The Sharp Edge of Precarity

A framework of Multiple Precarities and homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract

This thesis presents a conceptual framework of ‘multiple precarities’ in order to describe intersectionalities of vulnerability and insecurity. This thesis also then road-tests the framework in the specific context of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand. By using the framework, homelessness is presented as both a condition and an identity, and is called the ‘sharp edge of precarity,’ where many different precarities intersect and coalesce. This thesis draws on empirical data collected through semi-structured interviews with key informants, a focus group with service providers in Auckland, field notes and observations, and a media analysis. The media analysis is also used to assess the representations of homelessness, and to evaluate how this aligns with the understanding of homelessness seen through the framework of multiple precarities.

Though precarity is commonly used to assess peoples’ insecurity in the labour market (see for example Standing 2011), this thesis draws in various other interpretations of precarity. The resulting varieties of precarity are used to present the framework of multiple precarities as a holistic tool with which insecurity and vulnerability can be understood in a far more expansive way. This framework is far more applicable to the diverse situations that people experience than any one interpretation of precarity. Empirical data supports the use of the framework as a way to evaluate homelessness, and analysis of media suggests there are opportunities to use the framework of multiple precarities to communicate the nature of homelessness, or develop policy responses.
Acknowledgements

Researching and writing this thesis hasn’t been easy, but it has been rewarding in many ways. At times the project was almost overwhelmingly daunting – both in terms of sheer size and due to the often-confronting nature of the work. There have been so many times that I wondered what I, or indeed anyone, could ever offer that would make the problem of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand easier to understand or deal with. At other times, I wondered how I was ever going to even finish a chapter, let alone a whole thesis.

But, throughout the (longer than it should have been) process, so many people have offered me support. My family, and in particular my wife Stef, have always had my back and continued to support me when I needed it – or tell me to get a move on when I needed that too. My supervisor Sophie has been a fantastic source of wisdom and advice, and consistently pushed me to question and think more deeply about the world around me – not just in this thesis, but throughout my time at university. I have also been lucky to have great connections and friendships with colleagues in the Geography department, whose passion for good chat, good coffee, and for thinking deeply has certainly been a highlight of my postgraduate studies.

Finally, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to all of my participants who so generously gave up their time to help me understand and write about homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand and test my theoretical framework. Their passion and ability to serve the people of Auckland in particular was astonishing, and I have no doubts that they are collectively embodying what it means to make the world a better place. I learnt so much by talking with them – not just about this topic, but also about how to selflessly serve others.
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Chapter One: 
Introducing precarious homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is a reflection on the concept of precarity, used to describe a sense of vulnerability and insecurity, and contributes to a growing understanding of how people experience economic and social exclusion and inequality. Around the world, people and societies are experiencing increased inequality, uncertainty, and insecurity (Keeley; OECD 2011; 2014). This rising inequality is felt economically – with increasingly flexible and insecure employment and eroded incomes – as well as socially and politically (Armingeon and Schâdel 2015). It is in this context that precarity can be used to talk about the sense of insecurity that is felt by more and more people. Precarity is often described as a sense of ‘teetering on the edge’ (Standing 2011, 20), whereby any security or permanence is lost. People who face uncertainty and vulnerability are also less likely to be resilient and self-sustaining. This thesis develops a framework by which many different conceptualisations of precarity are included in a holistic and intersectional way. The resulting ‘framework of multiple precarities’ provides a way of evaluating and understanding precarious experiences and situations as a product of many different processes and pathways – rather than a singular identity or experience.

This thesis also ‘road tests’ the framework of multiple precarities by examining homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand as a case study. In doing so, this thesis is an opportunity to ground the concept of precarity in a contemporary situation, as well as provide insights into the way in which homelessness might be better understood. The end goal of this thesis is to offer suggestions and recommendations – both in the understanding of precarity as a conceptual tool for evaluating insecurity and vulnerability, as well as how homelessness can be addressed through the lens of multiple precarities.
Homelessness is presented in this thesis as the ‘sharp edge’ of precarity – where peoples’ individual experiences of insecurity are felt most intensely, and where structural and macro-scale inequalities culminate most acutely. Though people experience precarity in situations other than homelessness, this thesis argues that homelessness is an extreme example of precarity, and is thus a useful place to examine the concept. Further, people negotiate a variety of different precarities, which allows for the analysis of intersections and interactions. The choice of homelessness as a case study is because homelessness is perhaps unique in Aotearoa New Zealand for a number of reasons.

First, it is an interesting time for politics and the media in Aotearoa New Zealand. Due to rapidly increasing house prices (especially in the largest city, Auckland) discussion in Parliament, the media, and society in general, has focussed on issues related to housing (Murphy 2014). Significant attention has been given, in particular, to investigating what homelessness in Auckland looks like – with specific emphasis on people who might subvert orthodox understandings of homelessness. That is, more and more people experiencing homelessness in Auckland (and Aotearoa New Zealand in general) are working and have families. Second, a relatively rapid shift in public perceptions of homelessness means that traditional conceptions (associated with individual pathologies such as alcoholism or drug addiction) are becoming complemented by thinking of the homeless as people suffering due to crises or complex situations. Third, these individual situations that are thought to have caused homelessness are also considered by some to be a symptom of structural inequalities and failures – further entrenching generational poverty and increasing poverty. This marks a significant change, and the future of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand will be likely to be determined by the way in which political leadership set agendas. The timing of this thesis, then, presents an opportunity to contribute in some way to decision making in regards to homelessness. At the very least, this thesis reflects on one way of examining how homelessness is understood, managed, and represented – namely through a framework of multiple precarities.
1.2 Studying homelessness with a framework of multiple precarities

The key analytical part of this thesis brings together concept (precarity) and context (homelessness). The combination of concept and context allows the development of a theoretical contribution to academic understandings of both precarity and homelessness. Further, as the final chapter suggests, there are practical benefits for service delivery and policy that can be derived from bringing together concept and context in this way. In essence, the thesis serves two purposes: assessing the applicability and appropriateness of a framework of multiple precarities, and evaluating how the framework might be used to evaluate homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The multiple precarities framework, developed through an extensive literature review in chapter three, is a useful conceptual tool for considering the variety of ways that precarities are experienced. The framework provides an opportunity to identify and analyse the processes and structures that contribute to, or create, precarious lives. This is done in an intersectional way, that encourages viewing precarity as a holistic concept, both as an identity and as an experienced condition. The research in this thesis tests and develops the framework by contextualizing it in Aotearoa New Zealand, and its ability to critique (and offer solutions to) social issues is demonstrated.

The context of homelessness features heavily in this thesis for three reasons. First, as mentioned above, it provides an opportunity to ‘test’ and contextualise the framework of multiple precarities in a real and grounded way. This ensures that the development of a theoretical approach to precarity remains connected to real-life experiences and contexts, and is able to offer meaningful commentary about the ways in which people experience precarity. Second, this thesis argues that homelessness is a situation where multiple precarities intersect and interact. For many people, homelessness is the sharpest form of precarity, where multiple vulnerabilities and insecurities are most pronounced and most likely to prevent meaningful progress (Hodgetts et al. 2012; Zufferey and Kerr 2004). For this reason, homelessness is perhaps the best example of precarity that is experienced
in multiple ways. More orthodox interpretations of precarity, such as labour precarity (Standing 2011), may not be as flexible as to encompass the multiple experiences of precarity outside the context of work. For those experiencing homelessness, precarity is not confined to one part of their life, and there exists multiple opportunities to respond to, or cope with precarity. Finally, homelessness is an increasing and intensifying problem in Aotearoa New Zealand, which is beginning to affect more and more people from increasingly diverse backgrounds and pathways into homelessness. While this thesis does not necessarily offer suggestions on preventing the causes of homelessness, it does offer ways to understand the variety of experiences that face the homeless population of Aotearoa New Zealand. This framework of multiple precarities of homelessness can then be used to inform policy decisions and service provision, in an effort to mitigate and reduce the harmful experiences and uncertainty of homelessness.

The research project, described in detail later in Chapter Two, is shaped by a number of research questions:

1. What are the specific features of a framework of multiple precarities of homelessness, and how can this be contextualized in Aotearoa New Zealand?
2. How can a framework of multiple precarities be used to explain and understand homelessness?
   a. What types of homelessness can be considered precarious?
   b. How do different types and experiences of homelessness intersect?
   c. What are the pathways in and out of homelessness, and how are they made more or less precarious?
   d. What are the representations of homelessness, and how do they align with other understandings of homelessness?

The research methods detailed in Chapter Two outline data collection and analysis to inform the findings of this thesis presented in Chapters Five and Six. The data collection involved semi-structured interviews with key informants who are service providers or otherwise involved in the homeless sector, a focus group
with a group of team leaders at a service provider, observations from fieldwork, and a media analysis. Research question 1 in particular is addressed in Chapter Five, and looks specifically at what a framework of multiple precarities of homelessness might look like in Aotearoa New Zealand. Chapter Five also answers questions 2a-c which examines in more detail what a precarious experience is, and how homelessness can be understood using the concept of precarity. Finally, question 2d is addressed in Chapter Six, which looks at representations of homelessness according to selected media and key informants, and how these representations shape both understandings of, and responses to homelessness.

1.3 Contextualising precarity

Before examining some of the literature pertaining to precarity, it will be useful to briefly introduce and discuss the context in which precarities are presented in this thesis. As is discussed below, increasing precarity is often understood as a consequence of neoliberal policies being applied to multiple sectors of society. The implementation of neoliberal reforms in the last few decades, gives the case study presented here (homelessness in Auckland) a context that examines some of the consequences resulting from neoliberal policy. While this thesis does not directly address neoliberalism and neoliberalisations, the final part of this chapter will provide a broad context in which neoliberalism plays a large role, significantly shaping society.

Neoliberalism is a term applied to the range of conservative economic and political theories that have been adopted as economic orthodoxy in most countries since the 1970s (Birch and Siemiatycki 2016; Harvey 2016; Larner 2009; Peck 2013). It is important to consider the roll out of neoliberalisations that fundamentally changed the relationships between people, governments, and the economy. Broadly speaking, neoliberalism can be summarized as the application and legislative installation of four key approaches to society: favouring free trade and open markets; corporatizing and privatizing public organisations into state-owned-enterprises or companies; deregulating markets and industry, while regulating and reregulating other aspects of the economy in
favour of business interests; and freeing the private sector in society by withdrawing government control wherever possible, and establishing contractual relationships with the private sector (Birch and Siemiatycki 2016; Bollard 1987; Douglas and Callan 1993; Duncan and Bollard 1992; Easton 1987; Harvey 2016; Kelsey 2002; 2015a; Larner 2009; Morrison 2004; Walker 1989). Neoliberalisations are the specific policies and decisions that have been made to implement the approaches above. Of particular interest, in this instance, are the neoliberalisations that have increased inequalities, or eroded social welfare policies.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, neoliberalism has its legislative roots in the Fourth Labour Government led by Prime Minister David Lange and Finance Minister Roger Douglas, who introduced a radical overhaul of the economy along the lines of the approach described above (Douglas and Callan 1993). These policies of restructuring were entrenched and strengthened by the subsequent National Party-led Government in 1991 (Richardson 1995).1 Aside from specific changes to policy, the effect of these policies was felt almost immediately with newly-privatized firms and ‘state-owned enterprises’ undergoing their own restructuring and rationalizing, and barriers protecting New Zealand workers being removed – translating to a rapid rise in unemployment (Kelsey 2002; Nairn, Higgins and Sligo 2012; Peck and Tickell 2012). Growing levels of unemployment and associated poverty were not equally distributed, and an increasingly unequal society began to emerge as Aotearoa New Zealand continued to synchronize with the global economy (Nana 2013; Rashbrooke 2013). A few decades later, the growth of inequality in developed countries has been identified by the OECD as stifling economic progress and overall wellbeing – with Aotearoa New Zealand as the country most-affected (OECD 2014).

1 Aotearoa New Zealand’s parliamentary system is broadly dominated by the Labour and National parties, who occupy centre-left and centre-right positions, respectively. In the 1980s and ‘90s, however, both parties were significantly influenced by far-right economic theory, resulting in the implementation of Roger Douglas’ budget in 1984 (nicknamed ‘Rogernomics’), and then Ruth Richardson’s ‘mother of all budgets’ in 1991 (similarly nicknamed ‘Ruthanasia’ – a term reflecting the perceived effect on wellbeing for poor people).
While this thesis will go on to discuss various interpretations and applications of precarity as a concept to examine vulnerability and insecurity in a neoliberal age, it is useful to briefly suggest the effect of these neoliberal reforms on the people of Aotearoa New Zealand. The distribution of inequality shows significant regional and ethnic disparities across the country – despite the neoliberal ideology of the market as an equaliser (sometimes referred to as ‘trickle-down economics’)(Eaqub 2014; Nel 2015). While some people benefitted from the liberalisation and deregulation of much of the economy, the vast majority of the country did not experience increased wealth or income, and received no benefit from the growth in Aotearoa New Zealand’s economy (Rashbrooke 2013). This diverged from results expected by the well-known aphorism ‘a rising tide lifts all boats.’ As a country with significant manufacturing and primary resource extraction industries at the time (which became more vulnerable to the globalisation of economies), the rapidly growing unemployment rate affected communities dependent on these specific industries (Conway and McLoughlin 2002; Morrison 2004). Further, neoliberal economic policy discouraged investment in regional centres by both government and private investors (Johnson 2015; Larner 2005). Alongside regional inequality, the burden of unemployment and low incomes fell most heavily on Māori and Pasifika people (Nairn et al. 2012; Peters, Smith and Fitzsimmons 2000; Te Ahu Poata-Smith 2013).

A significant amount of literature about neoliberalism in Aotearoa New Zealand focuses on the long-term effects of these policies, especially for the generation growing up in this era (Atwool 1999; Dean 2015a; Nairn et al. 2012). Children are shaped and moulded by the culture they grow up in, and these authors argue that the neoliberal culture of Aotearoa New Zealand has created an unequal generation, inherited from a generation of policy-makers that never experienced the same feeling of ‘discomfort, loss, and disconnection’ (Dean 2015a). This provides a broad context from which the subsequent chapters examining precarity, and then homelessness, can be understood. Building a picture of the impact and long-term legacy of neoliberal reforms is important for this thesis, because it justifies why the framework of multiple precarities is needed to explain
how and why people experience precarity. Just a complex and multi-faceted process has driven the social, political, and economic changes in Aotearoa New Zealand over the last four decades, so too is a complex framework needed to understand the pathways and processes that can be called precarious today.

1.4 Thesis structure

The concept of precarity has been tested and refined in various ways, many of which are examined in Chapter Three. Regardless of how precarity is specifically framed and in what context it is used, all definitions of precarity are typified by the sense of vulnerability and insecurity. Considering these vulnerabilities and insecurities as interrelated and intersecting experiences across a range of contexts allows for precarity to be used more widely. That is, a holistic interpretation of precarity – as presented through a broad analysis of literature in Chapter Three – allows for a thorough and detailed examination of the various and multiple ways that people experience vulnerability and insecurity. When coupled with a specific context, the concept of multiple precarities can offer detailed insights into the individual and collective precariousness.

This thesis draws together two distinct threads: the concept of precarity, and the context of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand. Chapter Three surveys and summarizes literature pertaining to precarity, and various interpretations and uses of the concept. This chapter also goes on to set out a generic example of a framework of multiple precarities that can be used to identify various aspects of the concept of precarity, and justifies the value of such a holistic and intersectional framework. Chapter Four introduces the context of this thesis and research – namely homelessness. Through analysis of literature concerning homelessness, as well as an introduction to the specificities of the case study research in Auckland, this chapter sets the scene for the research project that has been carried out. Chapter Five presents the bulk of the results of the research project, and offers a framework of multiple precarities of homelessness – tying together the two conceptual and contextual strands of this thesis. The framework is presented as distinct precarities, which are drawn from research data as well as from literature relating to both precarity and homelessness. This chapter details
the precarities drawn from research, but points to opportunities to identify and evaluate further precarities that have not been discussed. Chapter Six then evaluates representations of homelessness in the media. Finally, Chapter Seven offers some conclusions and reflections, and makes recommendations for further investigation and policy.
Chapter Two: Studying precarious homelessness

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines methods used for the empirical component of the thesis, which allows a demonstration of how the framework of multiple precarities can be used. This chapter first contains a detailed examination of theoretical approaches employed in the research – particularly deconstructive post-humanism and a critical feminist approach. These theoretical approaches are the epistemological and ontological foundations of the research, and underpin the way in which knowledge is both understood and collected. This research, in particular, examines structural inequalities and problematic policy, but is also concerned with the everyday experiences of individuals. A sound theoretical approach allows me to traverse what might be termed the ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ scales of this inquiry – asking and answering questions that relate to individuals as well as to structures and institutions. The third section details the specific methods employed in desktop and field research, and how each of these methods are shaped by, and shape the development of a theoretical and practical understanding of precarity and homelessness. The final part of this chapter looks at the ethical issues that I needed to consider in designing and carrying out research, as well as some of the specific challenges that shaped the final results of the research.

2.2 Theoretical approaches

My research approach draws heavily on two main theoretical traditions. First, to explore the precarious day-to-day experiences of homeless people, I adopt a deconstructive post-humanist approach that is informed by post-structuralism. Second, questioning the way that human subjects are described in research, I adopt a critical feminist approach, which enables an intentional reflexive approach to research, fieldwork, and writing. These approaches advocate for the primacy of human experiences, but question and complicate the variety of ways
that humanity might be described in the research process (Johnston 1986; Lorimer 2009).

Post-humanism is a general term given to a range of theoretical approaches taken by geographers to respond to, or radicalize, humanist geographies of the last four decades (Lorimer 2009; Smith 2009). Like humanist geographies, post-humanism focuses on the agency and experiences of people. Some post-human geographers, however, use a wide definition of 'human' in order to explore the relationship between people and animals (Bingham 2006; Panelli 2009). Post-humanist geographies can be divided into a number of related, yet distinct, approaches. I have adopted a deconstructive approach, which takes an ‘analytical-philosophical’ position to the ontology of being human (Braun 2004; Castree et al. 2004, 1342). This theoretical perspective invites the sceptical and reasoned appraisal of the category 'human,' and by using this approach, I consider intersecting categories of social difference, such as age, gender, class, or ethnicity in order to define the human ‘subject’ (Lorimer 2009). For example, whereas a humanist approach might emphasise the importance of a person's definition and experience of home, a post-humanist approach interrogates the myriad ways that social difference shapes a persons' experience of a concept like 'home' (Blunt 2003; Rose 1993). This builds on the importance of the concept of intersectionality described in Chapter Three, establishing a different way of approaching identity and experience. A deconstructive focus draws on the important features of post-structuralism and suggests that there is no single 'human' experience, but rather suggests a network of power and violence that underpins the interactions between groups of people divided by cultural and social difference (Lorimer 2009).

This approach, when informed by post-structuralism, gives me the framework to focus on homelessness and the specific locations, objects, spaces, places, and people that shape this experience; it also allows for the examination of larger factors and processes that might also be at play. Cultural geographers use place, space and landscapes in order to identify and describe a person's multidirectional interactions with the world around them (Crang 1998). Taking a more general post-humanist approach allows me to examine the way that
performances, movement through space, and social connections also affect experiences and lived realities. After deconstructing what it means to be fundamentally human using a variety of social differentiations, post-humanism describes how an ontology of humanity can be (re)constructed in complement or in opposition to the environment in which it might be located (Braun 2004). Peoples’ individual strategies and coping mechanisms (as well as support service frameworks) are thus informed and shaped both by individual experiences and relationships with their environment, but also through processes and structures that constrain them.

I also use aspects of a critical feminist approach, because it looks at the way that knowledge is constructed (epistemologies), particularly in relation to the positioning of the researcher and the subject of research (McDowell 1992). A critical feminist approach allows me to focus on epistemology and imagined landscapes of power (Rose 1997). The introduction of reflexive feminist research followed an increased interest in the role of power relations in the research process (Pile 1991), and came about as feminist geographers of the 1980s and 90s offered a critique of gender biases in geographic research (McDowell 1992). However, a critical feminist methodology goes further than this by challenging a conventional approach which positions the researcher as disembodied, isolated, and wholly impartial to the research process and the research subject (Pateman and Grosz 1986; Rose 1993). Rose (1997) discusses the importance of a transparent approach to a researcher’s positionality in a research project. Following Rose (1997) my research approach is structured in a way that ensures I do not suggest that my perspective is objective and distant, but rather shaped by my own experience and assumptions. This is emphasized through the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews and field observations. Further, a feminist methodology requires more than merely identifying my own subjectivities, but also requires recognizing and describing power relations (Burns and Walker 2005). A feminist approach therefore allows me to be highly reflexive and considerate of my own position in the research process. Further, it allows me to view my position in the research as constituting part of the research process and results itself.
Donna Haraway (1988) used the term ‘situated knowledge’ to describe how a critical feminist research method intentionally makes positionality obvious, recognizing that there is no impartial ‘God Trick’ that can be used to describe reality. Instead, a different form of objectivity can be described through the naming of my positionalities (Mansvelt and Berg 2010). This open and transparent approach to research is not sufficient to ensure an absence of power relations, but it is a necessary component of my research project. The elimination of bias and implicit power relations is impossible in research. Instead, I must be as aware as possible of the effects of my own positionality. A critical feminist approach to research allows this. Further, it enables me to identify the ways that my positionality and academic presence in might colour my results. Because I am unable to eliminate the influence of my own positionality and identity (Rose 1997), it becomes even more important to identify and describe the nature of these interrelated processes. This gives validity to my research, and supports the conclusions I make through situating that specific knowledge in an identified landscape of power. However, just as it is impossible to view an external situation in an entirely impartial way, it is also impossible for me to wholly take account of my own internal biases (Rose 1997). Therefore, any attempts to establish (and qualify) my own positionality are accompanied by the admission that I do not know myself perfectly, and will always make inherently biased assumptions. My positionality is discussed - to the extent that I can - below, in section 2.4.

A critical feminist approach is important in the way that it can be translated into the shaping of the writing process itself. Through ‘writing up’ a research project (in this thesis), I am creating knowledge, and the epistemological manner in which I create (write) that knowledge is important for the landscapes of power that my research will construct (Mansvelt and Berg 2010; Rose 1997). Therefore the broadly anti-positivist approach in my fieldwork and data collection is consistent through the writing of my research. Just as the data collection stage of a research project always involves positioned and situated knowledge, so too does the writing up of research. I therefore take a reflexive approach to both research and writing, through the critical feminist tradition of
analyzing and describing landscapes of power and my own role in (re)creating these landscapes (Rose 1997).

2.3 Methods

This section outlines the way in which research was carried out in this thesis project. Four methods were used to collect empirical data: semi-structured interviews with key informants; a focus group with team leaders of a large service provider; field notes, photos, and observations from fieldwork; and a media analysis of newspapers articles. Each method has its own benefits, and was selected for its ability to answer the research questions above in section 2.1. The data generated by these methods are complementary and together produce the results, which are presented and discussed in Chapters Five and Six. Most data was collected during a period of fieldwork in June 2016 in Auckland, with a few interviews carried out over the next month.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews are valuable to a research project for four key reasons (Dunn 2010, 102). First, they fill a gap in knowledge about a topic, especially with information that may not be possible to gain otherwise. For example, knowledge relating to the creation of government policy regarding homelessness can only be gathered through contact with experts in the field (that is, policy analysts). Second, they can reveal motivations and justifications for particular actions or behaviours. Third, they can collect a wide variety of differing opinions and perspectives, which are particularly important for potentially controversial topics. Finally, interviews can demonstrate respect and understanding, they allow for reflexive research methods, and they can give the opportunity to empower informants by giving voice to their perspectives.

I used semi-structured interviews with seven key informants, including staff at service providers who deal with homeless people, staff at city council, elected representatives, and staff at government departments. These key informants were selected based on their specific knowledge and opinions, and interviews took place with the use of an interview guide (Dunn 2010). This guide included a range of topics and themes I wanted the interview to cover, but the individual
specific questions were not planned in advance (an indicative topic guide is provided in Appendix 1). The use of semi-structured interviews provided me, as the interviewer, with the flexibility to follow particular lines of questioning that I believed to be useful or beneficial. It also provided the interviewee with the ability to talk about that which they felt comfortable and knowledgeable about, or wanted me to understand further. A summary of the key informants who participated in the semi-structured interviews is given below in Table 1.

Interviews were approximately 60 minutes in length, and were mostly held at the key informants’ place of work, or in a public cafe. All interviews were set up prior to the fieldwork taking place, either by email or phone, and all participants gave informed consent for their participation (see information sheet and consent form in Appendices 2 and 3)

**Table 1: Schedule of Key Informants who participated in semi-structured interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Informant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Title/Position/Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>Advisor at Auckland Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>Advisor at Auckland Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tania</td>
<td>Manager of emergency housing provider, with personal experience of homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Auckland-based politician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo</td>
<td>Community advocate, former elected representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Analyst at Ministry of Social Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>Development leader at social service provider</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Focus group**

Focus groups are a form of interview, held between an interviewer and a group of key informants, guided and moderated by a facilitator but encouraging interaction between participants (Cameron 2010). Focus groups are useful for a number of reasons. First, they allow for the interviewer to reach a wide variety of key informants in a relatively efficient manner. This is of significant value for fieldwork when time may be limited, and also recognizes the fact that many participants are limited in time themselves (Bryman 2012). Second, the focus group provides high-quality information from knowledgeable key informants – much as do semi-structured interviews (Matthews and Ross 2010). Third, both the breadth and depth of information can be greater than semi-structured
interviews, on account of the increased number of participants, and their ability to respond to, and expand on each others’ statements (Matthews and Ross 2010). Finally, focus groups can provide an additional form of qualitative data, through the observation and analysis of group dynamics (Cameron 2010). That is, group dynamics between participants can sometimes provide further useful data that goes beyond the words that are said. The way in which people interact within the focus group, and the way that they respond to one another can be a rich source of observational data.

In this research, one focus group was held in Auckland with a service provider based in the Central Business District. There were six participants (listed below in Table 2), who represented various service teams within the organisation. The focus group was initially organised as an interview with one person, but became a focus group as other people became available and were invited to join. This became a valuable opportunity to hear a range of opinions from within the one organisation. As described above, the focus group offers unique data, due to the way in which participants can interact with each other, and respond to their colleagues’ remarks. This required me to be very flexible with the structure of the interview, and to manage the discussion to ensure that all the topics I wanted to cover were brought up to the group. The same topic guide as for key informant interviews was used. The focus group lasted for 60 minutes, and was recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. All participants gave their informed consent.

Table 2: Schedule of Key Informants who participated in focus group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Informant Pseudonym</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Field notes, photos, and observations**

Following the discussion above in section 2.3 about the importance of recognizing and naming my own positionality and experiences in carrying out research, an important method in this project is the keeping of field notes that
record my experience of research. Field notes are a way in which observations are recorded, and generated a unique type of data for this research project (Bryman 2012). Photos can be taken to record visual observations, and often accompany explanatory notes about their meaning (Kearns 2010). These notes and photos reflect the experiences and observations that I had whilst carrying out field research – particularly when in a new environment. A summary of the observational data collected is provided below in Table 3. Observational data has a number of benefits for research. First, it is a method that allows for the examination of a situation while also taking account of my own positionality. In many respects, field notes and observations are the most susceptible to my bias and positionality because I choose what to observe and note, and I interpret all this data directly using my own beliefs and assumptions (De Walt 2002; Matthews and Ross 2010). However, as an observer, I have relatively little control over what happens, so observations can offer an insight into the nature of a situation as it might occur without my presence. Further, in situations where I am unfamiliar or uncomfortable (such as visiting a homeless shelter or service provider), I can take account and record the experience of being in a place outside of my own comfort zone.

Second, through observation methods, particularly when arranged with a key contact, I am able to observe situations that might otherwise be difficult to be a part of. This provided a unique range of data for the research project, and enriched the breadth and depth of information available for discussion. Finally, observation allows for information gathered through other methods to be contextualized and complemented (Kearns 2010). This both enhances the quality of other data (such as through semi-structured interviews), and provides a context in which that data can be understood. For example, through observing the streets of Central Auckland, my own interpretation of comments made by key informants was contextualized and arguably of more value than if I remained as purely an outsider, looking into a context with which I had no familiarity.

Table 3: Summary of field observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Method used</th>
<th>Variety of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
In describing varieties of observation, Gold (1958) presents four distinct, yet similar, approaches which remain in contemporary use for field observation (De Walt 2002; Goldbart and Hustler 2005). These varieties are: complete observer, remaining outside of and anonymous in an observed situation; observer-as-participant, who reveals their position but is still mostly observing; participant-as-observer, who embeds themselves in a group’s activities as a visitor and reflects on experiences; and finally complete participant, who covertly or discreetly involves themselves as a member of a group. The varieties of observation all have distinct benefits and disadvantages, but for the most part my research traversed between complete observer and observer-as-participant. Table 3 lists the range of observations undertaken for the current study, indicating the type of observation involved.

A key part of my field observations was my attendance at an event held by LifeWise called ‘The Big Sleep Out.’ The ‘Big Sleep Out’ events were held across the country, and normally involved people raising funds through donations and spending a night sleeping outside in a public space. The Auckland event, which I

| Walking as a visitor to Auckland | Notes were kept each day about my reflections of walking around the CBD and other suburbs, and how I experienced the city – with reference to the perception of homelessness | Complete observer |
| Evidence of homelessness | Photographic evidence of homelessness in public places in Auckland, accompanied by notes recording details | Complete observer |
| Visiting homeless service providers | Notes recorded of my experience and observations while visiting the premises of a service provider in Auckland | Observer-as-participant |
| Guest at LifeWise Big Sleep Out | As an invited guest to this event, I was able to participate in workshops, listen to seminars and keynote presentations, and share in a meal. Notes were kept of my experiences, as well as the content of presentations | Participant-as-observer (limited participation) |
| Visiting Auckland Library | Notes and photos taken of my observations while visiting the Auckland Library, with particular reference to how the space is used by the homeless | Complete observer |

Table 3 lists the range of observations undertaken for the current study, indicating the type of observation involved.
attended, was organised by LifeWise and was ‘invite-only.’ The participants were local politicians, business people, and journalists. The event also involved a number of presentations from homeless service providers, and people with personal experience of homelessness

**Media analysis**

A media analysis was used to examine a selection of New Zealand media, in order to evaluate the gap between how homelessness is presented and understood, and how it is framed by this thesis. Media analysis involves reading and summarizing the documents available, and applying a thematic analysis to a selection of media articles. Analysing media uses a thematic approach to extracting and categorising data in order to try explain the ‘meta-story’ that media is telling – that is, the story behind the story that reveals representations, assumptions, power relations, and understandings (Bloor and Bloor 2007; Dixon 2010; Foucault 1991; Huxley 2009; Waitt 2010). The process of analysis is a multi-step, reflexive process that involves the selection of texts and investigating the different activities that the knowledge contained in the texts reproduce (Rose 2001; Waitt 2010). This method is chosen for its ability to indicate and illustrate perceptions and approaches to homelessness – with particular reference to the way that homelessness is understood and presented in the public sphere. The media analysis is used specifically to answer research question 2d, which asks ‘what are the representations of homelessness, and how do they align with the experiences of homelessness?’

The use of this approach to discourse complements my deconstructive post-humanist approach, through describing the way that discourse creates other meanings, and providing an opportunity to explore some of the tensions involved in studying homelessness (Cresswell 2009a). Media analysis also allows for the identification and interrogation of social structures that constrain or limit the experiences of the homeless and service providers, and create an environment within which policy is developed.

The media articles analysed in Chapter Six were published between June 2015 and October 2016, and came from three sources: Radio New Zealand, the *Otago*
Daily Times, and the New Zealand Herald. Radio New Zealand (RNZ) is a state-funded media group, which broadcasts media via its radio stations and online at radionz.co.nz. It also publishes news articles and written reports from its broadcast programs online. It was chosen for data collection as it is a national-level media group and is state-funded rather than a for-profit company. The Otago Daily Times is an independent newspaper based in Dunedin, but publishes articles online at odt.co.nz. It was selected as a source because it is a local publication with a relatively local audience, and provides a contrast to the national publications. Finally, the New Zealand Herald is a national newspaper owned by the private company New Zealand Media and Entertainment (NZME), which publishes online at nzherald.co.nz. It was selected as a private, for-profit media publication. Further, the New Zealand Herald online also includes many stories that are published in local newspapers owned by NZME, and thus has a large network of local and national reporters and stories.

