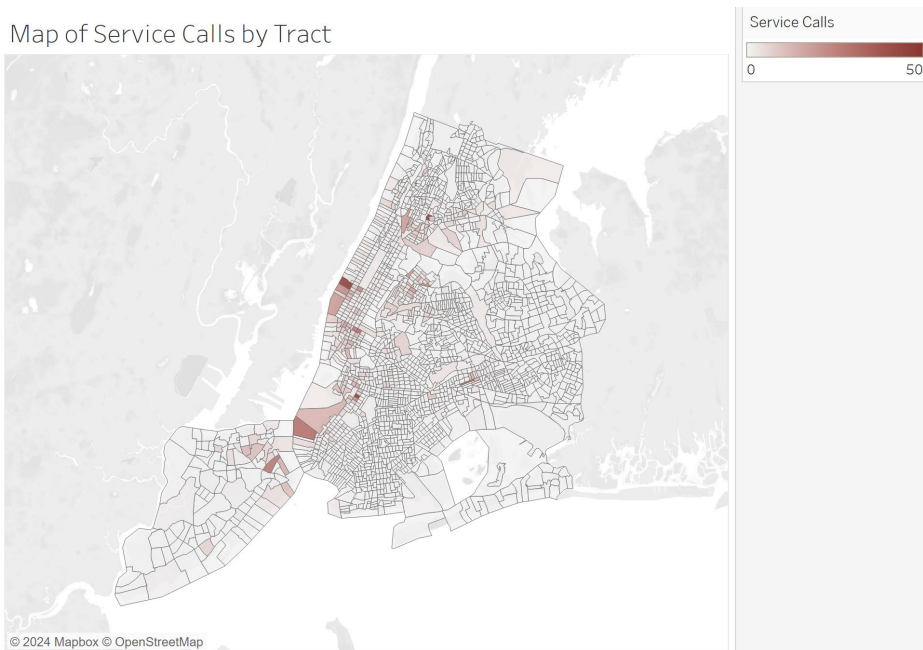
Police calls regarding encampments occurred more than 20 times as frequently as calls to the Department of Homeless Services. The presence of homeless encampments is not inherently criminal, other than the created laws and regulations that directly target this community.

Therefore, our communities have relied on police to handle this problem, expanding their responsibilities into tasks that are best handled by other organizations. The criminalization of the homeless exacerbates the vulnerability of these communities who are already highly victimized and further deprives them of resources and support. Identifying the community features that are associated with service calls is important in understanding outreach responses and can contribute to the expansion and development of these services.

Looking at the distribution of calls across the map (Figure 1, 2, and 14), they tend to be at places of high significance to tourists, like Times Square and near the Statue of Liberty. This may be related to the idea of public safety and sanitation in high traffic areas.



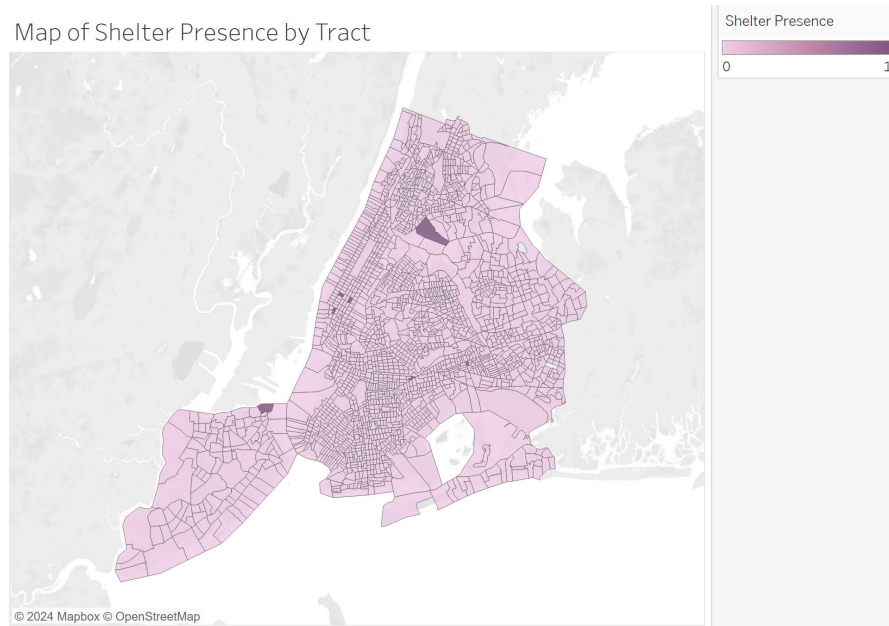
**Figure 1. Map of Police Calls by Tract**



