Homeless people in the face of hazards and disasters: Auckland as a case study.

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any degree or diploma at a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements."

SIGNED: _____ DATE: 2020-12-03

Mathew St.Martin

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ABSTRACT

Homeless people are disproportionately vulnerable to hazards and disasters because of different intersecting factors, including lack of access to resources, mental health issues and marginalisation. Unfortunately there is limited research focusing on homeless people in the face of hazards and disasters. We know little about homeless people's experiences facing hazards and the mechanisms they utilise to overcome them. The same can be said concerning our understanding of the limits of their access to resources vital to preparing and responding to the disasters of their everyday lives. This is also the case when responding to large-scale events that can pose a substantially larger burden on their already precarious and difficult situation. The aim of the study was to gain a better understanding of homeless people's experiences in terms of their preparation and response to both daily and large-scale disasters. More specifically, the objectives of this Master's Dissertation were to understand the mechanisms homeless people utilize to overcome the effects of hazards and disasters in an urban setting. In addition, the research examined what role the Government and local organisations play before, during and after disaster, and how those experiencing homelessness view their performance.

Homelessness is a growing problem in New Zealand. In parallel, the country is prone to a multitude of natural and human induced hazards such as floods, storms, earthquakes, fires, tsunamis and epidemics. The research focused on Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand and where the majority of homeless people live. The study was conducted after the Sky City fire in the Auckland CBD and during the COVID-19 pandemic. 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted with homeless people from Auckland's CBD utilising a qualitative descriptive approach and were then thematically analysed.

The findings indicate that homeless people perceived the daily hazards of everyday life as more threatening than large-scale disasters. The findings also suggest that those experiencing homelessness are substantially more resourceful and resilient than often suggested in the literature. The participants in this study demonstrated a strong sense of community amongst the homeless, and that sense of belonging to a community increased their resilience to hazards. The findings also highlight that resource allocation for the homeless has significantly improved in recent years, especially in response to the

recent and ongoing COVID-19 pandemic still plaguing the country at the time of the interviews. The participants had an overwhelmingly positive view of the performance of both the Government and the organisations tasked with assisting the homeless in their daily struggle with hazards and disasters. This was especially the case in response to the pandemic where it was revealed that the vast majority of those who wanted temporary housing were able to receive it. The study concludes by highlighting the importance of the Government and organisations creating a pathway for those in temporary accommodation to attain permanent housing and continued access to resources in the community. Lastly, it emphasises the need for a better understanding of homeless people's strengths and weaknesses in the face of the hazards and disasters to adequately tackle disaster risk.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Do the homeless matter when we prepare and respond to disasters? This is a topic that has been largely ignored, as the homeless are all too often disregarded, marginalised and even ignored as members of society. This has left a large gap in our understanding of how they cope with the hazards they face in their daily lives, as well as the large-scale disasters they are exposed to. Little research has been conducted looking into how this affects those experiencing homelessness. This study seeks to improve our understanding in this area and identify pathways forward that will improve resilience in the homeless community.

Section 1.1 will introduce the key terms that structure disaster studies. Section 1.2 will provide a background about homeless people in the face of hazards and disasters. Section 1.3 will focus more specifically on Auckland's homeless and their exposure to hazards and disasters. Section 1.4 will then outline the aims of the study and section 1.5 will formulate the research questions and the objectives of the study.

1.1 A short background on vulnerability, capacities and disaster risk reduction

The definitions for *disaster* can vary greatly. Scholars and experts often debate these definitions noting the complexity and the frustration in attempting to do so (Perry, 2007). Defining disaster does seem to be largely based on context, pivoting around audience, purpose and the goals in defining it. Sjoberg (1962, p. 357) defined disasters as "severe, relatively sudden, and frequently unexpected disruption." However, as Perry

(2003) notes, this definition suggests that disaster is an uncontrollable phenomenon and society can do nothing to prevent its occurrence. Smith (2005, p. 301) proposed that disasters are "events that produce death and damage and cause considerable social, political and economic disruptions," a definition that seems rather unambiguous when it comes to society having any control over them. Stallings (1998, p. 136) however puts the definition into a more social context calling disasters fundamental disruptions of routines. As Perry (2003) notes, it is important to understand that 'hazards' are not disasters, and that hazards are separate entities, and a source for potential harm, especially affecting those who are more vulnerable. Hazards, or risks, are simply circumstances, events or objects that have the potential to pose a threat to populations and lead to disasters (Walters & Gaillard, 2014).

Vulnerability is a key concept in disaster studies (Chaplin, Twigg & Lovell, 2019; Wisner, 1998). According to Wisner, Gaillard and Kelmen (2012) vulnerability is "the likelihood of injury, death, loss and disruption of livelihood in an extreme event, and/or unusual difficulties in recovering from negative impacts of hazardous events primarily related to people." Although the importance of the human dimension in disaster has long been identified in the disaster literature (i.e. Prince, 1920; White, 1945) it was only in the 1970s that the concept of vulnerability was formalised (O'Keefe et al, 1976; Wisner et al, 1977). Vulnerability significantly challenged the dominant *hazards paradigm* that understood disasters as natural, resulting mainly from extreme, unexpected and rare events. In turn, what was called the *vulnerability paradigm* highlighted that disasters are political, social, economic and cultural in their origin, thus emphasising the unequal access to resources among society members (Hewitt, 1983; Watts and Bohle, 1993).

Vulnerability is indeed conceptualised as the result of limited access to information, infrastructure, social security system, land, shelter, institutional resources,

social networks and economic means (Chambers and Conway, 1992; Scoones, 1998; Wisner et al., 2004). Today, it is recognised that local people can be vulnerable in different ways, socially, geographically, economically, politically, and generally a combination of these (Lovell et al., 2019). People are vulnerable economically because they have low wages, little savings, are unemployed or have limited capacity to request a loan (Gaillard, 2010). They are vulnerable geographically because they live in risky places, vulnerable socially due to weak social ties, and vulnerable politically (or institutionally) since their voice is not taken into account by political institutions (Wisner et al., 2012).

However, vulnerable people are not without capacities. An individual's capacity to reduce the risks from hazards is a pivotal aspect in the conversation concerning vulnerability. The relationship between vulnerability and capacity is important as each influences and affects the other (Gaillard & Fordham, 2018). Individuals' capacities can be viewed from either a structural lens or an observational one. More simply put, one approach is based on patterns of behaviour and the other focuses more on an individual's ability to adapt (Wisner, Blakie, Cannon & Davis, 2004). The concept of capacity arose in the late 1980s when it was first coined by practitioners and adopted by scholars (Anderson & Woodrow, 1989). Capacities are the resources and assets that local people use to resist, cope with, and recover from hazards and disasters. Capacities may include traditional and local knowledge, social organisations and solidarity networks, skills, and technologies (Davis et al., 2004). Capacities have both individual (e.g. Kuban and MacKenzie-Carey 2001) and collective features (e.g. Ahmed et al. 2011). Every person holds a unique set of capacities that are usually shared and combined with those of their neighbours, kin and community members. Altogether, people's knowledge, resources and skills form collective capacities.

The concept of *capacity* refers to the ability to access and use the resources needed to overcome disasters. In that sense it refers not only to availability of resources but emphasises notions of entitlement and ability to mobilise livelihood resources (Chambers and Conway, 2992). However capacity is not the contrary of vulnerability, since a vulnerable individual can also have strong capacities. For example, a very poor person with no or few assets, no access to a formal social security system and high exposure to natural hazards can also have strong knowledge about their environment and have developed coping mechanisms which can be critical when facing disasters (Luna, 2003; Campbell, 2006). In recent literature the concept of capacity is often used interchangeably with the concept of resilience.

Resilience is a term referring to an individual's or a system's ability to recover and/or absorb the occurrence of hazardous events (Usamah, Handmer, Mitchell & Ahmed, 2014; Aldrich, 2012). In the field of disaster studies this term is often used to describe a society or community's capacity to maintain a functional structure in the face of hazards and disasters (Usamah et al., 2014). *Resilience* also refers to that entity's ability to adapt, change, learn from past disasters and improve risk reduction measures. This includes planned preparation measures to adapt and overcome hazard stress (Usamah et al., 2014). According to Aldrich (2012, p. 7) this preparation exists in five stages: "personal and familial socio-psychological wellbeing, organisational and institutional restoration, economic and commercial resumption of services and productivity, restoring infrastructural systems integrity and operational regularity of public safety and Government". Aldrich (2012) notes that areas displaying less resilience are typically unable to properly mobilise and require 'recovery guidance' from outside actors in the private or public realm.

The concepts of *vulnerability*, *capacity* and *resilience* are key to framing disaster studies and by extension disaster risk reduction. Disaster risk reduction is a systematic approach to identifying, assessing and reducing the risks disaster poses (Peters, Peters, Twigg & Walch, 2019). Disaster risk reduction encompasses the development and application of policies, strategies, and practices to reduce vulnerability and disaster risks across a society. Disaster risk reduction aims to create the conditions for empowering people to better avoid, absorb, and recover from, shocks and stresses (Twigg, 2015). Nowadays, it is recognized that disaster risk reduction can only take place when communities' capacities are strengthened and vulnerability reduced (Wisner et al, 2012). The next section focuses on the homeless, who are recognised as being particularly vulnerable to hazards and disasters, but have in many cases been overlooked and under-researched in disaster studies.

1.2 Homelessness & Disasters

Homelessness is an issue faced all around the globe, affecting millions worldwide, transcending borders, gender, race, religion, age and culture (Wright, 2000; Hamad, 2017). With rapid urbanisation and the rising cost of living, cities around the globe are seeing this effect as much as at any time or place in history (Richards, 2009), in cities all across the United States, Canada, South East Asia and Oceania (Aoki, 2008; Sard, 2009; Amore, 2016; Every). Recent studies have shown increases in homeless rates of 40% in New York City, 35% in Wellington, "rapid increases" in Manila, significant increases in Sao Paulo, a reported 75% increase in Los Angeles in less than a decade and an astonishing 250% increase in rough sleepers in England (Aoki, 2008; Sard, 2009; Holland, 2018; Ritchie, 2019).

For homeless people, everyday life mirrors all characteristics of a disaster (Wisner et al., 2012). As the homeless are almost universally accepted as being some of the most vulnerable to hazards, and as the number of homeless people continues to grow, prioritisation of their consideration in respect to disaster risk reduction gains prominence (Gaillard et al., 2019; Gelberg, Andersen & Leake, 2000). Reducing vulnerability is closely linked with providing people with access to adequate resources and means of protection, yet homeless people have extremely limited access to resources such as water, food, shelter, communication tools, social services and medical services which in turn further increases their vulnerably (Edgington, 2009; Busch-Geertsma, 2016).

Various services are available in our communities to assist the homeless in overcoming those barriers and reducing their vulnerabilities to hazards and disasters (Walters & Gaillard, 2014). These services include providing free access to basic resources such as food, clothing and toiletries. Having access to these valuable resources reduces the burden on other services like shelters and medical services as it allows the homeless to maintain their hygiene, exposure to hazards and overall health (Ravenhill, 2016). Other services for the homeless include employment services, treatment facilities, dentists, libraries for communication and sheltered recreation. These services will often be provided at a discounted rate or free of charge and regularly rely on volunteers to run them (Edgington, 2009; Melnitzer, 2007). These services are all intended to reduce homeless people's vulnerabilities to hazards and disasters.

In some cases the homeless have been found to be quite resourceful and display their ability to mobilise resources within their own 'homeless community' without assistance from external organisations or Government assistance (Walters & Gaillard, 2014; Richards & Smith, 2005). Their community frequently utilise other homeless individuals within the group that have access to various resources or possess different

skills that can benefit their needs and reduce vulnerability to the hazards from disasters (Ravenhill, 2016). This includes the development of communication strategies and strategies to access resources outside of the various organisations by means of exchange, scavenging and theft (Richards & Smith, 2005). This resourcefulness only improves over time, as those experiencing homelessness develop daily routines and build stronger strategic alliances that help them access a broader range of resources (Smith, 2006).

Ensuring the homeless are prepared for disasters is not only important because of the disastrous nature of their daily lives, but also because large-scale disasters have increased worldwide. Disasters are partly a result of climate change that has caused irreversible damage to environments, affecting communities across the globe (Pielke, 2020). Climate change not only increases the prevalence and frequency of disasters, but increases the strength and frequency of large-scale disasters as well. The homeless are disproportionately vulnerable to hazards and large-scale disasters as they typically lack access to secure housing and sleep outside, leaving them exposed to natural elements (Every, 2016; Fogel, 2017; Edgington, 2009). Interestingly, there are limited studies examining how the hazards and disasters impact the homeless, with many scholars noting that we know almost nothing about homeless people's experience of disasters, including the mechanisms they display to overcome such events (Gaillard, 2019; Vickery, 2018; Wisner, 2012). Notably, existing studies all emphasise homeless people's heightened vulnerabilities to the hazards of daily and large-scale disasters (Vickery, 2015; Gaillard et al., 2019; Phillips, 2012).

Unfortunately, all too often the homeless are not included in preparedness activities and disaster planning at the local community level (Wisner et al., 2012). As Wisner, Gaillard and Kelman (2019) note, there is a lack of specific inclusion in many of these disaster planning strategies for the homeless, which has severe consequences for

their wellbeing. This is a public policy issue that can be attributed to the power and influence gap between those who are homeless and those with economic means. This imbalance further increases the vulnerability of those experiencing homelessness, and affects countries on an international level as well as in countries like New Zealand that are disproportionately exposed to disasters.