In total, 235 articles were selected from these three media sources. All these articles, published between June 2015 and October 2016, were about homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand. This included political news and opinion pieces regarding homelessness, as well as reporting on particular events or the general situation. Due to the nature of journalistic networking and syndication, many of the articles covered the same item of news, and were often repeated from one publication to the other. The exact extent of this was not assessed, as it does not provide any useful data for understanding the representations of homelessness. The media analysis carried out focussed on content and context, rather than the quantity of reporting. That said, Table 4 below summarises the articles that were selected for analysis from each of the three publications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of articles</th>
<th>Radio New Zealand</th>
<th>Otago Daily Times</th>
<th>New Zealand Herald</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>108</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4: Summary of media articles analysed**

**Data Analysis**

The data that I collected is in the form of text – either transcripts of interviews and conversations, or notes that I have recorded in a field diary. I used coding
methods to organise my data thematically with the software application nVivo. Coding is important for data reduction, data organisation, and forms an important part of data exploration (Cope 2010). Coding was completed after the interviews were transcribed and field diary notes have been recorded. After coding, I analysed data by organising coded material into thematic groupings that reflected my research questions. This provided the necessary information to produce a set of results that answers the specific questions that guide my research, and which make up Chapters Five and Six. As mentioned above in my discussion of how and why I adopt a critical feminist approach, my intentional and transparent positioning means that I took care to be consistently reflexive throughout the research project – not just during field work. The interpreting of data I gathered involved my own value judgments and subjective interpretations based on what I understood to be important.

2.4 Ethical considerations

An important part of any research project is the consideration of ethical and representational issues, in order to increase the quality of the research being done (as explained in section 2.1), and because of the importance of respecting and valuing the people I engage with in research.

The dynamic relationship between a researcher and those who participate in research is a topic of considerable study in geography, and particularly in feminist geographies and methods. This comes from an interest in improving geographic methods in order to increase the effectiveness of research, but also reflects a desire to minimize any risk of harm for those who contribute to a research project. In particular, a significant feature of reflecting on research looks at the boundary between an academic researcher and a subject of research. This boundary is the conceptual location of power imbalances, and facilitates recognition of the nature of power relationships between researcher and researched (Dowling 2010). This is emphasized in the critical feminist approach I take, described in section 2.2. The research I carried out aimed to reduce the ‘gulf’ between researcher and researched, through involving and respecting informants and participants. These methods echo the rationale of ethnographic
research, which aims to locate the researcher inside a society or community, rather than outside, allowing for research to occur alongside relationship building (Cloke et al. 2004; Goldbart and Hustler 2005).

As described above, my research is ultimately and undeniably shaped by my own positionality and subjectivity. Merely naming my own subjectivities is not sufficient to eliminate them, so instead by reflexively ‘taking account’ of positionality, I seek to validate the research by situating the knowledge I create within the subjective framework of my own experiences (Rose 1997). This means referring to aspects of my own personal experiences or perspectives as well as aiming to learn and achieve personal growth through the research process (Dowling 2010). As a male Pākehā who grew up in a relatively wealthy family in Dunedin, my own personal experiences or contact with precarity or homelessness is different from the people who I talked to. This does not necessarily undermine my ability to learn and talk about these issues, but it is a factor in the way that I interact with people I may research with.

I previously experienced an example of this in some previous research I carried out in Dunedin, looking at precarity and community responses, and this experience shaped my future approaches to research. I met with some residents of a neighbourhood to talk about their collective experiences with precarity. After learning where I grew up in Dunedin (a neighbourhood with high property prices, and high decile schools) they asked what I thought of their neighbourhood. As I explained that I had not known much about their neighbourhood while I was growing up, they mentioned that my own neighbourhood was where the ‘rich people’ lived. The difference of experience was made very clear to me, and this type of exchange exemplifies the potential ‘gulf’ between myself and those with whom I want to research. The process of resolving this difference is not clear, but through identifying these positionalities, I remain aware of the potential impacts of my own role in my research.

Once I began fieldwork in Auckland, it became clear that the level of need (in regards to support for the homeless) was much higher than I had previously
expected. This was not necessarily surprising, as significant media coverage had preceded my fieldwork, but meant that certain aspects of my planned research methods needed to be changed. I had originally planned to carry out more participatory research through volunteering, but this became difficult to arrange with various service providers. I realized that most service providers were over-worked and under-resourced, and that my own presence was potentially problematic, adding to workload rather than diminishing it, however well meaning. I was incredibly grateful for service providers’ time in talking to me, and it became clear that the specific situation that service providers in Auckland faced was not one that made it easy for participatory research and co-production of knowledge through innovative methods to occur. This may have been different if I was based in Auckland, or if I had longer to spend with each key informant to develop a relationship and establish and explore opportunities for co-production of research. I remain certain that other methods (such as co-production of research techniques, interviews with homeless people, and auto-photography exercises) would produce useful data for this thesis, as well as for the homeless sector themselves, but as an academic researcher I remain aware and sensitive of the potential difficulty my presence brings to these situations and contexts. Any co-production of knowledge and research requires mutual trust on the part of the researcher and the participant (whether that be a service provider or a homeless person).

Because of the nature of my research, it is very important that I followed correct ethical procedure in regards to privacy, confidentiality, and informed consent (Dowling 2010). I completed a category A ethics application under the University of Otago policy for ethical research with people, prior to the empirical research beginning (included as Appendix 4). However, high ethical standards go beyond fulfilling specific policy requirements, and I took a consistently flexible and comprehensive approach to ethics throughout the research project. This flexible approach to ethics ultimately resulted in a number of changes to my research, which fundamentally changed the way in which research was carried out and results were sought.
Conclusion

This section has outlined the theoretical approaches used throughout this thesis, and how the specific methods taken in the research complement the theoretical and epistemological traditions that I have adopted. In particular, I use deconstructive post-humanist and critical feminist approaches to the creation of knowledge. These approaches have implications for how knowledge is created, the way that research is designed and carried out, and the ethical standards which research should follow. These can be seen through the first three methods taken in the research project: semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and participant and field observations. All these methods provide opportunities for critical and reflective research practices, including genuine attempts to take account of my own positionality and bias in collecting and interpreting data. The final method used in the research project is media analysis, which is also consistent with the broad aims of the approaches I have employed.

The next chapter of this thesis continues with a theoretical discussion that picks up the specific uses of the term 'precarity' in order to develop the conceptual tool as a framework of multiple precarities in the first of two chapters that review the literature. Chapter Three explores many applications and interpretations of the term precarity, and provides a theoretical grounding for the development of the framework of multiple precarities, which the research project uses to examine homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand.
Chapter Three:
Examining multiple precarities in literature

3.1 Introduction

Precarity has been utilised in a variety of ways across multiple disciplines, which gives the impression of precarity as a vague experience for people, and an imprecise concept for academia. However, shared traits link all of these various definitions, which can give substance to the diversity of precarity literature, and allow various interpretations to be drawn together. Furthermore, this chapter will suggest that a new framework of multiple precarities can be used to describe the various and diverse ways in which precarity is experienced. A framework of multiple precarities uses the concept of intersectionality to view vulnerability and insecurity in a holistic way. It suggests that the experience of precarity is inextricably linked to strategic and constructed identities that exist in the intersections of various precarities. These intersections are based on the ‘here-and-now’ of insecurity and are intensely experienced – often painfully and violently. Likewise, these intersections are constructed and adopted forms of identity, that are strategically mobilized in order to express political and social aspirations in the face of processes that marginalize and exclude.

This chapter explores the diverse forms of precarity that have been expressed and developed in literature. This begins with a discussion of precarity in the context of labour markets, particularly in relation to the concept of a ‘precariat’ as an emergency Marxist class (Standing 2011). The chapter then turns to how precarity is mobilised by activists and academics as an avenue to organise collective social action. Precarity has also been used to describe an insecure sense of place, and other forms of precarious living in sections 3.5 and 3.6. These various precarities speak the same language of vulnerability and insecurity, but do so in order to emphasize specific forms and expressions of precariousness. In section 3.7 and 3.8 these precarities are brought together, by considering them in a networked relationship informed by the concept of intersectionality.
Throughout this chapter, the various precarities used in literature contribute to a growing understanding of the many ways that precarity can describe peoples’ vulnerabilities or insecurities. This thesis builds a ‘framework of multiple precarities’ that draw on this literature, using this chapter as a guide to source material. Each ‘version’ of precarity offers a different interpretation on what it means to be vulnerable, and how people respond individually or collectively.

### 3.2 Contesting Precarity

As this chapter explores, much discussion and debate in precarity literature is spent defining and identifying precarity in its various forms. Though conceptually consistent with one another, in the sense that precarity is approximately synonymous with vulnerability and insecurity, various interpretations of precarity emphasise different contexts, experiences, and identities. The contestation surrounding definitions of precarity reflects the insecurity of those who are precarious and the often unclear and messy way that different precarities intersect. Precarity as a concept and as an identity or experience is contested, and it is in this contestation that the complex and always changing aspects of precarity are located (della Porta et al. 2015b).

The concept of precarity has been used, in various contexts, for a number of decades to refer to a particular type of experienced insecurity and vulnerability (della Porta et al. 2015b). To experience precarity is to experience a kind of poverty in one sense or another, but the academic and social meaning of the word has not been static as it has moved through space and time. According to Jean-Claude Barbier (2004), precarity followed Western European terms such as the French précarité, or the Italian precarietà and initially referred to the disruption of families experiencing poverty in an holistic sense (Doogan 2015; Pitrou 1978). The changing use of the term precarity indicates the transience that is inherent in the concept – both in academia and in everyday lived realities. For French sociologists, for example, the use of précarité encompassed precarity of employment (précarité de l’emploi), precarity of work (précarité du travail), and a more general précarisation where society experiences increased destabilization and precariousness (Barbier 2004; Paugam, Zoyem and...
Charbonnel 1993; Pitrou 1978; Schnapper 1989). The conceptually broad origin of precarity – in its original French usage – suggests the possibility of precarity being used to describe a holistic experience, despite more recent interpretations narrowing the term's use. As precarity became used in other parts of Western Europe, and eventually in English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom, the scope of its use became more focused on employment relations, and how changing forms of work on a large scale (to flexible and insecure employment relations) might be described by language such as precariousness and precarity (Reich 2001; Sennet 1999). In some senses, it is to this broad approach that my framework of multiple precarities returns. However, the framework uses the concept of intersectionality (discussed in section 3.7 below) to draw together the various precarities present in this chapter.

3.3 Labour Precarity and a post-Marxist class

One example of precariousness in labour relations has situated precarity in a post-Marxist context, and relies heavily on the contribution of UK economist Guy Standing (Standing 1997; 2014; 2012; 2011). Standing's thesis rests on the idea that global society is witnessing the rapid growth of a new class-in-the-making, called the *precariat* (Standing 2011). There is a clear linkage between the precariat and the processes that have been described in European academia relating to a process of *precarisation* or increasing precariousness that results from structural and systemic processes. According to Standing and others, precarisation produces precarity, which is experienced by the precariat (Melin and Blom 2015; Standing 2011). These scholars offer various ways of defining and measuring the precariat and the variety of experiences shared by the precariat create a challenge for academics to conclusively describe the disparate group. Membership in the precariat stretches from unskilled and unemployed people, through to highly-skilled workers in an unpaid internship, whose qualifications do not fit the job market they navigate (Fadaee and Schindler 2014; Standing 2014; 2011).
Standing (2011) uses the term ‘social income’ to refer to the various ways in which people receive support – income, or in-kind benefits that allow people to meet their needs and achieve their aspirations. For the precariat, social income is undermined by labour insecurity, and also by the loss of state, community, and employment support. Examples of social income not captured by the financial definition of ‘income’ include welfare benefits, accommodation supplements, company pensions, and family support structures.

Members of the precariat share a range of features that shape their experience of work (Standing 2014, 16-28). These include distinctive relations of production (unstable labour) and distribution (the undermining of social income, as described above). Moreover, distinctive relations to the state see the precariat criticized as insufficient in respect to their engagement with neoliberal capitalism as the dominant, and only legitimate economic mode. That is, neoliberal capitalism assumes that continual transactions between parties will lead the market to an optimal state that maximises the benefits available to all. However, this market model is also predicated on the idea that transactions can have winners and losers, and that sub-optimal engagement with the market – such as workers who are under- or over-qualified – will lead to negative outcomes. In this new relation to the state, the precariat are both pitied and reviled by the public; they are deserving of minimal support but also attract fear and apprehension. Further features used to describe the precariat include low social mobility, over-qualification for the labour that they are expected to undertake, and increasing experiences of genuine poverty and deprivation. It is this final feature of experienced poverty that points to a wider definition of precarity for which this chapter argues.

Standing (2011, 17) argues the precariat is measured through seven key aspects of labour insecurity. The experience of these insecurities, or the lack of security, typifies the vulnerability of the precariat, and are both expansive and inclusive. Precarious work displays some, or all, of these ‘symptoms’ of insecurity, but the presence of insecurity does not necessarily entail precarity – or indeed, membership in the precariat. While these aspects of labour insecurity are not
necessarily new, Standing argues that it is the extent and broad impact of them for the precariat that determine the distinctiveness of their experience.

1. A lack of labour market security sees people lacking the opportunity to enter the labour market and earn an income. Full labour market security would see a government ensuring full employment was achieved through guaranteed work schemes, for example.

2. Employment security involves protection at work against unfair hiring and firing procedures, as well as the nature of work arrangements (such as the distinction between contractors and employees).

3. Job security ensures that workers are able to become indispensable in their role, as well as find opportunities for promotion of both status and income.

4. Work security involves protection in the form of health and safety policies, and acceptable hours of work that allow for a healthy work-life balance.

5. Skill reproduction security ensures that workers have the opportunity to learn new skills (either at work, or in other institutions), and therefore increase the price (wage) they can attract in the labour market.

6. Income security includes minimum wage protection, social security or pensions, in-work tax credits, and progressive taxation structures to ensure all workers have an adequate and secure income.

7. Representation security allows for workers to have a collective voice through unions, health and safety committees, access to democratic decision-making, or other forms of representation.

When some, or all, of these indices of labour security are absent or restricted, the movement to precarious work, and membership in the precariat, is hastened. However, despite the clear taxonomy of insecurity given above, precarity is notoriously difficult to define and measure. It is for this reason that the precariat builds on the language of class struggle in Marxist and post-Marxist thought. The precariat, it is argued, develops into a ‘class-for-itself’ opposing the consequences of global neoliberalism, and organised by distinctive relations to the means of production and distribution (Bodnar 2006; Miller 2010; Robinson
However, as will be discussed below, this post-Marxist definition is potentially problematic because it suggests that a person's involvement in the labour economy is the most important and defining aspect of their identity. If their identity is defined by work (either lack of, or specific insecure features of it) what does this mean for a group for whom work is increasingly less important?

A post-Marxist approach offers the opportunity to imagine the types of class-consciousness that might emerge from this new ‘dangerous class’ (Standing 2011). The precariat is expansive because it defines globalisation and neoliberalism as processes that are ongoing and increasingly push people into membership in the precariat through increased global competition for the labour market and increasing demands for flexibility. The precariat is inclusive because, though it is defined negatively (by a lack of work-based identity, for example) it is open to redefinition to include other forms of precarious work. These ‘varieties of precariat’ include those who are forced into insecure work, but also those who willingly (if grudgingly) accept short-term contracts as a ‘stepping-stone’ to secure employment, or even those who seek out flexible and precarious work in combination with other activities such as childcare or volunteering (Standing 2011, 101)

The precariat is a new and emergent class that is destined to become increasingly relevant as processes of precarisation continue throughout the global economy for a number of reasons. First, the precariat exists because of, and in opposition to, inequalities and vulnerabilities typical of global neoliberalised capitalism (Robinson 2011; Standing 2011). As this variety of capitalism is maintained and strengthened through both domestic and international policies, the economic and social climate for precarisation will continue. Second, the precariat makes use of the social networks of protest and activism in order to form a collective identity and politicize issues, as will be discussed below (Bauman 2013). Through protest and social action, the precariat identifies itself as the victim of capitalism, and challenges the structures and processes that shape the world in which the precariat struggles to negotiate (Fadaee and Schindler 2014). The precariat is distinctly new, and its
identity is linked explicitly to the environment in which it is found. That is, members of the precariat experience precarity because of the economic or political environment in which they live, and they can use their identity as the precariat to innovate a counter-culture. Thus, the precariat interacts with the economy, politics, and society in new ways (Bodnar 2006).

Situating the precariat in labour relations is not necessarily wrong, nor are the seven indices of insecurity irrelevant. However, using the labour market exclusively to define the precariat may over-emphasise the importance of work for people, to the point of arguing that their primary experiences and identity are based on their security (or lack of) in employment. As the rest of this chapter suggests, there are various other ways that people experience precarity, outside of their position in the labour market. This actually echoes the early use of the French term *précarité*, which talked about a more holistic experience of insecurity – albeit limited to the experiences of families in poverty (Barbier 2004; Pitrou 1978). The framework of multiple precarities developed in this thesis, reflects this approach – inviting and including the many other ways that precarity makes sense as a concept to describe vulnerability.

Finally, the description of the precariat as a new social class-in-the-making suggests the possibility, and indeed necessity, of social action on a large scale. The use of precarity, especially referring to the precariat, as a feature of social action is an important use of precarity that transcends a purely academic approach, and invites activists and academics to share a common terminology. Again, the framework of multiple precarities can be used as a ‘road-map’ of sorts, to locate the ways in which precariousness is experienced – and pointing towards the opportunities for social action to be a collective response.

### 3.4 Precarity and Social Action

Though the language of class might be problematic as a descriptive category, and is potentially limiting of the way in which precarity might be identified, the precariat is a useful term for social action. Through utilizing ‘precariat’ as an organising and mobilising group identity, diverse social activists have engaged in protest and direct action across the globe. As a politicised tool of protest,
precarity is more than an academic descriptor – it is a claimed identity through which activists can organise labour protests. In considering social action, precarity can be understood as more than just an experience (of poverty, for example), but also as an adopted and performed identity (Butler 2009).

Precariat social action follows closely the tradition of Marxist and socialist protest – organised around the creation of a new class, articulation of their experiences, and demands for change (Mattoni 2012; Standing 2014; 2011). According to a rallying cry of the 2004 EuroMayDay parade ‘the precariat is to postfordism what the proletariat was for Fordism’ (della Porta, Baglioni and Reiter 2015a, 227; Mattoni 2012, 113). Strategic identities are adopted by those experiencing precarity as a tool with which to communicate their experience in the form of social action and protest. Social action using the precariat as its ‘rallying cry’ have mostly been focused in Western Europe, particularly in the annual ‘EuroMayDay’ protests that have happened across Europe since 2001 (della Porta et al. 2015a; Standing 2011). The protests were attended by diverse groups with varied experiences, but were able to participate in a common protest with a shared theme of precarity (della Porta et al. 2015a; della Porta and Mosca 2006). The process of protest as a collective group indicates the strategic adoption of precarity as an effective tool. It points towards the possibility of precarity being more than an academic category but also as an identity point around which diverse groups of people with varied experiences of precarity can mobilise and communicate. By way of example, the EuroMayDay protests have included the specific identities of ‘tempworkers’ and ‘chainworkers’ who are those experiencing precarity of employment through casual or part-time contracts and through employment in large multi-national companies with large cohorts of flexible workers. Further, the ‘social precariat’ are also identified as EuroMayDay protestors – whose experience of precarity is due to their status as unemployed, students, or migrants (della Porta et al. 2015a; Mattoni 2015; 2012).

Precarity – in the contexts of social action, and elsewhere – is not a fixed category of analysis, nor an agreed form of identity. Multiple environments and contexts host peoples’ experiences of precarity, and their experiences of
precarity are neither homogenous nor wholly unique. Much like earlier Marxist calls for proletarians around the world to rise, the precariat has a distinctly international (or rather, global) character (Robinson 2011; Seymour 2012). However, social action involving the precariat has defined precarity in different, often contrasting ways. Even when events involve the same people and take place in almost identical spaces and at similar times, precarity can be used in different ways (Mattoni 2015; 2012). This indicates the transient nature of precarity – both the insecurity experienced by the precariat, and the uncertainty of what it means to be precarious. Alice Mattoni’s description of Italian social action involving the precariat demonstrates this process through the varied adoption of precarious identities (Mattoni 2015; 2012). The Precari Atesia strikes in 2005 focused on precarious call-centre workers at Europe’s largest call-centre reclaiming and occupying their break-room to protest intentional isolating tactics employed by their company through insecure work and alternating shift times. This event focused on a specific industry and a specific workplace and defined the precariat in a narrow and targeted manner. By contrast, the EuroMayDay parade in Milan attracted a much wider variety of participants and activists, united for the day under the banner of precarity. Over 100,000 people participate in the annual event, and the parade has been replicated around Europe (della Porta et al. 2015a; Mattoni 2015; 2012).

Other social movements and protests exemplify the strategic essentialism that might be suggested by the use of a ‘precariat’ identity. For example, the use of the dichotomous ‘99%’ and ‘1%’ identities in the ‘Occupy’ protests show this coalescing of identity (Trott 2013). Fadaee and Schindler (2014) suggest that the Occupy movement gathered a variety of individual actors and groups who were united by their sense of vulnerability. This vulnerability was felt as the inability to absorb and respond to economic, social, or environmental shocks, and the increasing belief that this was due to circumstances beyond their control – echoing the call of the precariat in other protests. Fadaee and Schindler (2014) make it clear that participants in this movement need not have experienced financial crisis, for example, because the point of the Occupy movement was this
sense of impending vulnerability, and this was the ‘master signifier’ (p778) that motivated and precipitated social action.

Along with the strategic adoption of identity and the coalescing of diversity, precarity social action makes use of humour and cynical joviality in order to highlight and draw attention to certain issues. Again examining the precariat in Italy demonstrates the utilization of acerbic humour as a strategic tool in the Reddito per tutte (‘Income For All’) protests in 2004, which saw the creation of the ‘San Precario’ figure – the patron saint of the precariat (Mattoni 2012). San Precario appealed to, and also mocked, the Catholic Christian beliefs of Italians, while also serving as a disruptive and critical figure around which protests were organised.

Another example of the precariat’s social action in Italy was the Serpica Naro fashion show in 2005 (Arvidsson, Malossi and Naro 2010; Gherardi and Murgia 2015). At a well-attended fashion show during a festival in Milan, a group of activists announced their plans to protest the business practice of a newly famous Anglo-Japanese designer Serpica Naro who had drawn a lot of attention from fashion fans. When it came time for the scheduled catwalk it was revealed to the crowd – and the organisers of the show – that Serpica Nario’s entire identity was fabricated by the same group of precarity activists, her name even being an anagram of San Precario (Arvidsson et al. 2010; Mattoni 2015; 2012). The actual contents of the show consisted of a number of models depicting and mocking elements of precariousness, including on-call and short-term contracts, sexual harassment, and the lack of maternity leave. The presence of humour in precarity echoes the way that satire is used to mock and highlight issues, while also mobilising and attempting to create a ‘terrain of the possible’ that ‘attempts to disrupt and initiate’ (see also Bain and McLean 2013; Gibson-Graham 2006, 20).

Further, the light-hearted atmosphere that humour brings to social action encourages participation that is both broad in appeal, and meaningful in substance. It attracts and entices participation, while also encouraging
alternative forms of behaviour that reflect the prefigurative goals of large-scale protests and parades, such as EuroMayDay (della Porta et al. 2015a).

### 3.5 Precarity of Place

Other authors have used ‘precarity’ to apply to a wide range of contexts. By stretching precarity to another context, the concept takes on new meaning and can become a tool for evaluating and assessing the experience of precarities of place. When a view of precarity is expanded beyond the workplace, it becomes evident that people experience insecurity and vulnerability in a range of ways. These multiple precarities intersect for individuals and in communities, and a geographic approach to the location of these intersecting precarities allow for the recognition of precarious places.

Precarious places, and experiences of precarity of place come in a variety of forms. Precarities of place might look at the way spaces occupied by migrants are made precarious by a lack of documentation or legal rights (Goldring and Landolt 2011) or the risk of ‘removal or deportation from one’s physical location’ (Banki 2013a, 453). This kind of precarity refers to the way that security of place (as the opposite of precarity of place) is dependent on the ‘permission’ of a state authority through either citizenship or an alternative socio-legal status, such as a refugee or a visa-holder (Banki 2013a; 2013b).

The literature on precarity of place indicates the importance of understanding the overlap between different precarities. For migrants and refugees, insecurity and vulnerability is a common experience, and precarity can be used to describe the way that the sense of insecurity is felt in relation to both work and a sense of permanence of place (Isin 2009). The relationship between precarious work and precarity of place is explored through the concept of hyper-precarity, whereby the experiences of migrant labour and socio-legal status overlap (Lewis et al. 2014a; 2014b). By investigating the interaction between these two precarities, the hyper-precarity concept suggests ‘pathways’ in which people find themselves becoming more and more precarious, on account of their socio-legal status. Labour is presented as existing on a continuum of freedom, and includes various characteristics of ‘unfreedom’ to describe the experience of forced or
partially forced labour (Banki 2013a; 2013b). The experience of unfree labour (with varying levels of associated precarity) is located in contexts in which people have a precarity of place due to uncertain citizenship rights, for example. Pathways to precarity, as described by Lewis et al. (2014a, 20-27), are the places in which labour precarity and precarity of place intersect, and include socio-legal status, migration contexts, and gender relations.

The intersection between labour and place is particularly conspicuous in situations where people experience uncertainty and vulnerability. Susan Banki (2013a) provides the example of migrant labour in Thailand, where Burmese migrants engage in insecure and often exploitative labour, and experience ongoing threats of deportation from employers and the risk of being caught by government officials. There is a fear of mobility for these workers, because of the fear of being caught, and this constricts the spaces in which migrants feel comfortable and secure. Their experience of precarity of place looks like a narrowing of places that are available to inhabit, and the ongoing sense of vulnerability in regards to the ability to remain in a place. Further, the ability to move freely is characterised as an important aspect of ‘un-precarity’ of place. That is, being able to move and relocate gives people the ability to mitigate any potential precarity of place. This might also be described as resilience, but framed in the language of precarity, the term ‘un-precarity’ suggests a sense of security that is not felt by others (Banki 2013a; 2013b; Vrasti 2013). For those that do not have this freedom of movement, there may be no rules that explicitly restrict migrants’ movements, but the ‘chilling effect’ of the threat of deportation can be enough to close down migrants’ mobility.

These authors point towards the value of a concept that takes account of the multitude of precarities that people experience. By intersecting place and labour, the ability to work securely is crisscrossed by the ability to reside permanently and the ability to move without fear or vulnerability. This paints a picture of intersecting narrow experiences, in some senses closing down the ways in which people can experience security and certainty, but in other ways expanding opportunities to describe and conceptualize the experience of precarity – in a more broad sense of the word (Banki 2013a; Vrasti 2013). The
rest of this chapter explores further ways that precarity might be explored, in order to further illuminate the intersectional and diverse ways that people experience precarity – not as discrete experiences of vulnerability, but as ‘untidy geographies of precarity’ that are both specific to the spatial and temporal experience of precariousness, as well as expansive to include the diversity of everyday lived precarities across a range of concepts called ‘precarity’ (Ettlinger 2007, 320; Vrasti 2013; Waite 2009, 414). These ‘untidy geographies’ resound well with the idea of the framework of multiple precarities, which does not seek to separate and compartmentalise precarities, but rather takes an intersectional approach to understanding the complexities and interactions of the precarities discussed in this chapter.

A second way to conceptualize the precarity of place is examining specifically the use of geographies of ‘home.’ This builds on the previously discussed context of precarities of place, but more specifically refers to the way that home is constructed and experienced by various people (Allen 2015; Blunt 2003; Blunt and Varley 2004). The concept of home is examined in further detail in Chapter Four below. As this thesis argues, a common precarious experience for many people in Aotearoa New Zealand is the increasing precarity of home, and conditions associated with the growing sense of insecurity attached to this concept. When this is undermined through increasingly difficult to access housing, the ability to make home a ‘safe space’ is lost. Literature has not investigated the precarities of home, so this thesis offers an expansion of the concept of precarity to include the way that people experience home, and the way that the lack of a secure access to a home (or the lack of sufficient housing) undermines a person’s sense of identity and security.

### 3.6 Precarious lives

Another way that precarity is conceived is as a more general sense of vulnerability and insecurity – traversing the specificities of the precarities described above, to speak more about the state of living a precarious life, rather than experiencing precarity in one particular way. Judith Butler introduces this dimension in her book Precarious Life (2004), which describes the kind of
political precarity experienced in America after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001. For Butler, the post-9/11 landscape of (in)security and fear typifies the ‘tightrope-like nature’ of precarity, albeit focused more on a political experience than an economic one. Other writers stretch precarity to new places by engaging with this concept, complicating the way that precarity might be considered (Gutterman and Rushing 2008; Lloyd 2008; Puar et al. 2012; Schram 2013). Precarity, according to Butler, is a generalized sense of uncertainty, insecurity, in response to a political and social environment, rather than an economic or employment situation. Unlike labour precarity or precarity of place, for example, Butler’s precarity explains the pervasive and all-encompassing effect of precarity on people who experience a culture of fear, uncertainty, and often violence. It is within this generalized context that a framework of multiple precarities can exist, recognizing the effect of political precarity alongside the precarities described above. The term ‘precarious lives’ hints at the way precarity is transient and also permanent. It is transient in the sense that it is not confined to one location or sphere of life, and can traverse multiple experiences. However, it is also permanent as precarity is not determined necessarily by intricate details of labour regulation, for example, but by a more general state of insecurity or uncertainty for everyone – albeit experienced differently by people.

Furthermore, Ettlinger (2007) suggests an ‘untidy’ precarity that is far broader, and builds upon precarious lives and what might I describe as a framework of multiple precarities. In this interpretation, precarity is not a neatly defined and shared feature of a group, but rather a complex condition or experience, that might be shared, but might also not even be noticed or identified by those that experience it. Untidy precarity allows the concept to become focused on both the intensely local and the expansively global. Precarity is concerned with the minute everyday details of a person’s lived reality, and it is concerned with the global processes of securitization, casualization, and neoliberalisation (Butler 2004; Ettlinger 2007; Lloyd 2008). In this untidy context, the multiple precarities framework gives shape to the messy and contested ways that individuals and communities express and experience precariousness. Responses to precarity are just as important here as the initial experiences, because people
move in and out of precarity as their situations and circumstances change around them.

This lends itself to conceptualizing precarity using a post-structural approach (Murdoch 2005; Panelli 2004); precarity is not a strictly defined category, and any attempt to define it undermines the conceptual value of the term. Likewise, precarity may not be best understood as an identity or group to which a person belongs – challenging Guy Standing’s description of the precariat (Standing 2012; 2011). Instead, precarity could be best understood as a condition of existence – shaped by experiences, boundaries, freedoms, and unfreedoms. A multitude of these are permanently present in society, and many overlap and intersect – echoing the ‘untidy geography’ of Ettlinger (2007). These precarities can be explicitly named and identified – and thus mitigated or ‘treated’ – to some extent, but also exist in a far more esoteric sense as a result of large-scale processes of securitization, neoliberalisation, or what might be termed precaritization (della Porta et al. 2015b; Doogan 2015).

3.7 Intersectionality

The above sections hint at a framework of multiple precarities being made up of intersections between experiences and identities, and between precarities of different types and in different places. To some, precarity is a definitive feature of a shared identity – and these people may align closely with the idea of a class-in-the-making called the precariat. However, to others, the story of precarity is one that rings true only in the abstract; a general sense of insecurity is experienced in vague or disparate ways. Indeed, the concept of precarity might be useful to consider certain experiences without the term even being used at all. The concept of intersectionality – drawn predominantly from feminist geographies of identity – gives shape to the messy and contested ways that individuals and communities experience precarity as a condition or express precarity as an identity (Valentine 2007; West and Fenstermaker 1995).

Intersectionality has been used to explain the way that axes of difference (for example gender or ethnicity) are not distinct, and a person’s experience of these axes is dependent on the interactions between various axes. Nobody has one
particular aspect of their identity that exists in isolation. Everyone exists in relation to the world and people around them, and also in relation to their own unique experiences and identities. The concept draws primarily on the experience of disconnection and marginalization, as a result of difference, and the quintessential 'intersectional figure' is often described as a black woman, whose identity (and experience of identity) differs substantially from a white woman, or from a black man (Brown 2012; Valentine 2007). It makes no sense to consider a black woman's experience of the world to be the same as a white woman's or a black man's, which is why intersectionality is used to take account of these overlapping and multiplying identities.