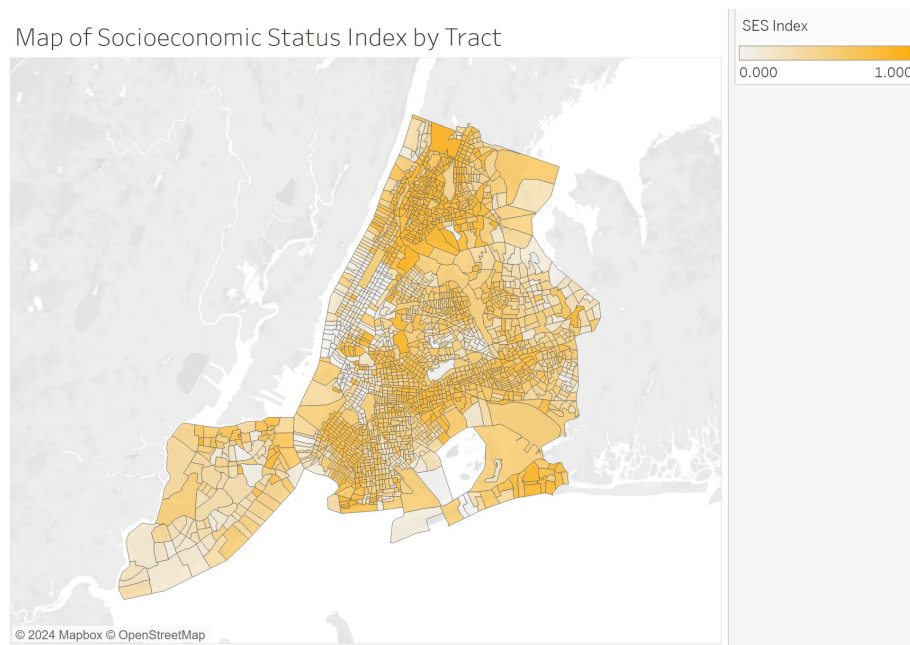
**Figure 2. Map of Service Calls by Tract**

The shelters included in the data are very spread out (Figure 3). They have a statistically significant impact in the amount of police calls, but this may be due to the low presence of shelter in the data. Considering the scarcity of shelters, it is not surprising to see the sheer

number of encampments, especially as the homeless population is likely surpassing capacities that are set by the shelters.

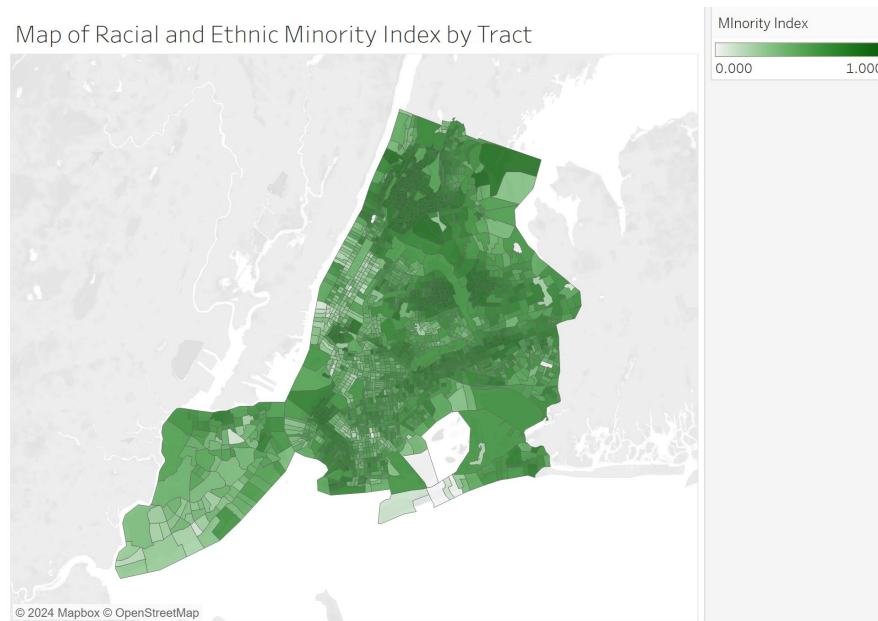


**Figure 3. Map of Shelter Presence by Tract**



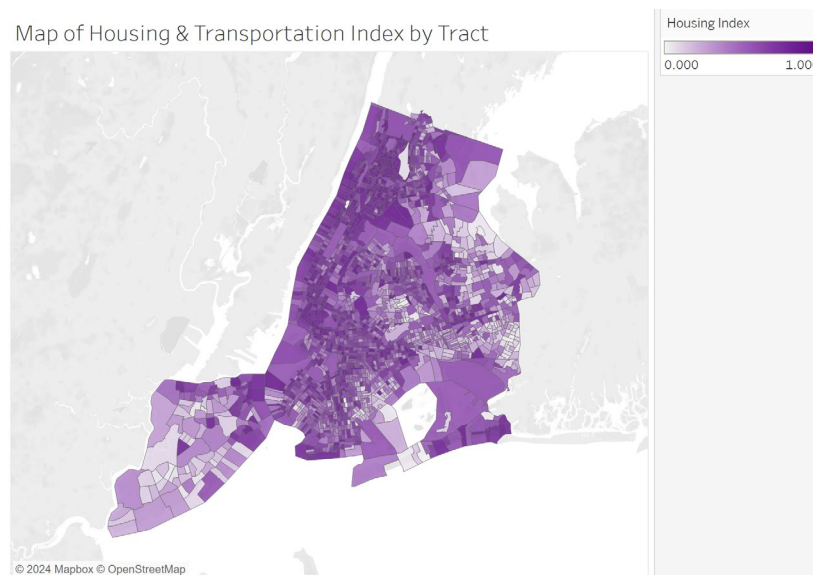
**Figure 4. Map of Socioeconomic Status Index by Tract**

The most concentrated area of high socioeconomic vulnerability is found in the Bronx (Figure 4), although many tracts throughout the city are considered to have socioeconomic vulnerability. The included variables are below 150% poverty, unemployment, housing cost burden, no high school diploma, and no health insurance. Considering that almost 70% of households rent in NYC and that the majority of renter households are considered rent burdened (NYC Comptroller 2024), it is clear why there is a high level of socioeconomic vulnerability. In the Poisson regression, tracts with lower SES index scores were more likely to make service calls and less likely to make police calls at statistically significant levels while controlling for all included variables. This is surprising, as Wu, Sun, and Triplett found that neighborhoods with higher class status is associated with higher satisfaction in police, which reinforces other previous studies (2009). One would believe that higher satisfaction would lead to higher usage in police services, but those who have higher economic stability may not interact as often with the homeless community, leading to less police calls.