1.3 Homelessness & Disasters in New Zealand

The prominence of homelessness in New Zealand is a relatively recent phenomenon (Amore, 2016; Gaillard et al., 2019). Since the turn of the century homelessness has rapidly increased all over New Zealand, with Auckland seeing the number of homeless treble since 2004 (Auckland City Council, 2018). The ratio of homeless in New Zealand has jumped from 1 in every 120 people in 2006, to 1 in every 100 in 2018 (Statistics New Zealand, 2018). Conservative figures estimate that the number of homeless in Auckland is around 3,500 with some at the Ministry of Housing placing it as high as 20,000 (Auckland City Council, 2018; Saturi, 2019). The majority of these individuals are male and disproportionately of Māori or Pacific Island descent (Groot, Hodgetts, Chamberlain, Radley, Nikora, Stolte & Nabalaru, 2008).

This increase has affected the quality and quantity of services that are able to be provided to the homeless, with frequent instances of those who are homeless being overlooked, forgotten or misunderstood by policymakers and practitioners (Barrett & Greenfield, 2018; Gaillard et al., 2019). Although homelessness has become a real issue in New Zealand, the terms ‘homeless’ or ‘homelessness’ are not mentioned a single time in the New Zealand Mass Evacuation Plan (2008), New Zealand’s National Tsunami and Warning Plan (2018) or the National Disaster Resilience Strategy (2019). All three of

these key policy documents include entire sections reserved explicitly for vulnerable populations such as the elderly and people with a disability, but none of them mention homelessness. Furthermore, homeless people's lack of inclusion in disaster planning is particularly problematic since the homeless represent an increasing share of the population who are disproportionately more vulnerable to hazardous situations. Additionally, Auckland lacks a men's overnight shelter and has a limited supply of resources for the homeless. These limited resources would undoubtedly be overrun during a large-scale disaster when resources are in short hand (Groot et al., 2008; Walters, 2014).

This issue holds even more weight considering New Zealand's exposure to a broad range of natural hazards and disasters that pose a disproportionate threat to those experiencing homelessness (Walters & Gaillard, 2014; Rañesesa, Chang-Richards, Richards, & Bubb, 2018). Located precariously at the South-Western end of the Pacific Ocean, New Zealand is no stranger to severe weather. In the past decade alone, New Zealand has witnessed weather related emergencies and disasters which have enacted intense damage and loss of life on some of its most populated regions (Rañesesa et al. 2018; Radio New Zealand, 2019). Flooding, landslides and severe weather systems have recently led to extensive damage and threat to life in urban areas across New Zealand including Cyclones Gita, Lusi and Fehi (Prasad & Fenton, 2019; Radio New Zealand). New Zealand has also recently faced two devastating earthquakes in the Canterbury region, one of which caused extensive damage to the South Island's most populous city, taking the lives of nearly 200 people. In 2019, the Whakaari White Island volcano erupted 30 kilometres off the North Island's East Coast in the Bay of Plenty, taking the lives of 22 people and bringing volcanic eruptions back to the forefront of many citizen's minds. Large-scale man-made emergencies have also taken their toll in recent history. In

October 2019, Auckland suffered a fire that saw a large portion of the Central Business District (CBD) shutdown and evacuated (Manhire, 2019). Most recently, the country has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 preys on the weak and vulnerable, making this pandemic one that would clearly be in the forefront of the minds of the homeless who already struggle with the hygiene and health challenges of living on the streets.

1.4 Aims of the study

This Master's dissertation aims to explore the lived experiences of Auckland's homeless in the face of disasters, their views on the marginalisation of their community, and their capacities in the face of disasters. This study is particularly motivated by the significant gaps in literature concerning the subject area. Though a recent study by Gaillard et al. (2019) has already concluded that due to the precarity of their everyday lives, homeless people in New Zealand have little to no regard for disaster awareness and risk reduction, there is still very little understanding of why that is the case. This has given shape to many of the indicative interview questions, focusing primarily on their own disaster risk reduction strategies when facing hazards and disasters, how such risks are communicated to them and their views on the support received from the wider community during such events. This will give the community a better understanding of homeless people's needs in the face of hazards and disasters and thereby help inform policy makers and practitioners with solutions to tackle disaster risk reduction.

1.5 Research Question & Objectives of the Study

The main research question this study tries to address is what are homeless people's vulnerabilities in the face of hazards and disasters and how do they build resilience in the face of such events.

This overarching research question will be answered through three main objectives:

1. To document homeless perceptions and experiences of hazards and disasters.
2. To examine homeless people's resources and coping mechanisms in the face of hazards and disasters.
3. To identify barriers and opportunities for developing effective disaster risk reduction initiatives targeting Auckland's homeless.

1.6 Summary

Chapter One has introduced the study of homeless people in the face of emergencies and disasters. Initially key terms were defined and discussed in order to give a conceptual framework to the texts of the study. Following that, a brief outline of homelessness as a growing issue internationally was given, and then a breakdown of their heightened vulnerability to hazards and disasters. These issues were then discussed in the context of Auckland, which is the case study for the research. This was followed by the aims and objectives of the study and the research question. Chapter Two contains a critical review of the past literature surrounding key topic areas of homeless people, and homeless people facing hazards and disasters. Chapter Three discusses the study's methodology and how the data was gathered and analysed in this research. Chapter Four

presents the results of the study and Chapter Five discusses these results in relation to the literature on homelessness and disaster.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Homelessness is a growing international phenomenon, the attributes and presentation of which can vary depending on context. Various governments and organisations find it challenging to define precisely what being homeless actually is, which is why definitions for that term can vary greatly. Being categorised or identified as homeless can both positively and negatively affect many elements of a homeless person's life including access to resources, benefits and many basic human rights. This includes being stigmatised or marginalised by certain individuals, organisations or governing bodies within a community. It is however believed by most, that homeless people have a heightened vulnerability to hazards due to their often-perilous lifestyles. An understanding of homelessness, its causes, and the conditions it renders to those experiencing it is of great importance in the conversation addressing solutions. The homeless are marginalised in society, and many conclusions are drawn based on assumptions concerning this population. Unfortunately many of these assumptions are misguided, as those labelled as homeless possess broad and diverse backgrounds and living situations. These are variables that are incredibly important to consider in discussions concerning how this group navigate the hazards of everyday life and larger scale disasters.

While public policy plays an essential role in homeless people's ability to prepare and respond to these hazards on both ends of this spectrum, unfortunately the homeless have little influence on those policies as they are often ignored. Additionally, untreated mental health and substance abuse issues further complicate their precarious lifestyles

leading into a self-perpetuating and endless cycle of homelessness. This is a cycle that if left uninterrupted or unassisted can last entire lifetimes. Intersectional issues with finances and health often exacerbate this and when left unaddressed can significantly amplify their already vulnerable situations. Nonetheless, these intersecting issues are often left unaddressed as the homeless have little power and influence in advancing any solutions towards these often-systemic problems. This is as important to consider for large-scale disasters as it is for the daily hazards and disasters faced by homeless people. For a homeless person, what most might consider a minor hazard can elevate quickly into a life-threatening disaster. There is a limited body of knowledge as to how this affects the homeless, and until further research has been conducted, our understanding of the real issues will persist.

2.2 Definition, terminology & categorization

There is no internationally recognised definition for homelessness. It is still a subject of debate regarding what the inclusion criteria are to identify, be labelled as, or be considered homeless (Oxford University Press, n.d.; OECD Affordable Housing Database, 2020). These variances do not only change between international borders, but between cities within a nation and even organisations within a city. The majority of definitions include very similar criteria, but over time these criteria are becoming much more comprehensive and inclusive of a wider range of individuals affected by or threatened with homelessness. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the state of homelessness as “a person being without a home and living on the streets”. This definition is very simplistic, and not at all inclusive of the myriad of categories and criteria that existing literature uses to discuss and define homelessness.

Some of the most inclusive criteria comes from the United States, a country that holds the second largest per-capita population of homeless in the world (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016). In the U.S. the primary Government agency that controls funding and policies for the homeless is the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and their definition of *homeless* is simply "a person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence" (The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2019 pg.2). This directly affects the statistics that categorise and quantify homelessness. In New Zealand, Germany and a number of other European countries, individuals are excluded from being defined as homeless 'until they have moved into one of the homeless living situations' such as a shelter, in a car or on the street (Statistics New Zealand, 2009, p.12). There is also broad consensus that it would be an effective prevention method to gather more information about these sub-groups, and their provisions of support, leading into the situation of their experience with homelessness (Edgington, 2009). Understanding the causes of homelessness can often guide and influence the effect or outcome.

The homeless, according to HUD, are individuals living in a place not meant for human habitation, in an emergency shelter, some form of transitional housing or are exiting an institution where they have lived for fewer than 90 days after previously suffering a bout of homelessness. HUD's criteria goes into further detail to include those about to lose temporary shelter like a hotel, motel or "doubling up" with friends and or family. HUD's criteria for being considered homeless also includes children or unaccompanied youth in unstable homes without a lease or ownership, and those fleeing domestic violence (The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2019).

HUD's definition, in comparison to other countries, is extremely inclusive and wide-ranging. In Japan for instance, the definition of homelessness is strictly limited to

those who are unsheltered, sleeping rough or roofless, which is one of the main reasons why statistics frequently show Japan as having the lowest rates of homelessness in the world (Chamie, 2017).

In New Zealand homelessness has been defined as "a living situation where people with no other options to acquire safe and secure housing are without shelter, in temporary accommodation, sharing accommodation with a household, or living in uninhabitable housing" (Amore & Baker, 2011). Defining homelessness is important as it establishes a common understanding and allows governments and stakeholders in the community to make well informed decisions on policy. Several countries have a broad range of terminology differentiating between the different categories of homelessness including *rough-sleepers, rooflessness, transitional* and various other titles; the importance of the differentiation between them will be further explored in section 2.4.2. Similarly, the recent literature has been careful to delineate between the state of homelessness, and homelessness as an identity, as many homeless are careful to emphasise that 'homeless' is *what* they are, not *who* they are (Parsell, 2010). This is important to consider when talking about their vulnerabilities and how we approach reducing them.

Categorisation of the various states of homelessness can also be quite complicated and can vary significantly from region to region. The terminology used to refer and categorise the homeless also varies internationally (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2020). The term *literally homeless* often refers to those living and sleeping on the streets, in abandoned buildings, parks or those staying in homeless shelters. Terminology differentiating between these different locations are often stated as *sheltered* (i.e. at a homeless shelter or a place not meant for human habitation) versus *unsheltered homeless* (i.e. on the street with no cover from the elements) or doubled up (i.e. staying at another

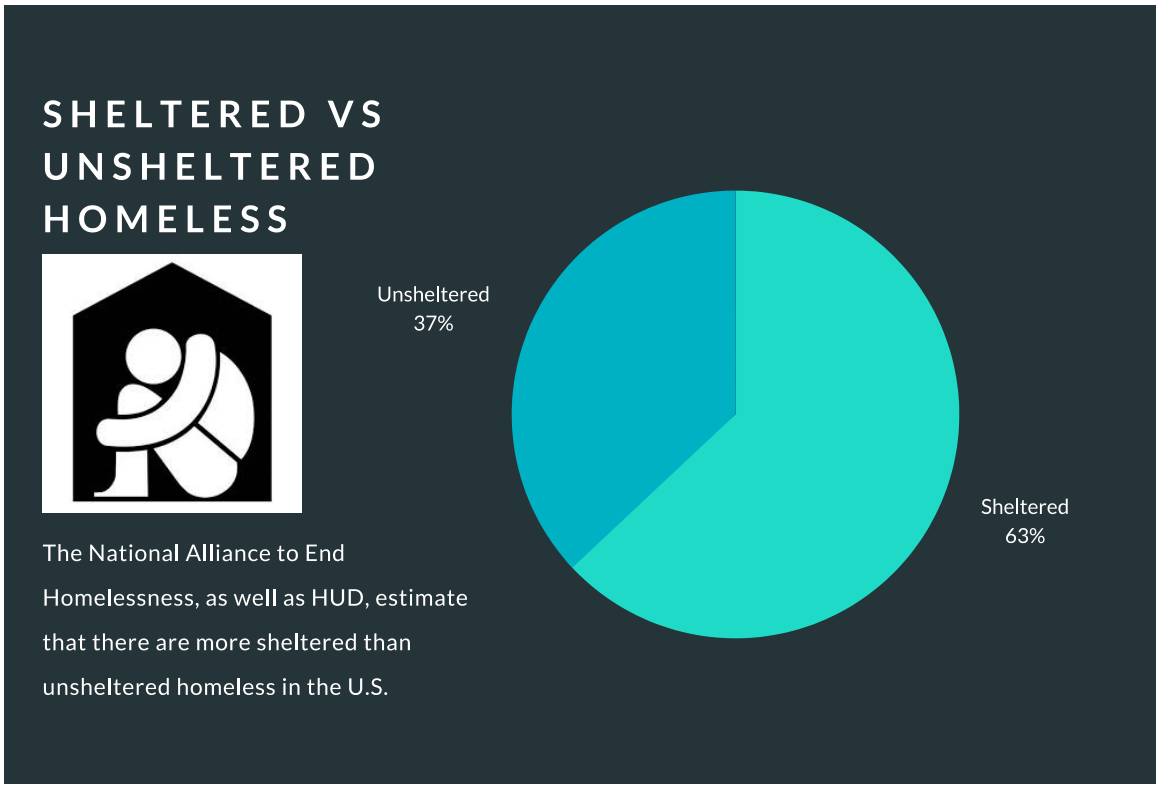
person's house), with the latter of the two often referred to as *rough sleepers* or the more literal *rooflessness*. For those temporarily living with a family member or a friend, different regions will often refer to them as *precariously housed* or *doubled-up* (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2020). The European Observatory on Homelessness has five separate categories of homelessness, whereas the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute has six, and some literature from the U.S. (see figure 1) narrows it down to only four. (Edgar, Meert & Doherty, 2004). Many categorisations, like the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA), have recently expanded to include those fleeing domestic violence and those under the threat of becoming homeless.