Some geographers have employed the concept of intersectionality, but there is not a clear examination of the concept in the discipline in a particularly wide sense. Geographers use the term to describe the ‘overlapping’ of identities and relations, situated in particular spatial specificities; axes of difference are ‘interlocked’ and related (Hopkins and Noble 2009; Kobayashi and Peake 1994; Peake 2010; Peake 1993; Pratt 2002; 1999; Ruddick 1996). The term could also be used in other ways, to tell a different story about the experience of identity. Instead of intersecting axes of difference being conceived in an ‘additive' sense (race + gender, for example), intersectionality points to the way that identity is achieved in relationships between and within differences (Valentine 2007; West and Fenstermaker 1995).

In this way, intersectional identity is both produced and accomplished in various spaces, in a fluid and non-static way, with ‘individuals...actively involved in producing their own lives’ (Valentine 2007, 14). This echoes the concept of performativity, which Judith Butler explained, and subsequently linked with her version of precarity (Butler 2002; 2009; 2006; Puar et al. 2012). Using the above example of a black woman can be useful for unpacking what this means. The experienced identity of being a black woman cannot be described by adding ‘black’ and ‘woman’ to an assumed ‘blank canvas’ starting point. Instead, the identities intersect and interact, and an individual’s own decisions about their own identity shape this. Someone might emphasise their gender in their own
expression of identity, while others might use their ethnicity as their primary ‘performative’ identity.

Precarities are intersectional in the sense that different categories of vulnerabilities and insecurities can be experienced simultaneously. Intersectionality has been hinted at in some approaches to precarity, such as the over-determined category of ‘hyper-precarity’ (discussed in section 3.3) which suggests that precarity is experienced sharply by migrants whose precarious socio-legal status is intertwined with their unfreedom in relation to work (Lewis et al. 2014a). The concept has not, however, been fully explored to examine the possibilities of investigating precarities with reference to experiences of difference and oppression based on gender, race, sexuality, health, age, or class.

Brown (2012) suggests that an intersectional approach to categorizing identity and experience can be problematic because it is difficult to know when to ‘stop counting’ axes of difference, as they relate to a specific concept. For example, it might be clear that there are distinct racial or gender aspects to precarity, but less clear that precarity involves other axes of difference. An intersectional approach to multiple precarities offers the flexibility to examine a wide variety of experiences, without resorting to ‘additive’ description of precarity that does not fully allow for peoples’ unique and dynamic experiences of precarity and ‘accomplished’ identities in a variety of spaces.

**3.8 Bringing it together: a framework of Multiple Precarities**

In thinking broadly about the multiple ways in which precarity can be experienced and expressed, it is clear that a framework is required to explore and explain the intersecting dimensions of precarity. A framework of multiple precarities can be used to categorise diverse precarities using an intersectional research approach, and can also examine the way in which subjects navigate and disrupt the borders between these fluid categories of difference and oppression. A framework of multiple precarities can be a conceptual tool with which to understand precarious experiences in a holistic way. Instead of suggesting a hierarchical ranking of difference and oppression, a multiple precarities
framework can allow for an intersectional approach to precarity. When a person experiences precarity, a spectrum of diverse categories of difference and oppression shape the way in which precarity is perceived. Precarity is shaped by experiences, boundaries, freedoms, and unfreedoms. A multitude of these are permanently present in society, and many overlap and intersect – revealing the intersectional ‘untidy geographies’ of precarity (Ettlinger 2007; Valentine 2007). These experiences vary across time and space, and are not static or stable even when situated in specific contexts. The framework adopts the approaches of labour and place precarities, but adapts to match the development of a more flexible and holistic way of describing the construction and accomplishment of identities that is not focused on combining various identity markers, but rather on describing how identity occurs in interactions between, and within, various axes of precarity (Valentine 2007; West and Fenstermaker 1995).

Figure 1 is a generic framework of multiple precarities that might be used to examine a particular situation. This framework is developed through the literature discussed throughout this chapter, and gives an example of what sort of precarities might be considered, and how an intersectional approach is useful for evaluating peoples’ experiences of precarities. Four key themes are drawn from the literature above, and these are depicted in the four parts of the diagram: precarities of identity, place, and labour, and precarious lives. Different aspects of each of these themes are also listed, which again can be traced to the literature above. A key aspect of this diagram is that it depicts precarity as made up of multiple constituent experiences, identities, and situations. The framework also uses the concept of intersectionality, which helps to explain the overlapping nature of precarity. The diagram does not, however, indicate which aspects of precarity intersect and overlap, because it is unclear how an individual’s experience of precarity can be compared to others’. The literature pertaining to intersectionality suggests that a person’s experience or identity is unable to be determined through ‘adding’ their various forms of vulnerability and insecurity. Instead, precarity – viewed through an intersectional model – is diverse and varied. Figure 1 is a generic example of a framework of multiple precarities, but
it is referred to heavily in Chapter Five, which adapts and refines it to create a framework of multiple precarities of homelessness.

The next chapter moves away from precarity to discuss the context and case study of this thesis: homelessness. As will be explored throughout this thesis, homelessness provides an ideal opportunity to test and further refine the framework of multiple precarities suggested in this chapter. Homelessness has complex causes and experiences, and is thought of in many different ways. Chapter Four provides an overview of discussions and debates in literature, including the challenge of defining homelessness, and the many ways of understanding the distinctive geographies of homelessness.
Figure 1: Generic framework of multiple precarities
Chapter Four: Constructing and reviewing homelessness in literature

4.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates literature about homelessness, and gives shape to the specific context of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand that is used in this thesis. This context, with a case study in Auckland, is a location for a framework of multiple precarities to be tested and exemplified. This chapter examines various aspects of homelessness, from a variety of disciplines and approaches, with the intention of providing a context that can be used in Chapters Five and Six, which describe the precarities of homelessness from the perspectives of service providers, and further develops a framework of multiple precarities through the lens of homelessness. The sections of this chapter will first look at multiple ways of thinking about the concept of home, and defining (and measuring) homelessness, before comparing various interpretations of homelessness as both an experienced condition and an embodied identity. Finally, themes of public and private space will be considered, shedding light on tensions that continually exist within the experience of homelessness.

4.2 Conceiving home

‘Home’ is an important concept for the formation of identity, and the home is the location of many experiences of being human (Allen 2015; Blunt 2005; 2003; Blunt and Varley 2004). Peoples’ sense of home is intrinsically linked to their sense of self and sense of identity (Varley 2015). This means that home is a key idea for identity forming, both as a conceptual location and as a physical and psychological landscape feature. Some writers have suggested that home is the most personal geography, where an individual’s identity is located, through a sense of belonging (Kaika 2004; Peil 2009; Varley 2015). Further, a home is an intentional expression of identity, and a space of ‘excess individualism’ where privacy is equated with control (Kaika 2004, 281). In the home, people have a

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space that is ‘shaped by everyday practices, lived experiences, social relations, memories and emotions’ and provides a spatial expression of the sum of lived experiences (Blunt 2005, 506).

As well as being the location of identity building, home is also the location of a person's (or family's) interaction with the objects around them. In some ways the home is an extension of the self, where people’s use of personal objects echoes their own bodies (Blunt 2003). Objects take on a meaning through their ability to convey abstract ideas such as ownership and memories, and the home is the location where these ideas are stored (Varley 2015). The relationship between people and their objects is significant when those objects are intersected by the concept of home. Because home is for many, and particularly those in the developed world, associated with a fixed building or permanent location, the objects that make up a person’s definition of home (such as furniture or important photos) take on a more permanent association with identity (Varley 2015). This explains the debilitative effect the loss of home in crises such as natural disasters can have for peoples’ sense of self. Homes are ‘everyday’ locations in the literal sense of the word, but also reveal the embeddedness of objects in a person’s experience of identity. Home security and actions taken to preserve the contents of a home (such as locks and gates) are seen as actions of self-preservation and not just financial insurance against loss (Peil 2009).

Home also serves as an easy and normalized ‘line that produces an inside opposed to an outside’ (Varley 2015, 276). Home offers security and familiarity to those who belong inside, and suggest inaccessibility and unwelcomeness to those who are outside (Brickell 2012; Peil 2009). Fences, gates and curtains are signifying objects that display exclusion, and act as symbolic (if not actual) barriers between a person’s public and private spaces (Atkinson and Blandy 2009; Collins 2009; Collins and Schantz 2009). In expressing ‘home’ people express ‘my space’ or ‘our space,’ which is necessarily differentiated from public spaces. Furthermore, home is an expected element of peoples’ day-to-day life. It exists as the ‘spatial and social unit of interaction between the individual and society’ (Peil 2009, 180). To have a home is utterly normalized in society, to the
extent that someone’s identity is almost synonymous with where someone is from. A person’s home is treated as an analogy for their identity, on a variety of scales. That is, a person’s home country is important to their identity according to themselves (in the case of national pride, for example) and to others. Likewise, the location and nature of a person’s home (in the sense of their accommodation) can be used as a proxy of a range of social and personal identifiers such as ethnicity, education level, criminal record, or income (Blunt and Varley 2004; Leggatt-Cook and Chamberlain 2015; Peil 2009; Varley 2015).

Home is both spatial and temporal. It is located in space, and exists at a variety of scales (Allen 2015; Blunt and Varley 2004; Kaika 2004). Though it is normally static (as in a building on a street), it is also mobile, in the sense that it is constructed differently by different occupants and over time. Either way, the concept of home occurs in complex, fluid, and contested processes (Peil 2009). Over time these processes can change; home is temporal and altered by the passage of time. A short-term home is different to a long-term home, and the complex interaction between space and time produces varying experiences of home for different people. For example, for those who experience home as relatively insecure or ‘hard to come by,’ home is not just a ‘thing’ or a singular experience – it is a process, where homes are built (both literally and figuratively) ‘bit by bit over the years’ (Varley 2015, 282).

This leads to a final point about home – it is fleeting and can be hard to grasp, yet remains a goal for people. People aspire to experience stability and ‘rootedness’ in one place, and home is often valued most by those who have the least secure grasp of it (Varley 2015). This is a point that will be touched on throughout this thesis – peoples’ desire for home, whatever that might look like. Home is contested and is made political through articulations of power and exclusion, and in processes such as postcolonialism, capitalism, racism, and gender relations (Blunt 2005). The politics of home explore the significance and interrelationships of ‘domesticity, intimacy and privacy’ that exist within and without the home (Blunt and Varley 2004, 4). Identity is struggled for in the context of home, and in the context of lacking a sense of home. Varley (2015)
describes young Mexican couples struggling to form their own independent identity in cohabitation with in-laws – the struggle for identity is carried out in the home, especially when people strive to change what home looks like to them. Without a home, or a place in which identity is rooted in space, processes of identity creation are made more difficult, and a person’s relations with society become more cramped and constrained (Allen 2015; Varley 2015). As the central location for almost all aspects of a person’s everyday life, the problem of homelessness explored in this thesis questions the sort of life that is experienced without the location of home.

4.3 Definitions of homelessness

As described above, homes are the basic organising unit of society, and are the way through which individuals and families interact with society. Indeed, the most common way to refer to people as a unit is ‘household.’ This means that the problem of homelessness is not just an experience for individuals, but a significant obstacle for the organisation of society. Defining and measuring homelessness, then, is no easy task, and geographies of homelessness have examined diverse aspects of the incidence, distribution, and experience of homelessness over many decades (May 2009). Many people need definitions of homelessness, including governments, service providers, and academic researchers. These groups use definitions in different contexts and for different purposes. The variety of definitions of homelessness fundamentally affect the way that people understand the scope of the problem, and how they might begin a process of dealing with or mitigating homelessness, or even talking about and describing it. This section examines various ways of defining or measuring homelessness, suggesting how homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand includes a variety of experiences – not just rough sleeping.
Figure 2: Two models for defining living situations

Source: Amore, Baker and Howden-Chapman (2011); (Edgar and Meert 2005)
Homelessness might be considered to exist on a spectrum or continuum that describes a person’s ‘extent of housedness’ with the homeless at one end, and the fully housed at the other. Somewhere along that continuum is a boundary where homelessness begins, but there is significant debate amongst and between academics, government, practitioners, and the public about where that boundary lies. Categories or tools used for defining (and subsequently measuring) homelessness include those who ‘sleep rough’ or are the ‘street homeless’ (May 2009; Peressini, McDonald and Hulchanski 1996), those who do not have permanent or semi-permanent accommodation or rely regularly on housing services (Couzens 1997), or those who reside in housing of insufficient size, quality or state of repair (Daly 1994; Springer 2000).

The most widely used approach to defining homelessness is the two-step approach of the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA). This approach uses a model to categorise housing situations, and then uses a typology to categorise types of homelessness. Figure 2 shows two versions of the ‘ETHOS’ model of homelessness developed by FEANTSA. The upper version is the model as described by FEANTSA themselves, and the lower version reflects a revision made in Aotearoa New Zealand, which will be discussed below. The model is used around the world by governments and organisations to categorise homelessness in a systematic way (Edgar and Meert 2005; Edgar, Meert and Doherty 2004). The model is based on three broad areas where exclusion occurs: the physical, legal, social domains. Physical exclusion means that people do not have sufficient physical shelter, for example, and the aspects of ‘home’ that go along with that – such as storage of belongings, heating, access to cooking facilities. Legal exclusion is simply defined as having security of tenure that is ‘legal.’ This means that homeowners and renters are ‘legally included,’ while squatters, people in temporary accommodation, or rough sleepers are ‘legally excluded.’ Finally, social exclusion – perhaps the hardest to define – is the social and personal consequences of lacking a home. This includes having a lack of privacy, being unable to easily have guests, or relying on public spaces for basic necessities such as sanitation.
According to the FEANTSA use of this model, homelessness occurs when people are excluded from both the social and legal domains (shaded dark grey in Figure 2). This means that insufficient quality of housing alone is not enough for a person to experience homelessness if they either have legal security, or their housing meets their needs in the social domain. For those who experience exclusion in other ways, the ETHOS model refers to them as ‘housing excluded’ (shaded light grey). When people experience no exclusion from the physical, legal, or social domains, they are ‘adequately housed’ (the white space around the grey circles) (Edgar and Meert 2005; Edgar et al. 2004).

While the ETHOS model remains a dominant approach to defining homelessness, Amore et al. (2011) offers a critique of the way that the model is used, and how it frames homelessness. According to their approach, the lower version of Figure 2 offers a better way to conceptualise homelessness. The second version uses the same three domains of exclusion, but suggests that homelessness occurs whenever two or more exclusions intersect. This differs from the first version in one regard: households excluded from both physical and social domains. For example, imagine a ‘legally tenured home without basic sanitary facilities whereby residents are unable to maintain privacy because they have to go outside of their dwelling or property and into public space to use a bathroom’ (Amore et al. 2011, 26). Excluding this category from the definition of ‘homeless’ seems unjustified and arbitrary, so it should be included.

The second part of FEANTSA’s approach to categorising and describing homelessness is to use their typology of homelessness, which identifies thirteen different categories of homelessness in Table 5, below (Busch-Geertsema 2010). The thirteen categories offer a slightly different approach by using categories that range from ‘roofless’ to ‘inadequate,’ rather than using the term ‘homeless.’ As Table 5 shows, the typology is far more detailed, and can be used to group together different ‘types’ of homelessness in a way that would be able to be counted or directly addressed.
Statistics New Zealand uses the ETHOS conceptual model and typology as a basis for its definition of homelessness, with a number of modifications to suit the specific context of Aotearoa New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand 2009; 2014). There are a number of key aspects of this definition that differ from other international definitions of homelessness which are important. For example, the Statistics New Zealand definition does not consider people in crowded housing to be homeless – despite other definitions or approaches considering social privacy to be an important part of housing (Statistics New Zealand 2014, 6).

Table 5: Typology of housing exclusion (Busch-Geertsema 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual category</th>
<th>Operational category</th>
<th>Living situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ROOFLESS</td>
<td>1 People living rough</td>
<td>1.1 Public space or external space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 People staying in a night shelter</td>
<td>2.1 Night shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSELESS</td>
<td>3 People in accommodation for the homeless</td>
<td>3.1 Homeless hostel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 People in a women’s shelter</td>
<td>4.1 Women’s shelter accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 People in accommodation for immigrants</td>
<td>5.1 Temporary accommodation, reception centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 People due to be released from institutions</td>
<td>6.1 Penal institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness)</td>
<td>7.1 Residential care for older homeless people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 People living in insecure accommodation</td>
<td>8.1 Temporarily with family/friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 People living under threat of eviction</td>
<td>9.1 Legal orders enforced (rented)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 People living under threat of violence</td>
<td>10.1 Police recorded incidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSECURE</td>
<td>11 People living in temporary/non-conventional structures</td>
<td>11.1 Mobile homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 People living in unfit housing</td>
<td>12.1 Occupied dwelling unfit for habitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 People living in extreme overcrowding</td>
<td>13.1 Highest national norm of overcrowding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Furthermore, people who are ‘between’ accommodation are considered homeless, but only when the different forms of accommodation fit into the definition of homelessness. The exception to this is, for example, a person sleeping on a friend’s couch or in a car while looking for a flat to sign, who is in this case not considered homeless even though they are clearly ‘between’ places (Statistics New Zealand 2014, 7). However, Amore et al. (2011) argue that definitions need to be consistent in a temporal sense. That is, if a person is deemed ‘homeless’ at the time of measurement or statistical collection, then they should be counted as homeless – even if they are ‘between places.’ An analogy can be made to employment statistics, where someone who is employed, but is about to leave their job, is considered employed. Likewise, someone who is unemployed at the time of measurement, must be counted as unemployed – even if they are only one day from becoming employed again (Amore et al. 2011).

The difficulty of defining homelessness is not inconsequential, as it determines the development and delivery of policy aiming to reduce the incidence and severity of homelessness (Amore et al. 2011; Baker and Evans 2016; Laurenson and Collins 2007). Choosing a definition of homelessness is a political choice, because it shapes the way that policy is developed, measured, and monitored. Furthermore, the perceived prevalence of homelessness shapes whether or not a government chooses to make homelessness a priority on their policy agenda (Amore et al. 2011). For exampled, if only those who ‘sleep rough’ are considered to be homeless, then counting and addressing the homeless population is difficult, but not impossible (James 1992; May 2009). On the other hand, if homelessness includes a broader definition of deprivation of housing, then addressing homelessness is a much more difficult task, and is associated with all sorts of structural consequences of economic trends, such as housing unaffordability, job loss, and dwindling social welfare support (Amore et al. 2011; Amore et al. 2013). This more comprehensive definition of homelessness might use the phrase ‘severe deprivation of housing’ to reflect the fact that the concept of home is the experience of ‘having a home’ is associated with the quality and acceptability of that home. As well as encompassing rough sleepers and those without four walls and a roof (such as those sleeping in cars),
the definition given by Amore et al. (2013) suggests that overcrowding and temporary accommodation is also evidence of ‘severe deprivation of housing.’ Though this is not necessarily equal in terms of experience (that is, a rough sleeper might experience ‘more’ homelessness), it does suggest an approach that is more about meeting society’s expectations and standards for housing, rather than counting those who are the ‘worst off.’

The definition used by (Amore et al. 2013) holds similarities to the approach taken in Australia, which uses a three-tier hierarchical definition of homelessness ranging from ‘living without conventional shelter’ to accommodation ‘without the security of a lease’ (Anderson 2016; Baldry et al. 2006, 23; Chamberlain 2012). An important point in the Australian definition of homelessness that is relevant to how Aotearoa New Zealand considers homelessness is the cultural expectation and normalcy attached to housing. Homelessness exists where peoples’ accommodation standards are below what is considered appropriate to the wider community (Chamberlain 2005). In examining homelessness, consideration must be given to what is, and what is not, appropriate standards of housing. This of course makes a consistent operational definition difficult – if not impossible, but also suggests the importance of locating homelessness within a community. Homelessness is situated and contextualized by where it occurs. Both the causes and potential solution to homelessness is utterly dependent on the culture and society that surrounds the experience of homelessness. Homelessness does not exist in isolation, and however it is defined or categorized, homelessness sits at one extreme end of a spectrum of housing on which all people – no matter how housing secure – can be found.

This perhaps echoes the argument given by Pacione (2009), that homelessness is the most extreme form of social exclusion; it is not just caused by a lack of housing affordability, but also through isolation and separation from traditional sources of social support as a result of a wide range of structural factors. For the purposes of this thesis and research, however, focus is on how homelessness relates to conceptions of precarity and vulnerability. This means that the operational definition of homelessness is less important than the ‘being without
a home’ – whatever that might mean. The variety of definitions described in part above serve to provide opportunities for debate and discussion about what is and is not homelessness, and indicate that there are various forms of homelessness. However, these definitions do not necessarily allow for the examination of peoples’ experiences, to which the rest of this chapter now turns.

4.4 Experiencing homelessness; being homeless

A tension exists in geographies of homelessness, both conceptually and in practice, between homelessness as a condition and homelessness as a practiced and performed identity. Though these two ideas or expressions of homelessness are not mutually exclusive (in the sense that someone might claim a homeless identity, while also experiencing homelessness with very little control), they present two distinct approaches to how people experience and relate to the idea of homelessness. On one hand, when people experience homelessness, there is a sense – at least in part – of a lack of control and self-determination. On the other hand, homelessness – like other forms of transience – can be a decision that reflects an advantageous adoption of flexibility and mobility (although this is in part due to a framing technique by policy makers, as discussed below) (Noy 2009). Survival strategies adopted by those who are homeless include the claiming and performing of identity, including the identity of ‘a homeless person’ and some studies examine what this performance of identity looks like (Boydell, Goering and Morrell-Bellai 2000; Groot and Hodgetts 2015; Hodgetts et al. 2008; Hodgetts et al. 2012; Hodgetts et al. 2010; Osborne 2002; Zufferey and Kerr 2004). This latter approach focuses on homelessness as an experienced identity. The distinction between these approaches is important. Though understanding homelessness as a condition leads to the creation of policy that can address homelessness, some criticize this approach as reproducing normative assumptions of what constitutes a home in the formal sense of accommodation on a spectrum from ‘housed’ to ‘unhoused’ (May 2009). An alternative approach is to focus on the experience of homelessness – the construction of identity, the reproduction and performance of specific identities in place, and the multiple experiences of homelessness that are unique and contested.
Part of this tension owes its origin to the history of how homelessness has been framed in academic geography, and the way in which different agencies and organisations frame homelessness in policy making (discussed below in section 4.6). In early geographies of homelessness, it was associated with individuals’ pathologies and vulnerabilities (such as alcoholism, mental illness, or health problems). This association firmly established homelessness as a condition. This was reflected in policy that emphasized care facilities like men’s shelters, as well as punishments for crime associated with homelessness, and leaving management of homelessness to the voluntary sector (May 2009; May 2000). Later, homelessness was understood to be caused, or at least exacerbated, by deinstitutionalization, and the withdrawal of care for ‘at-risk’ people who then ‘fall’ into homelessness (May 2009). This still presented homelessness as something that ‘happens’ to people – a condition, rather than an identity.

However, more recent geographies of homelessness focus on the ‘new homeless’ who increasingly include young people, women, and families (May 2009). Homelessness is increasingly seen as a consequence of changes to state welfare regimes and the labour market in a structural sense – rather than individual circumstances and consequences. These structural factors include the ‘insufficient construction of affordable housing, gentrification, cutbacks in welfare budgets, stagnating and falling real incomes, and the rise of part-time and insecure employment [and] discriminatory practices...for some social groups’ (Pacione 2009, 199). In this more recent climate of the ‘structurally-induced homeless’, geographies of homelessness have been more interested in questions like how people create and maintain a sense of home (and what home means, as described above in section 4.2), and the importance and impact of gender relations (and other axes of difference) on the experience of homelessness. Framing homelessness like this is more understanding of the diversity of experiences of homelessness, and also recognizes that homelessness exists as a ‘rupture of order in the neoliberal city’ – undermining and opposing expected and enforced norms in the urban landscape (Langegger and Koester 2016, 1)
Throughout this thesis, I take an approach that more closely follows the second understanding of homelessness as an identity – rather than a condition. There is value, however, to understanding how homelessness has been constructed in the past, and how this shapes people’s perceptions and representations of homelessness. This is discussed in further detail in section 4.6, and later in Chapter Six. Another key point of tension in studying homelessness is centred on the way in which people (including, but not limited to homeless people) use public space. The next section examines this topic of literature, and suggests how understandings of public space might shape the experiences of homelessness.

4.5 Public spaces, private lives?

As mentioned above, there is significant tension in how people understand, occupy, and use public space. A key tension in this aspect of geography can be understood when examining how peoples’ private lives are experienced and performed in public spaces (Goheen 1998; Iveson 1998; Ruddick 1996). This section introduces some literature that pulls at this question, and in particular considers how public spaces embody vastly different meanings for homeless people, compared to most members of the public with whom they share the space. This section examines a number of themes present in literature including the democratization of space (Harvey 2006; Mitchell 2003), law and order (Mitchell 2003), public space as an urban landscape (Collins and Schantz 2009), locating the study of public space on the street (Fyfe 1998), and considering those who are ‘in place’ and ‘out of place’ (Cresswell 2009b).

Public space is hard to define, and covers a huge range of spaces and places to which the public have varying degrees of access, and varying degrees of rights. It is, by its very nature up for contestation (Goheen 1998). Public spaces include diverse examples like ‘the street, the park, the media, the Internet, the shopping mall, the United Nations, national governments, and local neighbourhoods’ (Smith and Low 2006, 3). Some of these spaces are more or less accessible to the public, and have more or less restrictions on the types of activities that can be carried out. Literature relating to public spaces examines how spatial, social,
and political processes affect and shape the various relations that occur in distinct places and landscapes. The varied definitions of public space in literature (which have not been covered in depth here) reflect and hint at the fact that people experience public space in a diversity of ways (Iveson 1998; Laurenson and Collins 2006).

A second key theme in literature is that of peoples’ rights to, and in, public spaces. There is a common notion of public space as democratic and equally accessible, but literature reminds that this is absolutely not the case (Amster 2004; Mitchell 2003). In fact, due to the fact that public space is not private (and governed by laws of ownership), it is far more likely to be under the influence of dominant social groups whose hegemonic interpretation of acceptable appearance and behaviour shape peoples’ experience of public spaces (Laurenson and Collins 2006). Thus, the study of peoples’ rights in public spaces always involves looking at how these rights are ‘policed, legitimized, or undermined’ (Mitchell 2003, 4). This is emphasized in literature which argues that public space is governed by the language of politics, and like the definition of public space itself, is always contentious and controversial (Davis 1990; Goheen 1998; Habermas 1989; Vernon 1993).

The extent, and the types of rights, that people are entitled to in public spaces are considerably varied. Particularly in North American cities, significant tension exists between peoples’ right to use and enjoy public spaces, and peoples’ right to (perceived) safety in the post-9/11 urban landscape (Mitchell 2003; Smith and Low 2006). Likewise, other cities wrestle with the tension between the democratic nature of space (being available and accessible to everyone), and the ability of some groups to use spaces in ways that challenge and undermine authority in the form of protest and activism (Mitchell 2003). For many groups that use public spaces, their use involves the willingness of those in power (such and political or financial elite) to allow others to exert control over space: ‘the right to inhabit, to appropriate, and to control’ (Mitchell 2003, 9).

Relatively then, and more strongly connected to homelessness, control of space is a third key theme explored in literature, and can be understood as the
appropriateness of using discourses of ‘law and order’ to exert control of public space (Mitchell 2003). This is done so through examining the role of the law to control access to, and activity in public space, and the tension in the city between justice and rights (Langegger and Koester 2016; Mitchell 2003). Examples of this kind of approach to public spaces can be seen in the ‘quality of life’ laws used in San Francisco to control and regulate street behaviour – specifically targeting undesirable homelessness, and the use of licenses and spatial restrictions on begging in other North American cities (Mitchell 2003). A sub-set of this approach is referred to in literature as ‘revanchism’ - the idea that (mostly) right wing urban rulers take revenge on people who use the city in the ‘wrong’ ways, through draconian regulation and enforcement (Smith 1996; Smith 1997).

Another tension captured and debated in literature is whether the city can be considered a ‘landscape’ or ‘public space.’ In many ways, the control of space is an exercise in urban aesthetics, whereby beggars and rough sleepers are deemed to be akin to discarded rubbish and ‘unsightly’ features of the urban landscape (Gerrard and Farrugia 2015; Mitchell 2003). The narrative of the city as a landscape is powerful, and is emphasized through both the privatization of space (with increased policing and control), and the development of grand urban features (such as Canary Wharf in London, or Britomart and Queen Street in Auckland) (Langegger and Koester 2016; Mitchell 2003). The right to the city becomes a right to move easily through an urban landscape, unhindered by distracting and disturbing features such as litter and evidence of homelessness, rather than a right to use public spaces freely. This is also seen in narratives of cleanliness and hygiene in the city (Langegger and Koester 2016) and poverty management (Takashi 1998).

Public spaces in the city, as mentioned above, include parks and squares, but literature suggests that the key location and most important variety of public space are the streets of the city. Streets are where peoples’ movements intersect with the activities that occur in a city, and the location of peoples’ alternative uses of space (Fyfe 1998). The streets are where Jane Jacobs (1961; see also 1995; 1996) sees the community of a city begin, and where vitality and activity create a dynamic, interesting, and self-regulating city. The streets, therefore, are
of course the battleground for control of the city. For homeless people, the streets are the easiest public places to access, and thus serve multiple purposes (Daly 1998). They are the location of social networks, and the system of exchange of both information and goods. The streets, particularly the footpaths, are the means of commuting – but for homeless people this is often on a different scale to the other users of the street. That is, while the city can be expansive for most people (ranging from suburban to urban), for many homeless people, the city is a much smaller place (Daly 1998). The streets are also the location of the visible and invisible boundaries that separate public space from spaces that homeless people are less welcome, such as shops, cafes, and businesses (Daly 1998). These are ‘quasi-public’ spaces that present distinct challenges for regulating access - as owners of stores, for example, look to keep homeless people away from their entrance-ways (Doherty et al. 2008).

Finally, public spaces are the parts of a city where some people are ‘in place’ and others are ‘out of place’ (Cresswell 2009b). This is the spatial location of processes of ‘othering’ (Langegger and Koester 2016), which can make invisible homelessness very visible, by pointing out the people who violate the expected norms of public space. It is observed in literature that homeless people use space very differently to other members of the public that move through and use space: ‘whether it is that they navigate the streets with an uncanny slowness...collect rubbish from bins...sleep while others are awake...are seen sitting on floors and sleeping on benches,’ homeless people appear to self-identify as ‘other’ when in public (Ferguson 2011, 43). The different use of spaces pulls at the tension between public spaces and private lives. For a homeless person, the public spaces (streets and parks and malls) are the locations of their private lives, and are comparable to somebody else’s private home and private space. As a result, the private lives of the homeless are mediated and monitored by their desire to remain invisible and to avoid a self-imposed ‘othering’ through using public space in non-conforming and disruptive ways. (Ferguson 2011). Ferguson (2011) gives the example of an observed behaviour of a homeless man, who stands beside a rubbish bin to retrieve
discarded food, but waits for the pedestrian crossing signal so his action is made less visible to passersby.

This section has examined a variety of themes in literature that discuss the nature of public space in the city, and has suggested how homelessness – along with many other issues and aspects – might be understood. The next section asks how policies to address, mitigate, or eliminate homelessness have been developed, and how this might inform a discussion of representations of homelessness in Chapter Six.

4.6 Making policy for the homeless

As described above, how homelessness is understood fundamentally affects how governments and non-governmental organisations address the ‘problem’ of homelessness in the city. There is an ongoing debate in both literature and policy regarding the nature and causes of homelessness. Early conceptions of homelessness were ideologically individualist, and suggested that personal failings such as addictions or crime lead to homelessness. Although more recent interpretations might argue that homelessness is more a product of socio-economic factors, structures, and market forces, homelessness is still often regarded to be an issue of personal pathology (Cronley 2010; Leggatt-Cook and Chamberlain 2015; May 2009; May 2000).

As noted in section 4.5, recent developments in the regulation of cities and urban public spaces have seen policy turn against homelessness – prohibiting or controlling begging, sitting and sleeping in public, or washing windows (Laurenson and Collins 2006). This type of urban policy targets certain ‘undesirable’ behaviours, but in reality is designed to instead target certain undesirable groups, and arises from neoliberal approaches to managing both space and people so cities can ‘compete’ with one another (Heynen 2010; Mitchell and Heynen 2009; Smith 1998; 1997). Though presented, and often understood, as keeping public order and safety, these policies are often accompanied by anti-homeless discourse (Laurenson and Collins 2007; 2006).
Along with outlawing, controlling, or otherwise regulating certain behaviours, urban authorities also seek to relocate homelessness to the peripheries, in order to maintain a more pristine and appealing central business district. In contrast to this approach, more recent literature suggests a less punitive, more supportive approach to managing public spaces and addressing homelessness. This is fundamentally supported by the idea that – as described in section 4.4 – homeless people have a right to be in public spaces (Laurenson and Collins 2006).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the regulation of homelessness in the public sphere has fallen to local government, and the interest in meeting their needs has increasingly been met exclusively by the voluntary sector and non-governmental organisations, normally with a religious background (Laurenson and Collins 2006). Despite this, there is an assumption in Aotearoa New Zealand that homelessness is not a big problem, and is sufficiently dealt with through a ‘generous and universally accessible’ welfare support system (Laurenson and Collins 2006, 189). There is much debate about the role of local government in providing social support and housing for the homeless, but in general, local government in Aotearoa New Zealand is reluctant to become involved in what is considered to be the role of the voluntary sector or central government (albeit in an increasingly diminished sense, as described in section 3 of Chapter One) (Laurenson and Collins 2006).