**Figure 5. Map of Racial and Ethnic Minority Index by Tract**

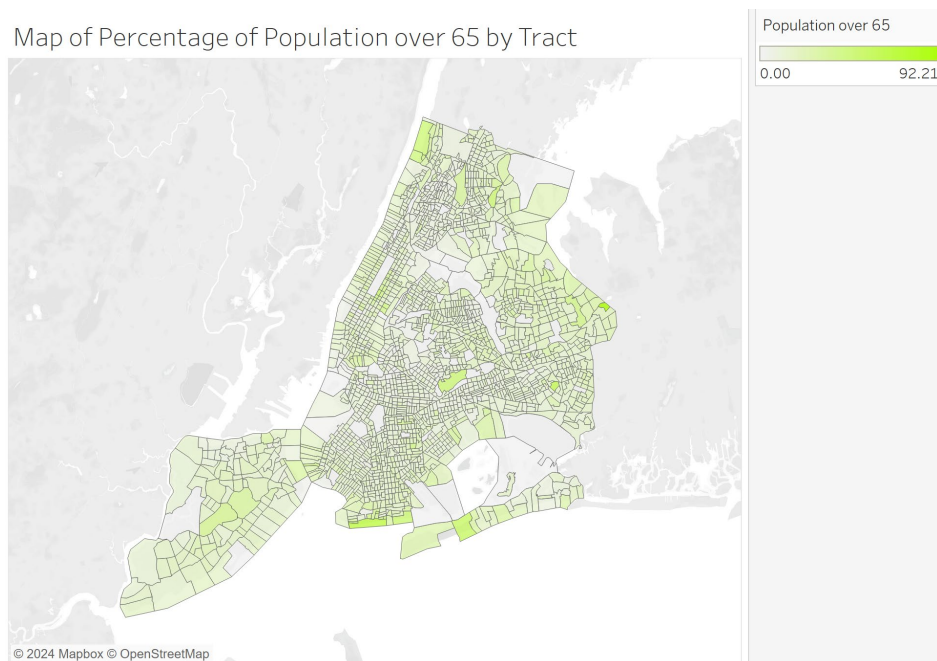
When considering the Racial and Ethnic Minority Index by tract (Figure 5), many tracts rank high. As New York City considered one of the most diverse cities, with history as an immigration entry point to the United States, it is easy to see why many tracts would rank highly. Some of the notable tracts include ethnic enclaves, like Chinatown, Koreatown, Little Italy, and Little India. Considering the regression models, those tracts are associated with increased service calls, which reinforces previous findings in the research.



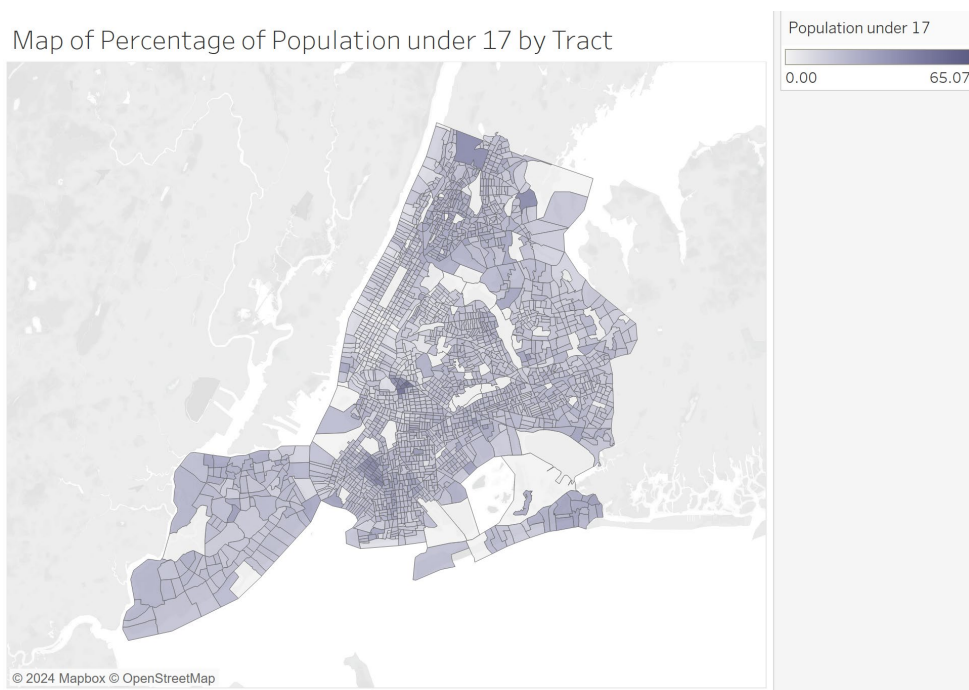
**Figure 6. Map of Housing & Transportation Index by Tract**

The Housing & Transportation index considers the following variables: multi-unit structures, mobile homes, crowding, no vehicle, and group quarters. As the population density is high in this city, many live in apartment complexes and group quarters (like college dormitories). Additionally, as New York City has a strong public transportation system, many residents may not have a need to own a vehicle. This index had one of the highest impacts on calls, with a 115.2% increase in service calls and a 71.2% increase in police calls, while controlling for all included variables per percentile increase. This could reinforce that these groups of people have

more empathy for the homeless, that those who experience housing insecurity may then feel the need to provide support to those in the homeless community.