***Figure 1**:* Categories of Homelessness

Source: Author's own, adapted from data from the 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress (2019), European Journal of Homelessness (2020) & Australian Housing and Urban Research (2019)

The use of different criteria to define who is homeless may seem marginally harmless, but from country to country it has a definitive effect on how the homeless are counted for data collection, how data is tabulated, and how, where and how many resources are allocated (D'Onise, Yan & Robyn, 2007; Edgar et al., 2004). In order to gather this data some countries will use what is known as a 'point in time count' where volunteers from the community, often with homeless guides, will go out in the community late at night and search the streets to try and tabulate an accurate count of the approximate number of homeless there are in the area (Boone, 2019; Auckland City Council, 2018). However, as Boone (2019) points out, there are massive flaws in these numbers and they often significantly underestimate the number of homeless in our communities. As demonstrated in Figure 1 and 2, not all people experiencing homelessness sleep 'outside'. In fact, data from the National Alliance to End Homelessness, as well as HUD, estimate that there are more sheltered than unsheltered homeless in the U.S. (Figure 2), and similar data was found in Europe and New Zealand (Auckland City Council, 2018; Edgar et al., 2004).

Figure 2: *Sheltered vs. Unsheltered Homeless*



Source: Author's own, adapted from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2019, p.8

Getting an accurate count of both sheltered and unsheltered homeless is extremely important as these numbers are often used to determine the services, supplies and funding organisations contribute (Boone, 2019). If not accurately represented, a disproportionate supply of food could be donated or purchased by a shelter when it is not needed vs the blankets or pillows that they may be in desperate need of.

2.3 The causes & effects of homelessness

Homelessness was once an issue confined to Third World countries, those suffering catastrophic loss or displacement due to wars, and massive economic depressions. It is now being discussed throughout the world as one of the greatest

problems plaguing present day society (Toro, 2007). Nowadays however, the pathway to homelessness has shifted and it is occurring for quite different reasons (Toro, 2007; Amore, 2016).

Since the turn of the century there has been a shift from discussing homelessness as a 'situation of homelessness' to the 'process of becoming homeless' (Hodgetts, 2007; Ravenhill, 2016). This change focuses on an identifiable and quantifiable label and state of being, to that of a more solution-based one, focused on the causes of their experience with homelessness (Ravenhill, 2016). The process of becoming homeless is different for everyone, however there are themes in the almost innumerable reasons individuals end up without a secure and stable home (Vickery, 2018).

There is presently a wide range of causes leading individuals into homelessness, but the majority stem from some form of financial struggle or loss (Phillips, 2012; Barrett & Greenfield, 2018). This financial struggle can derive from a myriad of factors, but frequently it is linked to disastrous personal events like unemployment, gambling, the death of a spouse, alcohol, drug addiction, mental illness, debt, economic crisis or even a natural hazard related disaster (Auckland City Council, 2018; Toohey, Shinn, & Weitzman, 2004). Homelessness is primarily a complex sequence of disastrous events that build up over time, leading to the precarious state of being homeless (Phillips, 2012). The path into homelessness is almost never a singular event, but a complex and prolonged series of events over time. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless (n.d.), there are loosely eight categorical commonalities (or triggers) that lead individuals into homelessness: 1) drug/alcohol addiction, 2) mental or physical illnesses, 3) incarceration/arrest record, 4) domestic abuse, 5) family conflict/divorce, 6) job loss, 7) lack of rent/mortgage money, 8) and/or unsafe housing conditions. There is no definitive hierarchy differentiating the proportionality of these categories as causes vary

between regions, age groups, genders and cultures (Phillips, 2012; Radu, 2012). It is also important to consider intersectional approaches as one trigger (like mental health issues) is often coupled with others and increases vulnerability and thus the risk of experiencing homelessness (Gaillard, 2019; Chaplin, Twigg & Lovell, 2019).

All of these factors that lead individuals into homelessness disproportionately affect minority groups such as immigrants, African Americans, and native populations such as Aborigines, Māori and Pacific Islanders (Gattis & Larson, 2016; Radu, 2012). These are groups who are often already marginalised ethnographically or racially, thus perpetuating historic disparities in employment, housing, criminal justice and poverty; all things that push them into a significantly higher rate of homelessness globally (Gattis & Larson, 2016). This is a socio-economic and cultural flaw that truly has no borders and hinders our ability to appropriately address the issue of homelessness in an effective manner.

Yet, homogenisation of the homeless in purely a negative fashion can be misleading, as sometimes homelessness is intentional (Parsell & Parsell, 2012). A significant amount of literature has shown that there are many cases where individuals choose a life of homelessness (Donley & Wright, 2012, Rosen, 2010). Within this sector of the homeless community there can often be a fervent anti-establishment and anarchistic mentality; a strong dislike for or disinterest in contemporary society. Without a doubt, this might be passed off as the result of mental illness, but literature has shown that some individuals desire simplicity, without the constraints of jobs, bills, taxes or responsibilities (Rosen, 2010). These individuals who chose to be homeless are often driven to live a free and unshackled ‘homeless lifestyle’ where they must rely on resourcefulness, the good will of others, and the surrounding homeless community to survive (Parsell & Parsell, 2012). All these factors aside, whatever the causes or

pathways of homelessness are, a common struggle unites them: a lack of access to resources, which shapes their vulnerability. Limited access to resources can often be the singular factor determining a person's longevity in their bout with homelessness.

2.3.1 Resources & everyday survival

Due to the precarious lifestyles of most individuals experiencing homelessness, the attainment of resources vital for their survival is significantly compromised (Busch-Geertsema, Culhane & Fitzpatrick 2016). People who lack secure accommodation frequently relocate and change their living arrangements, making every day unpredictable and resource allocation inconsistent and difficult (Daly, 2013). This varies from situation to situation as some are sheltered, and can access running water and power, but others sleep in cars, alleyways or buildings with no heat, toilet or electricity.

As was discussed in section 2.2, there are many different types and categories of homelessness, but all of them face challenges accessing resources for their health and wellbeing (Bower et al., 2016). As Gaillard (2019) suggested, every day in a homeless person's life can be a disaster. Most of them do not have a physical address, which inhibits them receiving Government subsidies like unemployment, and makes it difficult to apply for jobs, open bank accounts or access health care.

In order to survive many homeless are forced to publicly beg or busk for money in populated public areas (Ravenhill, 2016). They often must wait in lines relying on hand outs, charities, food banks and soup kitchens. The homeless regularly find public libraries a place of respite where they can stay warm, dry, use the Internet free of charge and interact with others in their community. In addition, it has been found that the homeless utilise networks within their own homeless community to access resources.

These resources not only include tangible items such as food and clothing, but also information concerning the whereabouts of those and other resources (Ravenhill, 2016).

Unfortunately, engaging in these necessities for survival is often open for public viewing and scrutiny, which often fulfils many stigmas and stereotypes held by the general public of a 'dirty and desperate population'. Nonetheless, not all homeless people are the same, and marginalising them in this way can have quite negative repercussions and can entrench them deeper into a cycle of homelessness that can last years, or even entire lifetimes (Yurasov et al., 2019).

2.3.2 Marginalisation

Refusing to acknowledge, or lacking awareness of the broad range and diversity of the homeless population, directly leads to their marginalisation (Melnitzer, 2007; Bower et al., 2017). Scholars regularly define homelessness using the same terms that are all too frequently used to define marginalisation (Melnitzer, 2007). This unfairly labels the homeless with common misconceptions such as having no place in society, no social roles and as outsiders looking in (Moncrieffe & Eyben, 2007). Though recent literature (see section 2.2.1) makes it clear that homelessness extends far beyond housing, and possesses a range of categories and definitions, these singular stereotypes are still all too common and pervasive (Bower et al., 2017). The ramifications for this are broad, far-reaching and often devastating for those experiencing homelessness, further perpetuating their marginalisation in present day society (Walters & Gaillard, 2014; Wisner et al., 2012; Melnitzer, 2007; Yurasov, I., Batova, V., Roganov, V., Petrov, D. & Chircina, M., 2019). This can lead to the homeless feeling isolated and exacerbate many of the physical and mental health issues discussed in section 2.3.3.

To many, the home unit is a symbol of stability, identity and of inclusion or belonging in contemporary society (Melnitzer, 2007). It is often viewed as a status symbol that labels those who lack one as unstable, undignified or even unwell (Melnitzer, 2007). When the homeless are marginalised in this way it pushes them to the edges of society and can have a devastating effect on their access to valuable resources (Gaillard, Walters, Rickerby & Shi, 2019; Wisner et al., 2012). This is of dire consequence to the homeless as they fit into a category of vulnerability that often renders them with the poorest access to even the most basic of resources further marginalising them and pitting them deeper into their battle with homelessness (Walters & Gaillard, 2014).

2.3.3 Mental health, suicide & isolation

A recent study in the United States found that approximately one in three adults who are homeless have a mental health issue such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, severe anxiety and/or severe depression (Edgington, 2009). These mental health issues have an even higher representation in those that have been homeless for lengthy periods. This can have a disproportionally negative effect as these individuals also have limited access to mental health services and live an existence that is already highly stressful (Edgington, 2009; Every et al., 2019).

It is important to understand that mental health issues can stem from many of the causes that lead to an individual's situation of homelessness (Bower et al., 2017). Divorce and domestic abuse can be highly stressful and traumatic events that can often leave individuals with overwhelming financial burdens and debt, further increasing the likelihood of homelessness (Edgington, 2009). The same can be said for substance abuse, incarceration or the stresses of an untimely job loss. Many of these elements are

intersectional, as substance abuse can lead to domestic violence, which in turn can lead to incarceration (Gaillard & Fordham, 2018; Chaplin, Twigg & Lovell, 2019). In many cases these causes are intertwined and contribute to long-term homelessness, or patterns of recurring homelessness throughout their lives.

Homeless people are not homogenous, and marginalisation in any form can give individuals experiencing it a sense of isolation from the rest of society (Melnitzer, 2007). This isolation does not only affect them from a broader societal standpoint, but marginalisation can often lead to the isolation of individuals within their own homeless communities (Bower et al., 2017; Phillips, 2012). This has contributed to a disproportionate number of homeless suffering from loneliness, and feelings of shame for their various situations. As Bower et al. (2017) suggest, this lack of social inclusion often contributes to factors that that feed back into their cycle of homelessness and can lead to sleep deprivation, poor nutrition, and substance abuse issues (Edgington, 2009). This has led to substantially higher suicide rates amongst those suffering from homelessness as well. A study in the United States cited by Ravenhill (2016) noted that suicide accounted for 25% of deaths among the homeless, versus only 1% in the general population; a separate study in New Zealand stated that the homeless are 34 times more likely to commit suicide (Hodgetts, 2007).

Mental health is just one of the many compounding issues that can lead individuals into homelessness or extend their stay in it. When an individual is faced with more than one factor (i.e. substance abuse issues, debt) or is at higher risk due to their race or gender, it is referred to as intersectionality (Gaillard & Fordham, 2018). Intersectionality is a concept that has emerged in the last 30 years as a way to approach the heightened vulnerabilities of those who fall under its umbrella. As discussed earlier, the homeless are disproportionately vulnerable, but this vulnerability increases

significantly if an individual is homeless *and* elderly, or homeless *and* a minority dealing with substance abuse issues. Further research will help bolster the limited understanding of we have of this phenomenon and put policies in place that can reduce the risks for those experiencing homelessness or prevent them from experiencing it altogether.

2.4 Homelessness & disasters

Data has shown that extreme weather and disaster related events are occurring at a much more frequent rate recently than ever before in history, with over 7,000 extreme weather events occurring in the past twenty years according to the United Nations (Fogel, 2016). This has been in large part due to the effects of climate change that has increased significantly over the past century (Pielke, 2020). The effects of climate change has seen temperature rises globally, which has had a significant impact on weather-related hazards; however, this relationship cannot be demonstrated against climate time scales. Rising temperatures cause heat waves that affect the homeless who are frequently without shelter or air conditioning. Temperature increases caused by climate change also promote the spread of diseases that prey on the weak, have a direct impact on the spread of wildfires that have ravaged Australia and the United States in recent years, and increase the frequency and severity of tropical cyclones and hurricanes (Pielke, 2020). Accordingly, there are a broad array of agencies and organisations that work together to build resilience to those hazards and disasters. Unfortunately, there is a lack of information concerning homeless people's specific needs leading up to, during and following these events, as little research has been conducted concerning them until recently (Gaillard, 2019; Every; 2016). This in turn contributes to the lack of inclusion for homeless people in disaster risk reduction strategies, as having a limited

understanding of how the homeless cope during disaster makes it difficult to develop strategies to reduce their level of risk. Homelessness in and of itself can already be its own form of a traumatic experience, but navigating through the trials of a natural hazard-related disaster while also experiencing homelessness, can complicate homeless people's already vulnerable and precarious situation. (Fogel, 2016; Bower et al. 2017).