In terms of responding to homelessness itself, and developing policy to address it, there is tension (both in literature, and in practice) over whether homelessness is a housing issue, or more of a social problem of exclusion and marginalisation (Leggatt-Cook and Chamberlain 2015). This fundamentally shapes the direction that policy takes, revealing an underlying political element in policy. Though aiming to be objective and ‘scientific,’ policy decisions and approaches are ultimately subjective and coloured by various interpretations of phenomena and experiences (Leggatt-Cook and Chamberlain 2015; Wedel et al. 2005). The political aspect of homelessness includes the way people become homeless (as mentioned above), the theoretical and working definitions of homelessness (as discussed in section 4.2), and the ideological responsibility of
the state to support those experiencing acute and chronic homelessness (Leggatt-Cook and Chamberlain 2015). This thesis does not specifically address the political implications of homelessness policy, but it is an area of research where there are significant opportunities to further analyse how homelessness policy is constructed and evaluated.

Finally, there is a growing field of research that specifically addresses the best and most effective way to mitigate – or even eliminate – chronic homelessness. A key idea in this area is the gradual, but fundamental, shift in the homeless sector from a ‘treatment first’ or ‘continuum’ model to a ‘housing first’ model (Tsemberis 2010; Tsemberis, Gulcur and Nakae 2004). Moving away from approaches that ‘often emphasise client passivity, sobriety, and moralized deservingness,’ a housing first model of addressing homelessness focuses on ‘placing clients directly into permanent housing and providing them access to comprehensive, client-directed support services’ (Baker and Evans 2016, 3). While some key informants brought this model up in interviews, such as Steve, Julie, Olivia, and Richard, there is relatively little research that has discussed this approach in the Aotearoa New Zealand context.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has considered approaches to home and homelessness in literature. This contributes to the construction of a framework of multiple precarities of homelessness, which is done in detail below in Chapter Five. Literature has considered homelessness in various ways, but this chapter has focussed on definitions that can be used to identify and describe features of homelessness, such as exclusion from social and physical domains. These definitions are widely used around the world, and form an integral part of any discussion about policy that might be used to address homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This chapter has also briefly examined some of the ways that homelessness is conceived and represented. This is an important part of the construction of a framework of multiple precarities of homelessness, as it builds the context from
which homelessness is understood and presented. It is also revisited in Chapter Six, which discusses representations of homelessness in media. These representations reveal how media, politicians, and the general public understand what homelessness is, and the extent to which a framework of multiple precarities might be useful to conceptualise homelessness. This provides insight into how policy might be developed that addresses the needs of homelessness, and also gains approval from the public.

The next chapter introduces the framework of multiple precarities of homelessness, as an extension of a generic framework that Chapter Three discussed. This chapter provides a comprehensive description of how the framework can be used to identify various aspects of homelessness, including various pathways into and out of homelessness, and multiple precarities that intersect and interact. Chapter Five provides an analysis of how the previous two chapters can be brought together with data from field work, It also shows how homelessness provides a concrete example in which precarity is contextualised, and where the concept of multiple precarities is tested and investigated.
Chapter Five:
A framework of multiple precarities of homelessness

5.1 Introduction to the framework of multiple precarities of homelessness

This chapter explores the conceptual framework of multiple precarities that was developed through Chapter Three (and presented in Figure 1), and applies this framework to the context of Aotearoa New Zealand that was studied through field research. In particular, this chapter is structured around Figure 3, depicting features of a framework of multiple precarities of homelessness. The diagram represents a synthesis of literature from Chapters Three and Four, and data from key informants and field observations.

As argued in Chapter Three, precarity has been conceptualized in various ways in literature, but it is through a framework of multiple precarities (such as Figure 1, on page 44; and Figure 3 below) that precarity becomes a concept that can be applied to people in a holistic and intersecting way. Likewise, various definitions of homelessness have been presented in Chapter Four. Most key informants agreed that the definition used by Stats New Zealand (and described in Figure 2 on page 49) is an appropriate way to describe and categorise levels of homelessness – although many tended to believe that homelessness should be considered in the widest possible sense. Theoretical approaches of intersectionality suggest that peoples’ experiences of exclusion, marginalisation, or precarity cannot be considered either separately or as overlapping (Brown 2012; Valentine 2007). Instead, the experiences and identities that arise from intersecting axes of precarity are unique and shaped by an individual’s specific situation. However, the framework of multiple precarities presented here suggests some of the common elements that might be seen in many peoples’ experiences of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand, and can be a useful
conceptual tool for both understanding homelessness, and developing policy to address and mitigate the multiple precarities of homelessness.

This chapter is divided into six sections that explain Figure 3. The next two sections explain the very centre of the diagram, and considers the many pathways into and out of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand, as well as some of the specific forms of precarity that make these pathways more precarious. Section 5.4 examines the gradated grey circle, representing some of the key multiple precarities of homelessness that have been identified. These precarities are not static experiences or identities, and people often exist on a continuum of precariousness in regards to these aspects - represented by the arrows and the gradation of this circle. The multiple precarities of homelessness are intersected by a range of other precarities that are less unique to homelessness, and can connect this thesis to wider discussions of vulnerability and insecurity. These intersecting precarities are considered in section 5.5 of the chapter, which focuses on the way that intersections between precarities can increase a person’s sense of precariousness in homelessness. Finally, section 5.6 discusses a number of other precarities that have been identified in literature and field research. These other precarities may not be the ‘most precarious’ aspects of a person’s experience of homelessness, but are nevertheless a key defining feature of precarious homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand.
Figure 3: A framework of Multiple Precarities of Homelessness
5.2 Precarious pathways

Understanding homelessness as a continuum

At the centre of the framework of multiple precarities of homelessness are the pathways into and out of homelessness. These pathways are the various reasons that people become homeless, particularly financial difficulty, mental health problems, and relationship breakdowns. It is also important to consider the nature of pathways out of homelessness, either through the reversal of the factors discussed here, or through the provision of effective support services that can establish security and resilience. This section considers these pathways into and out of homelessness, and also discusses the factors that might contribute to increasing peoples’ perceived and experienced precarities somewhere along these pathways.

Figure 3 depicts these pathways as two spiralling arrows – suggesting that people move along a continuum, rather than being either ‘homeless’ or not. The experience of homelessness is shaped by movement along this continuum, and also by range of other precarities of homelessness that can be experienced simultaneously.

Section 4.3 considered the various definitions of homelessness and suggested that homelessness is best conceptualized as a definition that can be categorized using a variety of operational definitions. The key part of using a continuum to understand homelessness is to recognise that First people are not either ‘in’ or ‘out’ of homelessness, but might experience varying degrees of uncertainty and insecurity relating to homelessness (May 2009; Peressini et al. 1996). This understanding can be seen in Statistics New Zealand’s definition of homelessness, which most key informants considered to be an adequate and useful definition (Statistics New Zealand 2009; 2014). The second reason that understanding homelessness as a continuum is useful is that it recognises the way that people themselves move between ‘versions’ or ‘varieties’ of homelessness. A person’s experience of homelessness is not static or stable, but is always in flux – especially when various intersecting precarities are considered. Furthermore, a conceptual approach to homelessness that uses a
continuum as its basis is more likely to enable an understanding that policy and support services can be developed that make a person’s experience of homelessness more or less precarious. If this is the case, then a continuum (or ‘pathways’) understanding of the experience of homelessness can result in much better outcomes for homelessness policy. A key informant at Auckland Council explained how this is the case:

A lot of initiatives which would previously been seen as enabling homelessness are now being understood as enabling dignity and wellbeing, and if you try and move people along a continuum, actually by allowing people to have a shower [for example], it's not making more people be homeless or [sleep rough]. It's just providing them with a crucial service that's important for their wellbeing (Interview with Julie, 2016).

This suggests a discursive shift in the understanding in the causes of homelessness, and is discussed in more detail in Chapter Six. The following sections examine three key pathways into homelessness: a lack of income, mental health problems or addictions, and breakdown of relationships.

Pathways: (lack of) income

Perhaps the biggest pathway into homelessness is the financial insecurity and increased precarity that comes from a lack of sufficient income or unaffordable housing (or a combination of both). As one key informant, a manager at a social service provider, explained:

...you’d struggle to find an example of someone who’s financially comfortable and functionally homeless ... just about anywhere. We know that’s a common [cause of homelessness] (Interview with Steve, 2016).

Financial precarity is a fundamental cause of homelessness predominantly due to the high cost of housing in Aotearoa New Zealand (Carroll, Witten and Kearns 2011; Cox and Pavletich 2009). When people do not have enough money from their jobs or through benefit support, their ability to meet the cost of living is compromised, and housing makes up a large part of their income. For example, one way of measuring affordability of housing is the ‘median multiple,’ which
measures the ratio of median income to median house price (for purchasers). In December 2016, the median multiple for all of Aotearoa New Zealand was 5.97 (that is, a house cost nearly six times the median income). The median multiple for Auckland was 9.33, suggesting a significantly more distorted ratio between housing and incomes (interest.co.nz 2017). Over a long-term period, the inability to pay bills or make rent payments or mortgage repayments can cause housing security to decrease, and for people to begin experiencing homelessness. This problem is experienced throughout the country, but is especially acute in Auckland, as the largest and most unaffordable city in Aotearoa New Zealand, according to the statistics above.

An emergency housing provider, who provided housing support services to many households with at least one adult in paid employment, lamented the financial difficulty many people in Auckland found themselves in. She was particularly frustrated by the number of families she dealt with who were in full-time employment, arguing that people should be able to afford to live and meet their costs with a full-time job – but they just cannot:

*So people with a wife to support, and children to feed in Auckland aren’t coping on $1200 a week as their wage. They’re just not coping, no one could raise a wife and kids in $1200 a week. With the price of housing and fuel, and keeping your car on the road, where’s the quality of life? …When you’re struggling to actually feed your children and you can’t clothe your children, you’re going to end up in major debt if you go shopping. Basically on that sort of wage in Auckland, you can’t shop, because your rent is $560 a week. It’s pretty bad when your rent or your mortgage takes half your wage* (Interview with Tania, 2016).

This key informant identified both housing costs, and the general cost of living as reasons for a household’s financial security to be compromised. This precarious financial situation quickly becomes an issue of homelessness when the basic cost of housing cannot be met. Field observations from an event put on by a homeless support agency support this finding. A homeless speaker at the event talked about how he was unable to find work after retraining in a new
profession. With a lack of work over a long time period, he ended up sleeping on the streets, as he had no options left with friends or family, and nowhere to go (Field observations, 2016).

One key informant also drew links to the concept of precarisation of work as a reason for the erosion of wages and increased precarity of income. With increasing uncertainty at work – both in terms of income and actually having a job in the first place, a community advocate suggested that homelessness was a consequence of an increasingly flexible work force:

_We’ve had comparatively low incomes, the forcing down of wages and precarious work, and the ever-increasing precarity of work. We work with a mix of [people in] paid work and the welfare system, people go back and forth. So precarious work, low incomes, and then benefit levels being kept very low, for many people below what they can live on and eternally in debt. Income pressures on top of the housing costs and the lack of state housing have come together in a perfect storm, basically. It’s absolutely terrible for those affected_ (Interview with Jo, 2016).

Finally, alongside the financial problems that are associated with mismatched housing costs and wages, many key informants also highlighted the relative erosion of state support that was available in the form of welfare provision or state housing support through Housing New Zealand. When comparing levels of state welfare support in the past, a manager at a social service provider was not very positive about current prospects:

_...if you could do it and compare a typical low-income family from the late 1950s, and compared them to that family now, the present day version is going to be in a much tougher place to get out of, I don’t think there’s any doubt about it_ (Interview with Steve, 2016).

Likewise, a community advocate involved in supporting and campaigning for those experiencing homelessness argued that state housing is in a far worse state than in past decades (refer to Figure 4 below):
I mean there’s a whole range of causes but from our point of view, the biggest problem is the rundown of state housing stock over decades, not just under [the centre-right political party] National, but under [the centre left party] Labour as well...a very slow rate of building under Labour, followed by a much much slower rate of building and acquisition under National plus the sell-off of housing and gentrification...the supply of state housing’s just been run down at the same time as we’ve had prices of housing going up for a whole lot of reasons that we don’t need to go into (Interview with Jo, 2016).

Figure 4: State Houses built and sold 1938-2002.
Figure 4 reflects Jo’s comments that construction of state housing was faster during the years when Labour formed the government (shaded red on the figure), while the National governments (shaded blue) built far fewer new houses, but sold many more. More recent data was not available to show the last decade of construction.

This data from key informants and observations suggests that financial precarity (either through low paid work, or through inadequate welfare support) is the leading cause of peoples’ transition into homelessness, and the biggest barrier to housing security. The increasing precarity of work, including the forces driving flexible and casual working conditions and the effect of these changes on peoples’ working lives, are discussed in detail in Chapter Three. In particular, there are important comparisons that can be drawn between the influential work of Guy Standing (2012; 2011) and data collected regarding homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand. The increasing precarity of work, as explained in Chapter Three, encompasses less security at work, fewer opportunities to receive training and promotions, and decreased compensation and wages. Homelessness, in a significant sense, is a product of processes of precaritisation that affect peoples’ income and is experienced by those whom Guy Standing refers to as the precariat. Precarious work is not the only route to a lack of money, however, and is certainly not the only pathway into homelessness.

**Pathways: mental health problems**

Another significant factor relating to peoples’ pathway into homelessness is that of mental health issues and the effects of addictions. As discussed in Chapter Four, some literature explores the role of mental health and addictions for the homeless, emphasising how past perceptions of homelessness have considered the role of addictions and mental health in order to imply that homelessness is an individual ‘sickness’ or ‘condition,’ rather than an experienced form of structural inequality or social exclusion (Cronley 2010; Leggatt-Cook and Chamberlain 2015; May 2009; May 2000). Field research identified that mental health is a significant factor in homelessness – particularly from the perspective of service providers.
Almost all key informants identified mental health as a primary factor for people to become homeless, or as a barrier to solving and mitigating homelessness. While not all people experienced mental health problems as a cause of their homelessness, key informants certainly suggested that mental health is significant, and in most cases is the most likely reason for long-term homelessness – particularly at the more severe end of homelessness. Mental health, even when not considered very serious, can be a significant barrier for people to overcome, and can contribute to increased precariousness. One key informant, a local politician, explained how common mental health problems are:

*There aren’t many people in New Zealand who don’t have some experience of mental illness in their extended family. It only needs … some economic shock like losing a job, or having to give up your own home or a serious illness or something like that, combined with mental illness and people are highly vulnerable and can end up being homeless* (Interview with Michael, 2016).

Another key informant, an emergency housing provider (Tania, 2016), told a number of stories of much more severe mental health problems that she had witnessed during her time providing emergency housing. She explained that those with mental health problems were far more difficult to house in her premises due to their specific needs, her lack of resourcing, and the fact that other residents were nearby. Tania perceived a lack of institutional care available in Aotearoa New Zealand, and that many people appeared to ‘slip through the gaps’ and find themselves homeless and in need of care.

Other key informants discussed the fact that mental health problems made the experience of homelessness far more precarious and difficult to deal with, and often compounded the sense of vulnerability and insecurity. A service provider discussed how common mental health problems were for the young people they dealt with:

*Our students...tend to have some mental health, addiction, or major social dysfunction* (Interview with Steve, 2016).
Another key informant, an advocate for welfare and homeless services, agreed and discussed how the intersections of homelessness and mental health worked both ways. When people are homeless, their experiences of mental health problems are made more complex and more difficult to treat or cope with:

*Every issue you can think of is exacerbated... disability, mental health, physical health* (Interview with Jo, 2016).

The key informant data above suggests three things about homelessness and mental health. First, mental health problems (especially more extreme cases) are perceived as a major contributing factor to pathways into homelessness and barriers that prevent pathways out of homelessness. Second, clients with mental health problems or illnesses present a significant challenge to service providers. This is because they tend to have very high needs, there is an inherent risk of placing mental health patients in cohabitation with other clients, and the severely limited resources of service providers – especially emergency housing providers. Third, most key informants very clearly articulated the intersectional nature of mental health and homelessness. This can be understood by referring to the literature in section 3.7 that discusses the role of intersectionality in conceptualising a framework of multiple precarities. When considering the sense of precarity experienced by people who are both homeless and facing mental illness, an intersectional approach argues that precarity can be understood by looking at the intersections between various experiences or identities – rather than ‘adding’ homelessness plus mental illness (Valentine 2007; West and Fenstermaker 1995).

It is also important to recognise that precarity extends beyond the experiences that are most obvious to an outsider – or even to the person experiencing these precarities themselves. The framework of multiple precarities of homelessness given in Figure 3 can be used and reused beyond describing a single form of intersectional precarity. That is, someone experiencing homelessness and a particular mental illness might also be experiencing other forms of precarity that are far less obvious or acute than their lack of home and mental health – but their experience of homelessness can still be conceptualised in an holistic way.
using the framework of multiple precarities of homelessness. Using intersectionality as an approach to conceptualise multiple precarities must involve being aware that it is difficult to know when to ‘stop counting’ precarities. Intersectionality argues that the value of conceptualising vulnerability occurs when examining the many and varied ways that experiences overlap (Brown 2012).

Pathways: relationship breakdown
A third factor that key informants identified as being a leading cause of peoples’ pathways into homelessness is the breakdown of relationships – either within their own household (a break-up), or with friends and families over time. This was not a factor identified in literature, but is clearly visible in data as a leading reason why people become homeless in the first place, and a complicating factor in peoples’ ability to build resilience and become less precariously homeless. The data suggests four key ways that the breakdown (either sudden or gradual) can be understood as a precarity of homelessness.

First, when asked what the reasons for people being homeless are, almost all key informants gave the breakdown of relationships as a common cause, particularly between partners or spouses. This was perceived and explained as being due to a breakup being a major life shock that disrupted a person’s livelihood, coupled with the need to find alternative accommodation, often on very short notice. This was, in many cases, enough to start a process of increasing precariousness that culminated in a much more serious form of homelessness.

Second, and often overlapping with the first factor, key informants identified domestic violence, abuse, and generally ‘toxic’ relationships as another reason why people found themselves in homelessness. The issue of toxic relationships and abuse (whether it be verbal or physical) was a particularly important reason for one key informant who managed an emergency housing provider particularly targeted to young mothers. Her interest in this aspect of peoples’ homelessness was due, in part, to her own experience in what she called an unhealthy relationship in the past. She explains that one part of the work that she does
with clients is working on establishing more healthy patterns of relationships in order to avoid abuse being a future cause of precarity:

*We have some girls come through here who have had terrible boyfriends and keep having boyfriends, so we [work] with them how to identify the bros that are just there temporarily, and the ones who are keepers.* (Interview with Jo, 2016).

Another service provider agreed that this was a significant factor in causing people to become homeless:

*Often [the cause is] violence – domestic violence or abuse or a breakdown of relationship, even if it hasn’t gotten to violence.* (Interview with Steve, 2016).

While it is clearly not the case that all instances of abuse or domestic violence lead to homelessness, key informants find that it is a common cause in homelessness (Interviews with Steve, Jo, and Tania, 2016; Focus group with Tama and Michelle, 2016). Further, even if it does not lead to a person leaving a relationship and becoming homeless, abuse and violence are some of many precarities that intersect with homelessness. When people are experiencing the insecurity of housing vulnerability, issues like domestic violence become more likely. This illustrates that intersecting precarities often are self-reinforcing, and can exist in complex networks of interrelated and connected precarities.

The third aspect of relationship breakdown is when young people lose touch with their parents, and move out of home. Many key informants (Interviews with Julie and Olivia, 2016) highlighted that youth homelessness needs to be better targeted and recognised. During field work, a number of opportunities for observation of various events took place. One of these was a fundraising and awareness event for LifeWise, a service provider based in the Auckland CBD. At this event, a number of members of the local business community spoke, along with LifeWise workers, and the previously homeless. At this event, it was suggested that the fastest growing demographic of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand is young people, with half the rough sleepers in Auckland under the
age of 25 (Field observations, 2016). Some specific aspects of youth homelessness will be considered in greater detail in section 5.4 below. In regards to the breakdown of relationships as a leading cause of homelessness however, one key informant who managed a service provider explained that many young people they support had a breakdown of relationships with their parents:

*I mean a classic one is...17 you’ve done something you shouldn’t have, your parents are at the end of their rope, and you’re kicked out of home – that’s a really common one for us.* (Interview with Richard, 2016)

Like the issue of abuse or a marital or domestic breakup, being kicked out of home for young people is a significant shock event, and can destabilise a young person’s life to the point that their ability to find and maintain secure housing is compromised. Other key informants (Interviews with Steve and Michael, 2016) agreed that young people were among the most vulnerable sectors of society, and thus most easily affected by issues of precarious housing – culminating in homelessness.

Finally, the fourth aspect of the breakdown of relationships is the more long-term effects of people running out of accommodation options with friends and family. For whatever reason people need housing support – whether through financial precarity, a breakup, job loss or relocation, or any other reason not explained here – staying with friends and families is normally a person’s first option. Various key informants explained this, and also pointed out that for many people in Aotearoa New Zealand, the ability to stay with friends and family is a temporary (and often far from ideal) solution to the problem of housing insecurity. As discussed in Chapter Three, many definitions of homelessness include severe overcrowding, which often occurs when people stay with friends and family (Amore et al. 2011; Amore et al. 2013; Statistics New Zealand 2009; 2014). Aside from being an inadequate form of housing, staying with friends and family is often temporary. Key informants talked about the pressure this puts on people – both socially and on their ability to meet other needs – and often involves major disruption:
[People] end up moving to South Auckland [for example] where they live crammed in a relative’s Skyline garage, you know. So that creates enormous social stress ... terrible for their education and their health (Interview with Michael, 2016).

One of the first resorts ... is to seek out family and friends, and often they don’t live where you live ... It's one of the most disruptive things of being homeless, is actually simply uprooting and moving (Interview with Steve, 2016).

When you’ve got 15 people in three bedrooms, so they're at the point where some of the people get kicked out because they all go because they can’t cope. The stresses on whanau and families are extreme (Interview with Jo, 2016).

During field observations at the LifeWise event in Auckland, a speaker talked about their personal experience being homeless. Their primary perception of the precariousness of homelessness was the lack of options available with friends and family. There was no mention of mental health problems, but rather a sense of nowhere else to go and a lack of alternative options to rough sleeping (Field observations, 2016).

These four aspects of social and relationship breakdown reveal another side of the multiple ways that people find themselves homeless. While mental health problems and financial precarity were certainly the biggest factors that key informants suggested led to homelessness, the breakdown of social relationships is also a significant part of conceptualising the multiple precarities of homelessness. All these factors – whether or not they are the primary cause of homelessness for a particular person – can be a massive part of their experience of homelessness and can contribute to multiple precarities. The intersectional nature of the framework of multiple precarities suggests that a person’s experience of homelessness is not just informed by the reason they became homeless, but by the multiple precarities that intersect and interact together (Valentine 2007).
The three sections above have examined ‘precarious pathways’ into homelessness that have been identified in the data. These pathways are identified as the main reasons that people become homeless: financial precarity, mental health problems, and the breakdown of relationships. In Figure 3, these three pathways form the central spiral labelled 'Precarious Pathways.' They are factors that increase a person's sense of precariousness and increase a person's degree of homelessness. The next section briefly examines some factors that key informants have identified as reducing a person’s experience of precarity, and could be understood as pathways out of homelessness.

5.3 Pathways out of homelessness: increasing income

The double ended arrows in Figure 3 show that people shift into homelessness, but also shift out of it. This section explains what these arrows represent, particularly the way that people can shift out of homelessness – either temporarily or permanently. This section does not, however, go into detail about the various services that are provided for mitigating and reducing homelessness by the homeless sector. Though these services and programs – which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six – are of course part of a person’s movement away from homelessness, this section touches on factors that contrast those covered in section 5.2 above.

As people increase their income, their precarity - as it relates to housing – is decreased. The reason for this is clear: an increased income makes the cost of housing (normally rent) more affordable to people experiencing precarity of housing. An increase in a person’s income might come about in many ways. The simplest way, of course, is paid employment. Higher wages, greater job security, and increased employability would drastically reduce the incidence of homelessness caused by financial precarity:

*In terms of precarious living ... alongside this highly deregulated labour market, where there's a great degree of insecurity and contracting is the norm, people [are] living with enormous levels of insecurity and precariousness* (Interview with Richard, 2016).
Aotearoa New Zealand has had comparatively low incomes, forcing down wages and precarious work, and the ever-increasing precarity of work (Interview with Jo, 2016).

A person's income can also be increased through increased welfare support for those either on low wages or who are unemployed. Again, key informants pointed out that decreased welfare support has, over time, made people more financially precarious, and therefore more susceptible to housing precarity. Increased welfare levels (or rather, restoration of previous welfare levels) would, according to key informant data, decrease Aotearoa New Zealand's level of housing precarity:

[Compared to the middle of the 20th Century,] I think the needs now for people who are in need of government assistance are greater, and their opportunity to then get into a [supported] situation is diminished and harder (Interview with Steve, 2016).

On the welfare side again, the benefit cuts at the beginning of the 90s under the National [led government] were never restored under Labour. So both governments are equally culpable of eroding welfare (Focus group with Tama, 2016).

These key informants argue that households receiving welfare support are not able to afford to live, and are in a worse financial and social position than similar households in Aotearoa New Zealand's past. Likewise, as discussed above, the loss of housing stock by the state housing provider, Housing New Zealand, is seen as a significant change in peoples’ ability to remain securely housed over time:

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2 The National government of the 1990s introduced many reforms to social welfare, including reducing the level of benefits for families and the unemployed. These reforms were never revisited in any significant sense by subsequent governments Dean, A. (2015a) Ruth, Roger and Me: Debts and Legacies, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books.
Ok, we built state houses in the 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, and people moved in, and generally made a reasonably good go at it without much support. But could you say the same about people in the bottom 10% of incomes at the moment? I don’t think you could (Interview with Steve, 2016).

These comments on increasing incomes to decrease precarity are returned to in Chapter Seven, which presents some general policy recommendations on how homelessness can be mitigated.

5.4 The multiple precarities of homelessness

This section of Chapter Five turns to some of the key precarities of homelessness that are identified in Figure 3. These precarities of homelessness – or factors that increase and contribute to a person’s sense of homelessness – are located on the grey ring that surrounds the precarious pathways in the centre of the diagram. The factors are drawn predominantly from key informant data and field observations, but also refer to aspects of the literature that was examined in Chapters Three and Four.

Sense of place

A person’s sense of place – particularly in relation to home – is a significant part of a person’s well-being and identity. This section examines three ways that the precarity of a person’s sense of place can be understood. Both the literature and key informant data agree that a sense of place is crucial to maintaining varying degrees of security, comfort, and normalcy in life. Clearly, becoming homeless disrupts that sense of place through various displacements. Displacement has a range of effects on people, but particularly affects young people and children. Key informants identified various reasons that people relocate or are displaced when experiencing homelessness. These include moving to be nearer family, moving to better climates for sleeping rough, or moving from suburban and regional centres to big cities like Auckland or Wellington. Key informants agreed that the very act of being displaced is an incredibly precarious experience in itself:
One of the consequences is transience, and the lower decile primary schools in this area report 50% or higher turnover of their roll in one year. It’s just phenomenal … And its one of the ways that the housing crisis is driving a huge gap between the wealthy and poor, between young and old, between people who own their assets and people who don’t [with] terrible consequences (Michael).

The importance of place is a topic that is discussed in literature, and is one of the ways in which the literature in Chapters Three and Four intersect. When studied as part of a framework of multiple precarities, precarity of place offers a distinctly geographical way of thinking about precarity (Banki 2013a; 2013b; Isin 2009; Lewis et al. 2014a; 2014b; Lewis 2009; Vrasti 2013). Geography locates and spatialises precarity, and suggests that where precarity is experienced is as important as how and why precarity is experienced. Key informant data corroborates this understanding of place, and also suggests that the same can be said about homelessness. Despite the word ‘homelessness’ literally indicating the lack of home, attention in literature has focussed on how and why people experience or face homelessness, rather than where it occurs.

Second, this leads to thinking about the very meaning of ‘home’ – both for those with a home, and those without. As discussed in Chapter Four, home is a significant concept in geography, and there are opportunities to explore in greater depth the connection to homelessness. Home is connected to peoples’ sense of self, and peoples’ sense of security and ‘normalcy’ (Allen 2015; Blunt 2005; 2003; Blunt and Varley 2004). Thus, it is no surprise that key informants identified that when people lose their home, they can struggle to maintain a strong connection with a sense of self and confidence:

And part of the nature of being homeless is you lose your power, and you’re silenced, and I think we [society] do that to people. And so I think that that, for me, is at the heart of the vulnerability. A voice is taken (Focus group with Michelle, 2016).

Further, home is not just a symbolic metaphor for identity and security; it is the location of the objects that help to constitute a person’s identity and security. As
is discussed in greater detail below, the individual objects and belongings that people own and make up a ‘home’ are an often overlooked aspect of what it means to become homeless. Key informants discussed, and field observations made clear, the precariousness inherent in not having a space to store personal belongings that would ordinarily be in one’s house. This, along with the lack of privacy that comes with being homeless, causes people to experience what can be understood as precarity of home. During field-work, shopping trolleys were observed as places that people held their belongings, such as clothes, food, blankets, books, and signs (Field observations, 2016). This allowed people to be mobile, and could be stored during the day with relatively little risk of being thrown away by people looking to keep the streets tidy. For example, a number of trolleys were observed in the garden outside the public library, which was a location frequented by members of the homeless community in the CBD (Field observations, 2016).

Likewise, key informants discussed how service providers, especially in the CBD and other ‘hotspots’ of rough sleeping, were investigating and implementing services such as showers and lockers. These facilities were identified as providing a way of helping establish routine and normalcy for rough sleepers, by mitigating the precariousness associated with having no home. Somewhere to store belongings and showers are features of ‘home,’ that allow people to meet basic needs and to provide a location from which people can carry out their day-to-day lives. In other words, showers and lockers provided rough sleepers with a ‘sense of place,’ even though they still remain homeless. Key informants at Auckland Council explained this:

*It’s the barrier that makes it so difficult. LifeWise is up on K Road, so to be able to get from Lifewise to City Mission, being able to move around the city, being able to access appointments. Carrying all your gear makes it so hard. Even walking a kilometre [is hard] if you’ve got all your stuff with you. The risks that go along with that, losing it* (Interview with Olivia, 2016).

*Often if stuff is left on the streets with no one there, it gets picked up and put in the rubbish* (Interview with Julie, 2016).
[When people lose their ID] social workers have to go through the process of getting ID, which pretty much takes the whole day for a social worker to run round with a client to get ID. Without ID they can’t get into hostels, it’s a massive issue (Interview with Julie, 2016).

Finally, key informants discussed a sense of place when they talked about social capital and relationships for people experiencing homelessness or housing vulnerability. Unlike the points discussed above, the sense of place that people experienced while homeless was often used to increase peoples’ resilience and ability to cope with multiple precarities. Their connection to place is important for people who remain in their local communities, and maintain relationships with friends, families, and even local businesses. As one key informant explained when asked why they focus on emergency housing for local people rather than all over the city, there is a real need for locally-based housing support for people who want to stay connected to their community of origin:

Because the people in this community have a really strong identity to [this suburb] ... They’re now in the third generation here, often urban Māori etc. So why do I do it in this area? Because there’s a community need ... You’d be a bit bloody stupid being based somewhere and taking people from 50 miles away. We used to do it, but they just don’t really know or respect the area. They don’t know where the shops are, they don’t know where the Laundromats are ... I know homelessness is a nation-wide issue, but for us we’re a small niche provider [this place], and there’s no one else [here] doing it (Interview with Tania, 2016).

On the other hand, other key informants talked about how other people – when facing the prospect of housing precarity – move to places where they are more likely to have their specific needs met:

There is a bit of ‘bright lights, big city’ here. Auckland’s the place to go [when you’re homeless] (Focus group with Michelle, 2016).