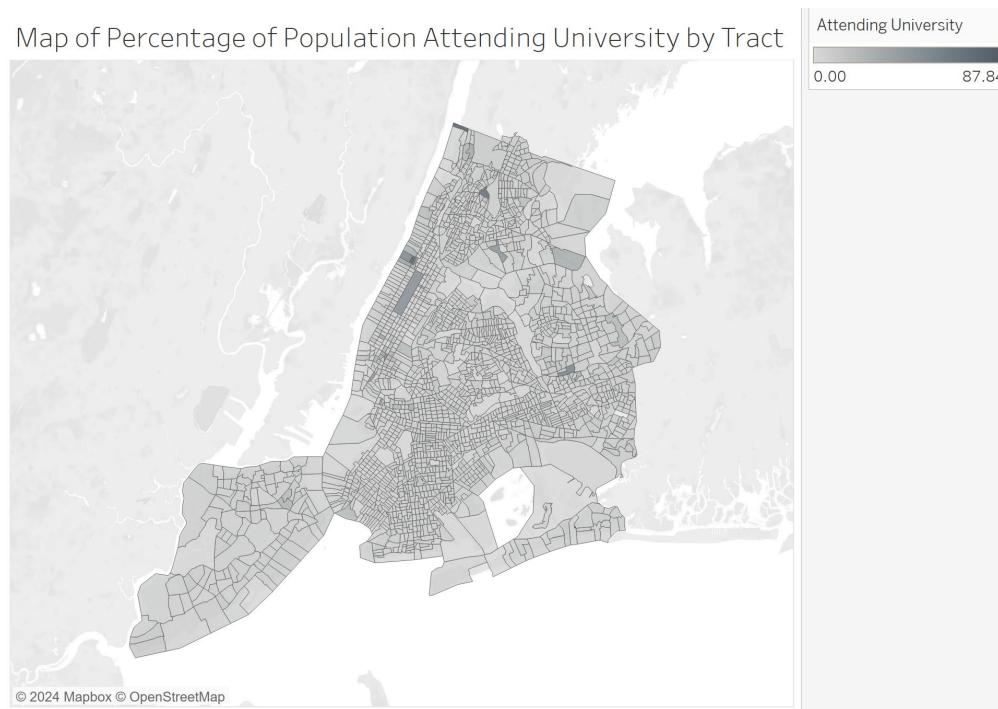
**Figure 7. Map of Percentage of Population over 65 by Tract**



**Figure 8. Map of Percentage of Population under 17 by Tract**



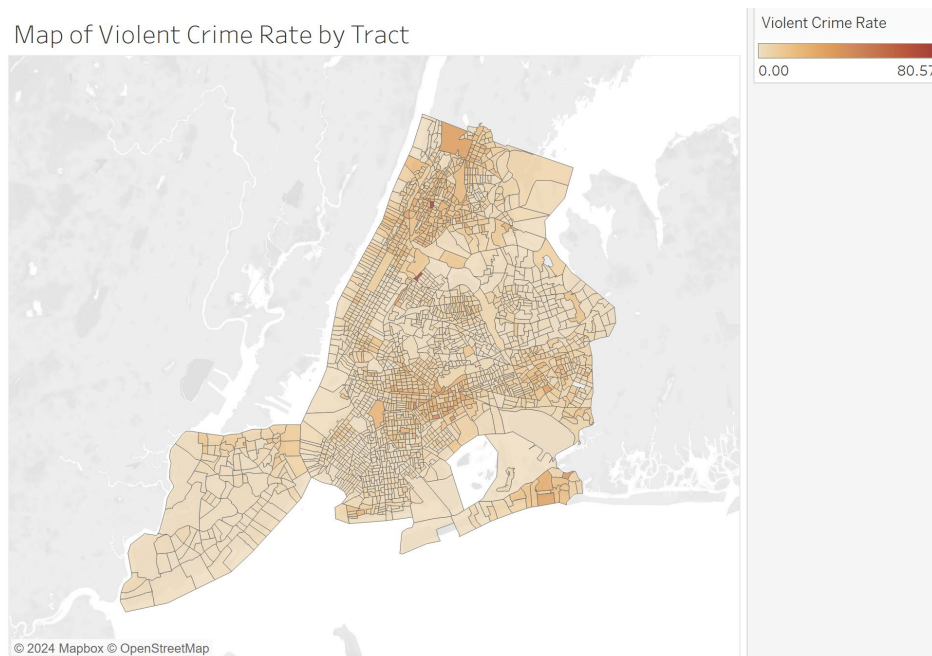
The highest concentration of those over 65 is at beach property in Brooklyn and in the north-western part of the Bronx (Figure 7). The highest concentration of those under 17 is in Bushwick, Brooklyn and in Van Cortlandt Park, Bronx (Figure 8). The spread is more even than the distribution of those over 65. Increases in the percentages of the population over 65 and under 17 decrease the number of calls to both the police and the Department of Homeless Services. The decrease is by less than 3% in all cases though, making it a relatively small impact per percentage.