Research has shown that disasters disproportionately affect individuals with higher vulnerability (Walters & Gaillard, 2014; Vickery, 2015, 2018; Every, 2016; Edgington, 2009). This is precisely why it must be understood that the state of homelessness renders individuals significantly more vulnerable than the general population, and that hazards and disasters of all kinds often expose those vulnerabilities (Wisner et al., 2012). Even compared with other vulnerable populations such as the elderly, ethnic minorities, mentally ill and children, the homeless are often considered to be some of the most vulnerable (Walters & Gaillard, 2014). This compounds vulnerabilities from several different categories and in many ways creates the conditions for disaster (Gaillard et al., 2019; Bower et al., 2017). This was the case in recent research by Vickery (2018) on how flooding in Colorodo disproportionately affected the homeless and in Hodgett's (2007) research on rough sleepers in London facing hazardous situations.

This is precisely why it is so important to recognize the diversity of those that identify as homeless when discussing disaster risk (Wisner, 2003; Phillips, 2012). Different individuals experiencing homelessness have differing strengths, weaknesses and vulnerabilities when facing hazards and disasters (Walters & Gaillard, 2014). This can depend on many different factors including age, gender, health status, severity of disaster, and the various categories of homelessness discussed earlier. Awareness of this

diversity is vital in the conversation about reducing the risks of hazards and disasters to the homeless, as there is not just one singular approach.

2.4.1 Power & influence

In addition to understanding homeless individuals' vulnerabilities to disasters, there are numerous individual, structural and organisational factors that can increase or decrease disaster risk (Every, 2016). This is mainly in regard to their inclusion and consideration in planning for disaster and resource allocation leading up and following the onset of a disaster. It is known that aid in the follow up to a disaster is disproportionately allotted to those who are more affluent, as they have substantially more power and influence in society (Walter & Gaillard, 2014; Scoones, 2019). This power and influence creates an imbalance towards individuals who are precariously housed in comparison to those with economic means and power (Scoones, 2009; Wisner et al., 2004). The homeless have some of the least power and influence in society due to their diminished status of importance or consideration and often their identities or existence are not even recognized by dominant social groups such as the more affluent. Those with more economic, social and political power already have a disproportionate amount of resources compared to those that are experiencing homelessness. The same can be said about access to resources should they be needed in order to prepare or react to hazards and disasters. This is a reflection on systemic failures of everyday development in society that unfairly favours those who are already at an advantage (Wisner, 2004).

Public policy has a great influence on homeless people's daily lives. The capacity of the homeless to earn money, access health services, and an abundance of other resources are all greatly, if not entirely, affected by community policies. Public policy has

the ability to improve homeless individuals' lives through community building programs, but as Phillips (2012) suggested, the majority of these programs have been found to be ineffective and lacking in their capabilities to create positive, long term change for the population they exist to serve (Phillips, 2012).

Public policy also has the ability to enable or inhibit access to important sources of income such as busking and panhandling (Walters et al. 2014). When the greater community marginalises the homeless in negative and destitute ways (such as dangerous, unstable, unclean and unpredictable) this influences the general population's interest in pushing them as far away as possible whether that be for their own health, safety or convenience. Public policy is greatly influenced by these stereotypes and often legally prevents the homeless from occupying public spaces to busk and panhandle (Melnitzer, 2007). This is a never-ending cycle, as homeless people lack a voice in their wider communities and therefore have a limited ability to affect public policy changes. Many homeless are also unable to vote due to their lack of a physical legal address (Walter & Gaillard, 2014). This is an irony that perpetuates the narrative furthering their marginalisation, and their heightened vulnerability to hazards and disasters.

2.4.2 Homelessness as an everyday disaster

Homelessness has been described as an everyday disaster; therefore, depending on the different factors of a homeless person's situation, even minimal hazards and risks can quickly turn into disasters (Gaillard et al., 2019; Wisner, 2012). Research has shown that the daily hazards faced by those experiencing homelessness are of significantly higher concern than most risks posed by large-scale emergencies. This is important to acknowledge as it suggests the importance of the greater community's consideration of

homeless people's wellbeing as it is not of great concern for them in comparison to the necessities of their everyday life (Gaillard et al., 2019). For example, Gaillard et al.'s (2019) research in Wellington and Christchurch exposed the marginal concern that large-scale natural hazards represent to the homeless in comparison to what they experience as disasters of their daily lives. In Gaillard et al.'s (2019) research, it was found that, though their vulnerability to natural hazards remained high, it paled in comparison to the daily needs facing the hazards of their precarious and resource strained lives.

According to Every and Richardson (2017) those experiencing homelessness prioritised resource acquisition above all other concerns in their lives. When the greatest threat to an individual's wellbeing is access to resources on a daily basis, a homeless person has little time to worry about emergency and disaster preparedness like identifying evacuation routes and taking part to disaster planning (Vickery, 2018). This constant struggle to acquire resources can be extremely mentally taxing and contributes to the homeless suffering from several other negative by-products of life on the streets (Ravenhill, 2016).

Other studies have found that depression, boredom, public policies, lack of sleep and lack of access to alcohol rank as the issues of most concern to those experiencing homelessness (Gaillard et al., 2019; Ravenhill, 2016). Additionally, finances are almost always of great concern, and this directly impacts their access to other resources vital for their daily survival (Phillips, 2012; Ravenhill, 2016; Wisner, 2012). This lack of financing also prevents them from accessing stable shelter, quality food and medical care. This also puts the homeless in the precarious situation of trying to find a safe space to lay their head every night in city centres where policies often do not allow them a safe or consistent place to sleep (Gaillard, 2019). All of these hazards expose, expand and compound their already heightened vulnerable status into the earlier mentioned

propensity for mental health issues and alcohol and substance abuse (Chambers et al., 2014). Unfortunately there has been limited research conducted to strengthen the validity of these findings much less address the root of the problem.

According to research by Hodgetts et al. (2007), the fallout from exposure to these hazards leads to illnesses and health related issues that are of the greatest threat to those experiencing homelessness. This is especially the case as they have extremely limited access to health and dental clinics. This lack of access can be a double-edged sword, as minor illnesses can quickly turn into life threatening issues for those living on the street. Poor hygiene conditions can lead to minor colds, which if left untreated can turn into major health issues like strep throat, pneumonia or even worse (Hodgetts, 2007). This is also the case with homeless people's limited access to dental care, as relatively easy to treat cavities can lead to infections that can only be treated by expensive medications or dental procedures.

2.5 Conclusion

This study explores homeless people's experiences facing both the daily hazards they face in everyday life and larger scale disasters that affect them substantially more than the majority of the population. This study also focuses on the resourcefulness of those experiencing homelessness and their individual and communal efforts in building resilience towards hazards and disasters. Homelessness is a growing problem internationally and numbers are quickly growing across the world. This in turn has caused a strain on organisations providing services to those in the direst of need and has placed emphasis on policies that should ensure their wellbeing. Those experiencing homelessness are some of the most vulnerable members of our society and thus require a

proportionate amount of care and attention when it comes to the hazards of their everyday lives. Instead, society places a disproportionate amount of attention during disasters on those with more economic status as they have more power and influence in society, again in turn bolstering the importance of the homeless plight. This is especially the case when it comes to the homeless facing the hazards of large-scale disastrous events that have a much larger impact on them than others in society. There is a large gap in our understanding of how those with minimal resources such as the homeless cope with these events and it is vital that further research goes into understanding this phenomenon.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will outline the chosen methodology and methods for the study. Section 3.2 will explain the use of constructionism in order to more closely interact with the participants in this study. Section 3.3 will discuss the use of a qualitative descriptive methodology to gain insight into the occurrence of disasters from homeless individuals and their community. Section 3.4 will outline the approaches utilised to recruit the participants and the difficulties presented due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This section will also explore the diversity of the recruited participants and the importance of proportionate representations. Section 3.5 will describe the use of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions for data collection and the steps that were taken to avoid bias during the interviews. Section 3.6 will analyse the use of qualitative thematic analysis when examining the interview data allowing for a more organised approach when analysing the data. Section 3.7 will reflect on the worldviews of the researcher. Finally, section 3.8 will provide the ethical considerations that were taken into account before entering into the data collection phase and section 3.8 will conclude the chapter.

3.2 Epistemology

In order to gain a better understanding of *how we know what we know*, Crotty (1998) breaks epistemology into three separate categories; objectivism, constructionism and subjectivism. The objectivist worldview would suggest that knowledge is constructed by individuals independent of consciousness and that they are observational and

measurable. Subjectivism is the opposite relying strictly on opinions and assumptions. This research however has been approached somewhere in the middle of those two; from the epistemology known as *constructionism*. Crotty (1998, p. 8) noted "there is no objective truth waiting for us to discover it…truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities of the world." This approach simply takes knowledge that we already have to further inform ourselves and influence that knowledge base in a continuum that is pragmatic and optimizes results. Utilisation of the constructionist approach allowed me to interact with the research participants and understand, in the most direct and candid way, their experiences with the hazards and disasters they had experienced in the past and/or face daily.

Homelessness is an observable phenomenon but simple observations can sometimes be misleading and inaccurate (Hodgetts, 2007). It was not until I interacted with the research participants during the recruitment phase that I truly began to understand the truths of their vulnerabilities. In many cases I found the exact opposite of many assumptions I had drawn from real life experiences and literature on the topic. As Crotty (1998) noted, truth comes from our engagement with reality, and conducting interviews *in person*, and conducting those interviews directly where the homeless slept, busked and interacted provided the most objective truth possible, and uncovered how truly resilient Auckland's homeless are. The approach for interacting with participants is very important, however in order to be effective in research, careful consideration and understanding of the methods utilised to conduct the study do also.

3.3 Methodology

In this study a qualitative descriptive approach was used to develop an understanding and gain insight into homeless individuals and the greater homeless community facing hazards and disasters (Kim, Sefcik, & Bradway, 2017; Astalin, 2013). The use of a qualitative descriptive approach helped to focus on the *who, what* and *where* of how these phenomena affected the homeless, specifically in relation to their health and wellbeing (Kim et al., 2017). This approach also lent to a more comprehensive summarisation of how these hazards and disasters affected them both on a short and long-term basis (Lambert & Lambert, 2015). This eliminated many prejudices, took little for granted and yielded the largest and most accurate amount of data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The use of qualitative descriptive allowed one-on-one in person interviews that gathered comprehensive data unable to be gathered through observations or first hand experiments.

Furthermore, the use of a qualitative descriptive approach enabled access to detailed perspectives and accounts of the homeless in relation to how they felt about community services and resources, their risk reduction strategies, and their overall view of assistance during those difficult times (Barrett & Greenfield, 2018). This framework also helped guide the understanding that this research would not necessarily provide specific explanations or answers, but would indeed raise awareness and insight into disaster related phenomena (Astalin, 2013). In order to accurately depict how these phenomena affected them, I utilised an inductive thematic approach to organize the collected data following the recruitment and interview phases of the study (Crotty, 1998). The recruitment and interview phases are the first interactions with the participants and where these approaches get put into practice.

3.4 Recruitment

Recruitment for this study commenced on May 19th 2020. On that exact date New Zealand had 45 active cases of COVID-19, no new cases, and improvements in conditions saw Auckland move from Alert Level 3 down to Alert Level 2 just days prior (see figure 3). Movement to Alert Level 2 meant that the disease was contained but that there was still a risk of community transmission. This improvement allowed shopping, domestic travel and most importantly, interaction with strangers at a 2-metre distance.

Figure 3

New Zealand COVID-19 Levels

Source: Author's own, adapted from data at http://covid19.govt.nz/alert-system/

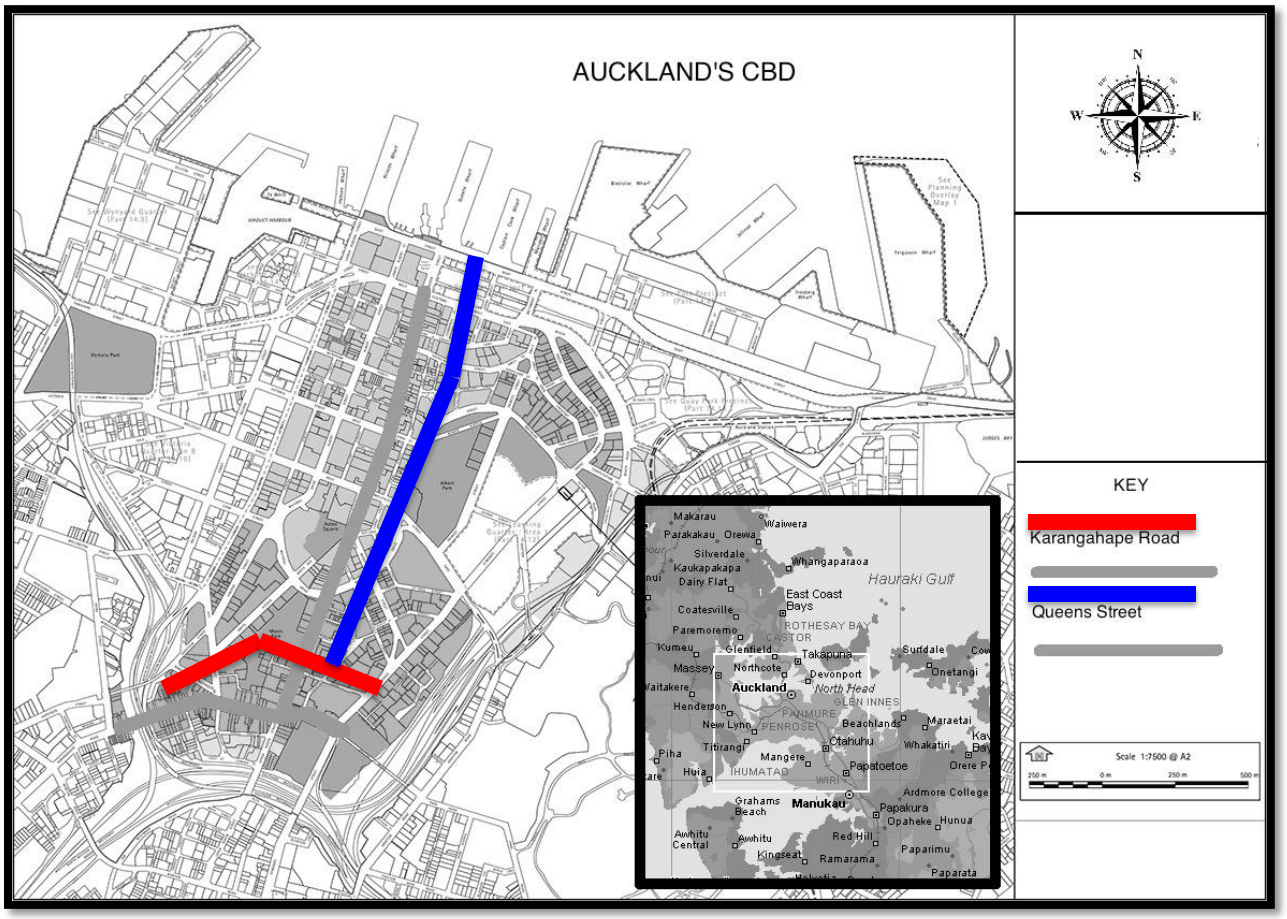
There were two separate methods used for recruitment. Some participants were recruited using posters that were placed in the entryway of one of Auckland's main homeless service and resource provider, the Auckland City Mission. Permission was granted to place the posters by on duty volunteers who also assisted in distributing the Information Sheet and contacting me on the phone.