Furthermore, in places like the Auckland Central Business District, communities made up of homeless people and often support service providers are significant
reasons for people to begin forming a new attachment to place. A service provider in the Auckland CBD explained:

If they’re up in Orewa or in Whangarei [smaller centres north of Auckland] then they might stick out like a sore thumb. There’s actually a street community here, there’s a place to be (Focus group with Tama, 2016).

Key informants involved in service provision explained that the sense of community that is shared amongst the homeless in Auckland’s CBD is based on the location where people spend their time and the activities that are carried out there. When people move away from the CBD (and their street whanau) then they experience the sort of disconnection and displacement that literature refers to when people are ‘out of place’ (Langegger and Koester 2016):

I’d say they’re ‘streeties’ or ‘street whanau.’ Yes, there is a certain pride in that, and it’s a pride of being part of something bigger than themselves, and being part of something they may never have had as children or younger people. Or part of something that’s kept them grounded in something, as opposed to being completely and utterly lost or blown away (Focus group with Tama, 2016).

For some people, this is family (Focus group with Michelle, 2016).

It is a community, yeah. And like any community, there’s some people that hold it tight, and some who don’t. Some will agree, some will disagree (Focus group with Ally, 2016).

It’s not just the homeless community either. It’s the community that walks past them everyday, saying ‘hi how’s it going’ – that social interaction (Focus group with Ally, 2016).

The data collected here demonstrates that a framework of multiple precarities of homelessness includes an analysis of precarities of place and the role of a geographical understanding of sense of place. Homelessness involves, in one way, a lack of place – specifically home. However, data also suggests that place can be understood more generally as the location of peoples’ homelessness, and
can involve the establishment of place-based community ties. In this sense, precarity of place works in both ways – increasing a person’s sense of homelessness in some ways, and decreasing it in other ways (or at least providing an alternate sense of place).

**Isolation**

Another precarity identified by key informants is that of isolation and social exclusion. This has been touched on in the above section, but can also be linked to literature regarding the nature of homelessness itself (Blunt 2003; Groot and Hodgetts 2012; Hodgetts and Stolte 2015; Hodgetts et al. 2010; May 2009; Osborne 2002). Key informants said that homelessness is a lonely and isolating experience – despite the sense of community that can be found amongst inner-city rough sleepers. In keeping with the intersectional nature of the framework of multiple precarities of homelessness, it can be difficult to discern whether other precarities can make people isolated or excluded, or whether being isolated and excluded leads people to experience other precarities of homelessness. In reality, it is likely to work both ways. This section examines some of the ways that data suggests people experience isolation or social exclusion in homelessness.

First, and probably most significantly, the various reasons that key informants give for people becoming homeless all lead to experiencing social isolation. These include situations like relationship breakups, loss of jobs, severe financial hardship, mental health problems, drug and alcohol addictions, or domestic violence. The experience of these factors – particularly when they lead from one to another, as is often the case – increasingly isolate people from their ‘communities of interest’ where they may have been able to find support.

Second, the breakdown of relationships with friends and family over time is another way in which people can become isolated. Section 5.2 above discusses the breakdown of relationships in detail, but one key informant explained how part of her work is to help re-establish connections with friends or family that have been ruined – often as people move along a precarious pathway towards homelessness:
And it can be restoring their links to whanau ... So we [help] them find out who they are, and connect them to some actual family. ...who are isolated because they're stubborn; they haven't gotten over a [disagreement] that happened in the family some years ago ... and they're mourning for their brother or their sister (Interview with Tania, 2016).

Through re-establishing relationships and social connections, especially with whanau, service providers assist their clients in overcoming the precarity of isolation. This is important even when people do not identify isolation as a precarious experience, as relationships with other people (especially whanau and family) can be the difference between having somewhere to go, and ending up on the streets.

Third, any relationship that is based in a community of homelessness – such as with volunteer service providers, or others experiencing homelessness – is typified by temporariness and potential dislocation. One key informant talked about what happened when people were able to move from sleeping rough in the CBD to accessing housing out of the city:

We take them from the city and put them out in the suburbs. They've got nobody to talk to. This is what street people have come in and said. They're just so lonely. And then they try and save up their bus fare, just to come back and say hello, you know? So there needs to be another structure around them (Focus group with Sharon, 2016).

Even outside of rough sleeping, the social isolation that comes with housing insecurity and precarity can be debilitating and severely affect peoples’ well-being and mental health. Further, another key informant who ran emergency housing services discussed how she was very rarely in touch with previous clients who had moved on. She believed this was because people did not want to revisit the memory of being homeless, and there was potentially an element of shame and embarrassment:

Once they've gone, very few [clients] actually keep in touch. I've heard that from other emergency housing providers ... But it is a bit like being at a
dentist for a root canal therapy. You can’t get much worse in New Zealand than being homeless in a homeless shelter, you know? So who wants to go back to the dentist? No one! The dentist helped you, you know, and you know you’ve no longer got a rotten mouth of rotten teeth, but you know you don’t really want to be calling the dentist every day (Interview with Tania, 2016).

Likewise, other key informants identified that the experience of being homeless undermined peoples’ sense of self-esteem and self-worth:

This is where the secrets and denials come in, I think they get lost and less self worth, and then everyone wants to belong to a community. I’ve just kind of seen that lot of less self-worth and they’re embarrassed and they’re in disbelief that they can’t get a house (Focus group with Ally, 2016).

It’s an episode in their lives, whatever made them homeless ... it’s the whole scenario of homelessness that they close the door, because they’re terrified I think ... Or they also go into denial. We have church members here... and they tell me ‘do not tell anyone I am here! My minister, the bishop. I do not want anyone to know that I’m homeless with my four children at the moment.’ So it’s a pride as well. So they don’t disclose to their friends (Interview with Tania, 2016).

Fourth, social isolation and exclusion occurs when people are unable to carry out the activities of daily life that are considered ‘normal’ – especially by friends and family and members of the public. An example of this, highlighted by key informants at the Auckland Council, is access to showers and the ability to wash and change clothes:

It’s so easy to become excluded from society, and things that we take for granted, like being able to have a shower in the morning. Like what that then means, the knock-on effect (Julie).

This key informant identified that showers and other public amenities for people to store clothes and do laundry were services that were in great demand but were not being met:
Public amenities probably. Showers, lockers ... We've only got access to two showers provided by Liston house that the emergency housing provider in the CBD that's actually closing ... It was open for 2 hours, 3 days a week ... And there's real demand. So that's a huge need. And for a number of years the rough sleeping community has been asking for lockers. We are working through a project at the moment (Olivia).

Policy addressing homelessness in many Western cities has been focussed, in many ways, on discourses of hygiene and cleanliness and a goal of eradicating visible homelessness from high-value real estate in the CBD of a city (Langegger and Koester 2016; Laurenson and Collins 2006; Mitchell 2003; Smith 1996; Smith 1997). This is discussed above in section 4.6. Such 'revanchism' or anti-homeless urban policy is less evident in Aotearoa New Zealand, (May 2009; Smith 1996; Smith 1997). This may be due to relatively lower numbers of visible homelessness, especially in the late 1980s and 1990s when such revanchist policies dominated city governance in the United States. Alternatively, it may be due to the smaller CBD areas that needed protection from the perceived detrimental effect of homelessness on business, law and order, and public safety. However, key informants (such as Julie and Olivia, 2016) did identify that proposals to meet some of the needs of the rough sleeping community were considered by many to be 'enabling homelessness.' This echoes common perceptions from literature about homelessness being both an individual pathology and result of individual decisions, or even a lifestyle choice (May 2009; May 2000). Key informants all disagreed with this perception, and despite its popularity amongst reactionary thinkers, it is not a common idea in media representations of homelessness.

As will be discussed below in Chapter Six, representations of homelessness have – in Aotearoa New Zealand – changed somewhat over recent years, and differ considerably from the narrative that has been, or still is, common-place in other North American or European cities. The precarious experience of isolation in homelessness appears to be less extreme in Aotearoa New Zealand than these other locations, due to the relative lack of punitive urban governance and a reluctance to regulate public space using narratives of 'urban cleanliness' and
‘landscape preservation.’ This does not, of course, mitigate the individual experience of isolation that might be experienced due to any of the above reasons, but rather recognises that the isolation that is discussed widely in literature may not be as relevant in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Finally, another way that isolation occurs in homelessness is through what might be called ‘avoiding contact.’ This point has some overlap with the above evidence relating to the ability to carry out practices of ‘normalcy’ like showering, but it is more to do with the behaviour and attitudes of members of the public. One local business owner at the LifeWise event spoke at great length about how people have been trained to ‘avert their gaze’ and ‘avoid eye contact’ – both literally when passing homeless people, and figuratively when considering the existence of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand (Field observations, 2016). For her, acknowledging homelessness was awkward and uncomfortable, but she argued that it was a very exclusionary practice for members of the public to do – and ending homelessness would be very difficult if nobody acknowledged the reality and existence of the homeless people they passed every day.

The practice of avoiding contact was corroborated by a young girl who was formerly homeless who spoke at the same event. According to her, the biggest thing that young homeless people needed, was to be given a chance and trusted with the ability to improve their livelihoods. From her experience, she was offered a job in a call centre by a local business, and this opportunity was enough to enable her and her younger sister to afford a rental property. With relatively little expense and support, the very act of someone trusting her with a job was enough to overcome the isolating experiences of homelessness.

**Youth Homelessness**

Key informants were clear that the fastest growing category of homelessness are young people – both young people becoming homeless, and families with children experiencing severe housing precarity. While statistical data is unavailable to demonstrate this, anecdotal evidence from key informants suggest that up to 50 per cent of rough sleepers in the Auckland CBD are under the age of 25, and most families experiencing severe housing deprivation have young
children. Auckland Council recognizes the growing youth homeless population, according to key informants from the council:

Youth homelessness is really on the rise in Auckland as well. Again, a high number of hotspots and like youth camps that were set up earlier in the year, in New Lynn. So that’s why Youthline are also seeing the demand for emergency housing for youth as well, so [we’re] looking at the feasibility of actually [providing] emergency housing for youth (Interview with Julie, 2016).

Likewise, a local politician was asked what the most precarious aspect of homelessness is:

The higher level of young people... Very high proportion of under-25s and a higher proportion of teenagers (Interview with Michael, 2016).

Youth are particularly vulnerable when experiencing homelessness, and are therefore often the recipients of targeted services from the homeless sector, as one key informant explains, service providers generally prefer to deal with young people who have experienced shorter periods of housing precarity:

Look, if you have the opportunity with limited resource to work with somebody who’s been on the street for 20 years versus somebody who’s been there for a week, you work with the [young person] you know? You’d actually get the most results if you work with the one there for a week, because of mitigating all the impact (Julie).

Young people are at risk of all sorts of complicating and intersecting precarities that arise when homeless, and key informants explained that they are often less equipped to deal with these ‘adult’ problems than people who are older. This means that young people are often most at risk of quickly moving along pathways into multiple precarities, which justifies the high interest in targeting support to young people:

A small percentage would be sleeping rough or in cars, there's another chunk in boarding houses where they're really compromised living
situations, exposed to some fairly adult issues that they simply aren’t ready for. And then another are doing things like sex for a bed, or basically really just hanging in their with the couch surfing (Interview with Steve, 2016).

[Young people are] very vulnerable to violence, sexual abuse, robbery, you name it (Interview with Michael, 2016).

For young people’s wellbeing, it’s also all the impacts around like prostitution, unsafe behaviours associated with survival, so that’s quite a massive concern (Interview with Julie, 2016).

The increased numbers of young people experiencing homelessness, and the subsequent and resulting attention from the sector can be justified by literature. In particular, the shifting academic understandings of homelessness as the resulting experience from structural inequality recognizes growing numbers of young people and families with children as experiencing homelessness (May 2009). This relates to data gathered from key informants, and suggests that homelessness is more than the result of individual choices or issues like alcohol and drug addiction, but should be understood as a structural problem of inequality and lack of social support – falling disproportionately on young people.

**Insecure and Insufficient Housing**

This section examines yet another key precarity of homelessness, which was observed in data through asking key informants how they, or their organisation, defined and measured homelessness. Increasingly, homelessness is understood more broadly than the extremes of rough sleeping or ‘rooflessness’ by both academic literature and in policy. Definitions now include more subjective phrases like ‘insecure’ and ‘insufficient’ to describe varying levels of precarity of housing. Key informants agreed that the definition of homelessness is important to get right for policy reasons, and is far more extensive than only counting people who sleep on park benches. Most key informants agreed that the Statistics New Zealand definition of homelessness (Statistics New Zealand 2009; 2014) is an adequate and useful definition. The definition, as used by key
informants, includes a variety of differing types of experiences that might be considered homelessness:

_There are four aspects to homelessness as Auckland Council sees it. Those rough sleeping, clearly. Those living in garages, over crowding. Those living in cars ... [and] inadequate housing (Interview with Olivia, 2016)._

_We talk about it as on a spectrum from rough sleeping on the streets to living in cars and overcrowding (Interview with Julie, 2016)._

_Being homeless in New Zealand is when you’re living out – living on the street, living in the park, living in cars, living temporarily in camping grounds, sheds, under boats, garages, having nowhere to live, couchsurfing, staying in overcrowded conditions with friends and relatives to the point where they boot you out ... People not having a safe secure home of their own is what it comes down to (Interview with Jo, 2016)._

Other key informants conceptualised homelessness in slightly different ways, but overall the data suggests a consensus for a relatively broad definition of homelessness:

_You’ll be well aware of the different definitions of homelessness, but we very much focus on the social aspect of it, rather than that simple rooflessness definition. For us, it’s also not a universal [experience]... what might look like a fairly distressing situation [for one person] is actually for them manageable in the short term. And vice versa, someone else who’s simply living with an aunty and uncle, or whatever, which may look more stable to an agency on paper, may actually be in a real crisis. ... We’re conscious of not just relying on that broad definition. There’s an individual element at play in every instance (Interview with Steve, 2016)._

One aspect of a broader definition of homelessness, as many key informants point out, is the fact that Auckland has too many people and not enough dwellings. This leads to overcrowding and living in inappropriate dwellings. As one key informant, a service provider in the Auckland CBD, explains:
Never before have so many [people] slept in such small spaces ... And when the garages of Mangare and Otara fill up, then you start seeing people in their cars (Focus group with Tama, 2016).

Chapter Six examines in more detail the representations of homelessness – both in the media and in policy approaches – but the conception of homelessness as overcrowding in an unaffordable housing market is a markedly different way of understanding homelessness than as an individual experience. Auckland Council recognises the reality of overcrowding in Auckland, especially in relation to problems to do with land use and service provision. A key informant from the council explains how clearly the issue of overcrowding is dominating the city’s landscape:

You just have to drive through poorer suburbs. If you were to drive through Mangere you’d see that overcrowding. It’s the number of vehicles parked up on people’s lawns. It’s tents, sheds, pitched out the back, garages converted into dwellings (Interview with Julie, 2016).

Likewise, a local politician suggested that current homelessness in Auckland can be understood as being exacerbated – if not caused – by a ‘housing crisis’ with a severe lack of housing and high prices:

We recognize that when people find themselves homeless, often there are a bunch of other things that have gone wrong in their lives, but that fundamentally homelessness is a lack of decent housing. When you have what is now, particularly in Auckland, quite an acute shortage of housing and very high housing costs, then that exacerbates all those other social problems ... It’s the housing crisis which has led to large numbers of not only rough sleepers but families living in cars and substandard and overcrowded accommodation, whether its crammed into a relative’s spare room or garage, renting and living in places like the Ranui caravan park, or paying hundreds of dollars to rent an uninsulated sleep out in someone’s backyard (Interview with Michael, 2016).
The lack of sufficient housing and high housing costs leads to overcrowding – particularly for low-income households. Literature suggests that more recent definitions of homelessness include overcrowding as an example of ‘severe deprivation of housing,’ or at least ‘housing exclusion’ (Amore et al. 2011; Amore et al. 2013; Statistics New Zealand 2014). Whether a specific operational definition includes overcrowding as a form of homelessness or not, key informants for the most part certainly argued that it was the kind of precarious experience of housing that should be considered a form of homelessness. While overcrowding might present a ‘less precarious’ form of homelessness than rough sleeping, for example, key informants did agree that peoples’ precarious experiences of overcrowding and insufficient housing were worth considering, especially to recognise the scale of housing vulnerability.

In a similar way to the above point, key informants explained that insecure and insufficient housing is increasingly normalised for families in Aotearoa New Zealand. In the past, individuals would mostly have experienced homelessness and housing insecurity, but high housing costs and a lack of dwellings have meant that families are now also experiencing homelessness. Many key informants identified the ‘face of homelessness’ as young families and children:

And there’s people sleeping in cars, and it’s affecting families. There are a lot of children. There’s like 30 children a night sleeping in cars in Auckland. Whereas it once, I think, seemed only ... rough sleeping in the CBD (Interview with Olivia, 2016).

They’re parents with gorgeous little babies and toddlers, and they just can’t get into an affordable rental home. So we tend to call them houseless homeless (Interview with Tania, 2016).

You’re starting to see [what’s] become common in Auckland with families in cars and things like that ... we know its happening, and we do have some of our families that are sleeping with a couple of other families under the same roof. A lot of overcrowding, and some sleeping in vehicles (Interview with Steve, 2016).
The changing ‘face’ of homelessness, as well as the changing nature of homelessness means that there are, as described in Chapter Four, new opportunities for conceptualising the experiences of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand. This does not, of course, diminish the already studied and still relevant experiences of rough sleeping, for example, but instead offers a chance for greater understanding of homelessness, especially in regards to the multiple ways that people might become homeless (such as increasingly unaffordable housing) and the multiple precarities that can be experienced simultaneously in homelessness.

Finally, key informants discussed the need for greater clarity and tools with which to evaluate the extent of insecure and insufficient housing in Aotearoa New Zealand. Though key informants agreed that the Statistics New Zealand definition of homelessness is adequate (Statistics New Zealand 2009; 2014), they also expressed desire for a more operational definition that was linked to levels of support needed and provided by the government. Further, there was a very consistent and strong expression of need for more detailed statistical work done in relation to homelessness. Across the key informants involved in this research project, there was very little confidence about the existence of useful and accurate statistics. The primary reason for homeless statistics to be problematic to collect is the difficulty in defining, identifying, and locating those experiencing homelessness – as is discussed in Section 4.3. Statistical data about homelessness is mostly carried out by the service sector, which has little or no funding for their daily operations, let alone to carry out statistical research. Despite this, the sector is able to provide insights into the state of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand, backed up by anecdotal and sometimes numerical data. For example, a key informant (Focus group with Ally, 2016) from a service provider in the Auckland CBD explained one method of assessing the numbers of homeless people in Auckland was counting the numbers of food parcels they had distributed to homeless families and households.

Second, some key informants suggested a lack of political will over multiple governments to directly address homelessness (Interviews with Mark, Jo, Tania, Julie and Olivia, 2016). In their opinion, measuring the extent of homelessness
would then require governments to take more proactive steps to solve housing vulnerability, which would be a significant social welfare investment. Whether or not government departments would agree with this claim, many key informants welcomed what they saw as recent changes in public perception towards homelessness. This will be examined in further detail in Chapter Six. Finally, a key informant from a central government agency suggested that measuring homelessness is made difficult for the government because people are often reluctant to engage with agencies like Work and Income or the Ministry of Social Development, due to either past experience or misunderstandings about support available:

> And we certainly are aware that people, especially vulnerable people, have a bit of fear or a mistrust of agencies and organisation, and sometimes don’t represent themselves, don’t come along to those agencies, for whatever reason (Interview with Mark, 2016).

This suggests that the potential tensions between the homeless community, the service sector, and the government works both ways, and needs to be addressed through cooperation and collaboration. Again, this relationship is revisited in Chapter Six, which looks at representations of homelessness in media and policy approaches.

### 5.5 Intersecting precarities

The next section of this chapter examines a range of intersecting precarities that have been identified through key informant data and literature. In referring to Figure 3, these intersecting precarities are surrounding the inner circle of multiple precarities of homelessness. The importance of these intersecting precarities is that they are not at all specific to the experience of homelessness, and might be applicable or relevant to a far wider section of society in Aotearoa New Zealand. That is, many of the precarious experiences of homelessness are not necessarily unique to homelessness, but rather are shaped by common experiences of precarity in multiple senses. Though Figure 3 does not indicate it, many of the precarities listed in this section (which is by no means an exhaustive list), might be able to be linked to other versions of the framework of multiple
precarities – in different contexts. For example, a person’s individual experience may include some degree of housing insecurity, yet their primary sense of precarity is more to do with their job than their home. Intersecting precarities, such as having to negotiate Work and Income bureaucracy, could be used to connect the experience of that person with the framework of multiple precarities of homelessness – drawing common elements of precarity and contrasting and comparing different experiences of vulnerability and insecurity, and responses to these precarities.

**Tangata Whenua**

Section 1.3 gave details about how inequality in Aotearoa New Zealand has grown between Māori and non-Māori, especially following neoliberal reforms in the 1980s and 1990s (Nairn et al. 2012; Peters et al. 2000; Te Ahu Poata-Smith 2013; 1997). In Aotearoa New Zealand, inequality can be both economic and social, and has wide-ranging implications for education, employment, health, and crime statistics. Both key informant data from this research project, and other statistics collected conclusively show that Māori disproportionately experience homelessness:

*Rough sleeping is still predominantly older, predominantly male, Māori and Pacific Island* (Interview with Julie, 2016).

*The people we [a community service provider] deal with come from all ethnicities, but the overwhelming majority are Māori and Pacifica* (Interview with Tania, 2016).

For Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand, the experience of homelessness intersects with a number of underlying precarities that can be understood in a general sense. A substantial amount of research has been published that examines the extent of inequality that affects the Māori population of Aotearoa New Zealand, especially in relation to employment, education, health, and legislative inequalities (Ajwani et al. 2003; Alexander, Murat and Jafortullah 2001; Chapple 2000; D’Hauteserre 2005; Harris et al. 2006; Mulholland 2010; New Zealand Institute of Economic Research 2007; Sibley and Ward 2013; Sutherland and Alexander 2002; Te Ahu Poata-Smith 2013). Many of these precarious
inequalities are attributed to the ongoing colonial legacies of relationships between Māori and Pākehā.

One key precarity experienced by Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand is that of employment and economic inequality. Historically, Māori were introduced to wage work through alienation and displacement, with the British Crown confiscating land, and Māori congregating in low-quality urban housing and engaging in working class employment (Te Ahu Poata-Smith 2013; 1997). Generations later, neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and 1990s saw Māori in manufacturing and extractive industries bear the brunt of economic changes, through loss of employment and erosion of real wages (Peters et al. 2000; Te Ahu Poata-Smith 2013; 1997). The already-significant income gap between Māori and Pākehā grew through this period. This is reflected in more recent statistics regarding wealth distribution. In 2004, Maori represented 10.4 per cent of the population, but controlled only 4.3 per cent of the country's wealth (Cheung 2007; Te Ahu Poata-Smith 2013). This disparity has almost certainly grown in the years since, and in 2013, there was a gap of $96 in average weekly earnings between Māori and Pākehā (Marriott and Sim 2014; Rashbrooke 2013).

Māori are overrepresented in low-paid, casual work – a difference that has been attributed in part to racial discrimination and education disparity (Sutherland and Alexander 2002; Winkelmann and Winkelmann 1997). The gap between Māori and non-Māori ‘labour-force status’ has grown over the last 30 years, again reflecting the way that neo-liberal reforms and market deregulation has unequally affected Aotearoa New Zealand society. The existence of inequality and a precarious relationship with employment is a precarity that intersects with homelessness – especially in situations where even full time work at the minimum wage is not able to meet growing housing costs in places like Auckland. An emergency housing provider explained what appears to be tragically common-place:

*But you know, we’ve got one father of 2 children, and a wife, who’s on $16 an hour. He goes to work every night and drives his car for $16 an hour. So
his pay packet at the end of the day is pretty small ... I've got one friend and her whole wage goes on her mortgage (Interview with Tania, 2016).

Second, health disparity is often used in Aotearoa New Zealand to measure ethnic and regional inequality. Māori (along with Pacific Island populations) feature disproportionately in measures of health disparity (Ajwani et al. 2003; Blakely et al. 2005; Sporle, Pearce and Davis 2002). These health measures include life expectancy, cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and suicide (Ajwani et al. 2003; Blakely et al. 2005; Harris et al. 2006). These factors relating to health show a gap between Māori and non-Māori. Like other disparities, these gaps have increased in Aotearoa New Zealand over the last 30 years. Harris et al. (2006) argues that the inequality of health in Aotearoa New Zealand is due to the dual factors of economic deprivation, and social discrimination. Both these factors contribute to a growing sense of precarity for Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand, through actual health problems caused by poverty as well as perceived discrimination (Blakely et al. 2005).

Key informants, particular those involved in service delivery in the Auckland CBD, were particularly aware of some of the specific ways that rough sleepers experienced health problems. One key informant discussed the importance of a health clinic that focuses on rough sleepers:

_In New Zealand, we have many ways of determining barriers of access to primary [health] care – cost being one. But others are cultural competence, staffing acceptance of those you might not like or smell or look different and act different. The centre is designed so that those barriers are also removed, as they’re often there in other mainstream medical centres. It is set up to care for those who are most vulnerable_ (Interview with Richard, 2016).

This demonstrates how intersecting precarities can be understood: financial and cultural precarities can intersect and converge on those who need health care, and drastically increase the perceived and experienced sense of precarity. In this particular case, Richard emphasized the potentially increased precarity that can occur with the lack of ‘cultural competence’ in health care, especially for Māori patients. Addressing peoples’ needs while also providing culturally appropriate
services is a way that service providers are able to mitigate some of the intersecting precarities that might otherwise affect Māori – or indeed any other cultural minority that is experiencing homelessness. This can also be seen in homeless service providers with the role of marae providing food and emergency accommodation for people experiencing homelessness or housing precarity. The services based in marae are aimed specifically towards Māori families, and meets the direct housing needs of people while also meeting their cultural needs. A key informant from the Auckland Council explained how marae carried out these roles quite successfully, compared to other service providers or the state:

*The marae are based where the community is as well ... Since they opened their doors, they've had a lot of people through. Families in particular they're looking at as well. And they seem to be actually moving people through quite quickly. They're actually providing some temporary housing. I think they've something like 30-40 people at the moment that they're servicing, and they've only opened their doors six weeks ago. People feel comfortable, from a cultural sense. I think 90 per cent of people accessing that service are Māori* (Interview with Tania, 2016).

The final way that key informants identified intersecting precarities affecting Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand is the role of colonial legacies and the ongoing dispossession that people might experience. One key informant at a service provider explained her perspective:

*I think, for me anyway, that there’s a really clear line between colonisation and homelessness. In terms of vulnerability you’re talking about a dispossession and disempowerment of peoples’ cultural identity ... If you don’t know who you are, you don’t know who you are* (Focus group with Michelle, 2016).

For Michelle, indigenous people – especially Māori who are homeless–experience vulnerability through the ongoing effects of cultural displacement and dispossession, as a result of colonial processes in Aotearoa New Zealand’s history. This is an intersecting precarity because it can be understood in the
context of many peoples’ experiences – not just the homeless. However, as Michelle described, the loss of cultural identity increases a person’s vulnerability and precarious experience of homelessness due to the silencing effect of cultural dispossession and the loss of a person’s voice. Further, the loss of connection with a particular place – disconnection from the land – further enhances a feeling of precarity of place for Māori culture that emphasises the importance of place. It is well established that the cultural impact of colonialism, and associated displacement in places like Aotearoa New Zealand has, and continues to have, a massive impact on indigenous culture that far outlasts the effects often perceived by non-Māori (Chapple 2000; D’Hauteserre 2005).

**Precarious Employment and Access to Education**

A second intersecting precarity is that of precarious employment and access to education. This particular precarity is worthy of a whole thesis, and features in research from various disciplines – some of which is examined in Chapter Three in relation to labour precarity. Precarity of education describes the vulnerabilities that might lead to a person’s lack of access to education, or experiencing comparative disadvantage in relation to education. When considered as an intersecting aspect of homelessness, employment or education precarity can be conceptualized as a pathway into homelessness, and a barrier to becoming housed again. As detailed in section 5.2 above, many key informants explained how precarious employment, unemployment, or low incomes lead to people entering precarious pathways to homelessness. However, it is also the case that people experience precarious employment or education without it necessarily making them homeless. Precarious employment, therefore, can be understood as an intersecting precarity.

Many service providers that look to enhance peoples’ resilience look to increase skills, and minimise precarity of education. For example, a Dunedin-based service provider discussed how they focus on young peoples’ basic skills to ensure they are ready for work:
We do foundation learning for youth and adults, which tends to be sort of literacy numeracy orientated NCEA Level 1 and 2 with a bit of vocational training (Interview with Steve).

Likewise, at the LifeWise event in Auckland, a young person who was previously homeless described how she and her sister were given the opportunity to work at Skinny Mobile’s call centre, despite being homeless at that time with very few qualifications. According to her, ‘homelessness is the beginning of missing out on opportunities,’ but when people trusted her with responsibilities and gave her a job, she was able to take advantage of that opportunity to decrease her sense of employment precarity (Field observations, 2016).

This discussion of employment precarity and the development of skills for young people in particular can be understood through literature describing the precariat – as discussed in Chapter Three (Standing 2014; 2012; 2011). The framework of multiple precarities of homelessness provides a way for Standing’s theoretical interpretation of modern working conditions for the precariat to be applied to a conceptual understanding of homelessness in an intersectional way. Though Standing, and other key authors discussed in Chapter Three, have not specifically referred to homelessness as a feature of the precariat’s experience, an holistic approach to precarity – examining multiple spheres of vulnerability and insecurity – allows for employment and education precarity to be used as an aspect or axis of homelessness.

Navigating Work and Income

The final intersecting precarity that has been identified through data is, again, one that has very little discussion in literature, and involves the complex and intimidating processes that are involved in navigating Work and Income, the agency that operates Aotearoa New Zealand’s welfare system (also known as WINZ). Work and Income is the point of contact for people in Aotearoa New Zealand to receive support in the form of welfare, housing, and financial assistance from the Ministry of Social Development. Also related to Work and Income is Housing New Zealand, which is a government agency responsible for the management of Aotearoa New Zealand’s state housing supply. Some key
informants suggested that there is a significant barrier to homeless people accessing the services on offer which is particularly difficult. This section provides data to explain four key aspects of this intersecting precarity. Many of these aspects are relevant to people who are not homeless as well, although they are felt most strongly by those who might at the more ‘severe’ end of precarity and homelessness.

First, the level of bureaucracy involved in the Ministry of Social Development’s services make it relatively inaccessible, according to key informant Jo. Jo, who was very involved in advocating for beneficiaries and supporting them through their interactions with Work and Income, explained:

[We] have been doing individual case work, beneficiary advocacy at the interface with Work and Income. Traditionally that mainly is working around unemployment and welfare, particularly welfare. But because government transferred state housing to MSD, to Work and Income, its meant over the past couple of years we’ve had to deal with housing a lot more than we ever planned to … what we’re aiming to do is advocate with Work and Income to try and get people into a motel or into private sector housing or into state housing, but we can’t be a housing provider (Interview with Jo, 2016).

Another key informant who provided emergency housing assisted her clients trying to get longer-term housing assistance from the Ministry of Social development agreed:

For us, it’s been really hard getting the houses and the barriers of bureaucracy. And that’s a real tough one (Interview with Tania, 2016).

Further, during field work at an inner-city service provider, I observed a staff member interviewing a homeless woman, and making phone calls to Work and Income on their behalf to explain their situation and their specific needs. This was, I was told later, a key service that was provided (Field observations, 2016). Many people were unable or unwilling to engage with government agencies, and non-governmental agencies play a key role in mediating this interface. The
perceived inaccessibility of services at Work and Income – or indeed any part of the Ministry of Social Development’s range of services – means that people may not be receiving the level of support that is available. Given that many key informants argued that that benefit incomes and other sources of welfare assistance were too low, this suggests many people in Aotearoa New Zealand may experience a high level of deprivation. This intersects precarious homelessness, as it increases the potential vulnerability and insecurity felt by those experiencing precarity of housing. As explained above, greater access to financial support is an important part of people becoming less precarious, so this disconnect between government agencies and the people who need support is significant.

Moreover, the complexities of the Ministry of Social Development’s systems presents a significant barrier to people moving through ‘stages’ of housing – from being homeless to emergency housing to more long-term housing. Tania, a key informant who provided emergency housing in Auckland, explained how when she started her housing trust 12 years ago, families would stay with her for up to two weeks before moving through to Housing New Zealand properties. At the time of her interview, however, she had families staying for up to a year before being able to be rehomed by Housing New Zealand – and even then she needed to campaign and advocate on their behalf, often by talking about the case with the media.