**Figure 9. Map of Percentage of Population Attending University by Tract**

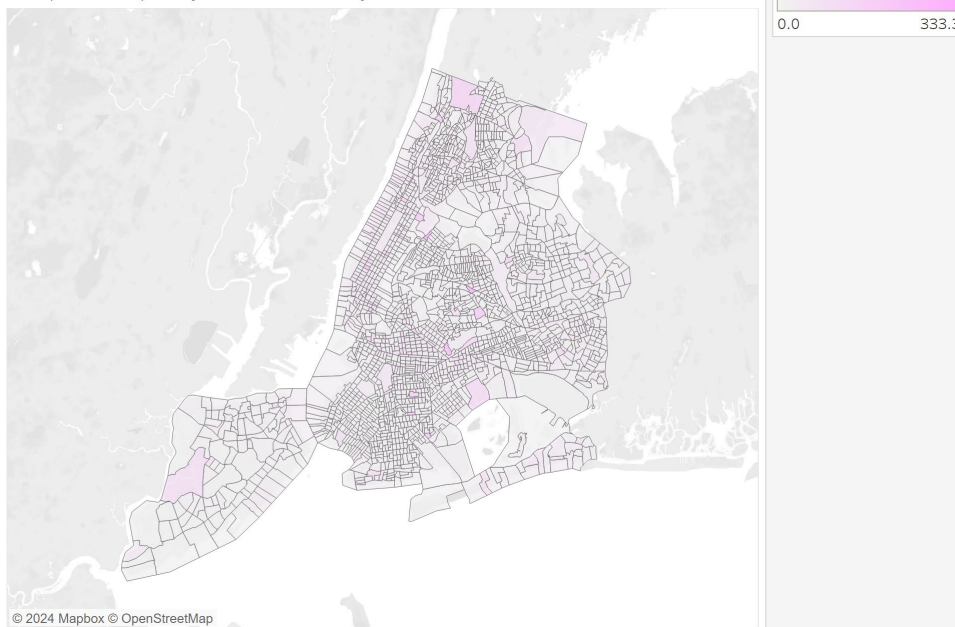
Understandably, the population attending university clusters in tracts with universities, most notably Columbia, New York University, University of Mount Saint Vincent, and Saint John's University (Figure 9). Attending university is associated with less of both types of calls. When considering police calls, this finding reinforces previous research. With university aged students experiencing higher levels of police-initiated contact, students may be hesitant to

contact police. When looking at service calls, it was unexpected that the tracts with high university student populations also did not use service responses. This could be connected to universities working to have a perception of safety and accessibility. University security and police may work to remove these encampments before students interact with them. Additionally, the indifference of communities with universities may reflect the “transplant” nature of many schools in New York City. People who did not grow up in New York may see the existence of homelessness as a feature of the city or campus as opposed to a burden or nuisance. Therefore, they may not see the need to call either police or homeless services.



**Figure 9. Map of Violent Crime Rate by Tract**

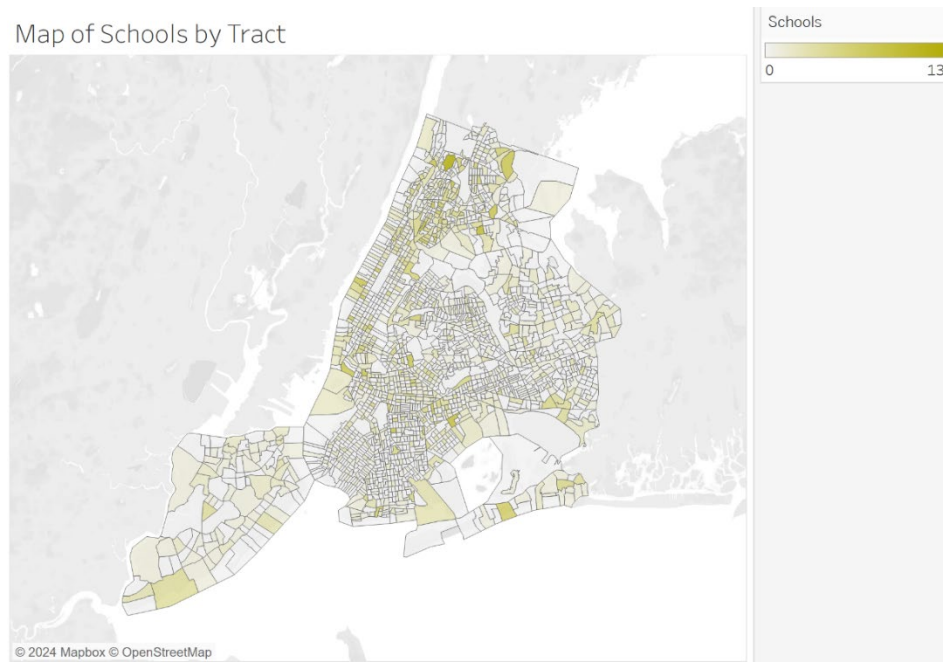
Map of Property Crime Rate by Tract

**Figure 10. Map of Property Crime Rate by Tract**

A few of the tracts with higher levels of violent crime are Astoria Park, Queens; Van Cortlandt Park, Bronx; Bayswater, Queens; Edgemere, Queens; and Claremont Park, Bronx (Figure 10). The tracts with higher levels of property crime are Astoria Park, Queens; Midtown Manhattan; and Elmhurst, Queens (Figure 11).