In traditional research format the Information Sheet is provided at the same time as the consent form, but due to the social-distancing complications of New Zealand moving to a Level 3 lockdown during the COVID-19 Pandemic, it was important to have a non-contact alternative. This included the implementation of Verbal Consent Protocols in order for consent to be given in a manner that allowed minimal contact between the researcher and the potential participant. In addition, The Auckland City Mission agreed to secure the Information Sheets behind a desk that is staffed from open to close in order to provide details to potential participants who inquired.

More effectively however was the alternative method of recruitment that took place following New Zealand's reduction to Alert Level 2 during the COVID-19 pandemic. This reduction in mobility restrictions allowed communication and recruitment to be conducted in person whilst still observing a safe social distance. In order to accomplish this I combed Auckland's two main thoroughfares of Queen Street and Karangahape Road (see fig. 2).

Figure 4

Karangahape Rd and Queen Street



Note: Map of downtown Auckland's two main streets (created by St.Martin, 2020)

In order to avoid further marginalisation or stigma on those who I assumed were homeless, I simply asked those who were busking and begging if they knew anyone in the area that had experienced homelessness, or was currently homeless. This approach allowed comfortable space for potential participants to come forward concerning their homelessness or inform me if they knew the location of any place homeless people congregated. Asking potential participants in this way allowed a safe approach to a potentially sensitive question, avoided labelling and marginalisation, and worked as an

effective icebreaker. Directly approaching individuals who simply *appeared* to be homeless would be entirely unethical, therefore the implementation of these cautionary methods (Runnels, Hay, Sevigny, et al., 2009).

In particular Queen Street and Karangahape Road were chosen for recruitment as they are host to one of the largest concentrations of Auckland homeless population. Though it has since changed due to 'stay at home orders' in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and the closing of New Zealand's borders, the homeless tended to dwell at these two locations as historically they were two of the main thoroughfares for pedestrians and tourists. This is particularly relevant as heavy foot traffic affords individuals access to significantly more lucrative begging and busking opportunities. However there is a hierarchy that exists on these two roads, as certain locations tend to yield more income from busking and begging. As I learned during the interviews, occupation of these more sought-after locations often has to be earned, through the attainment of respect in the homeless community. This respect is something that appears to only be earned through longevity of time spent in and amongst the homeless community, and their reputation on the streets. Ravenhill (2016) found a similar hierarchy in research recently conducted in Australia.

If it was convenient for the potential participant, the interview was conducted directly following the initial recruitment. I adapted this approach through an awareness that individuals experiencing homelessness can often live precarious lives with limited resources and limited access to phones or emails (Every, 2016: Phillips, 2012: Gaillard et al., 2019). Being unable to contact or locate a potential participant could have been particularly detrimental to the recruitment process, especially during the unpredictability of a pandemic.

In order to respectfully compensate those who agreed to participate, each participant was offered a twenty-dollar gift voucher for a local supermarket. This in no way was an incentive to influence their participation, and was therefore only offered following the conduction of the interview. This was strictly to prohibit any bias in their participation based on remuneration or compensation.

3.5 Interviews/Data Collection

A total of 10 interviews were conducted over the course of a one-week period. Auckland was chosen for this research as it contains the highest concentration of New Zealand's homeless population garnering an elevated need for services and resources. The interviews were conducted in various locations on or near Queen Street and Karangahape Road in downtown Auckland. Each interview ranged between 25 and 40 minutes in length with the exception of one interview that lasted well over an hour due to a passionate participant's input on the topics at hand.

The interview locations were not predetermined, but simply left up to the preference of the interviewee in order to make them as comfortable physically and emotionally as possible. This was also a method utilised in order to mitigate any positioning of power or authority over them (Merriam et al., 2001). Several of the interviews were conducted on the street in the exact locations where the participants were initially encountered. This was frequently the exact location where they slept, busked or begged. Other interviews were conducted in local cafés or public spaces, again dependent on the wishes of the participant. The interview location had quite severe implications on the quality of the recordings of the interviews. The interview sessions and recordings were regularly interrupted by the overwhelming sounds of a dense metropolitan city. This

routinely included ambulance sirens, trains, buses and in one instance an interview even had to be postponed due to the threat of being rammed with a shopping cart by an irate and seemingly intoxicated pedestrian.

The open, semi-structured interview approach enabled the participants to share their views with fewer barriers and restrictions than a more regimented approach might offer. This structure facilitated an environment that was able to produce better individual and community understanding, as the participants were able to discuss topics tertiary to the ones posed (Kim et al., 2017). The topics they broached were often more relevant, insightful and thought provoking, which guided further questioning outside of the original indicative interview questions. This particular framework lended the structural flexibility that gave the participants power and influence over the direction of the interview and, indeed, personalised each interview (Kim et al., 2017). This was especially pertinent to this study as the recruited participants were extremely diverse. Participants not only ranged in age, race, gender, education, culture and religion but also in the time they had spent homeless, in their living arrangements and their abilities and disabilities. Questions for the interviews were vetted through an ethics process conducted by AUT and by managers and volunteers at various homeless shelters throughout Auckland and the United States.

The diversity of recruited participants produced findings that cultivated unique and differing experiences that guided the interviews in varying directions pertinent to each participant. This approach produced results with minimal bias, and fewer limitations, that were representative of the broader homeless community in Auckland. Additionally, as opposed to surveys or phone conversations, the face-to-face semi-structured interviews facilitated an environment that allowed the participants to share more personal and critical feedback regarding their experiences with hazards and

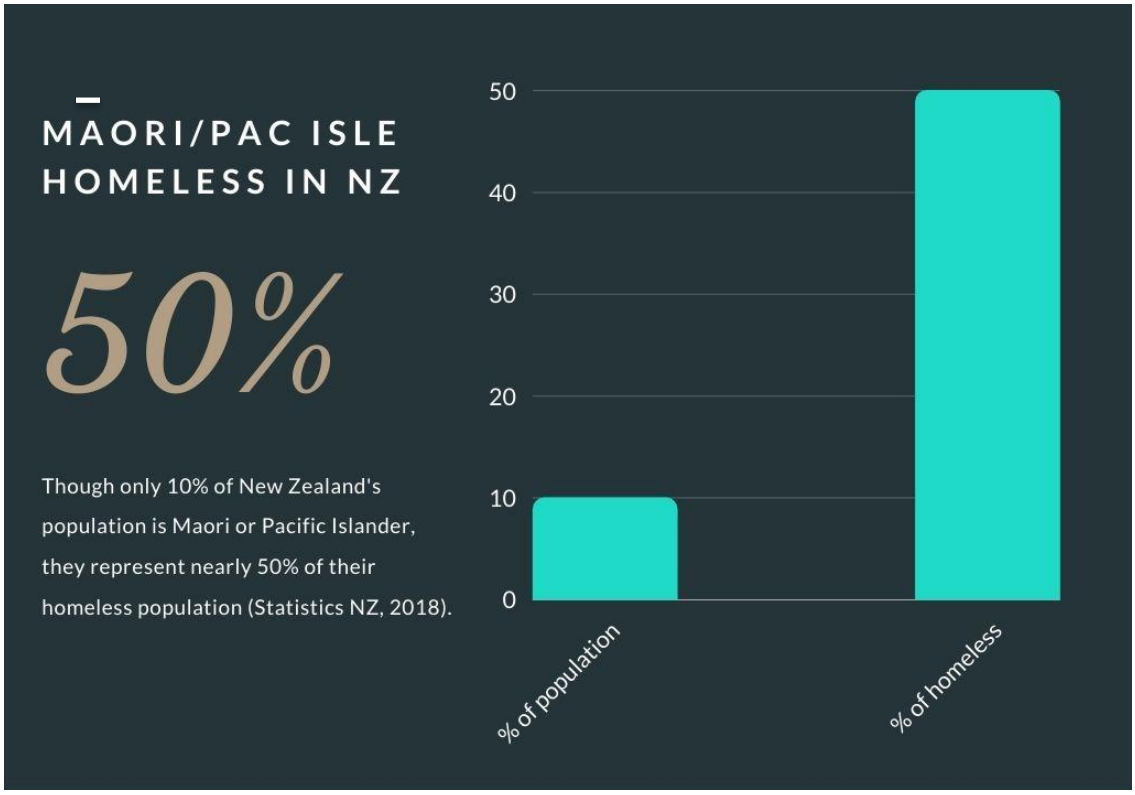
disasters, thus encouraging the more inhibited participants to contribute their knowledge (Kitzinger, 1995).

Participants had to either currently identify themselves as homeless, or have experienced homelessness or received homeless services in the past year. As discussed in the literature review, there are varying degrees and categorisations of homelessness, but for the purposes of this study those particulars were not discussed with the participants as I felt it might be potentially confrontational, confusing, misguiding, or serve as a potential distraction from the intentions of the study (Phillips, 2012).

There is a disproportionate number of Māori and Pacific Islanders experiencing homelessness compared to the rest of New Zealand's population (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2010; Statistics New Zealand, 2013). According to statistics New Zealand (2018) just over 10% of New Zealand's population is of Māori or Pacific Island descent, but they represent nearly 50% of the homeless population (Figure 4).

Figure 5

Māori and Pacific Island Numbers



Note: Homeless Population Numbers for Māori & Pacific Islanders taken from Statistics NZ, 2018.

This statistic suggests how disproportionate their representation in the homeless population is. 60% of the participants in this study were of Māori or Pacific Island descent which was within close range of the nearly 50% they represent of the homeless population. (Statistics New Zealand, 2013; New Zealand Parliament, 2014). Additionally there was an even split of men and women that participated in this study, accurately representing data from Statistics New Zealand's data on gender ratios of those precariously housed (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). Overall, I believe the participants in this study possess a well-balanced range of gender, culture and race backgrounds representative of New Zealand's diversity (Figure 3). Unfortunately, statistics have also shown that up to half of New Zealand's homeless are under the age of 25, and as many as

a quarter are children, a representation which my study did not accurately embody (Amore et al., 2013).

For purposes of anonymity participants are referred to numerically, as can be seen below in Figure 3. Anonymity in research is paramount as it may often be a deciding factor in whether or not a participant discloses personal information or beliefs (Astalin, 2013; Gelberg et al., 2000)

Table 1

Participant Details

	Gender	**Race/Heritage**	**Age**
Participant 1	Female	Māori/Pacific Islander	47
Participant 2	Male	Māori/Pacific Islander	28
Participant 3	Female	Caucasian/Jewish	42
Participant 4	Female	Māori/Pacific Islander	52
Participant 5	Male	Caucasian/NZ	61
Participant 6	Male	Māori/Pacific Islander	50
Participant 7	Male	Caucasian/NZ	40
Participant 8	Female	Māori/Pacific Islander	31
Participant 9	Female	Caucasian/NZ	45
Participant 10	Male	Māori/Pacific Islander	23

Note: Details of ten participants interviewed for the study

3.6 Data Analysis

The use of qualitative thematic analysis allowed the uncovering of patterns and themes, and facilitated a more organized understanding of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This also allowed a more subjective view in making sense of the various experiences, and more clearly understanding their similarities and differences. As a researcher, it is impossible to completely eliminate bias derived from personal world-views and life experiences (Lambert & Lambert, 2016). This undoubtedly had an effect on the method of recruitment, the analysis of the data, and how it was reported. In order to reduce the possibility of these potential biases self-referencing was incorporated, otherwise known as reflexivity, in every step of the research and analysis process. Dependability and rigour in research is paramount, and in order to ensure this the purpose of this study, its aims, recruitment of participants and methodology were as detailed and transparent as possible.