A second way that people experience precarity when navigating Work and Income is due to the specifics of how services are made available. Though this is perhaps a relatively minor aspect to a person’s experience of precarity when they are homeless, many key informants explained how people struggled with meeting the requirements of Work and Income. For example, most people were required to regularly visit their local branch office of Work and Income in person, which presented major problems for people who were lacking stability of place.

Further, another difficulty with receiving support was needing a home address and phone number in order to engage with government agencies. Some key
informants from service providers explained how they ensured clients were given access to these sorts of things. At one inner-city service provider, a client was observed using a free phone in the lobby to contact both friends and case managers from Work and Income. This demonstrates the social and institutional importance of phone access. Further, key informants from the same service provider explained how many of their clients had mail delivered to their address, and used it as their service address for dealing with Work and Income.

The final reason that navigating Work and Income adds to – and increases a person’s sense of precarity in homelessness – was identified by a key informant from the Ministry of Development. When explaining some of the challenges faced by the Ministry in defining and measuring homelessness and vulnerability, he pointed out that some people chose not to deal with the Ministry (and Work and Income) out of mistrust or reluctance:

_I mean we’re always going to be reliant on what people present to us, and what people tell us about. And we certainly are aware that people, especially vulnerable people, have a bit of fear or a mistrust of agencies and organisations, and sometimes don’t represent themselves, don’t come along to those agencies, for whatever reason. So we’re ... never going to see the full extent of it presenting itself to us. ... I mean we’d like them to come to us, to make sure they’re getting all the help they can, but we acknowledge that is something that does happen_ (Mark).

Other key informants did not mention this when interviewed, but media analysis – as is discussed in Chapter Six – did reveal that some service providers maintain a level of distance from the Ministry of Social Development to ensure that they remained approachable and appealed to clients who had a certain level of mistrust for government agencies and departments.

### 5.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has identified and discussed a broad range of different precarities that can be understood as making up multiple precarities of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand. In particular, this chapter has discussed Figure 3, which
graphically displayed the combination of field data and analysis of literature about homelessness and precarity. The key message of this chapter is that homelessness is not an obvious and easily defined term, nor is it a static and easily understood experience. A framework of multiple precarities, developed through the analysis of literature in Chapters Three and Four, can be used to identify and evaluate the multiple and varied ways that people experience vulnerability and insecurity within a particular context. The data presented in this chapter provides examples of how key informants understand the multiple experiences of homelessness that might be considered precarious.

Perhaps the most important aspect expressed in the framework of multiple precarities of homelessness is the way that experienced precarities are not discrete and separate. Literature concerning the concept of intersectionality is used to express how experiences and identities that relate to homelessness and precarity overlap and interact. The conceptualization of these intersections are partially expressed in Figure 3, but the individual experience of multiple precarities of homelessness is, of course, wholly unique to the person. Many precarities are shared by many people, but they may not be easy to compare due to the huge range of ways that precarities overlap and intersect.

Some of the precarities that shape a person’s experience of homelessness could be conceptualised as making up ‘precarious pathways’, which cause people to become more (or less) homeless. These might be a person’s primary experience of homelessness, and ultimately the reason they are homeless. Despite this, there are always intersecting precarities that influence the experience of homelessness. Some may be more or less acute, and some may be more or less easily mitigated and addressed by service providers or state assistance. Further, some precarities of homelessness are ‘intersecting precarities’ that are not exactly unique to homelessness, and might be shared by people who have no housing precarity, yet nonetheless increase precariousness. In a more general sense, the framework of multiple precarities of homelessness demonstrates a potential use of thinking about precarity as a very holistic and broadly applicable concept. This chapter provides a case study application of this conceptualisation
of precarity, and has utilised the framework of multiple precarities in a specific location and with a specific context: homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The following chapter, which is the final chapter that presents findings of this research, focuses more specifically on the context of this thesis: homelessness. In particular, Chapter Six examines and considers how homelessness is understood and communicated in the media in Aotearoa New Zealand over the last year. This answers the final research question of this thesis, which asks what the representations of homeless are, and provides an opportunity to evaluate how precarity might be understood or communicated outside of an academic thesis. Chapter Six also offers analysis of how representations of homelessness align with the experiences of homelessness that are discussed in Chapter Five, in order to see whether the framework of multiple precarities would be a useful way to communicate vulnerability and insecurity. Finally, the seventh chapter of this thesis provides some recommendations on future research in these fields (homelessness and precarity), and also discusses how policy approaches to homelessness can be developed using the concept of multiple precarities.
Chapter Six: Representations of precarious homelessness

6.1 Introduction

This chapter considers some of the ways that precarious homelessness is represented in media in Aotearoa New Zealand, especially in recent times. This is an important part of evaluating the framework of multiple precarities of homelessness in Chapter Five because it demonstrates how precarity is understood and represented to the wider public. The understanding of precarity in general – and homelessness in particular – reveals how government policy might approach the problem of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand. Further, by analysing the representations of precarity that are used by the media, some of the key tensions in the conceptual model of multiple precarities of homelessness can be evaluated. That is, while the concept of multiple precarities might be clearly applicable to homelessness – as is done in Chapter Five – representations of homelessness in the public media may align with a different understanding of what it means to experience homelessness.

This chapter answers the final research question of this thesis: How is homelessness represented, and how do these representations align with the experience of homelessness? The data used to answer this question comes from two sources. First, media articles published in Aotearoa New Zealand over an 18-month period are analysed in order to evaluate how homelessness is represented. Second, the findings from this analysis are compared to the data collected from key informant and focus group interviews. Because there is significant overlap in the data used with Chapter Five, the focus in this chapter is more specifically on the representations and perceptions of homelessness, and how these align with the way that key informants talk about the multiple precarities of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand.
Section 2.3 above detailed the media articles that were selected for analysis in this chapter. Three sources were used – The *Otago Daily Times*, the *New Zealand Herald* online and Radio New Zealand (RNZ) online. In total, 235 articles were used, although many of them shared content or interviews, due to the nature of journalistic networking.

This chapter considers four findings from the analysis of media articles, and the representations of homelessness displayed. First, there was, during the time period from which media articles were selected, a huge and sudden increase in the attention that homelessness received in all media outlets. This demonstrated a significant growth in interest in homelessness across various sectors of society – including political focus. The increased attention also provides further opportunities to assess the representations of homelessness – and how these might change over time. Second, there are a number of changes in the way that homelessness is represented in media that diverge from ways that it is sometimes represented in literature.

The third finding is the range of responses observed in the media to a perceived growth in homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand. For example, homelessness is politicised – by opposition politicians as evidence of failing government policy, and by political commentators as a topic of discussion over the role of government in responding to homelessness, and the personal responsibility of particular government ministers. The final finding discussed in this chapter includes the normalisation of particular aspects of homelessness. One of these aspects is equating homelessness with particular behaviours. That is, in many media articles, homelessness is associated with specific behaviours (such as begging), rather than the more general definition of being without a home. Another aspect of homelessness that is normalised through the media is the involvement of charities and volunteer work in meeting the needs of the homeless community. A lot of media attention focuses on the role of volunteer service providers, rather than the way in which government agencies do (or should) contribute to the homeless sector.
6.2 Increased media coverage

Figure 5 below displays the number of articles concerning homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand that were published by the three media sources during the period of analysis (June 2015-October 2016), shown as monthly totals. The three coloured lines display the data for the three media sources, and the black line displays the total number of articles. The most striking part of this graph is the massive increase in media coverage and attention starting from April 2016, and only really decreasing in October 2016 – at the end of the period of analysis.

While it is unclear exactly what led to the hugely increased attention on homelessness at this time, anecdotal evidence suggests that programmes on RNZ initiated a lot of journalistic inquiry – particularly Checkpoint with John Campbell and Morning Report, hosted by Susie Ferguson and Guyon Espiner. Both of these programmes contributed large numbers of analysis, opinion, interviews, and statistics to the articles that were published by RNZ online. Further, as Figure 5 displays, RNZ was the largest contributor to the media coverage during this period, especially during the busiest three months (publishing 49 per cent of the articles from May-July 2016).

Key informants were very much aware of the increased media coverage on the issue of homelessness, and for the most part welcomed it. Some key informants, particularly service providers, explained that they used the media as a strategic tool. One key informant – Jo – explained that many of the stories that appeared in the media during the peak coverage in May and June 2016 immediately prior to field work were cases shared by her advocacy organisation. Key informants, such as Tania and Jo argued that attention from the media was important for two reasons. First, media attention was found by service providers to motivate Work and Income and the Ministry of Social Development to resolve peoples’ situations. One key informant explained that her role in helping people access more permanent housing from Work and Income almost always involved contacting the media with a person’s individual case:

*The last 18 months, every house I got [for a client], I fought so hard for. And 9 times out of 10, I went to the media* (Interview with Tania, 2016).
Figure 5: Number of articles about homelessness published each month by three media sources, June 2015 - October 2016.
While effective, the use of media to resolve individual cases was sometimes a difficult prospect for service providers to negotiate. Another key informant, who talked about also using the same technique to get help for clients, described the challenge of knowing what happens when Work and Income is ‘forced’ to do something by the prospect of negative media attention in regards to an individual case:

_Sometimes it works, and the family gets a state house. But we know that every time we do that, we’re knocking someone else ... down the list ... we do it sometimes to keep it in the public eye and to push, but we know damn well it’s not solving anything, and all we’re doing is stopping another family in desperate need from getting a house_ (Interview with Jo, 2016).

The second reason that media attention is significant is that it provides an opportunity for perceptions of homelessness to change. As the rest of this chapter goes on to explain, the increased coverage of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly that of ‘new’ forms of homelessness, provide opportunities for the general public to understand homelessness in new ways. That is, when presented with many different forms of homelessness – particularly in the way that media did, new stories are told of what it means to be homeless in Aotearoa New Zealand, and how this might relate to other economic processes happening at the same time. Key informants (such as Michael, Julie, and Olivia) suggested that this is a major result of the rapid growth in coverage that Figure 5 shows. A key informant at the Auckland Council suggested that the increased coverage of homelessness in media, coupled with the perceived increase in homelessness in the city, led to shifts in perception quite quickly, particularly in Auckland:

_I think probably because of the increase in homelessness. There’s a lot of media around it ... Yeah, just seems to be a shift in mindset, whether it be economic related, or hearts and minds_ (Interview with Julie, 2016).

The rest of this chapter examines this shift in the perception of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand by analysing how precarity and homelessness is represented in media and some responses to an increased level of homelessness.
6.3 Changing representations of homelessness

Analysis of media articles identifies two key ways that homelessness is depicted and that these representations are increasingly common in the media. Key informant data also suggests that this is the case. First, homelessness is represented as becoming an increasingly normal part of life in Aotearoa New Zealand for the working class. This contrasts heavily to other understandings of homelessness as an aberration or ‘failure’ – whether by the individual or by the state. Second, and very much related to this, homelessness is increasingly represented with a new ‘face’: young families and children. The following subsection explores these representations.

Precarious homelessness becoming increasingly ‘expected’

Homelessness and poverty is described as ‘the new normal’ (Radio New Zealand 2016f) and is depicted as including retirees (Bateson 2016b), children (Collins 2016f), and young people (Leslie 2016). Table 6 below shows examples of media that suggest that homelessness is ‘expected’ and experienced by ‘normal’ people. No longer is the experience of homelessness reserved for middle-aged Māori or Pacifica males, who were the expected demographic to ‘suffer’ homelessness. This shift is echoed in literature, which identifies the existence of the broad experience of homelessness, and suggests the importance of understanding the diversity of homeless people (May 2009; May 2000; Pacione 2009). As has been shown throughout this thesis, there can be many causes for homelessness, not all of which are captured by a perceived ‘homeless figure’ who has no job and has addictions. Further, research that corroborates these perspectives is increasingly cited in media to support the suggestion that homelessness is the ‘new normal’ for some people (Radio New Zealand 2016f).

Table 6: Sample of media data showing homelessness as increasingly ‘expected’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Source</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... she was 60 with a full-time job when the Global Financial Crisis hit and within weeks she was jobless. She could not find another job and decided use her savings to live in a caravan park.</td>
<td>(Bateson 2016b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘One month after their mother died of cancer, four children face becoming homeless on Saturday unless they can get a</td>
<td>(Collins 2016f)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Growing numbers of Kiwis risk becoming homeless in old age because of falling home ownership rates, rising rents and static housing subsidies (Collins 2016e)

If the homeless population were a hundred people, 70 are staying with extended family or friends in severely crowded houses, 20 are in a motel, boarding house or camping ground, and 10 are living on the street, in cars, or in other improvised dwellings. (Otago Daily Times 2016b)

Desperation to find housing, food and sufficient income to survive had become ‘the new normal’ for many families (Radio New Zealand 2016f)

The homeless population of central Auckland is two-and-a-half times higher than it was three years ago, a new report says. (New Zealand Herald 2016a)

The significance of this change in how homelessness is represented is twofold. It demonstrates that people become homeless for a variety of reasons. Rather than focusing specifically on a particular type of homelessness – rough sleeping, for example – media throughout this period also examined people sleeping in cars, people in emergency housing, and people living in insufficient and overcrowded conditions. The focus on diverse experiences of homelessness also allows for – and indeed encourages – new policy interventions and new understandings from the general public. That is, if homelessness is only depicted as rough sleeping and people suffering from addictions, there are relatively narrow range of policy responses needed. For example, policy interventions might include increased institutional care or greater personal responsibility. Instead, by suggesting the experience of homelessness is becoming normal, and not just experienced by rough sleepers, more options seem available to deal with the ‘homeless crisis.’ At the same time, however, it is possible that by making homelessness seem ‘expected’ media is making homeless more invisible and easier to ignore – or at least view as part of a ‘normal’ big city. Section 6.4 below considers some responses to increased homelessness.

A phrase sometimes used in the media is ‘hidden homeless’ to describe the new way that homelessness is understood and identified. This phrase is useful for a number of reasons, and reveals a lot about changing representations of homelessness – and indeed about the nature of precarity itself. The qualifier ‘hidden’ refers to the fact that this sub-set of the homeless population are harder
to identify and see – they are not necessarily sleeping on the street and pushing around shopping trolleys. Further, they are ‘hidden’ because the cause of their experience of homelessness is far less clear than it might be for other understandings of homelessness. One article describes the growth of the hidden homeless as due to ‘issues including lack of money, the high cost of rental accommodation and social issues preventing them from being able to access rental accommodation’ (Bateson 2016a). Finally, the hidden homeless are, in many ways, also hidden from service provision and policy. As Chapter Five has discussed, being homeless in Aotearoa New Zealand involves a variety of precarities that intersect and coalesce to create homelessness. When people experience a wide range of precarities – but do not experience an acute form of homelessness – the development of effective policy and service provision is made much more difficult.

The acceptance of homelessness – in the sense that it is understood as less of an aberration from what is expected in society – was also discussed by key informants. Key informants agreed that homelessness was caused by a multitude of factors at once. Many said that homelessness could be summarised, or even defined, as the product of inequalities and structural processes in Aotearoa New Zealand society that are not being questioned or challenged:

If I was ever trying to sum it up, I’d say homelessness is the structural issue experienced by the individual. ... we as a society are not responding to the needs of people and the end result is homelessness (Focus group with Michelle, 2016).

Further, homelessness is also depicted in media, and understood by key informants as an extension of the ‘housing crisis’ in Auckland, with the lack of affordable housing directly related to the increase in people sleeping cars (Manhire 2016).

Homelessness is not an individual experience, even though the specific experience of homelessness can be different for every person. The fact that media representations are increasingly focused on the wide range of homelessness, and the everyday experiences of the homeless, demonstrates the
importance of examining the range of precarious aspects of homelessness – both for understanding and characterizing homelessness, and for developing effective policy.

The new ‘face of homelessness’

Table 7: Sample of media data showing the new ‘face of homelessness’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kids sleep in cars to show solidarity</td>
<td>(Mackenzie 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids living in vans? I’m mad as hell.</td>
<td>(Sumner 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hundreds of young people are sleeping rough</td>
<td>(Leslie 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One in 100 NZers are homeless</td>
<td>(Radio New Zealand 2016d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA, aged 11, told Checkpoint that before living at the marae, her mother, father and five siblings had been living in their van since February.</td>
<td>(Radio New Zealand 2016b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tens of thousands of baby boomers risk becoming homeless in retirement unless the government takes urgent steps to deal with the problem, a report says.</td>
<td>(Newton 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A family with a newborn baby has been given shelter at a South Auckland marae after spending some of the first days of her life in a tent at Whakatane.</td>
<td>(Collins 2016d)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As well as an increasingly ‘expected’ experience of life in Aotearoa New Zealand, homelessness is depicted by the media as being experienced by young families and children. This use of children and young families as the ‘new face of homelessness’ suggests that, as above, traditional stereotypes of homelessness are no longer relevant – or at least no longer wholly accurate. Further, by relating homelessness to young poor families and children, media representations of homelessness make sense of the vulnerability and insecurity of homelessness in an accessible way. The homeless are presented as ‘normal people,’ rather than ‘others’ on the margins of society. This can make it easier for the media to position homelessness as a moral issue – a perspective to which this chapter returns below.

The major way that media representations have included young families and children as the new face of homelessness is through the use of interviews and stories that focus on the experience of these people. Rather than talking to service providers or case workers about the state of the homeless sector, media
coverage has often focused on direct experiences by interviewing and quoting children and families. In particular, children have, on a number of occasions, become de facto-spokespersons for homeless communities through attention from the media. For example, a young girl with the pseudonym ‘B,’ who was a temporary resident at Te Puea marae in Mangere Bridge, Auckland was interviewed many times\(^3\). ‘B’ was recently homeless, along with her family, and was also undergoing cancer treatment. Over the course of a couple of weeks in June, ‘B’ was interviewed, and her family was eventually moved into more permanent housing with Housing New Zealand (Haunui-Thompson 2016a).

Likewise, another 11-year old girl ‘TA’ was interviewed on the show *Checkpoint with John Campbell* about how she and her family of eight people were currently living in a van as they could not afford housing even though both parents worked (Radio New Zealand 2016b). Her interview became a symbolic sound bite for the media coverage, especially her call on Prime Minister John Key to ‘try walking in my shoes; it’s not actually that easy’ (Radio New Zealand 2016b).

Key informant service providers were very aware of the increased attention on young people and children by the media, and used this themselves in order to campaign and advocate for clients. For example, one key informant featured in a story in the media focusing on a young family who was a client at their emergency housing facility and was unable to find permanent housing through Housing New Zealand. One reason why representations of homelessness involving young families and children are important is that they can elicit an emotional response from the public. This emotional response is examined in the next section, which considers a number of reactions to the changing and increasing representations of homelessness.

\(^3\) Te Puea marae received substantial attention from media and the public for a number of weeks, after opening their doors to the surrounding community who were facing homelessness or sleeping in cars. Volunteers at the marae worked to provide food, shelter, and care to dozens of families over a couple of weeks, and received substantial financial and practical donations of volunteers and goods (Campbell 2016; Collins 2016h; Dennis 2016; Radio New Zealand 2016g).
6.4 Responses to increased homelessness

This section considers the politicisation of homelessness, and the moral and ethical responses to the increased attention and coverage of homelessness.

**Politicising homelessness**

**Table 8: Sample of media data showing politicisation of homelessness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labour leader Andrew Little said Mr Key needed to explain why he misled the public.</td>
<td>(Dunlop 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The National Party are trying to diminish and deny the very idea that there is a homelessness crisis,’ he said.</td>
<td>(New Zealand Herald 2016b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour and the Green Parties are opening an inquiry into homelessness after their attempt to get a select committee to hold one was blocked by National Party MPs.</td>
<td>(Bramwell 2016a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Because it’s a government-dominated committee, it is unlikely it will do anything with it,’ [Green co-leader, James Shaw] said.</td>
<td>(Heron 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Little, celebrating Labour’s 100th birthday today, seemed oblivious as he walked past both photos to announce the first of three announcements he’s making on the housing in the coming days.</td>
<td>(Soper 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Andrew Little] said that the homeless were the ‘sharp end of the Government’s housing crisis.’</td>
<td>(Otago Daily Times 2016d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians invited to sleep in a car for a night</td>
<td>(Radio New Zealand 2016e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour MPs seemed delighted to talk about the housing crisis, and homelessness, for several hours yesterday, as they filibusted the government’s legislation extending the life of special housing areas.</td>
<td>(Collins 2016a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the reasons that so much media attention was given to the issue of homelessness during this period was the sustained focus from politicians and political commentators. This demonstrates that homelessness became – and is – a political issue, as well as a housing issue. There are two aspects to the politicisation of homelessness that can be observed in media and in data from key informants. First, there was much debate over the nature of the government’s state responsibility to address homelessness. Second, the opposition parties in Parliament, service providers, and some members of the public used homelessness as an example of the failure of government policy.
The extent to which a government is responsible for exercising its duty of care to deal with homelessness was the topic of many opinion pieces published in the media during the period of analysis. Many of these suggested that the government was failing to address the topic sufficiently, and agreed with criticisms of the government’s perceived inability to ‘solve’ the homelessness crisis. The underlying narrative across the media echoed this sentiment, and promoted the idea that Work and Income and the Ministry of Social Development was not providing sufficient support for the homeless. For example, one article by RNZ presented the story of a family that owed Work and Income $12,000 from motel rents as they could not find emergency housing to stay in (Ashton 2016).

Key informants generally agreed with the suggestion of government failure, although there were two distinct perspectives that service providers took. Some service providers conceded that the government was, for a range of reasons, unable to provide adequate services to the homeless. Even if they were to invest more heavily in and improve service provision such as Work and Income, these key informants suggested that their organizations’ knowledge and skills made them far more effective at providing certain services than the government could ever be:

[We deal with] say half of the pie [of homelessness]. We’re good at finding rough sleepers; we’re good at supporting them … while they are rough sleeping. We’re good at then getting them into emergency accommodation. … [we’ve] been doing that for many years now. We don’t own any accommodation of our own that we can refer people to, so we’re not a housing trust or anything like that. We do half the pie, and don’t have enough resource to do that as well as we could. Of the agencies in town we probably have equal, if not the best knowledge of rough sleepers (Focus group with Tama, 2016).

Thus, service providers saw the role of government as facilitating and supporting the homeless sector through funding and policy. In contrast, other key informants believed that the volunteer sector should not be required to meet
basic housing needs for people in Aotearoa New Zealand, and that the government has an ultimate duty of care to ensure the most vulnerable people in the country are not left homeless. For some in the volunteer sector, their involvement in this process, aside from ‘filling gaps’ in the emergency housing space, is to advocate on behalf of people needing care and support:

*What we’re aiming to do is advocate with Work and Income to try and get people into a motel or into private sector housing or into state housing, but we can’t be a housing provider* (Interview with Jo, 2016).

These two fundamentally different perspectives on the role of the government in the homeless sector mean that there is likely to be ongoing debate amongst the homeless sector, and with the government itself. One key informant explained their perspective:

*We think the opportunity for government to get in there is to [provide a] state house solution. I personally think the government’s got a responsibility to do that. It’s a pretty basic human need, and pretty basic government function* (Interview with Steve, 2016).

According to another key informant, the reason for the tension is:

*Because there’s no statutory obligation to house [people] in this country ... there’s no state or local government responsibility for housing* (Interview with Jo, 2016).

Likewise, media articles address this tension, particularly with quotations from opposition politicians – which leads to the second aspect of the politicisation of homelessness. Because of significant media attention, and the various responses from the public (which are discussed below) opposition politicians used the issue of homelessness to address and criticise the government and their policy decisions (or lack of). This links closely with the above point about the responsibility of government to ensure housing, and can be seen in the many statements made by politicians particularly from the Labour and Green parties.
The use of media as a way of promoting the politicisation of an issue is not a unique phenomenon, and homelessness provides many opportunities to address some of the underlying tensions between major political parties in Aotearoa New Zealand. Aside from the above point about the government’s level of responsibility to provide housing, the issue of homelessness touches on a wide variety of issues over which major political parties disagree, such as levels of benefit support. The significance of this is that homelessness was (and still is) used as a way of opposition politicians differentiating between the two largest parties in Aotearoa New Zealand, and highlighting the policy gaps that they believed the centre-left Labour party could fill. One constant and clear example of this came from housing spokesperson for Labour, Phil Twyford, who was quoted by the Otago Daily Times saying ‘it’s time for the Government to throw off its ideological blinkers and look at other approaches [to homelessness]’ (Williams 2016). This shows the clear connection between homelessness and a perceived difference in political ideology held by the government and the opposition.

The political nature of the homelessness debate in Aotearoa New Zealand reflects, in part, an ongoing debate in literature. This debate centres on the role of neoliberalism in shaping both social welfare and urban governance. The intersection of social welfare and urban governance is where homelessness is located, and where geography in particular is able to contribute. The nature of these debates has been discussed previously in this thesis – especially in section 1.3 and throughout Chapter Four. The key aspect of neoliberalism, as it relates to the politicisation of homelessness, is the threat of increasingly controlled public access to spaces and social welfare. The erosion of social welfare in Aotearoa New Zealand in the 1990s – following privatisation in the 1980s – provided for the ‘roll back’ of the state (Kelsey 2002; 1993; Nairn et al. 2012; Peck and Tickell 2002). This created the context for diminished state responsibility for homelessness (and the subsequent increased role of the voluntary sector, as discussed below in section 6.5). Further, the roll-back of the state created a power shift in urban governance – not because of a previously strong state government in managing public space, but because of the
increasingly relevant calls for protecting private investment and ‘legitimate’ use of public space (Laurenson and Collins 2006). In this context, the politicisation of homelessness suggests an interest in reframing homelessness as a public concern – not to protect the public from homelessness, but to include the homeless as part of the public that might need protected from harm. This idea is further explored in the following section, which examines various framing techniques that pitch homelessness as a moral and ethical issue – not just economic or political.

Moral and ethical responses

Table 9: Sample of media data showing moral or ethical responses to homelessness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kiwis in this country do not want to live in a country where our people sleep in cars, where our people sleep on beaches.</td>
<td>(Heron 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Auckland marae which has opened its doors for those in need is calling on others to do the same.</td>
<td>(Haunui-Thompson 2016b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I actually feel ashamed of what our country is like. We shouldn’t be like this.</td>
<td>(Furley 2016b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because this isn’t good enough. Children should not be living in cars.</td>
<td>(Sumner 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is not the New Zealand that we were brought up in, that we’ve grown up in, and it’s not the New Zealand we want to see our children grow up in</td>
<td>(Heron 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness must end</td>
<td>(Furley 2016a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids living in vans? I’m mad as hell</td>
<td>(Sumner 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to get serious about homelessness</td>
<td>(Coffey 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forget the house – time to move into a car</td>
<td>(Manhire 2016)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A second major response to the perceived increase in homelessness, and especially the changing nature of homelessness, comes in the form of highlighting moral or ethical issues that arise from the existence of widespread homelessness. This response can be seen in a number of ways and sources, including members of the public responding to media (as observed by key informants), and opinion pieces from commentators published in media articles. This section looks at two ways that moral and ethical responses are articulated. The first of these is a sense of moral responsibility and of needing to ‘do the right
thing’ in regards to homelessness – particularly when faced with the ‘new face’ of homelessness such as children, families, and the elderly. The second is a kind of shame and embarrassment about the state of housing precarity in Aotearoa New Zealand, especially when compared to the reputation of Aotearoa New Zealand’s social welfare support through the twentieth century.

A sense of moral duty to take action or solve homelessness is implied in a number of ways through the media that was analysed. Some media articles refer to the work carried out by charity and volunteer groups (Furley 2016b; Haunui-Thompson 2016b), while other pieces of media, especially opinion columns and commentary, calls for political action and policy changes to address a moral crisis (Sumner 2016; Williams 2016). Both expressions of morality in regards to the issue of homelessness serve the same purpose: to motivate action and inspire change.

Significant attention in the media was focused on the role of Te Puea marae in Mangere Bridge, South Auckland, and part of the media attention could be seen to motivate other volunteer community groups, especially churches, to provide similar support services. For example, Radio New Zealand quoted a social worker:

My partner and I drove around town and we saw all these empty churches and we thought this is the time when the church needs to step up. This our challenge to other churches, we have so many people in the congregation and we have a need that must be met (Furley 2016b).

This kind of article, along with others like it (Campbell 2016) suggests a moral obligation on the part of churches and other community organisations to provide support for the homeless. Likewise, many other articles depict responses to homelessness that demonstrate how offering support (whether financial or in kind) to service providers is one way of responding to the needs of the people of Aotearoa New Zealand. A number of businesses in Aotearoa New Zealand also offered support, especially by providing free services and products at places like Te Puea marae (Collins 2016g; Otago Daily Times 2016a).
Further, a number of successful fundraising initiatives received significant coverage in the media, including the ‘Park up for Homes’ event\(^4\) and the LifeWise ‘Big Sleep Out’.\(^5\) As noted in Chapter Two, the LifeWise event also formed part of the field observations for this research project. These sorts of events demonstrate the level of support that agencies have from the public, which in turn indicates the extent to which people feel morally obligated to respond to homelessness. One article discusses the public’s response to a ‘Park up for Homes’ event:

*People felt they needed to support those within their community who were forced to live in their cars because they could not afford a home. Others admitted they too had been in the same situation at some point of their lives. ‘It’s a real mix [of people], but there’s a collective sense of wanting better and wanting something different for our country,’ Ms Johnston said (Otago Daily Times 2016c).*

Another participant in a separate event, quoted by Radio New Zealand, reveals how peoples’ responses to homelessness suggest that Aotearoa New Zealand society should be better equipped to support people – the second way that moral and ethical responses are expressed:

*It’s not about left versus right. It’s about us altogether as Kiwis doing something and saying we deserve better as a country (MacKenzie 2016).*

This second articulation of the moral or ethical response to homelessness is similar to the first, but suggests that Aotearoa New Zealand is not the country it used to be in providing state support. It follows the argument that there was a much more effective level of social support in Aotearoa New Zealand’s history – a

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\(^4\) This event was held in a number of cities around the country, and involved people parking their cars in carparks around the city, and sleeping in them for the night with their families. The event was mostly done to raise awareness, generate media attention, and show solidarity with families for whom sleeping in their car was their only option (Dunlop 2016).

\(^5\) The ‘Big Sleep Out’ events were held across the country as well, and normally involved people raising funds through donations and spending a night sleeping outside in a public space. The Auckland event, which I attended, was organised by LifeWise and was ‘invite-only.’ The participants were local politicians, business people, and journalists. The event also involved a number of presentations from homeless service providers, and people with personal experience of homelessness (Collins, 2016b)
fact reiterated by a number of key informants – and that contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand is far less willing to support the worst-off. This is clearly a more critical response to homelessness (or rather, to successive governments’ policies in relation to housing, poverty and inequality), and is unsurprisingly seen in a number of critical opinion columns published in the media sources that were analysed.

Even the headlines of these pieces reveal the critical nature of responses to homelessness in some media sources. The opinion pieces emphasise certain aspects of homelessness, and often include imperative language that appear to demand action from the government or from other agencies. Table 9 above summarises some of the quotations from articles that were published in the media sources during the period of analysis.

These articles demonstrate that there is a narrative in the media that suggests a ‘correct’ course of action that the Aotearoa New Zealand government should take in regards to homelessness, and they suggest various ways of ending homelessness. Many of their opinions are based on the work of service providers in developing new policy proposals for ways to address, mitigate, and eventually end homelessness.

Apart from appealing to a sense of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ in regards to action on homelessness, some media articles highlight the fact that overseas media sources published a number of stories in international media about the level of homelessness and poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand. These articles – particularly those published in The Guardian (in the UK) and on Al Jazeera (a Middle-Eastern website) – discussed the level of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand, and compared current levels of poverty and material deprivation to the reputation that Aotearoa New Zealand had for its level of social welfare support. These articles were cited by domestic media to emphasise the significance of the issue of homelessness, and were also referenced by opposition politicians and political commentators to criticise government policy.

This section has examined two of the key responses that were observed in the media articles that were analysed. These responses came in the form of political
commentary, especially from opposition politicians, and moral and ethical concern for the need to take action on homelessness. Key informants readily identified the use of media sources to drive these responses as contributing to changing perceptions of homelessness. Further, as many key informants explained, media contributed to a growing political appetite to address homelessness directly and an increased public awareness of the variety of experiences that constitute being homeless in Aotearoa New Zealand. The final section of this chapter considers two aspects of homelessness that have been shaped through the media that was analysed.