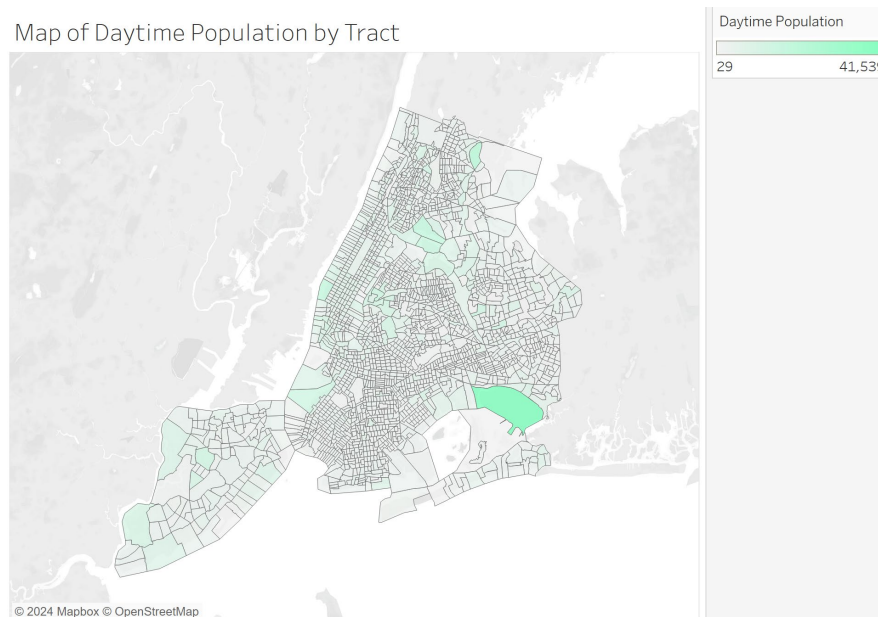
Many of these tracts are parks. Since the rates are based on the population of tracts and these tracts would have a very low population, crime rates in these places may be

Map of Schools by Tract



overexaggerated. Midtown Manhattan includes the Empire State Building and the surrounding areas, while Elmhurst includes the Queens Center. As violent crimes may be considered more severe, there may be an increased commonplace to call police for any types of events, which could explain why these tracts are more associated with more police calls. These tracts also may already have high police presence, leading residents to believe that calling will lead to quicker responses. When considering property crimes, they occur in tourist-heavy areas. Tourists may not know to call police, especially international tourists who may not understand American systems, or have no stake in the safety or protection of a tract beyond the time they spend there.

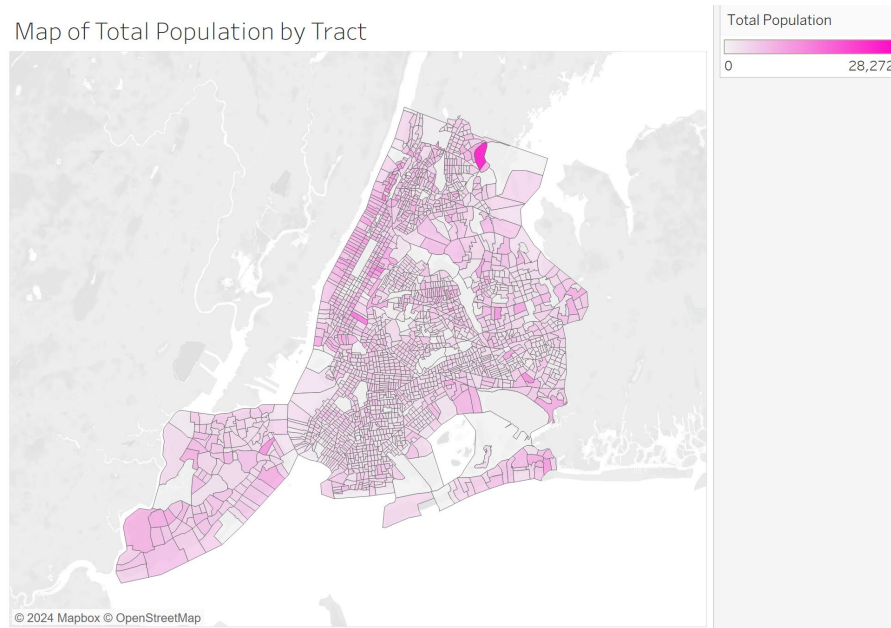
**Figure 11. Map of Schools by Tract**



**Figure 12. Map of Daytime Population by Tract**

JFK Airport draws the most daytime activity by population. Because JFK Airport has its own security personnel, it may skew the results when regarding police calls. This could explain the association of decreased calls and daytime population. This could also explain the decrease in