There are six phases to Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, the first of which is familiarising oneself with the data. In order to more accurately accomplish this, each interview was recorded and transcribed for repeated review and analysis for the 'findings' and 'discussion' chapters. Transcription of the interviews allowed the researcher to more clearly see thematic patterns emerge throughout the analysis. The second stage is the 'coding' of patterns and broad ideas used to find more specific thematic ideas in the third stage. During the coding analysis, the researcher moves, changes or discards codes used to form more specific themes in the following stage. In the third stage the researcher can begin developing themes and moving them into categories of 'main themes' and 'sub themes', with the fourth stage being the tuning and

refining of those themes. The fifth phase defines and labels the different themes for the final phase of discussing the findings (Braun & Clark, 2006).

3.7 Researcher Reflexivity

Qualitative research can be interpretive, therefore reflection on my own worldviews and bias was taken into great consideration during every stage of the research process (Haynes, 2012). Reflexivity allows for the researcher to be self-aware of these biases, reflect on their origin, and challenge them throughout the entire research process. This is not only vital for the quality of the data and how it is interpreted, but for my own personal growth as a researcher. Reflecting on my own background before entering into the interview portion of the research allowed me to consider the importance of trustworthiness and the dynamics and complexities of subjectivism vs objectivism. Proper consideration of these dynamics ensures rigor in outcomes of the qualitative research process.

My interest in vulnerable populations stems back to my time in the military, where two tours of Iraq exposed me to the collateral damage that ill-thought out actions and the consequences of those actions, can bring to civilian populations. I completed two tours of Iraq and was directly exposed to the destruction that can be caused by a lack of organisation and planning in international interventions. This led me down a more humanitarian based path, both serving on a Red Cross Disaster Services team and working with the U.S. Peace Corps in Senegal.

More specifically to the homeless, I managed the day shift at a homeless shelter in Fargo, North Dakota in 2017. The experiences I had working at a homeless shelter were invaluable and altered or completely changed many of the preconceptions I had about the

homeless. This taught me valuable lessons about not homogenising the homeless population, as they are an extremely diverse and complex population that should not be given definitive labels and stereotypes. Additionally, this experience was invaluable during the recruitment process as I was already comfortable working with this population, and the second I mentioned my history with the homeless to the potential participants, there was a genuine easing of any tension that was there.

3.8 Ethics 20/68

This study involved face-to-face interactions with vulnerable populations, and at times, implied discussing sensitive subject matters. Due to this, ethical consideration was sought before any contact was made with potential participants. This was done in order to ensure that all participation was free and voluntary, and that each potential participant understood they were under no pressure to participate. This is especially important as these interviews were conducted with an already vulnerable population whose access to supplies and resources was further being challenged in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Each potential participant was made aware, both verbally prior to the interview, and in the Participant Information Sheet, that they could withdraw at any time and request that all data and recordings be destroyed at no consequence to them. They were also ensured that withdrawing would not upset or disappoint anyone involved in the research. Potential participants were also ensured that their identities would remain anonymous and that their privacy and confidentially would be respected.

I was able to gain the potential participants trust on these matters through several different approaches both physically and verbally. At no time during recruitment did I place myself in a position of power when talking to the potential participant and was

quick to inform them that I had previously managed a homeless shelter and was conducting research to benefit their community and that their input would be invaluable (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2008). Knowing that they were talking to someone that understood their worldview, and that they had power and influence that could potentially impact change and improve conditions for their community empowered the potential participants (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane & Muhamad, 2001).

From a physical standpoint I ensured that I positioned myself at eye-level with each individual I approached and did not talk down to them as they were often sitting, squatting, or lying down on the ground. Standing up and talking down to someone can often be intimidating and possibly perceived as positioning oneself in a place of power, which might intimidate the potential participants (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2008; Merriam et al., 2001). Additionally, I intentionally dressed in a plain and simple manner (limited to jeans and plain t-shirts) so as to not look 'out of touch' and potentially creating an insider/outsider environment (Merriam et al., 2001). These were all key ethical considerations that attributed to the validity of my results.

3.9 Conclusion

Understanding the methodology and methods of how this study was conducted was an extremely important step in the process of the research that was conducted. This awareness reduced bias in the process of the interviews, how the data from the interviews were analysed, and the how the results were interpreted and discussed. Being aware of my own worldview improved my understanding of where some of that bias may have stemmed from, and improved the approaches and strategies for recruitment. This was especially pertinent in how I framed the questioning during the interview sessions.

Furthermore, the utilization of a semi-structured interview approach, and utilisation of indicative interview questions, allowed the flexibility required to encompass the broad diversity of the participants representing New Zealand's homeless population.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of Auckland's homeless population in the face of hazards associated with emergencies and disasters. However, the scope of the study also took into consideration the daily hazards and disasters of homeless people's lives. This included hazard and disaster preparation for anything within these contexts in relation to resource allocation in their communities. This study also sought to understand whether or not the homeless harboured a sense of marginalisation in their respective communities and how that may have affected any disaster risk reduction strategies they had in place. The interview questions for this study focused on homeless people's perspectives on interpersonal community interactions and interactions with local organisations or agencies with regard to those topics. More specifically the questions focused on their daily struggle to attain resources, including accessing shelter and emergency housing. All in all, ten interviews were conducted and this section explores the themes uncovered in those interviews.

In order to achieve the objective of focusing on Auckland, all recruitment was conducted in person in Auckland's Central Business District on the two main thoroughfares of Queen Street and Karangahape Road. These two locations are where a concentrated contingent of Auckland's homeless can regularly be found. Those who agreed to the interviews were asked a series of questions concerning their experiences

(both as a community and individually), responding and/or preparing for both large-scale disastrous events, and the daily hazards, emergencies and disasters of their everyday life. This included questions about their relationship with fellow homeless people, Auckland's non-profit organisations, and how that affected their access to resources essential for disaster risk reduction and resilience. Interviews were conducted in May of 2020, immediately following New Zealand's drop to a Level 2 status during the COVID-19 pandemic. This section provides the findings of those ten interviews.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the research approach for this study took an inductive approach in order to allow the data to inform the themes, as opposed to a more deductive approach of going into the analysis with predetermined themes. Open-ended interviews were conducted in order to have as little influence over the outcome of the participants' responses as possible, and allow them to discuss those issues that truly mattered and affected their day-to-day lives.

After thorough thematic analysis and coding, three main themes emerged from the responses shared during the interviews. Section 4.2 explores Auckland's homeless as a *community* and how that distinction affected their access to resources when facing both large-scale disastrous events, and the daily hazards, emergencies and disasters of their everyday life. Section 4.3 explores the participants' views on the performance of the various disaster risk reduction organisations and their housing status when facing these same potentially vulnerable situations. Section 4.4 explores their prioritisation of day-to-day hazards versus larger scale emergencies and disaster risk.

4.2 Auckland's Homeless as a Resilient Community in the Face of Hazards and Disasters

Participants overwhelmingly stated that they viewed Auckland's homeless population as a community. This sense of community created an environment which contributed positively to the participants overall physical and mental wellbeing; this is critical in building resilience when facing both large-scale disastrous events, and the daily hazards and disasters of their everyday life. Some of the core tenets of 'community' are engagement, diversity, collaboration, respect and support (Bauman, 2001; Daly 2013). These were all sentiments expressed in participant's responses to the interview questions concerning their experiences with emergencies and disasters. They regularly discussed the other individuals experiencing homelessness as a *family*, often referring to each other as *brother, sister, cousin, uncle or aunty* regardless of age, race, gender, education, culture and religion.

> *Oh yeah, we're definitely a community, but I'd say we're more like a family in a lot of ways – we definitely band together at times; hell, I can probably name half the [homeless] guys on this street!* (Participant 2: Māori female, 19/05/20)

> *Oh yeah it don't even matter that I'm an old white fella, those guys up the way [referring to a predominantly Māori/Pacific Island contingent of homeless further up Queen St] all call me Uncle. There's a lot of respect down here if you earn it. I mean, we don't always get along, but when have you ever heard of a family always getting along?* (Participant 8: white male, 20/05/20)

Participants utilise these close community relationships to access and attain resources on a daily basis, something vital in hazard and disaster resilience building. They communicate with each other openly about various resources, the location of the resources and their quality. Many participants will utilise their own personal networks to attain or inquire about other resources as well, often borrowing, trading or sharing as emphasised in these quotes:

> *No, I don't have a cell phone, I lost it, or it got stolen a while back, but one of my [homeless] friends always got one I can use.* (Participant 4: 19/05/20)

> *Before the lockdown fella down the street used to give me ciggies for a bit of coin or a tinny (marijuana)– I mean, who can even afford a [expletive] pack these days?* (Participant 10: 20/05/20)

During my interview with Participant 3, we were interrupted halfway through as she shouted to two younger Māori/Pacific Island gentlemen and asked, "hey, if you guys are heading over to the food line, let me know if it's better than those sandwiches they had yesterday will ya?" (Participant 3: white female, 19/05/20)

Resources such as food and communication tools like cell phones are vital in order to minimise the impact of hazards they face on a day-to-day basis. This can even be said in the case of substances such as cigarettes and marijuana which are frequently exchanged in their community and have been shown to be utilised in order to alleviate some of the stressors of the precarious lives of populations such as the homeless (Peretti-Watel & Constance, 2009).

Interactions amongst participants reflected a level of respect for one another based on their reputation and the length of experience as homeless:

> *There's kinda three separate sections of us down here. Lower Queen Street has been around the longest and you really have to earn it to be down here, you know, with all the tourists, they've got the money. Then there's this kind of line between us and the Māori fellas on upper Queen, but we respect each other because we've earned it you know – K-road is all the druggies and all that.* (Participant 8: 20/05/20)

Participants were often found in pairs or trios and discussed working together as a community to access various resources that are invaluable when facing both large-scale disastrous events, and the daily hazards, emergencies and disasters of their everyday life:

> *Oh, we know how to stay warm. Him and me went into the most expensive hotels during lockdown and we just walked in there together, jumped in the spa pool. No one blinked an eye, and we just knew how to do it, and we just thought, this is real good. It was your idea [gesturing to his friend] wasn't it?* (Participant 7: 20/05/20)

Participants predominantly used the inclusive pronoun *we,* as opposed to the exclusive and singular *I,* further suggesting their feelings towards Auckland's homeless as a community:

…sometimes in the carparks we would get attacked by security guards… (Participant 3: 19/05/20)

…we don't need as much help as some people think sometimes, we're, like you said, pretty resilient - we're a tough bunch (Participant 4: 19/05/20)

We often lose out on things like gifts because there's no storage space for us to keep our things… (Participant 1: 19/05/20)

Homeless passers-by in the community would not even hesitate to interrupt interviews to ensure that this strange 'outsider' (myself the interviewer), asking a fellow homeless person seemingly innocuous questions, was not disturbing their *brother* or *sister*. This was predominantly the case regardless of age, race, gender, education, culture and religion. This inclusivity has been shown to build stronger communities, and stronger communities are more resilient to a broad range of hazards and disasters (Daly, 2013; Radu, 2012).

Figure 6: *Stored Homeless Possessions*

Source: Photo taken of homeless persons possession precariously stored on Queen St. (photo credit; Mathew St.Martin)

Participants' close relationships in their 'community' dramatically improved communication channels and the exchange of information for both large-scale disastrous events like the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the daily hazards, emergencies and disasters of their everyday life. The homeless people that were interviewed regularly knew of incidents in the community, within minutes of them occurring, irregardless of the possession of a cell phone or their proximity to those specific incidents. The participants shared information about resources in their community, which had recently

become much more important during the pandemic, mostly due to the lack of tourism and the subsequent decimation of income from busking and begging. Participants regularly stated that this information was shared via the use of cell phones or by word of mouth.

As Auckland contains New Zealand's highest concentration of individuals experiencing homelessness, its CBD is host to several organisations working to reduce the risks of the hazards they face. All the participants knew multiple organisations in the city that assist with homeless needs and knew where and how to access them. Homeless people overwhelmingly mentioned the Auckland City Mission (the Mission) and Lifewise, two of the main actors in homeless services in the area. Lifewise and the Mission both have a broad range of services for the homeless including mental health services, housing assistance and disability services. However, both of their focuses shifted to address the growing temporary housing needs following New Zealand's lockdown in response to the pandemic.

Other organisations that assisted with emergency housing were also mentioned, including Housing First, Salvation Army, James Liston Emergency Housing and Kahui Tu Kaha which is an organisation focused on emergency housing specifically for Māori and Pacific Islanders. As for resources such as food and clothing, participants frequently mentioned the Salvation Army, the Mission, and various volunteers unaffiliated with organisations that were distributing donated food from all over the community.

Participants discussed informing other homeless of the location of authority figures such as Police officers and City Watch personal. Knowing the location of individuals with authority and power can be valuable when trying to avoid them when engaging in illegal activities, but also in the case of emergencies and disasters.

When seeking other homeless to recruit for interviews, participants knew specific locations, numbers and often names of homeless people halfway across town which speaks once again to their knowledge and communication as a community.

> *Oh, yeah, there's three guys that hang on the corner over by the Countdown near Spark (a grocery store near a stadium in Auckland's CBD), I'm sure they'd talk to you about all this.* (Participant 3: 19/05/20)

Participants clearly cared for each other and had each other's back in a broad range of different support rolls and day-to-day interactions vital for daily hazard and disaster preparation:

> *Since this whole Coronavirus thing it really seems, or feels, like we've [the homeless community] pulled together a lot, you know, it's like nobody is out here anymore, it's just us.* (Participant 2: 19/05/20)

At the same time, some participants did speak of infighting, theft and violence within the community. Several participants spoke of carrying weapons when they slept at night out of fear of being attacked and/or stolen from. This may be a somewhat understandable occurrence in a population disproportionally possessing mental health issues, lacking finances, access to resources, and in the middle of a global pandemic that exacerbates all of those things. This is however significantly more concerning as it increases hazards to their community and therefore reduces collective resilience to hazards and disasters. This, once again, is of increased concern when considering the

importance of resilience when facing the day-to-day disasters of their everyday life, much less more substantial disasters such as the current pandemic they are facing.