6.5 Shaping representations of homelessness

The first aspect of the changing representations of homelessness is the correlation drawn in media between being homeless and behaving in particular ways – specifically activities like begging. Second, media normalises a certain aspect of support for the homeless through entrenching the voluntary sector as the primary provider of services to the homeless, rather than focusing on government agencies that provide services.

For the majority of people in Aotearoa New Zealand, media coverage is the main way that they observe the (perceived) realities of homelessness. This makes the way that media depict homelessness important for a wider understanding of what homelessness is, or is not.

‘Behaving’ homeless

Table 10: Sample of media data showing how people ‘behave’ homeless

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mild weather has brought rough sleepers from all over New Zealand to Auckland, police say...and the presence of extra homeless people has resulted in more complaints about beggars.</td>
<td>(Tan 2016c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Christchurch City Councillor wants a group of homeless people who have set up camp in the central city to be moved on like buskers.</td>
<td>(Radio New Zealand 2016c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland homeless people seeking booze, food, cash and cigarettes appear to be targeting Asians in the city because of their generosity.</td>
<td>(Tan 2016b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland central city beggars are breaching council bylaws</td>
<td>(Tan 2016a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
up to 900 times a month, and Auckland wants powers to fine them... Mayoral candidate and Mt Roskill MP Phil Goff is warning people to beware of ‘rip off merchants’.

| Children have been sleeping in cars, garages and outside, the Salvation Army has found - and the charity is demanding a new law to ensure all children have adequate housing. | (Baker 2015) |
| He is dishevelled and unshaven: nights spent at the bus shelter by the police station are hard and cold, and begging has no easy route out. | (Campbell and Frost 2016) |

The media emphasises certain behaviours as constituting homelessness. The two main actions or behaviours that are observed as constituting homelessness in the media are begging (especially in the CBD), and sleeping in cars (especially for families in suburbs). While it is of course true that these are not the only ways that people experience homelessness, it is also the case that the media present these behaviours as the predominant way that homelessness is experienced in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The first behaviour that is used to represent homelessness is begging, and a lot of media articles discuss how regulations around begging might be used as a tool to address homelessness, particularly in the Auckland CBD. For example, a then-candidate for the Auckland mayoralty proposed a bylaw making begging illegal in the CBD, and was quoted by Radio New Zealand:

> It's not fair that some people use our streets and public places for their own ends - even if they clearly need help (Campbell and Frost 2016).

Another city councillor suggested that while a ban on begging may not be the answer, the council should instead move beggars regularly. Treating begging in the same way as buskers would minimise the ‘harm’ of begging:

> [The beggars would] not actually [be] continuing at one particular site and creating an issue for one particular area (Tan 2016b).

Other articles posed similar questions, and gave voice to the perspective that urban governance should respond to homelessness by making it more difficult and more uncomfortable for people to be homeless in the city (Kirkness 2016; Radio New Zealand 2016c; Tan 2016b). Key informants at Auckland Council
also described the range of discussions and decisions that took place at the council regarding the different opinions and perspectives about the nature of begging in the CBD. In general, the approach at Auckland Council has been to not emphasise this aspect of urban governance, and instead focus on positive and proactive approaches to homelessness.

Nevertheless, there is a consistent narrative in the media of ‘cracking down’ on begging and other undesirable uses of public space. There are three broad interpretations of begging regulations observed in media, and in key informant data. The first of these is that rules and regulations that restrict begging - or ban it all together - provide city councils and police with the legal mechanism to move homelessness away. This echoes some of the literature relating to homelessness governance and ‘revanchism’ in Chapter Four, especially section 4.5, regarding the targeting of certain ‘undesirable’ groups through controlling or regulating ‘undesirable’ behaviour (Laurenson and Collins 2007; 2006; May 2009; Smith 1998). In Aotearoa New Zealand, prohibiting begging in certain parts of the city would allow for the ‘cleansing’ of undesirable groups from spaces that are deemed to need protection. For example, an article in the New Zealand Herald described the need for greater protection for Asian stores and restaurants in Auckland, suggesting that:

*Auckland homeless people [are] seeking booze, food, cash and cigarettes [and] appear to be targeting Asians in the city because of their generosity* (Tan 2016b).

Shop owners were resorting to installing security gates and doors, and preventing ‘rough people’ from entering their stores, while calling on police and local government to provide better protections (Tan 2016b).

The relatively permissive attitude taken by Auckland Council towards certain types of begging in the CBD in particular raises a second interpretation of the role of begging regulation in Auckland. One key informant at the Auckland Council (Julie) explained that the council has been criticized for ‘making it easy to be homeless’ by allowing begging to take place. This argument is a common one in literature, suggesting that certain services that might be provided to meet
the needs of the homeless actually facilitate and increase the level of homelessness – or at least encourage people to remain homeless. Another example of this argument in the Auckland context is in relation to the proposed provision of shower and toilet facilities specifically for rough sleepers – again criticized for giving people an attractive alternative to having a home, and instead sleeping in the CBD. Olivia, a key informant at Auckland Council thoroughly dismissed this argument, claiming instead that these services are about providing a small level of comfort, and allowing begging is about giving people dignity, rather than dismissing their opportunities:

A lot of initiatives which would previously [have] been seen as enabling homelessness are now being understood as enabling dignity and wellbeing, and if you [can] try and move people along a continuum, actually by allowing people to have a shower, it’s not making more people be homeless or rough sleeping. It’s just providing them with a crucial service that’s important for their wellbeing (Olivia).

Nobody is tempted into rough sleeping by the attractive services on offer in the CBD, because being homeless is certainly uncomfortable and difficult, regardless of the level of services available. Nevertheless, this argument is likely to remain common, as begging in the CBD is a very conspicuous activity.

The final depiction of begging in the media is the assumption that begging is an effective tool to mitigate peoples’ precarious experience of homelessness. That is, media coverage of begging often assumes that making it easier to beg in the city would make it easier to survive homelessness – regardless of what the homeless population of Auckland actually needs or wants. For example, a homeless person interviewed by Radio New Zealand explained that begging does not often provide much assistance anyway:

Begging’s not that good…It’s never going to get you anything… You need something where you’re developing and growing, something where you can succeed or move forward - or you’re always going to be on the streets (Campbell and Frost 2016).
This is why regulation of urban space alone is not entirely sufficient to eradicate homelessness – support from service providers such as the City Mission is required to meet the needs of the homeless population. As will be discussed in the next section, the media often assumes that the experiences of homelessness are similar or homogenous. Thus, the assumption is that because many people beg in the CBD, begging must be a good way to meet the needs of the homeless. Though some peoples’ livelihoods might depend on their begging activity, not all people experiencing homelessness are able to – or want to – spend their time begging in the CBD. This is particularly the case for families and young homeless people, for whom the CBD is not a space they feel comfortable occupying for long periods of time. This also speaks to the need and value of a framework of multiple precarities that can be used to evaluate and communicate complex situations.

The second behaviour that is likewise used to represent homelessness, particularly in recent media concerning Auckland, is that of sleeping in cars. In contrast to begging as a representative behaviour, sleeping in cars is not presented as a survival strategy or tactic – but rather as an example of the extreme consequence of a lack of housing for families in particular. Further, sleeping in cars is not suggested to be especially problematic for a sense of public order or ‘cleanliness’ in the way that begging is. For this reason, the majority of media coverage emphasises the way that people sleeping in cars have no other options. This frames sleeping in cars as behaviour of the ‘undeserving’ homeless, compared to begging as a problematic and undesirable activity. This contrast is further discussed below.

Like begging, representations of homelessness as sleeping in cars assigns a shared experience to all homeless people – or at least all of those who fit within the ‘new face of homelessness.’ In contrast to beggars though, this group is made up of people whose reasons for experiencing homelessness are explained as out of their control. For example, an article in the Otago Daily Times told the story of a family who ended up sleeping in their car after the city council failed to repair a council-owned water mains pipe that leaked, causing irreparable damage to their home (Elder 2016). Thus, sleeping in cars is presented in a sympathetic
manner, while begging might be presented as an almost predatory behaviour for people to carry out, taking advantage of the city itself to get by. The media in Aotearoa New Zealand used the evocative image of families and children sleeping in cars to highlight the housing crisis and shortage of accommodation. This image was repeated through numerous interviews with different families who were living in cars – such as the 8-person family of TA, who lived in a van for months (Radio New Zealand 2016b). Both of TA’s parents worked, and TA herself was studying every night by torchlight to sit an exam for entrance to St Cuthbert’s College – a position she narrowly missed out on. It was further emphasised through the work of volunteer organisations that organised events where people slept in their own cars to raise awareness for service providers – such as the ‘Park Up for Homes’ event that took place across the country.

A second idea that was emphasised through the media coverage of people sleeping in cars was the effects that homelessness had on children. Many of the interviews mentioned above involved interviewing children, who explained the difficulty of living in a car (Radio New Zealand 2016b). These difficulties included the need to shower at a parent’s work, eat takeaways and canned food for every meal, staying awake at night due to younger siblings coughing, and the struggle to do homework due to having nowhere to read and write and not light. As mentioned above, the strategic use of these evocative and true images and stories were designed to generate a sympathetic response from readers, and motivated reactions from various parties (including the government). Furthermore, the coverage of working families with young children emphasised the difference between the ‘new face of homelessness’ and a more orthodox depiction of homelessness in the CBD.

The media’s coverage of homelessness also establishes families sleeping in cars as a pseudo-location where homelessness is found, and sets up a narrative where homelessness can be addressed by ‘knocking on car windows’ (Elder 2016) and moving people from a car to a home – if they want to. This narrative was presented explicitly by the then-Prime Minister John Key who described how the
Ministry of Social Development was involved with service providers in offering help to people sleeping in cars. However, in a more implicit way, by describing homelessness as occurring in cars in Auckland, the media - and Prime Minister – suggest that homelessness is an experience of not having somewhere better to sleep. However, as Chapter Five has demonstrated, homelessness is not merely the lack of a house to sleep in, but is made up of a series of precarities. This means that the suggestion that homelessness (and all the precarities that go with it) can be solved overnight (literally by a night in a bed) does not take account of the many intersecting vulnerabilities and insecurities that people experience – including a possible distrust of government agencies that offer sometimes unwanted help.

Finally, as has been touched on above, media coverage of the ‘new face of homelessness’ emphasises and strengthens a dichotomy between the ‘deserving’ and the ‘underserving.’ The deserving homeless are those that participate in behaviours seen to cause or represent homelessness (such as drug abuse or begging). The underserving homeless, by comparison, are the perceived victims of a lack of affordable housing or a lack of jobs. This dichotomy has been discussed in detail in literature examining policy approaches to welfare recipients (see for example Applebaum 2001; Arneson 1997). The ‘undeserving’ narrative establishes that some people are ‘poor’ (or in this interpretation, homeless) through no fault of their own, and therefore require assistance to mitigate the precarities that shape their experience of homelessness. Throughout media coverage of homeless behaviour, this dichotomy can be seen – contrasting the undesirable beggars of Auckland’s CBD to the pitiable and sympathy-inducing families sleeping in cars. The beggars and sometimes violent homeless people that target Asian stores to demand alcohol are presented as having nothing in common with the families living in vans and showering at their workplaces, for example. In reality, key informants involved

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6 This story was subsequently shown to be untrue and disputed by the service provider (Salvation Army) that PM John Key alleged worked with the Government to offer help to people sleeping in cars (New Zealand Herald 2016d)
in service provision saw both groups as experiencing similar homelessness, albeit with varying specific precarities.

**Entrenching the volunteer sector**

Table 11: Sample of media data showing how the volunteer sector is entrenched in homeless service provision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The church needs to step up</td>
<td>(Furley 2016a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Homeless] families were now benefitting from the generosity of volunteers - and donations of food, bedding and clothing from the community.</td>
<td>(Campbell 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The free lunch pack initiative was organised by a group established by Ms Tamaki, Feed a Family Northland, which is a branch of an Auckland charitable trust created to help struggling families and the homeless.</td>
<td>(Collins 2016c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Puea Marae, in Mangere, says it is willing to help out up to 100 people who have been sleeping in their cars or struggling to find somewhere safe to stay, and other marae are also considering what they can do to help.</td>
<td>(Radio New Zealand 2016a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the ground we learned a lot. We learned the marae was a better front door for this social service provision, it took away all the visual barriers and allowed agencies and marae whanau to get on with doing what needed to be done.</td>
<td>(Dennis 2016)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A final way that media coverage shapes representations of homelessness is through its depiction of service providers and the emphasis on the volunteer sector and charity organizations. Again, this provides an opportunity to examine homelessness and intersections with broader processes of neoliberalism. Media emphasises volunteer service providers and charities by focusing specifically on stories that involve people receiving support or help from volunteer agencies, such as the Auckland City Mission (Bramwell 2016b) or Te Puea Marae (Radio New Zealand 2016g). This is further enhanced by the fact that many of these organisations are relatively vocal in their criticism of government policy in relation to support services from the government.

The first result of this kind of media attention is the belief that central or local government do not have a responsibility for mitigating the causes of homelessness, and are not required to provide comprehensive support services. That is, rather than suggesting that solving homelessness requires more
sufficient welfare support for the homeless, or better policy approaches to housing provision, media coverage focuses on the non-governmental charitable organisations that meet some of the needs of the homeless. While many debate the extent to which governments are indeed responsible for the welfare of their citizens like this, media coverage emphasizing charitable work and the volunteer sector working with the homeless implies that personal responsibility to volunteer or donate money to these causes might in fact be more important than targeted government policies.

The second result of media coverage is the suggestion that the best – and possibly only – way out of homelessness is through engagement with a homeless support agency. This is a similar point to the one above, but differs in the sense that the media has presented a number of ‘success stories’ of people who have received support from volunteer agencies and have moved into more permanent housing situations. The effect of this is that it implies that charities are the best organisations to deliver the support services that homeless people need, and that homeless people should depend on volunteer non-governmental agencies for their support. This creates an expectation for these organisations, even though many key informants discussed how they are unable to meet all the demand for their services and believe the government (through the Ministry of Social Development, for example) is much better equipped and resourced to deliver particular services. For example, one key informant explained that the biggest problem was how long the government’s emergency housing pipeline is:

*The bureaucracy can be fixed. They need to get back to the KISS approach – keep it simple, stupid! I think what’s really got hard is just [keeping] peoples’ portfolios moving along a chain. [They] just need to falter, or there to be one gap, and you lose ... the person, they drop them off the waiting list* (Interview with Tania, 2016).

For Tania, the biggest need was not necessarily more funding for her own work, but rather more permanent houses for her to move people into.

The role of the volunteer sector is discussed in great detail in literature, especially regarding the way in which market ideals, and neoliberalism in
particular, crowd out and replace the values of community volunteerism (Dean 2015b; Georgeou and Engel 2011; Hoffman and John 2017; Larner and Craig 2005; Milligan 2007; Rosol 2012; Sandel 2012). In the context of the homeless sector, the tension and interaction between volunteerism and neoliberalism is two fold. First, the rise of ‘managerialism’ puts immense pressure on volunteer agencies to look and function like corporate entities and to conform with market ideals like efficiency, competition, and appropriate compensation (Georgeou and Engel 2011; Sandel 2012). Second, and as an extension of this, the volunteer sector can be understood as part of an outsourcing strategy of neoliberal approaches to state services (Rosol 2012). That is, volunteer organisations, such as homeless agencies, can be considered the pseudo-privatised service providers when they are organised by market values. The ongoing privatisation of the service sector can therefore, without actual privatisation, be folded into the processes of ‘roll-back,’ and ‘roll-out’ neoliberalism (Milligan 2007; Peck and Tickell 2002; Rosol 2012). This refers to the ‘roll-back’ of the state’s involvement in providing services and structuring society, followed by the ‘roll-out’ of privatised (or pseudo-privatised, in the case of the volunteer sector) replacements to the service sector.

The ongoing coverage of volunteer support services in the media is likely to further entrench the belief that volunteer agencies are the best way to address homelessness, which puts greater pressure on the already under-resourced organisations. Moreover, by highlighting the way that people needed support from non-governmental services, the media can imply that peoples’ needs are better met by charities and non-profits than by the government – making it less likely for people to approach MSD or Work and Income for assistance, and turning to churches, marae, or other agencies instead. For example, many media articles discussed the already high level of mistrust people had for government departments. Radio New Zealand interviewed a service provider who said:

[We] declined an offer by MSD officials to accompany them, as many of the people [we work with] had a deep distrust of government officials (Collins 2016b).
Likewise, a key informant from a government department, agreed:

_We certainly are aware that people, especially vulnerable people, have a bit of fear or a mistrust of agencies and organisation, and sometimes don’t represent themselves, don’t come along to those agencies, for whatever reason_ (Mark).

This paints a picture of a volunteer sector that is both ill-equipped to fully deal with the scale of the problem, but also struggling to engage with central government for many reasons. This chapter has highlighted the role of the media in perpetuating this ‘service gap’ through emphasising the work that volunteers and charities do, in contrast to the failings of government agencies. The final section of this chapter concludes the media analysis and reflects on how the final research question was answered.

### 6.6 Conclusions

This chapter has examined some of the representations of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand in the media, and has assessed some of the effects of these representations on peoples’ understanding of the nature, causes, and consequences of homelessness. The analysis revealed similar, but occasionally different, narratives about homelessness, including the changing face of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand. Further, through examination of media representations of homelessness, it is possible to see some responses to homelessness – specifically the use of homelessness as a political tool, and arguing for moral and ethical responsibilities to take action regarding homelessness. Finally, media representations have also shaped how homelessness is understood. Some of these representations distort the reality of how and who homelessness effects, and who should be responsible for homelessness.

This chapter has referred to the multiple precarities of homelessness described and presented in Chapter Five as a framework from which to understand homelessness. When considering, for example, how the media makes assumptions about how a typical homeless person behaves, the framework of
multiple precarities can be used to illustrate the problematic simplifications in a representation of homelessness. Furthermore, the analysis of media articles given in this chapter, and the discussion of representations of homelessness presents another opportunity to justify and explain the framework using the realities of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand. The development of any theoretical framework requires its application to the real world, in order to test the applicability and accuracy of the framework and its features. This chapter has illustrated how a holistic approach to understanding homelessness (such as a framework of multiple precarities) allows for the thorough examination of homelessness, and can provide insights into the experience of being homeless, through the eyes of the media and the greater public. This ultimately shapes the opportunities for policy and approaches to mitigate and end homelessness.

The final chapter of this thesis concludes by summarizing and justifying the key features of the framework of multiple precarities of homelessness. This is further contextualised by referring to ideas about meeting the gaps that exist between the precarious experiences of homelessness and support services available. This forms the basis of a series of policy recommendations that arise from this research project and thesis, and a number of recommendations for future research to better understand the multiple precarities of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand.
Chapter Seven: Conclusions and recommendations

7.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes this thesis in three parts. The first of these presents some of the policy recommendations that arose from the research project. Some of these recommendations are based on direct comments from key informants, while others are drawn from literature concerning best practice approaches to homeless policy. Other recommendations are based on a combination of the two, and seek to mitigate the multiple senses of precarity that were perceived to be experienced in homelessness. The policy recommendations vary in how they might be implemented; some require direct intervention or adjustment from central government, others call for greater involvement in policy by local government, and still others emphasise the role of non-governmental agencies such as the Auckland City Mission or Lifewise. An overarching narrative throughout these recommendations is that the Aotearoa New Zealand government needs to take a far greater role in all levels of homeless policy – from strategic planning and working with stakeholders or agencies, to greater funding and more directly delivering key services. This was a commonly agreed upon perspective for many key informants who work in the homeless sector, such as Tama, Jo, and Tania, and reveals the extent to which the sector sees a significant gap in the involvement of central government. The six recommendations presented below are in no particular order, and there is no evaluation of the relative importance or weighting of each. Rather, the recommendations reflect the gaps that the research has identified in homeless policy, with regards to the data gathered from key informants, and the theoretical development of the framework of multiple precarities.

Second, this chapter is provides a summary of the research questions set out in Chapter One, and how this thesis has answered these questions. Third, the chapter reflects on the thesis’ development of a theoretical framework of multiple precarities. This summary reviews and reflects on the framework’s ability to be used to identify and discuss broader contexts of precarity or
vulnerability. Not all precarities (or interpretations of precarity) are included in the framework, so it is important to consider the extent to which the framework is useful for talking about precarity. This discussion is linked to broader contexts, beyond homelessness and precarity.

Finally, this chapter points towards possibilities for future study that further examine how precarity might be used as a concept to explore vulnerability and insecurity. These proposals for future research are based on potential limitations of the study presented in this thesis, as well as identified ways in which further investigation may emphasise or expand on findings already discussed.

7.2 Recommendations

The initial goal of this thesis set out to develop and test a new conceptual framework of multiple precarities, and then apply the various aspects of the framework through the context of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand. This has been the goal of the substantive chapters of the thesis and is reflected upon in below in sections 7.3 and 7.4 of this chapter. This section, however, offers six recommendations that touch on some of the further findings of the research. These recommendations are, in essence, a way to respond to the participants of the research project (such as service providers and other key informants) using the substantive work of the thesis – the framework of multiple precarities. Far more could be said about each of these recommendations than this section is able, and each recommendation is, I would argue, worthy of substantial consideration through policy analysis. The following list provides a conclusion to this thesis by reflecting on the findings, and by looking forward to ways that this research could contribute to further policy development.

**Recommendation one: homeless policy should take account of multiple precarities of homelessness**

This thesis has both reviewed and demonstrated how the concept of precarity can be useful for considering vulnerability and insecurity. In the case of homelessness, the framework of multiple precarities offers an opportunity to develop and assess policy that might address the multiple causes and
experiences of precariousness. That is, the experience of homelessness is not just the experience of having no home – it involves many intersecting and overlapping precarious experiences. A framework that provides a way of mapping and conceptualising these precarities is useful for evaluating proposed policies or different options for policy-makers.

Further, this thesis has argued that an intersectional approach to precarity is actually vital for understanding the experience of homelessness. That means that policies are unlikely to be successful in addressing the various sources of precarity if they do not take account of the many ways that people can experience homelessness. To use this recommendation, policy makers should first recognise the existence of intersectionality when it comes to identifying and evaluating vulnerability and insecurity (which might be understood as precarity). Second, the policy-making process should take account of these multiple precarities. For example, a lack of home is not the only ‘problem’ that homeless policy should seek to address, and therefore not the only criterion against which policy should be evaluated and assessed.

**Recommendation two: a more holistic understanding of housing vulnerability is needed**

In a similar vein to recommendation one above, there is a need for homelessness to be understood and articulated in new ways. First, homelessness is not just the experience of sleeping rough, but should be interpreted as encompassing the ways that people can be vulnerable with regard to housing. This includes the many situations that might be considered ‘normal’ in places with extreme pressure on housing, such as overcrowding, staying with friends and family, or sleeping in cars and garages.

Second, definitions of housing vulnerability need to take account of the many interconnected vulnerabilities that might stem from – or contribute to – homelessness. This could include financial vulnerability and the inability to pay rent, or it might include social breakdown of relationships with partners or family. Further, it could also include the impacts of being homeless on children, and their education or health outcomes. This far more holistic approach to
housing vulnerability does not make it easier to deal with, but it does ensure that policy approaches to homelessness do not miss the reality of experiencing housing vulnerability.

**Recommendation three: identify critical points on the multiple precarities pathway**

Figure 3 on page 67, and sections 5.3 and 5.4 give an indication of the way that there are multiple ways into and out of homelessness. The framework of multiple precarities of homelessness refers to these as ‘precarious pathways,’ and includes aspects of vulnerability such as a lack of income, mental health, and the breakdown of relationships. The framework also includes the pathways out of homelessness, such as giving people access to an increased income. This third recommendation suggests that identifying these pathways into and out of homelessness is critical for constructing policy interventions that can reduce the incidence or severity of homelessness.

This is the case because key points along these pathways (such as a sudden loss of income through losing a job) are the critical points at which intervention can prevent a person or family from slipping further into homelessness. Likewise, by understanding the nature of pathways out of homelessness, support agencies (whether state support, or not) can better identify how and when to support people in order to maximise the chance that they will ‘escape’ homelessness. The only way to identify and understand these critical points is through gaining knowledge about the varied experiences of homelessness – which would require good sharing of knowledge between agencies, and with the government.

**Recommendation four: develop an operational definition of homelessness**

An operational definition of homelessness would focus on the experience of homelessness, as well as the potential range of responses to homelessness – both by individuals and by support agencies. Currently, the definition used by almost all service providers and government agencies is based on the Statistics New Zealand definition, and is mostly accepted as fit-for-purpose. However, this thesis has identified that homelessness is not a singular experience, but rather
made up of a range of intersecting precarities. Thus, a definition of homelessness that is made up of a typology and used to count and categorise homelessness is not sufficient. Instead, a new definition that works to identify causes, experiences, and pathways of homelessness would be of more use. This recommendation is an example of how central government, local governments, and support agencies can all contribute and engage in homeless policy.

**Recommendation five: policies such as Housing First have the potential to address multiple precarities**

Alternative homeless policies, such as Housing First (introduced in Chapter Four) have the potential to mitigate the precarities of homelessness through addressing multiple precarities at once and targeting support to the person. The development of these policies can be achieved in conjunction with a definition of homelessness that better addresses the experience of homelessness. That is, a more operational (rather than statistical) definition of homelessness naturally leads to the emphasis of homeless policy that seeks to address the multiple ways that a person experiences vulnerability of housing.

Housing First is attractive in this regard because it meets housing needs, first and foremost, which is unsurprisingly identified by key informants as the biggest and most urgent need to those experiencing homelessness. But more than merely meeting the need for immediate housing, the Housing First model discussed by key informants (such as Steve and Richard – who both are involved in Housing First-style projects) provides a context and location within which other needs are met. International literature (as well as evidence given by key informants) suggest that Housing First is more effective at providing support and long-term solutions to those experiencing homelessness, and is far more cost-effective than providing a ‘scatter-gun’ approach to support services (Baker and Evans 2016; Tsemberis 2010; Tsemberis et al. 2004). That is, Housing First can enable targeted and accurate social support, based on centring support in a person’s home, rather than spread across a city. Again, this is an opportunity for multiple actors to collaborate through mixed funding models and cross-sector engagement in homeless policy. Further, there is significant value in folding Housing First (or other specific policies like this) into wider housing policies,
rather than separating housing issues from homelessness. This would see Housing First as an intervention in the housing market at one end of the spectrum, with other forms of intervention (such as increasing supply of housing, or using tax and levy signals to discourage speculation) intervening at the other end of the housing market.

**Recommendation six: social support needs to be better integrated and connected**

On a more practical level, the final recommendation of this thesis touches on policy needs that key informants identified. The first of these is more housing that is more accessible, and that offers more security. This can be met through aggressive construction of housing by the government, dramatically increased numbers of social housing provided with the state as landlord, and greater funding for emergency housing providers that can meet immediate needs for those experiencing vulnerability of housing. Second, greater financial support, especially for working families, can assist in reducing the financial pressure that can lead to homelessness.

In a related sense, there is likely to be a need for existing social support to be better connected. Greater integration and development of state social support would function to better address the multiple precarious experiences of homelessness (or any other situation that people find themselves needing support for). The above recommendation for housing policies like Housing First suggest an integrated approach to housing support, but this kind of holistic approach to social support is likely to better meet the needs of those that are most affected by homelessness.
7.3 Research questions

The research questions for this thesis were set out and explained in Chapter One. This section reflects on how the preceding chapters have answered the research questions, and summarises how this thesis has been framed in relation to each question. The research questions are:

1. What are the specific features of a framework of multiple precarities of homelessness, and how can this be contextualized in Aotearoa New Zealand?

2. How can a framework of multiple precarities be used to explain and understand homelessness?
   a. What types of homelessness can be considered precarious?
   b. How do different types and experiences of homelessness intersect?
   c. What are the pathways in and out of homelessness, and how are they made more or less precarious?
   d. What are the representations of homelessness, and how do they align with other understandings of homelessness?

Chapter Five addressed the first research question by describing the features of a framework of multiple precarities of homelessness. This framework draws together literature regarding both precarity (reviewed in Chapter Three) and homelessness (Chapter Four). Further, the framework of multiple precarities is contextualised and located in the specific case study of Auckland, as the largest city in Aotearoa New Zealand. The use of a single case study throughout this thesis has allowed for a detailed and in-depth examination of a theoretical framework – by grounding it in a practical situation.

The framework of multiple precarities provides a holistic and intersectional lens through which peoples’ experiences and situations can be viewed. In the context of homelessness, this gives users of the framework a new way to conceptualise and consider the causes, experiences, and pathways of homelessness. Chapter Five provided an in-depth account of the specific features of the framework of multiple precarities of homelessness, including the integral ‘precarious pathways’ that people move along – either into or our of homelessness.
However, the framework also provides a way of including many ‘intersecting precarities’ that refer not just to homelessness, but to the multiple ways that many people experience vulnerability and insecurity. In homelessness, these multiple intersecting precarities can be emphasised or minimised, depending on peoples’ individual circumstances. Examples of these intersecting precarities are the experiences of Tangata Whenua, and the complex interactions with employment, education, and social welfare institutions.

The second research question asks about specific aspects of the framework of multiple precarities. Most of the sub-questions are answered in Chapter Five also. Throughout Chapter Five, precariousness is presented as both a spectrum and a network: peoples’ experiences can be more or less precarious (in the case of moving along ‘precarious pathways’ of homelessness), and their experiences of homelessness can be shaped by multiple intersecting precarities (such as social isolation, an eroded sense of place, or insecure housing). Thus, the answer to question 2a is that all homelessness is precarious – or at least can be understood through the framework of multiple precarities. However, not all homeless people might identify as being ‘precarious,’ and some key informants pointed out that the intersectional and holistic ideas of the framework may not reflect how people experience their own sense of homelessness.

Question 2b asks how precarities intersect, and Chapter Five addressed this in a theoretical sense, as well as reflecting on the comments of key informants. While the theoretical framework of multiple precarities implies that intersectionality is an integral part of homelessness, Chapter Five also pointed out that key informants consider a lack of money, mental health problems, and the breakdown of relationships as three triggers for people ‘falling’ into homelessness. Not all homelessness is caused by a complex of insecurities and vulnerabilities, and for service providers in particular, there is often one key aspect of a person’s life that defines being homeless.

Question 2c was also answered in Chapter Five, and drew heavily on the work of service providers who were key informants for this research. Key informants identified ways that people move into – and out of homelessness, and pointed
out the ‘roadblocks’ that could prevent people from seeking help or assistance to do so. This research question is perhaps the most practically-aligned, which is why the work of the homeless sector is an integral part of understanding the pathways out of homelessness. Using a framework of multiple precarities to view homelessness suggests that there may be more than one way ‘out of homelessness.’ Key informants agreed with this, although many pointed out that there are particular ‘intersecting precarities’ that can make it particularly hard to move out of homelessness, especially problems with institutions like Work and Income, Housing New Zealand, and access to education.

Chapter Six reflected further on the framework of multiple precarities through the lens of media representations of homelessness, and answered the final research question 2d. After using the framework to examine homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand, Chapter Six evaluated how representations of homelessness in mainstream media aligned with the perceived experience of homelessness. Chapter Six was based on a media analysis, which found that media in Aotearoa New Zealand was beginning to emphasise a ‘new face’ of homelessness that was increasingly ‘expected’ or ‘normalised,’ as a result of high population growth and rising house prices. Further, media analysis suggested a range of reactions and responses to homelessness that reveal the ways in which homelessness – sometimes as a ‘political football’ with which to criticise policy-makers, and sometimes as an opportunity to reflect on the moral and ethical obligations of people. Finally, Chapter Six examined the way in which media was found to emphasise certain ways of ‘behaving’ homeless, and the importance of the volunteer sector’s role in addressing homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand.

7.4 Reflecting on the framework of multiple precarities

The framework of multiple precarities must be accurately contextualised and used in reference to wider processes and realities in order to be a valuable and useful theoretical tool. This is an integral part of determining a theoretical tool’s value, and in this instance requires discussion of broad systemic process that the framework refers to in more specific terms. The framework of multiple precarities does not (and cannot) talk about all the ways that homelessness is
experienced, or all the ways that people experience vulnerability and insecurity. Rather, as has been emphasised throughout the thesis, the framework points towards a conceptualisation of precarious vulnerability that is centred on homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand. In other contexts, this framework might look entirely different due to cultural, social, or political situations. This section makes three reflections on the use of the framework of multiple precarities and how it can be used to identify and discuss the broader context of precarity.