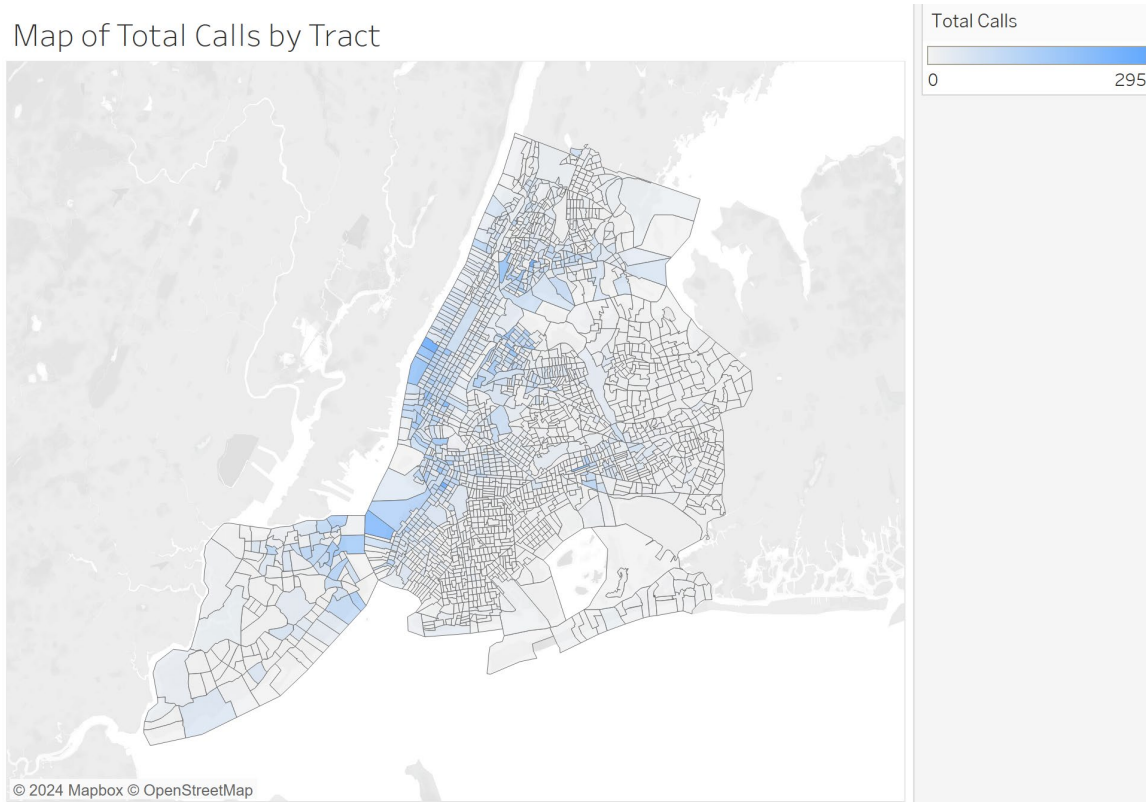
service calls as well, especially as the airport may try to keep a perception of public safety and sanitation by prohibiting homeless from existing in the space.



**Figure 13. Map of Total Population by Tract**

Co-Op City is the largest residential development in the United States and is the most populated tract in New York City. In terms of the hypothesis presented, total population increases both types of calls. As there are more people to observe encampments and the homeless community, there is a higher chance that someone will call about these if they view encampments as a disruption to public space. Additionally, with more densely populated tracts, people may be more concerned with safety. Residents could be more distrustful, especially with more people in such close proximity. In the Greater Vancouver Regional District, population density had a negative influence on residents' sense of community (Douglas 2022). Due to a lack in traditional sense of community in cities, residents have more of a reason to protect their personal space and make calls to police to maintain their personal safety. Considering this in Durkheim's societal

ideology, there is low social trust and cohesion present in urban cities currently, leading to a concern for personal safety and general distrust in others around them.



**Figure 14. Map of Total Calls by Tract**

### *Limitations*

The data provide views of neighborhoods rather than individuals in New York City. This means that conclusions cannot be directed at individuals, but instead reveal general trends in these spaces. This is important, as many changes that can occur in the systems of policing and outreach responses will occur on a neighborhood level rather than on an individual scale. By understanding general neighborhood trends, our communities can emphasize what spaces will be

more accepting and willing to expand outreach responses for the homeless community.

Additionally, these results will help future researchers know what to ask individuals about their communities relating to response methods toward homelessness and encampments.

Because of the nature of homelessness and the difficulty in tracking the community, there is not a clear way to keep track of encampments. Although calls to NYC311 give a general idea of encampments disruptive to public space, it does not acknowledge all the encampments that occur in the city.

There were very few shelters included in the data. There are many organizations and services that provide meals, resources, and care to homeless individuals, but I decide to focus on the shelters recognized by the Department of Homeless Services that are open 24/7. Therefore, there is a small number of shelters compared to the number of tracts. I would like to reconsider this variable with other shelter-like organizations to provide a clearer look at services provided to the homeless.



## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusion**

Considering what factors influence the current perceptions of homelessness is key to understanding why the current methods that are being utilized and how to create meaningful change. The institutions acknowledging homelessness—police, who tend criminalize the homeless community, or government homeless services which try to provide resources for the homeless community—create varying impacts on the homeless community. Punitive methods can further entrench the homeless, with excessive fines and records that make them ineligible for helping services. Alternatively, service organizations can provide resources, support, and methods to improve living conditions. Despite continued efforts to reduce homelessness in both manners, it remains an ever-prevalent issue in our society. Through data from New York City 311 data, New York Open Data, New York Police Department Open Data, and U.S. Census data, I aim to understand community demographics, perceptions of homelessness, and the impact in the type of response method provided to the homeless. The findings were complex, as many variables are at play in both types of calls, including shelters, minority status, housing stability, age, crime, and population. This reveals a huge gap in the knowledge about societal perceptions of encampments and the impact on this very vulnerable community. Additionally, the disjointedness in police calls and service calls reveals a clear disparity in the treatment of homeless people, as access to services should be easier obtain—with more known ways for the general public to refer disruptive encampments. With this research, I hope to encourage the



implementation of compassionate laws, ordinances, policy, and procedures that will have an effectively serve the homeless community and provide lasting long-term help.