4.3 Disaster Risk Reduction Organisations & Emergency Housing During COVID 19

In order to explore organisational response efforts for Auckland's homeless in the face of hazards and disasters, participants were asked about their access to various resources in the community and how helpful they were. This included inquiries into how helpful the resources were, if they were accessible, and how they could be improved for any future hazards and disasters they may face. One of the predominant topics discussed was access to sheltering, and emergency housing during both the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the evacuation of downtown Auckland following the Sky City fire in 2019.

Participants overwhelmingly had positive views of organisations assistance responding to both everyday hazards, and larger scale disasters such as the ongoing pandemic:

> *During COVID-19, when I needed resources and assistance, I knew I needed to go somewhere powerful and I went to the Auckland City Mission, but they've always been good to the homeless around here* (Participant 6: 20/05/20)

This sentiment was emphatically corroborated by 9 out of 10 participants who noted that "the City Mission is awesome, as is Lifewise and Merge Café (Participant 2)"

and that "the city and the organisations are doing a fabulous job; the Auckland City Mission is excellent… Lifewise the same, it's almost too much (Participant 4)."

Though participants had these views at present, many made note that this assistance had only come in recent times, and in large part as a result of the pandemic response, and that resources had not always been this readily available.

> *There was no food out here for years and then the last few years it's been truly good for us, especially since the virus hit.* (Participant 7: 20/05/20)

> *Compared to what it used to be like, the homeless situation in Auckland has improved a lot.* (Participant 6: 20/05/20)

> *The organisations are doing a great job…. but the Government should have taken action years ago.* (Participant 9: 21/05/20)

Due in most part to Government's attempts to reduce the hazards of the disastrous COVID-19 pandemic, participants had overwhelmingly been housed temporarily or permanently at the time of the interviews.

> *Most people are temporarily housed through Lifewise and through different organisations, which I think is amazing.* (Participant 1: 19/05/20)

> *Since the lockdown somebody or something housed everyone! Straight away they put me at James Liston Hostel, which wasn't flash, but I was housed and fed like a king.* (Participant 6: 20/05/20)

This housing was primarily because of legislation that was passed by New Zealand's Government and the Ministry of Social Development declaring a State of Emergency that funded hotel rooms for the vast majority of homeless individuals that were interested in temporary shelter during the international health emergency (Davidson 2020). Some participants, however, were temporarily housed before the COVID-19 lockdown:

> *I was actually [temporarily] housed just before the pandemic through Kahui Tu Kaha (a subsidiary of Housing First) and I've found them to be pretty awesome at the moment.* (Participant 2: 19/05/20)

Participants were also aware and hopeful that their temporary housing would lead to a more permanent solution to their homelessness:

> *…right now I'm in a transition place where I can actually apply now for cheap accommodation again.* (Participant 3: 19/05/20)

> *There's a pathway to getting your own place through Housing First or Housing NZ for sure, it's not always easy…. but it can definitely be done and a lot of these organisations will help you with that.* (Participant 6: 20/05/20)

Participants discussed how nearly every homeless person on the street who wanted accommodation in reaction to the pandemic was able to receive it, but just like Participant 5, some homeless still prefer to be outside. Some interviewees discussed those in their community that were too addicted or intoxicated to be housed, or simply did not like the idea of 'being confined to four walls'. One participant even stated that when they were given accommodation through Housing First last year, they slept on the porch as they were uncomfortable inside the apartment and that it "didn't seem natural" (Participant 5). Some interviewees were even given accommodation, but had no interest in staying in it, drawing potential links to a disconnection with societal social norms, or as was discussed in Chapter 2, those who choose to be homeless. This is especially interesting when considering the perception of homeless people in relation to some of the common concepts of resilience versus vulnerability discussed earlier:

> *I've actually got the keys to a place that Lifewise helped me get, but I don't stay there. I really don't like it much… a bunch of these other guys have been put up in motels all over though.* (Participant 5: 20/05/20)

> *The City Mission sent people out during lockdown to see if those homeless who weren't indoors wanted a motel or something. A lot of them didn't – a lot of these people have been out here 20 or 30 odd years.* (Participant 2: 19/05/20)

> *Listen man, when you've been sleeping outside for so long, sleeping in a room can feel like a prison cell or something you know – it just didn't feel right – I really tried for a few days, but I couldn't handle it.* (Participant 8: 20/05/20)

The interviewees even portrayed overwhelming positive views of City Watch and other authority figures in charge of managing 'nuisance activities including obstructive or aggressive behaviour, monitoring busking, outdoor trading and damage to public assets'.

> *City Watch, they cool; no problems anywhere when I'm busking.* (Participant 4: 19/05/20)

> *No, they've never yelled at me or talked down at me or anything like that. Some of them are quite nice honestly.* (Participant 3: 19/05/20)

> *Hey man, if you don't [expletive] with those guys, they don't [expletive] with you, you know what I mean? Some of 'em are real cool eh? Honestly bro…. sometimes, maybe they're bored or something, but they just talk with you eh.* (Participant 9: 20/05/20)

> *City Watch, they're the guys who are on Queen Street and ask for busking permits and tell you where you can and can't sit, but they're usually real nice about it.* (Participant 10: 21/05/20)

4.4 Daily Hazards vs. Large Scale Disasters

To better understand the burden that risks of large-scale disasters place on Auckland's homeless in comparison to daily hazards, participants were asked about their preparation and reaction to past and present events like the recent fire in downtown Auckland, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were also asked if disaster

preparation and risk reduction strategies mattered to their community, and if people were discussing these larger-scale events currently or in the past.

Participants were substantially more concerned with daily hazards like lack of access to showers, limited revenue sources, theft and violence within their own homeless community. This included even basic hazards such as speeding tourists on e-scooters, bicycles and skateboards.

> *Sometimes at night when I sleep on the streets, I'm sniffing glue, and I have to sleep with a weapon on me... if you have anything that's valuable, especially money, you need to sleep with a weapon.* (Participant 4: 19/05/20)

> *They need more police down here as things get stolen from me all the time!* (Participant 3: 19/05/20)

> *Theft can be real bad… happens all the time, [Name], that's her biggest problem, [homeless] people stealing all her stuff when she's sleeping outside.* (Participant 1: 19/05/20)

The participants seemed quite resilient and independent when it came to the threat of hazards from large-scale events, and expressed little interest in assistance from external actors. Participants were specifically asked about evacuations during the Sky City fire in late 2019. It was important to understand how this disaster risk had been communicated to them and if that communication involved any community organisations or authorities. This was asked in order to gauge their risk communication channels both within their community, and from outside sources. Participants were also asked if they

desired assistance or more nuanced information during the evacuation. This was specifically something the majority of participants found completely unnecessary with many acting insulted for even being asked.

> *Why would I need anyone to tell me to evacuate when there is smoke coming from a building? Completely unnecessary, that's just common sense.* (Participant 6: 20/05/20)

> *For Sky City I was up the street and I could see it, no one needs to tell me what to do.* (Participant 3: 19/05/20)

Those participants who scoffed at the idea of needing any assistance during the Sky City Fire described themselves as 'resilient' (participant 2) and as 'a tough bunch' (participant 5). These participants regularly referred back to how difficult their lives were on the streets, their struggles in and out of housing, and shared their sentiment that trivial things like bad weather and building fires meant nothing to them. The participants believed they could handle a lot of adversity as they had made it through difficult times living on the street. They felt they had control over the majority of the disastrous events in their daily lives, but had absolutely no control over large-scale disasters so why even bother thinking about them, much less preparing for them.

One participant noted the cities attempt to inform the public of the fire and their disaster risk reduction strategy for evacuating citizens and requesting they seek shelter. Immediately following the fire (which burned for nearly three days) the city's Emergency Management Department sent out an alert via text message to all cell phones within a certain range of the fire. Of the five participants that had access to a cell phone, only one

stated that they had received the text on the afternoon the fire began, filling the downtown area with smoke and noxious fumes, and two others stating that they had received the text, but not until the next day. This was in large part due to their lack of access to something as basic as an outlet to charge a cell phone if they indeed possessed one. If a cell phone battery is flat, no one can call it, no matter how important the matter. Participants also noted the irony of the message requesting that they 'seek shelter and roll up their windows.'

> *The message told me to seek shelter and roll up my windows, so I just sat here on the street and pretended to roll one up [motions to rolling up an invisible car window in front of him].* (Participant 8, 21/05/20)

In the case of COVID-19, participants overwhelmingly lacked interest or concern for the pandemic with regard to their own personal health, or the health of the homeless community. When asked if testing were readily available to them, free of charge, would they be interested in getting tested, 8 out of 10 participants expressed no interest at all. Participants also overwhelmingly stated that they never worried about contracting the disease, and nor did others in the homeless community, with many frequently stating that nobody was even talking about it.

> *Nobody in the homeless community talks about it (COVID-19), we're mostly worried about health and safety… things just go on every day and there's always another day, another problem, and then another day.* (Participant 4: 19/05/20)

Nahh, I don't worry about it. I even have asthma, but whatever, you've got to die of something eh. (Participant 5: 20/05/20)

COVID-19 didn't matter to me and I wouldn't get tested if I could. I was just more worried about people as a whole and the panic it caused. (Participant 2: 19/05/20)

Participants' perception of risk in this context was minimal and they agreed that COVID-19 was not of concern to their own personal health. However they stated that it had negative financial implications on their day-to-day earnings from busking and begging.

The lack of tourism during lockdown definitely affected my income. (Participant 2: 19/05/20)

It's definitely been harder to make money down here. (Participant 3: 19/05/20)

Some of us are getting a Government subsidy for sure, like $170 a week if you can figure out the paperwork, but nobody is earning anything on the street anymore – well, legally anyway. (Participant 8: 20/05/20)

4.5 Summary of Key Findings

Overall these findings suggest several important points concerning Auckland's homeless in the face of large-scale disastrous events and the daily hazards, emergencies

and disasters of their everyday lives. After thoroughly analysing the participant's interviews it was clear that Auckland's homeless overwhelmingly viewed themselves as a community and appeared to be incredibly resilient and resourceful. Participants viewed themselves as independent and had little interest in increased assistance from external actors. Additionally, participants believed that the organisations and various stakeholders tasked with building resilience in their community were performing exceptionally well. This was specifically in regard to those providing aid, resources, and assistance during the broad scope of hazards and disasters that had recently affected Auckland's residents. Lastly, it was clear that their community was substantially more concerned about the precarity of their daily lives as opposed to the threat of large-scale emergencies and disasters that might expose any of their various vulnerabilities. These results, coupled with the shift in homeless individuals' inability to earn income due to the decimation of the tourism industry, has challenged the public's perceptions of risk when it comes to the homeless community facing disasters (Slovic, 2000). Collectively, all of the conclusions drawn from the interviews suggest that Auckland's homeless are much more resilient in the face of hazards and disasters than was previously thought. This is primarily due both to their own resourcefulness and to the quality performance of the Government backed agencies and volunteers in downtown Auckland.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The findings detailed in Chapter 4 identified that the homeless population in Auckland's central business district overwhelmingly viewed themselves as a community. They spoke of each other fondly, with respect, and utilised those relationships to build resilience in the face of both the hazards and disasters of their everyday life, and in response to larger scale emergencies. Their close community relations were developed over time by gaining one another's respect and trust. Their close relationships also helped to build resilience within their community, leaning on each other for resource acquisition and exchange. Their excellent communication skills further developed their resilience to daily hazards and the fallout from disasters.

The findings also highlighted their exemplary views of the performance of the Government and local organisations in response to disaster preparation and response. They overwhelmingly acknowledged their awareness of this as an improvement from the past. The findings also uncovered the participants' appreciation that organisations not only helped provide resilience building resources on a day-to-day basis, but also temporary housing for the vast majority of them following the COVID-19 pandemic. They shared that contracting COVID-19 was of no consequence to them, but were acutely aware of its impact and concerned about the effects it was having on the greater community. They discussed their concerns on how this compromised their ability to earn money by means of busking and begging, as it resulted in limited local and tourist foot-traffic. This decline in monetary resource access made the role of the organisations, the Government and volunteers all that much more vital.

This discussion will examine the significance of these findings in comparison to literature and understandings from the past. Section 5.2 will discuss the role of community in relation to building resilience against hazards and disasters. Section 5.3 will discuss the homeless communities' utilisation of different communication tools under the same context. Section 5.4 discusses the main external actors in helping their community build resilience. Section 5.5 discusses their access to housing and how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced that. Section 5.6 contrasts the importance of daily hazards vs. larger scale disasters on their community. Section 5.7 lays out the limitations of the study and 5.8 makes recommendations for further research. Section 5.9 will conclude the study.

5.2 Community & Diversity

All participants viewed Auckland's homeless population as a community and referred to each other affectionately. They confided in each other, and frequently referred to their fellow homeless as 'brothers', 'sisters', 'friends' or 'mates'. This supports Ravenhill's (2016) assertion of homeless culture and some of its positive allures of connectedness and community. This is vital to homeless people's survival as a close connection with the community is important when responding to daily hazards and large scale disasters (Vickery, 2018). Ravenhill (2009) noted from her extensive research on England's homeless over the course of more than fifteen years that there are many aspects of living an extended life of homelessness that are appealing and that "each [relationship] has emotional significance" (Ravenhill, 2016, pg. xvii). Ravenhill also noted that by many individuals' third night of initially becoming homeless, they had already settled into the lifestyle and had made friends within the homeless community.