First, the framework of multiple precarities presented throughout this thesis emphasises a holistic understanding of precarity. Both the term ‘multiple’ and the way that it is conceptualized in figures one and three suggest clearly that precarity is not a simple or single category. This is important for the ongoing use of the framework, or for re-contextualising the framework to examine some other experience. A holistic approach to precarity always asks ‘what else?’ and suggests that there are many simultaneous ways that precarious experiences intersect and interact. The framework of multiple precarities employed throughout this thesis, while focused specifically on homelessness, suggests that precarity is an interrelated and always contextualised experience that is never static. However, a holistic approach should not over-emphasise interconnectedness as people often experience particular precarities far more keenly or sharply than any other that might be described. A holistic framework provides the freedom to include multiple precarities in a very intersectional way, but it is important to recognise that peoples’ own perceptions should shape a framework, especially if it is contributing to an operational approach to precarity. As is described in section 7.5 below, further research that includes the perspectives of homeless people would contribute to the development of the framework.

Second, along with being holistic in nature, the framework of multiple precarities is inclusive and open, rather than prescriptive. This means that the framework of multiple precarities can be used to talk about precarity in a broader sense, by remaining receptive to new forms of precarity. For future implementations, the ability to be flexible and inclusive means the framework can always be relevant and applicable. Using a framework can be a risky way to describe a dynamic and
Intersectional field such as precarity, because it can imply that experiences are allocated into discrete fields or categories. However, with the holistic approach outlined above, the framework of multiple precarities can be used to include more and more ways of identifying precarities. Further, the framework identifies processes and pathways of precarity, rather than categories. This ensures that it is not prescriptive and does not try and fit a person's experience into a narrowly defined category of precarity.

Finally, throughout this thesis, the framework of multiple precarities has intensely (and almost exclusively) focused on homelessness. This has been advantageous for two reasons. It has narrowed the scope of research, and enabled a focused examination of one particular precarious experience. This has led to a number of recommendations about homelessness, set out above in section 7.2. In addition, it has provided a people-focused way to contextualise and ground the theoretical work done in designing the framework of multiple precarities. This gives the research a 'hook' on which to hang the theoretical framework, and provides evidence for the validity of the framework for understanding and conceptualising precarity. There are important messages that can be drawn from the research that link to more general processes and structural shifts that could be part of a broad set of precarities. The following three sections briefly link the framework of multiple precarities to processes of increasing housing unaffordability, erosion of social welfare, and the precaritisation or work. These links point to opportunities for future research that could apply the framework of multiple precarities in a less specific context.

**Precarities of home are increased by housing unaffordability**

The focus of this thesis has specifically been on developing a framework of multiple precarities. This has been contextualised by applying the framework to homelessness in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Despite this specific context, it is possible to draw some more general links to processes of decreased access to housing for many (if not most) of society. This goes beyond homelessness, in a narrow sense of the word, and could apply to a far wider population base. There has been significant attention paid to increasing housing unaffordability in Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly in relation to centres of high growth like
Auckland and Wellington. These also happen to be the places where homelessness has been observed in greatest numbers, suggesting (as key informants, such as Michael, agreed) that homelessness is the extreme end of the ‘housing crisis.’

There are two aspects to the way that precarities of home could be described. The first of these is the increasing cost of housing, especially in relation to the household incomes of the poorest households. The internationally accepted way of measuring affordability of housing is the ‘median multiple,’ which measures the ratio of median income to median house price (Cox and Pavletich 2009; Murphy 2014). In December 2016, the median multiple for all of Aotearoa New Zealand was 5.97 (that is, a house cost nearly six times the median income). The median multiple for Auckland was 9.33, suggesting a significantly more distorted ratio between housing and incomes (interest.co.nz 2017). According to international use of this measure, housing is considered ‘affordable’ when the multiple is 3.0 or less – suggesting that housing is extremely unaffordable in Aotearoa New Zealand (Cox and Pavletich 2009).

Another way of looking at housing affordability is measuring the percentage of annual household income that is spent on housing – again, 30 per cent is considered ‘affordable’(Cox and Pavletich 2009; Murphy 2014). This figure is useful because it includes households that rent, and because it can be separated to identify low-income households that are more vulnerable to precarities of housing. In 2015, housing costs were 20 per cent for all households (nearly doubled since the 1980s). Costs for the bottom quintile (lowest 20 per cent of households) were 54 per cent of their after-tax incomes (Ministry of Social Development 2016). This again suggests that housing is significantly unaffordable whether or not people are buying or renting homes, and especially for low-income households. While much more could be studied and written about housing unaffordability for low-income households, it is clear that the framework of multiple precarities could be used to describe how precarities of home can contribute to a person’s (or household’s) sense of vulnerability and insecurity.
The second aspect of precarities of home in Aotearoa New Zealand can be understood through the lens of generational disparity. While distinctly harder to measure or quantify than the above form of precarity of home, there exists a number of differences in access to housing for young households in Aotearoa New Zealand now than there were in the past (Carroll et al. 2011). Some of these include less affordable housing, access to loans, stability of income, access to support from government in the form of state housing, and the fact that households that already own property are more able to purchase further property than young households (Eaqub and Eaqub 2015; Parker and Council). The framework of multiple precarities, as explained through this thesis, could offer a way of conceptualising the many ways that young households today face different challenges that previous generations did not. This connects to the points made in section 1.3 about the experience that young generations have had of neoliberal reforms in the 1980s in Aotearoa New Zealand (Atwool 1999; Dean 2015a; Nairn et al. 2012). An overall assessment of the difference between young households today and older generations (such as the ‘baby boomer’ generation) would suggest that households experience more precarities of home in many ways – justifying the possible use of a framework of multiple precarities to examine in greater detail.

**Long-term erosion of welfare creates income precarity**

The erosion of welfare benefits has been discussed throughout the thesis, particularly in sections 1.3, which provided a historical context for studying precarity in Aotearoa New Zealand; and 4.3, which introduced conceptual definitions of homelessness. While it is a theme throughout the thesis – and key informants discussed the way that the erosion of welfare relates directly to homelessness, it is also another way that the framework of multiple precarities could be used. This could be done in the context of ‘income precarity’ – reflecting on and seeking to understand people’s sense of vulnerability and insecurity in relation to their household income and expenditure. Naturally, this overlaps significantly with the context described above in relation to housing, or even to the context of this thesis in relation to homelessness. Likewise, it could overlap with the discussion below on the precaritisation of work. Nonetheless,
examining precarities of income through a framework of multiple precarities could give a useful insight to how people navigate and experience the current landscape of state support.

There is a complex network of state support benefits or policies available to people, including in-work tax credits like Working for Families, job-seeker benefits, accommodation supplements, minimum wages, progressive tax brackets, state housing with Housing New Zealand via the Ministry of Social Development, and disability benefits. Though there is a range of benefits available, key informants (Jo, Steve, and Tania) and literature suggest that the level of support in Aotearoa New Zealand is significantly lower or harder to access than it ever has been (Kelsey 2015b; 1993; Nana 2013; Peck 2013; Peck and Tickell 2012). However, all of these seek to address the multiple causes of people’s hardship, so it is likely that a holistic approach to discussing people’s precarious experiences of income would be beneficial. Likewise, this approach could offer insight into the potential merits or problems of a policy like a universal basic income (UBI) that seeks to mitigate potential aspects of income precarity by guaranteeing a minimum income for all.

**Increased precaritisation of work leads to uncertain employment**

The final link that can be drawn from this thesis to wider processes or systems is perhaps less of an original contribution as the above two sections suggest, but is more of a return to the concept of the precariat. As explained throughout Chapter Three, precarity is used in literature to describe a person’s relationship to a labour market that is increasingly flexible, casual, non-standard, and likely to be constantly changing (Munck 2013; Seymour 2012; Standing 2014; 2011; Trott 2013). While increased labour market flexibility provides benefits to the economy, with regard to better skills matching and efficient allocation or labour resources, this benefit comes with a perceived cost to workers of uncertainty and increased vulnerability. Precarious work suggests that the people who perform the work are guaranteed fewer minimum standards of employment, less remuneration for their labour, and weakened bargaining power – and described as an emergent class called the precariat. The interpretation and use of precarity in this thesis is complementary to the concept of the precariat, and suggests that
precarity can be experienced in multiple ways and in multiple places – not just at work.

The labour market cuts across many spheres of a person's life. It sets household incomes, especially in a society with eroded social welfare support. It determines where a person lives, and how they and their family spend their time. It can contribute, sometimes negatively, to a person’s health and wellbeing, and it can be the primary location of a person's social circles. With the ongoing importance of work in almost everyone's lives – despite an apparent casualisation of work – it is therefore a critical aspect to study, and remains a key context in which to place the framework of multiple precarities. Again, this thesis can contribute in a complementary way to wider discussions by examining how multiple precarities of homelessness can reflect and shape the multiple precarities of work.

7.5 Possibilities for future research

All research projects have limitations and can point to possibilities for further research and study. Many of the methodological limitations of this project were set out in Chapter Two, particularly the methods section 2.4. However, there remain two more general limitations for this study, on which further research might choose to focus, or at least make explicit mention.

The first of these is the fact that this research project took a slightly more distant approach to data collection in regards to the experience of homelessness. This was, in part, due to practical limitations of the project – such as resources, time, and the difficulty of entering a sector such as homelessness without a network of contacts. However, it was also intentional in many ways, because the focus on service providers allowed for a very general and broad examination of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand. Service providers and other sector experts were able to quickly provide useful data and comments, and also could contribute positively to the direction of the research itself.

Future research would be able to add significant value to the framework of multiple precarities of homelessness by providing detail through specific and
close engagement with people experiencing homelessness. A more explicit focus on the experience of homelessness would likely give new perspectives to some of the aspects discussed throughout this thesis, and would also add validity to the claims of the framework to capture the multiple vulnerabilities and insecurities of homelessness. For these reasons, the focus on service providers as data sources is both a limitation of the present study, but a significant opportunity for future research.

The second reflection is that there are many more opportunities to examine other precarious experiences in other contexts. Again due to practical limitations, the research focused specifically on homelessness in Auckland. The reflective nature of the research enabled the research to be led by participants, and this meant that there was significant attention paid to the way that financial precarity (or poverty) and ethnicity (particularly Māori) intersected with the precarious experience of homelessness. In future research, there is the clear possibility to add to the intersectional framing of precarity by exploring the potential of the framework in other ways. For example, the experiences of migrants and refugees could be ‘overlaid’ using the framework – as could the experiences of people with mental illness, disabilities, other ethnic minorities, and members of the LGBTQ community. All of these other experiences or categories would provide unique interpretations of the framework of multiple precarities and could provide new insights into homelessness. Likewise, the framework of multiple precarities might offer new ways of identifying, describing, or otherwise talking about a much wider set of experiences than only homelessness.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview topic guide

Appendix 2: Information sheet

Appendix 3: Consent form

Appendix 4: Ethics ‘A’ application
Appendix 1: Interview topic guide

- What is your title, responsibility, and role at your organisation?
- What sorts of services does your organisation provide, with regards to homelessness?
- How many people does your organisation deal with, with regards to homelessness?
- Talk about homelessness
  Different definition – how do you define it? How do others define it? How is homelessness measured? Are you involved in measuring homelessness?
- How many are ‘regular’ vs. ‘one-off’ in terms of needing support? How long do people generally need support?
- For a typical person who you deal with, who is homeless, what are the most urgent needs they have?
- Why do people become homeless? What are the ‘pathways’ to homelessness? How well do you think the public/the government understands pathways to homelessness?
- Do you deal with people who are ‘at risk’ of homelessness? What are the key features of being ‘at risk’ of homelessness?
- Are there particular people who are more at risk of experiencing problems or illnesses in homelessness? E.g. old people in cold houses.
- Who/what are the organisations or services that most provide support to the homeless while they remain homeless?
- Who/what are the organisations that enable people to move out of homelessness?
- Do people move in and out of homelessness, if so, why?
- Some people talk about people choosing to be homeless. In your experience, does this ever happen? Why do you think this is a perception that people have?
- In which ways are people who experience homelessness vulnerable or insecure? Work, violence, social stigma, physical health, mental health, identity, etc.
- Some people describe homelessness as an extreme form of social exclusion – do you agree with this description?
- Talk about idea of precarity → experience of ‘teetering of the edge’ insecurity and vulnerability, and increasing sense of uncertainty. How relevant to homelessness is this concept? Can you see homeless people experiencing other precarities?
- What are the barriers to service providers being able to deliver the support they would like to?
- My research is interested in how people experience homelessness, and what they do to deal with being homeless. In your knowledge, what sorts of things do homeless people do that help them cope with, or survive, being homeless? Where do they carry out these practices?
- How do you think homelessness in your area compares to other parts of New Zealand or other countries?
- In your opinion, what are they key steps that local and national government can do to help reduce homelessness?
- What is the message that you think I should be sharing about being homeless in Aotearoa New Zealand?
Appendix 2: Information sheet

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the Aim of the Project?
This project aims to describe some of the experiences of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand, and to categorise the ways that people experience a variety of vulnerabilities. It also aims to provide an analysis of service providers and their role in supporting people who experience homelessness. The project is being undertaken as part of the requirements for Nathaniel Christensen’s Master of Arts degree.

What Type of Participants are being sought?
A range of participants are being sought including:
• Key informants with specialist knowledge, either professional or personal
• Elected representatives of specific constituencies relating to the research project
• Members of Parliament or Ministers with responsibilities relating to the research project
• Managers of service providers or government support services
• Staff members and volunteers at service providers
• Homeless people, or people with experiences of homelessness
All participants must be adults over the age of 18.

What will Participants be Asked to Do?
Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to take part in one or more of the following methods:
• Take part in a semi-structured interview with the researcher for up to 1 hour held at either a public café (in a place that maintains your privacy), or at participants’ places of work – whatever is more convenient for you.
• Join a group interview/conversation with other participants, the researcher, and staff members of a service provider, for up to 1 hour
• An informal conversation with the researcher aiming to create a map of places you might visit, lasting no more than 30 minutes
Please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind. If at any time during your participation in this project you wish to stop, there will be no disadvantage to you.

What Data or Information will be Collected and What Use will be Made of it?
If you participate in the project, please be aware that the researcher will take notes, and will also make audio recordings of interviews. If you wish for no recording to be made, please let the researcher know.

Recordings and notes will be used by the researcher to create transcriptions of the interview, and these will be kept confidential. Data and information will remain in the possession of the researcher and the Department of Geography for up to 5 years, but will remain secure and confidential for this period. Personal information such as names and contact details will be destroyed at the completion of the research project.

The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve your anonymity. Pseudonyms or generic identifiers will be used rather than names in the case of direct quotes. If you wish to be given copies of the transcribed notes of your participation, or wish to receive a copy of any results of this project, please mark the appropriate section of the attached consent form.

This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes experiences and knowledge of homelessness, legal and political contexts, and the role of service providers. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. Consequently, although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.

In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

Can Participants Change their Mind and Withdraw from the Project?
You may withdraw from the project prior to the completion of data analysis in September 2016 or during your participation without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What if Participants have any Questions?
If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:-

Nathaniel Christensen and Dr Sophie Bond
Department of Geography
nathaniel.christensen@otago.ac.nz
(03) 479 3068 sophie.bond@otago.ac.nz

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph +643 479 8256 or email gary.witte@otago.ac.nz). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix 3: Consent form

The Sharp Edge of Precarity: Homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand
CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary.
2. I am free to withdraw from the project without any disadvantage.
3. Personal identifying information (such as recordings) may be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for at least five years.
4. This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes experiences and knowledge of homelessness, legal and political contexts, and the role of service providers. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops and that in the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.
5. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.
6. I wish to receive (please circle and provide email or postal address):
   A copy of my transcribed interview results
   A copy of the project’s results

I agree to take part in this project.

................................................................. ........................................
(Signature of participant) (Date)

.................................................................
(Printed Name)

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph +643 479 8256 or email gary.witte@otago.ac.nz). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix 4: Ethics application

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE
APPLICATION FORM: CATEGORY A
Form updated: May 2014

Please ensure you are using the latest application form template available from: http://www.otago.ac.nz/council/committees/committees/HumanEthicsCommittees.html and read the instruction documents provided (Guidelines for Ethical Practices in Teaching and Research and Filling Out Your Human Ethics Application).

1. University of Otago staff member responsible for project:
   Bond Sophie Dr

2. Department/School:
   Department of Geography

3. Contact details of staff member responsible (always include your email address):
   Phone: 64 3 479 3068 Email: sophie.bond@otago.ac.nz

4. Title of project:
   The Sharp Edge of Precarity: Homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand and a framework of multiple precarities

5. Indicate project type and names of other investigators and students:
   Staff Co-investigators
   Names: 
   
   Student Researchers
   Names: 1
   Nathaniel Christensen
   Level of Study (PhD, Masters, Hons):
   Masters

6. Is this a repeated class teaching activity? (Delete answer that does not apply)
   NO

7. Fast-Track procedure (Delete answer that does not apply)
Do you request fast-track consideration? (See ‘Filling Out Your Human Ethics Application’)

NO

8. When will recruitment and data collection commence?
01/06/2016

When will data collection be completed?
31/07/2016

9. Funding of project
Is the project to be funded by an external grant?

NO

10. Brief description in lay terms of the purpose of the project (approx. 75 words):
The research investigates the experiences of homelessness in New Zealand, and uses a framework of multiple precarities to describe and analyse the ways in which people experience vulnerability and insecurity in a range of ways in homelessness. The research will focus on expert service providers and the way their work mitigates or alleviates precarity and vulnerability.

11. Aim and description of project:
The research project has two research questions, with a number of sub questions:

1. What are the specific features of a framework of multiple precarities for homelessness, and how can this be contextualized in Aotearoa New Zealand?
2. How can a multiple precarities framework be used to explain and understand the experience of homelessness?
   a. What types of experiences of homelessness can be considered precarious?
   b. How do different types and experiences of homelessness intersect?
   c. In which spaces do different precarities of homelessness present themselves and what are their effects?
   d. How do people maintain a sense of place and identity in the precarity of homelessness?

In answering the questions, the project also aims to provide insight into the experiences of homelessness and the role of service providers in mitigating vulnerability and insecurity. It is expected that the output of the research project will contribute to international literature about precarity and homelessness, and will also provide empirical discussion and analysis of case studies in New Zealand. The research may contribute to policy making for both central and local governments, as well as service providers. Further, it is expected that the research will provide an opportunity for service providers and homeless people themselves to share their experiences and voice in an academic context.

12. Researcher/instructor experience and qualifications in this research area
Nathaniel Christensen has completed a BA in Geography at the University of Otago, which involved a number of field-based research projects, including a group research into alternative economies in Wanaka in 2014. He has also undertaken a summer research project in 2015 with Sophie Bond that formed part of a preliminary study of precarity in Dunedin. This involved a field research component of key-informant interviews.
13. Participants

13(a) Population from which participants are drawn:
Participants will be based in either Dunedin or Auckland. Key informants selected for their specialist knowledge, or staff members at service providers such as the Salvation Army will be interviewed. Some members of Auckland and Dunedin’s homeless community will also be included as participants for other research methods detailed in section 14 (i.e. not semi-structured interviews), and this will occur within the context of a service provider with whom the researchers create a working relationship, such as the Auckland City Mission.

13(b) Inclusion and exclusion criteria:
Participants will be selected and included due to their specialist knowledge or personal experience, which allows them to answer questions related to the research questions given above. Key informants are expected to give information based on their specific roles. Other participants included members of Dunedin’s and Auckland’s homeless communities and will be invited to participate through the researcher being introduced to them by a service provider. Other participants in the methods detailed below in section 14 will be included as users of services for the homeless and are homeless.

13(c) Estimated number of participants:
The research aims to have approximately 15 key informant interviews across Dunedin and Auckland. For the other methods, a target of 5-10 members of the homeless community, or uses of homelessness services, are expected.

13(d) Age range of participants:
All participants will be adults over the age of 18, but specific age ranges are not sought for this research.

13(e) Method of recruitment:
Most key informants will be recruited via email or phone call after their expertise or knowledge has been identified as aiding the research project. After meeting with key informants in service providers, the researchers will get in contact with a number of users of the service (i.e. members of the homeless community), and a group meeting will be organised. The service providers will be invited to assist in the recruiting of participants for this phase of the research project.

13(f) Specify and justify any payment or reward to be offered:
For interviews that take place in a café, the researcher will offer a drink to participants. In the case of group interviews held on the premises of a service provider, the researcher will bring refreshments (such as a bottle of juice) to offer participants. Apart from this, no payment or reward is to be offered to participants in the research project, although the researcher will be contributing his time in the form of volunteering at various service providers if and when the opportunity arises.

14. Methods and Procedures:
The research project uses a mixed-methods approach, in order to gather a wide range of types of data that answer the research questions above. A table of methods is attached to this application form which detail the various methods used for each research question in the project.

**Key informant semi-structured interviews**

The project will use semi-structured interviews with a range of key informants, including staff at service providers who work with homeless people, staff at city councils, elected councillors and national members of parliament, and staff at government departments. At least 15 key informants, across the two case study locations, will be sought. These key informants will be selected based on their specific knowledge and opinions, which will be gained through interviews that use an interview guide (attached). This guide includes a range of topics and themes I would like the interview to cover, but the individual specific questions are not planned in advance. The use of semi-structured interviews provides the interviewer with the flexibility to follow particular lines of questioning that might be useful or beneficial. It also provides the interviewee with the ability to talk about that which they feel comfortable, knowledgeable about, or would like to make further understood.

Interviews will be recorded for later transcribing and coding. Interviewees will be made aware of this when they are informed about the study and are asked to complete a consent form. If any interviewee requests that a recording not be made, notes will be kept by the interviewer instead. All interviews and their contents will be kept confidential, and this will be explained verbally as well as in the information sheet provided to all participants. This is particularly important when people are interviewed in their capacity as an employee of an organisation, department, or council, but give personal opinions that might differ. In this situation, conflicting accounts or opinions will be treated as two individual statements, and no connection between the two will be made in the writing of this project. Participants will be asked if they would like to receive a copy of the transcribed interview. If they opt to receive their transcript, they will be told that they are able to comment on what they have said, and may revise or withdraw any statement made prior to completion of data analysis (in September 2016). Interviewees will also be given the option of receiving a copy of the findings of the project after its completion. It is expected that many key informants will choose to receive a copy of the research findings. All participants will be told that they are free to decline to participate at any time, and there will be no consequences or disadvantages to their decision.

All interviews will be undertaken either in a convenient public place (a café, for example) or at an interviewee’s place of employment (such as the Dunedin City Council, or Salvation Army). No interviews will occur at private residences of either the interviewee or the researcher. This ensures safety and security for both parties involved, as well as ensuring ease of participation for the interviewee. For interviews held in public places, a location will be sought that can maintain the participants’ privacy, as required.

*Group Interview*
Group interviews will be carried out in the context of service providers and with their support and supervision. This ensures safety for participants and for the researcher. The format of the interviews will be very casual, and will involve anywhere between 5 and 10 participants. The researcher will guide the group through a series of questions and conversations between both members of the homeless community or users of services, and staff members or volunteers.

It will be suggested that at least one staff member or volunteer join in the group discussion. This is for two reasons that assist the interview process. First, staff will be more aware of the dynamics and individual personalities of the group than the researcher will. This provides the researcher with support and guidance, should any issues or potential issues arise. Second, it is hoped that the staff will also contribute to the discussion that occurs in the interview through providing answers, questions, or prompting discussion based on their own experiences.

An information sheet will be made available to all participants, which will also be read verbally by the researcher. Consent forms will be provided for participants to sign, which explain the nature of the research project and the way in which interviews will be recorded (as detailed in the previous section). In the case where a participant does not wish to be recorded, the entire group interview will not be recorded, and the researcher will instead keep written notes. All participants will be told that they are free to decline to participate at any time, and there will be no consequences or disadvantages to their decision.

**Participatory research**
The researcher will carry out participatory research by volunteering at the service providers where research is located. This serves a number of purposes that increase the quality and value of the research project. First, as a reflexive and participatory method of research, volunteering with a group works to mitigate or minimize any implicit power relations that might exist. That is, as a university researcher visiting a service provider, there is an implicit balance of power. Through engagement with the service provider, and users of the service, this research method will allow the researcher to approach the community in a different way. Second, participatory research methods offer a rich source of experiential data. Casual and unplanned conversations will be likely to occur between the researcher, staff and those who use the services. Further, the researcher will experience certain aspects of involvement in a service providing role, such as serving food. Both of these experiences will be recorded as notes in a field diary, and it is expected that they will offer very different data to the other research methods. Finally, though this research project offers no payment or compensation to participants, it is hoped that the researcher’s volunteering will ‘give back’ to the community in which the research takes place. Again, this minimizes any imbalanced power relations that might exist. Further, the project has a goal of co-production of knowledge that can benefit both an academic understanding of homelessness, as well as practical tools for supporting those who experience the vulnerability and insecurity of homelessness.

The researcher’s involvement in volunteering at a service provider will be negotiated in the early stages of developing a relationship with up to four service providers who might offer key informant interviews. An important consideration is that the way in
which the researcher volunteers is suitable and appropriate. This will be ensured through mutual agreement about the form that the participatory research occurs.

**Collaborative mapping exercise**
Participants will be identified by the researcher through introduction by a service provider, and it is expected that the researcher will have met the participant through one of the above methods, prior to their involvement in this specific exercise. The mapping project involves the collaborative production of a visual map of the places that the participant might visit in their day to day activities (for example: the main street, a public library, the Auckland City Mission, and the Botanic Gardens). This will be done on a blank piece of paper, but the researcher will also have a road map available to guide the process. The production of a map will be accompanied by discussion about why the participant visits these places and what they do there. The researcher will engage in a flexible approach to the exercise, with the purpose of sharing the production of the map with the participant.

The participant will have the purpose of the exercise explained to them, as well as the nature of the research project in relation to their contribution. A consent form will be given to the participant, and if they choose to participate, it will be emphasized that they may stop the exercise at any time they like with no disadvantage to them. The exercise will take place at a service provider’s premises (such as the Salvation Army or City Mission), and may include the involvement of a staff member or other volunteer. The exercise will be followed by the researcher visiting some of the locations identified by the participant, although this will occur at a completely different time, and the researcher will not be accompanied by the participant.

**Please Note:**
All of these methods detailed above are open to flexibility based on the specific requirements and contexts of the service providers the research will partner with. Because the research project aims to co-produce knowledge in conjunction with service providers and homeless people, it is possible that as the research is further developed, small changes to the above methods will be made. This would not be to change the substantive goals of the research project, nor the way the researcher carries out their work, but rather to ensure that the project is able to meet the needs and requirements of the service providers.

Contact has been made with a number of service providers, including The Salvation Army in Dunedin and Auckland, the Methodist Night Shelter in Dunedin, the Auckland City Mission, and Lifewise in Auckland. So far, a positive response has been received from the Auckland City Mission, and it is expected that a positive relationship will be formed with them and other providers.

Before field research begins, confirmation of permission to carry out research in their premises will be gained from each service provider, and a copy of this permission will be forwarded to the committee.

15. **Compliance with The Privacy Act 1993 and the Health Information Privacy Code 1994 imposes strict requirements concerning the collection, use and disclosure of personal information. The questions below allow the Committee to assess compliance.**
15(a) Are you collecting and storing personal information (e.g. name, contact details, designation, position etc) directly from the individual concerned that could identify the individual?
YES

15(b) Are you collecting information about individuals from another source?
NO

15(c) Collecting Personal Information:
Will you be collecting personal information (e.g. name, contact details, position, company, anything that could identify the individual)?
YES
Will you inform participants of the purpose for which you are collecting the information and the uses you propose to make of it?
YES
Will you inform participants of who will receive the information?
YES
Will you inform participants of the consequences, if any, of not supplying the information?
YES
Will you inform participants of their rights of access to and correction of personal information?
YES

15(d) Outline your data storage, security procedures and length of time data will be kept
Data will be stored in three formats across the research project. First, written notes will be kept in a field journal, and then typed up and stored as electronic files. Original notes will be destroyed after they have been transcribed. Second, recordings of interviews will be kept on the researcher’s computer, and then transcribed. The researcher’s computer will remain password protected at all times, and all digital data will be backed up on a password protected external hard drive. While personal details such as names and email addresses will be collected and kept, these will remain secure on the researcher’s computer, and will not be linked to other identifying or private data, and will be deleted after the completion of field research. After the completion of the research project, digital data will be archived for up to 5 years in the Department of Geography, but written notes and recordings will be deleted.

15(e) Who will have access to personal information, under what conditions, and subject to what safeguards? If you are obtaining information from another source, include details of how this will be accessed and include written permission if appropriate. Will participants have access to the information they have provided?
Access to data will be restricted to the student researcher and the supervising staff member.
Participants will be given the option of being sent copies of their transcribed interviews, and will have the opportunity to give feedback to alter or clarify their own comments prior to the completion of data analysis (September 2016). Participants will
not have access to any data they did not provide, nor to any information about other participants.

15(f) **Do you intend to publish any personal information they have provided?**
No. However, some information given by key informants that is published may be attributable to a key informant due to their specialist knowledge. Information sheets and consent forms will reflect this, in order to fully inform participants.

15(g) **Do you propose to collect demographic information to describe your sample? For example: gender, age, ethnicity, education level, etc.**
NO

15(h) **Have you, or will you, undertake Māori consultation?**
Māori consultation with Ngai Tahu has been carried out.

16. **Does the research or teaching project involve any form of deception?**
NO

17. **Disclose and discuss any potential problems or ethical considerations:**
There is a possibility that key informants might make statements that could reflect badly on themselves or their organisation. If this is a concern for participants, they will be given the option of receiving a copy of their transcript and then withdrawing or commenting on any statement made. They will have until the conclusion of data analysis to do so, in September 2016. This potential problem will also be mitigated by ensuring that key informants remain anonymous in any written reporting of the research, or in any presentations or papers. Information sheets and consent forms will reflect the possibility of this problem to participants.

There is a possibility of research methods (either individual and group interviews, or other activities) resulting in stress or emotional distress for participants. This will preferably be avoided through the inclusion of staff members in interviews who have specialist knowledge and awareness of potential issues that may arise. If an incident does occur, participants will be reminded that they may discontinue the interview immediately with no consequence. All interviews are held in public places, preferably at the premises of service providers, where staff and volunteers are available to assist with any incident that may occur.

A third potential issue is physical or emotional risk to the researcher, especially when carrying out interviews. Physical risk will be minimised by holding interviews in public places or places of work, where supervision is available, and intervention is possible. Both the researcher’s staff supervisor, and partner, will be informed as much as possible of research plans (particularly when in Auckland). A fieldwork health and safety plan will be completed and submitted through the Department of Geography. Emotional distress to the researcher is a possible outcome of potentially upsetting interviews. The procedure for dealing with this is regular contact with the staff supervisor, and the development of relationships with service providers who have experience with the issues that will be presented to the researcher.

No personal contact details of the researcher will be given to participants who are homeless or experiencing housing precarity. Contact will be exclusively through
service providers, and information sheets will have the researcher’s university contact details rather than their personal details. This is for two purposes. First, it ensures the safety and security of the researcher. Second, it ensures that participants who are potentially vulnerable are not left in a position of wanting to seek support or assistance from the researcher or the university. This project investigates the way that service providers are able to give expert support to those experiencing homelessness and it is important that the responsibility of caring for and supporting the homeless is left to their expertise.

Another issue that may present itself is service providers being unhappy with their involvement in the research project through poor communication and research design by the student researcher. It is very important to the quality of the research, as well as the ongoing relationships between the researcher and service providers, that the research be designed in a way that service providers are happy. This means that the research process is reflexive and flexible, and will treat all data collection as collaborative with the co-production of knowledge as the central goal. All research methods detailed above will be explained to service providers and the appropriate key informants. This is to inform and gain permission, but also to seek advice because it is recognised that the service providers invited to participate in the research are experts at what they do, and that the researcher’s goal is to learn and observe, and to offer opportunities for collaboration – not to visit and extract data and then leave. Contact has been made with some service providers already and discussions are underway, as detailed above. Establishing a good working relationship between the researcher and these providers will form an integral part of preparing the research project.

There is a possibility that the student researcher’s involvement with service providers, particularly in Dunedin, will continue after the research project has completed. For example, an on-going relationship with the service provider might involve the student researcher continuing to volunteer. If this is to happen, the researcher will make it clear that his research project has concluded, and that his on-going interactions have nothing to do with the research project. On the other hand, there will also be the possibility of further research being planned, in which case, the specific reason for the researcher’s involvement will be fully disclosed.

Finally, all interviews and conversations will be kept confidential between the researcher and the staff supervisor, except in the case of learning about harm, or potential harm, to a person or property. In serious cases, the research team may be required to pass information to the police or other authority. The potential for this problem to arise will be mitigated by involving service providers in the data collection and research design, and it is expected that interviews will take place in the presence or under the supervision of service providers who are able to give support.