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# Jamie Nguyen

Penn State Senior, Social Commentary Filmmaker

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## Professional Summary

I am a creative and passionate first-generation college student. I have expertise in the technical knowledge of creating high-quality content with applicable videography, post-production, animation, and visual effect skills. I am most interested in storytelling and representation within media, that highlights real-world disparities and inequality in an engaging and thought-provoking way, with emphasis on race and socioeconomic class. My goal is to create narrative films highlighting the Asian American diaspora, particularly about Vietnamese American refugees. I also am interested in analyzing food and food systems, as a method of cultural dispersion and connection.

## Education

### **Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) : Sociology**

**Graduation:** May 2024

**The Pennsylvania State University** - University Park, PA

#### *Awards & Honors*

- Schreyer Honors College
- Dean's List Fall 2020-Fall 2023
- Paterno Fellow
- Chaiken Scholar

#### *Key Projects*

- Schreyer Honors Thesis: *Punitive or Outreach? Perceptions of Homeless Encampments and the Corresponding Responses Inflicted onto those Experiencing Homelessness in NYC*
- SOC 400W Research Paper: *Intergenerational Transmission of Wealth through Paternal Education*

### **Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) : Film Production, Minor in Horticulture**

**Graduation:** May 2024

**The Pennsylvania State University** - University Park, PA

#### *Awards & Honors*

- The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Gold Rising Class of 2023: Internship enhancement program for filmmakers who face difficulty entering, are traditionally excluded, or were historically barred access into the entertainment industry.
- Dean's List Fall 2020-Fall 2023
- Bronze Telly Recipient for Alumni Association Video Spotlight created through CommAgency.

#### *Key Projects*

- (in)Dependent Producer and Gaffer: 20-minute narrative film about financial instability, childhood nostalgia, and friendship.
- Good Company Key Production Assistant: 35-minute dystopian narrative film about investigative journalism, technology's impact on society, distrust of corporations, and relationships.
- Playing God Assistant Director: 25-minute narrative film about revenge, jealousy, friendship, and relationships.
- Negative Producer and Editor: 8-minute narrative short about friendship, womanhood, betrayal, and subversion of expectations.

## Experience

### **Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Learning Documentary**

*January 2023 to Present*

**Producer, Videographer, and Editor** - University Park, PA

- Facilitated communication between interviewees about their personal experiences with education systems and provided space for them to openly share their beliefs and opinions.
- Developed creative strategies to maximize resources while maintaining high production quality standards.
- Managed the budgeting process of production projects from pre-production through post-production.

## **CommAgency**

*August 2022 to Present*

### ***Videographer and Editor*** - University Park, PA

- Planned and coordinated video shoots with clients, producers, directors, and other professionals for Penn State affiliated organizations.
- Delivered projects on time with a team of five while adhering to strict deadlines and client expectations under pressure.
- Adjusted positions and controls of cameras and related equipment to change focus, exposure, and lighting.

## **Penn State Residence Life**

*March 2022 to Present*

### ***Resident Assistant*** - University Park, PA

- Planned programs and activities designed to promote wellness and create a living environment conducive to personal growth.
- Established positive rapport with residents through active listening and constructive feedback, considering their backgrounds and identities to connect with them.
- Maintained up-to-date knowledge of university resources available to students.

## **Monkeypaw Productions**

*June 2023 to September 2023*

### ***Development Intern*** - Los Angeles, CA

- Provided coverage for scripts, short stories, and novels, assessing alignment with values of social relevancy, representation, subversion, and genre for Jordan Peele's production company.
- Managed sensitive, detailed spreadsheets tracking submissions, talent, creatives, and materials for projects.
- Provided feedback in internal development meetings about film & television projects with senior executives.

## **Pho Viet**

*May 2019 to May 2023*

### ***Social Media Manager*** - Bloomsburg, PA

- Created branding and marketing content for a small local business to increase visibility.
- Highlighted the immense cultural impact of a Vietnamese restaurant in a small town.
- Translated between employees and customers to ensure quality service.

## **Samuel Goldwyn Films**

*August 2022 to December 2022*

### ***Development and Script Coverage Intern*** - Los Angeles, CA

- Provided coverage and insight for 3+ scripts weekly based on the marketability of prospective independent films.
- Researched prominent upcoming films to advise the acquisition department.
- Worked 20+ hours weekly and swiftly completed emerging tasks while taking a full class load.

## **Penn State College of Liberal Arts**

*August 2022 to December 2022*

### ***Sociology 470 Teaching Assistant*** - University Park, PA

- Developed positive relationships with students with individual interactions and recognition of accomplishments.
- Provided individualized support to students who required additional help with understanding concepts.
- Assisted teachers in planning and delivering lessons to students, ensuring the curriculum was followed.

## **Penn State University College of Bellisario**

*October 2021 to May 2022*

### ***Willard Editing Lab Advisor*** - University Park, PA

- Apply knowledge in Adobe Premiere and After Effects to help novice editors with class projects.
- Manage the digital editing lab to ensure that people are using devices appropriately and effectively.
- Create an open environment to make novice editors feel comfortable with newly learned skills.

## **World In Conversation**

*January 2021 to January 2022*

### ***Dialogue Facilitator*** - University Park, PA

- Created engaging activities that encouraged collaboration between attendees.
- Encouraged active participation from all attendees throughout the duration of the program.
- Engaged in meaningful conversation about contentious topics and current events.

## **Extracurricular Activities**

- Videographer and Editor for Culture Central, student-led talk show about diversity and representation
- Previous Vice President of Delta Kappa Alpha, Cinematic Film Society
- Videographer for 46Live, THON Livestreaming
- Videographer for the Society of Asian Scientists and Engineers
- Previous Social Media Manager for Penn State Sports
- Member of the Student Film Organization