This is important to note as the first few days of those experiencing homelessness can be by far the most difficult as the experience is unfamiliar, frightening and resources and shelter are difficult to find (Ravenhill, 2016). This demonstrates how important it is to quickly find alliances and friendships, as this greatly improves access to the information and resources that are vital to building resilience to hazards. As Wisner (2012) states, there is a bond between many homeless people, as they share a similar struggle for survival and work with each other to build resilience.

Participants noted that their bonds had strengthened in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and that they utilised one another for the additional support they needed during the pandemic. This was especially the case when it came to communication of resource distribution. Participants commented on an abundance of resources that were made available following the initial 'lockdown,' and how information concerning the location of these resources was communicated quickly throughout the homeless community. These resources were also traded and exchanged based on dietary restrictions, preferences and individual needs. Titz et al. (2018) draw similar conclusions when discussing the roles and dimensions in a 'community' and how people within a community assess, interpret and adapt to the risk of a disaster within their respective communities.

The participants relayed that they could only truly relate to other homeless people as only they have an understanding of their day-to-day struggles facing hazards. This is contrary to some literature by Titz et al. (2018) that suggests doubts about the 'usefulness of community' and refers to it as potentially 'futile' and 'harmful'. The authors suggest that the term 'community' is frequently overused in the conversation about disaster risk reduction for those homeless with heightened vulnerabilities. Titz et al. (2018) further questions the use of 'community' in terms of a group of people with similar interests and

social networks. The findings for this research disagree with that assertion and could only find a few cases where participants viewed their community as 'harmful.' Bower et al. (2017) discusses how poor in quality, short lived and untrustworthy many of the relationships can be. Several of Bower et al.'s (2017) participants spoke of the friendships they had made in their homeless community, and how they lacked consistency, reliability and staying power. As some of the findings suggested, this was the case on a few rare occasions when participants noted their concern about violence and theft from other homeless members of their community. This aligns with Ravenhill's (2016) assertions concerning theft and violence as part of the culture of the homeless experience which is in large part due to resource scarcity amongst the homeless. One of the participants even discussed sleeping with a weapon at night out of fear of being stolen from by other homeless members in their community.

These are strong arguments of why the homeless cannot be homogenised as they clearly have different experiences within their respective communities. The homeless share similarities in their community relationships, they are also complex and have varying interests, abilities, levels of trust and power relationships. As Vickery (2018) points out, the homeless are an extremely diverse population and often assumptions made concerning them are incorrect. Not all experiences were positive, but in this study, it was found that a sense of community amongst the homeless was very beneficial to Auckland's homeless, overwhelmingly positive and vital to their survival and their resilience overall.

Understanding that the homeless are indeed a close community as opposed to individuals living separate lives on the street is important. This helps the greater community better understand their abilities to build resilience when facing hazards or disasters. However as with any community, not all relationships amongst community

members are perfect and tensions, violence and thefts still exist. However this was rarely mentioned in the study, as the findings strongly suggested the prevalence and importance of their positive community bonds and how those bonds helped build resilience facing hazards.

5.3 Communication Tools

The importance of communication as an effective disaster risk reduction and resilience building strategy has been widely discussed (Hanson-Easey, Every, Hansen & Bi, 2018; McCafferey & Steelman, 2013; Gaby-Fleur, 2015). Hanson-Easy et al. (2018) discuss communication for disaster risk reduction and resilience building both in terms of preparation for hazards as well as response to disasters. Parallels can be drawn with many of the findings from this study, as communication was key to resource allocation for the majority of the participants facing daily hazards and while recovering from large scale disasters. Participants openly discussed communication networks in their community, and how they utilised those networks to their benefit. Examples of their communication for resource allocation came in many forms: Some homeless people spoke of exchanging goods for other goods, or goods for services, as each homeless person has access to different resources and possess varying physical and mental strengths. The findings demonstrated that the participants were very efficient in communicating this, as many could identify several resources and who they could access them from or exchange them with in their community. Many participants discussed communication lines sharing the location of volunteers giving out food and clothing, the location of authority figures, and the location of the day-to-day happenings within their community. As the homeless typically lack access to phones, the majority of this communication is happening on the

ground from person to person, which is extremely impressive in a world heavily reliant on technology. This is in line with Brookfield and Fitzgerald's (2018) research that noted word-of-mouth as homeless people's primary source of information and communication. Auckland's efficient on-the-ground communication amongst the homeless not only reflects back on their strong community bonds, but also on their resourcefulness in resilience building.

Communicating the location of authority figures was found to be something the participants wanted to be aware of both for their own protection, and to avoid getting caught in illegal activities. The findings showed that Auckland's homeless had an overwhelmingly positive view of authority figures downtown including both the police and city watch. The findings revealed that authority figures on Queen St would regularly stop and chat with those busking and begging and would know each other by their first name. These relationships build trust, and trust is important when responding to disasters as it is the authority figures that typically give guidance and leadership in response to these events. Ravenhill (2016) confirms these findings stating that local police built trusting relationships with the homeless community and were in many senses an important part of their community. Ravenhill (2016) stated that the police recognised that the presence of a homeless person in front of a shop would provide that shop and its owner with a 'passive sense of security.' This is somewhat surprising as homeless often engage in illegal activities just to survive in addition to frequently loitering and sleeping in locations not allowed in city centres (Ravenhill, 2016; Phillips, 2012). This also potentially speaks to a larger homeless community that could be explored in future research.

Hanson-Easy et al. (2013) described these communication networks as social connectedness or 'social capital.' Gaining a sense of social connectedness through the use

of communication networks helped the participants deal with some of the mental strife that comes along with the day-to-day hazards of a person experiencing homelessness (Cusack et al., 2013; Edgington, 2009). Participants overwhelmingly described their lives as mentally taxing and relied heavily on the support of those in their community that can often be gained through good communication lines and trust. This belief is congruent with Edgington's (2009) establishment that those experiencing homelessness disproportionately suffer from mental health issues and therefore need strong community ties in order to cope with the difficulties that can result from it.

However, according to Hanson-Easy et al. (2013), not all community members have access to positive communication through social networks. This supports some of the findings that reported tension between individuals in the homeless community over theft, violence and drug abuse. The findings provided several examples of how individuals in the homeless community had to earn respect to be accepted and trusted, and if that trust was compromised it was communicated quickly throughout their community and would affect their reputation. This is a prime example of the manifestation of negative social networks, and how that might ostracise certain individuals and push them out of their respective communities. Reputation is extremely important on the street and if a homeless reputation is damaged in the community, access to resources can become extremely strained (Ravenhill, 2016).

The participants also discussed the importance of communication between themselves and the outreach teams that informed them of temporary housing during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings support Hanson-Easy et al.'s (2018) contention that the dissemination of risk communication is vital to reduce risk in vulnerable communities. Participants spoke about outreach teams from several organisations in Auckland's CBD and how they communicated the availability of the

temporary accommodation by walking up and down Queen Street and Karangahape Road, speaking to the buskers, beggars and street dwellers in the homeless community. This information was then disseminated amongst the various personal networks in the homeless community. This dissemination of information within the homeless community was vital to those living on the margins of the homeless community who dwell off of Queen Street and Karangahape Road. Participants discussed how these individuals are often in carparks, alleyways, under bridges or in various parks off of the main roads. This means that their access to communication is much more limited and they often rely on word of mouth to receive their information. This can be vital when responding to both daily hazards and large scale disasters as accessing information quickly can be of a life or death consequence (Drabek, 2007). This information may include evacuations following disasters, or severe weather warnings where every second counts in individuals' response.

Though Mayhorn and McLaughlin (2012) discuss the effectiveness of the use of social media and technology in risk communication, they also mention that it can sometimes be ineffective. For these communication tools to be effective, people must have access to them and many homeless people either do not have such access or it is very limited. This was confirmed by participants who shared how ineffective the use of text messaging was when Auckland's Emergency Management team sent out an evacuation warning during the Sky City fire in the fall of 2019. Only one of the participants received the evacuation text on the date of the incident, with several receiving it the following day as their phone's batteries were un-operational due in large part to lack of locations to charge them. This means of communication also left out those individuals who did not have cell phones and in this study that was 50% of the participants.

Communication travels in both directions as well, and many of the organisations that provide services to the homeless rely on feedback or information from those in the homeless community. This is how many organisations know what resources are needed and what services to provide those experiencing homelessness. Participants discussed giving feedback to various service organisations when they were not getting the resources they needed such as accommodation and food that met their dietary restrictions. They also mentioned how grateful they were and gave positive feedback or gratitude whenever money was dropped in their hat or a food item was handed over. Positive feedback is always welcome and reinforces efforts and initiatives, but negative feedback is just as important as these organisations' purpose is to build resilience within the homeless community, so knowing what is not working matters equally. Edgington (2009) discusses similar information sharing looking into their specific resource needs in her research on homeless service organisations preparation to disasters. In Edgington's (2009) research she discusses collaboration with local health departments community service organisations and the homeless to better understand their needs for resilience building and disaster risk reduction.

The findings clearly demonstrate how effective and efficient the communication is between those in the homeless community. Good communication benefits them in many ways including resilience building in their communities. Having good communication, the participants were able to exchange important information about resources. This was regardless of the presence of important communication tools like cell phones and the internet. This quality communication was especially important following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Working together in this manner helped them build strong bonds and trust with one another which helped individuals cope with mental health issues. It is also important for the homeless to communicate with the Community

Service Organisations concerning the resources and services they provide so they better understand their needs.

5.4 Community Service Organisations & External Actors

Brookfield and Fitzgerald (2018) discuss the important role of community service organisations (CSO's) and their positive impact on the resilience of the homeless community. In their research they note that the state of homelessness reduces individual's disaster resilience, and that CSO's minimise structural pre-disaster vulnerability through engagement with the homeless population. Participants' feedback on Auckland's CSO's reflected this belief and spoke of how important the services had been in building their own personal resilience to hazards.

Participants knew several CSO's by name and discussed how vital their services had been in recent years. This was the case when facing the everyday hazards of their lives as well as large scale disastrous events. As noted by Every (2019) these vital services include food and housing, both services stated to not be in short supply due in large part to the CSO's working in and around Auckland. It is also possible that this is in large part due to the outbreak of a pandemic, but many participants stated that services had begun improving well before that.

Several participants even discussed there having been such an abundance of services since the COVID-19 pandemic that they could afford to be selective of some of the food they preferred from different CSO's. This countered the argument by Every which stated;

> *Homeless organisations connect their clients with critical services such as food, healthcare, and housing. Yet, these agencies are generally underprepared for extreme weather and disasters triggered by natural hazards particularly with regard to their ability to continue to provide services to deal with surges in demand in the wake of an event* (Every, 2019, p. 803).

This study demonstrated that this was not the case whatsoever in Auckland, as services and supplies had exceeded demand in the wake of a major event. However, the ability of CSO's to provide these services is largely contingent on funding and the Government's approach towards disaster response. This means much of this success can be attributed to New Zealand's influx of funding to build the resilience of the homeless in the early days of COVID-19. This money not only allowed CSO's to fund extra food for those who could not afford it, but also to fund employees and volunteers that went to the streets to inform the homeless of these additional services.

Brookfield and Fitzgerald (2018) also discussed a certain stigma that some homeless feel when using homeless services through CSO's, a sentiment shared by several participants who talked about damaging their pride waiting in line for a handout or begging for resources. Unfortunately, acquisition of some of these resources is an absolute necessity for their survival; so many are forced into these acts regardless of their personal pride. This was even more so the case during this studies interviews as many complained about the lack of tourism in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and how that negatively affected one of their primary sources of income.

Many of the CSO's expanded their roles in building resilience amongst those experiencing homelessness through communication of the availability of temporary housing following the COVID-19 pandemic. This was verified in interviews with all ten

participants who had been contacted by various organisations informing them of the opportunity. According to The Guardian, over 100m NZD was pledged by the Government to house the homeless when demand for accommodation skyrocketed in March of 2020 (Graham-McClay, 2020). The participants discussed how efficient the organisations were in this regard and stated that if any homeless individuals wanted accommodation, they were given access to it. This was a direct result of the pandemic, as prior to this Auckland's only homeless shelter had been closed for nearly two years for upgrades and repairs.

This temporary accommodation was made available as borders had closed and tourism plummeted, leaving empty hotel rooms throughout the city (Davidson, 2020). The money the Government allocated not only went towards funding the CSO's and their recruitment efforts, but to compensate hotels for use of their space. This approach was able to get hundreds of homeless off the street, helping curb the spread of the virus to an extremely vulnerable population, and keep the hotels afloat during a time of immense revenue loss.

There was, however, a small number of participants that had no interest in the offer of accommodation. This is in line with other studies discussing those who choose not to live within 'the confines of four walls.' Donley and Wright (2012) discuss this phenomenon in their research looking into those who have chosen to live unsheltered in Florida. Donley and Wright (2012) note how there is a contingent of the homeless that chose, for several reasons, to 'opt out' of homeless services rather than subject themselves to 'helpers.' They note a few reasons for this phenomenon including personal pride, preference of the freedom of an outdoor existence and rules that they would rather not follow. In the present study of homeless people in Auckland, two of the participants clearly fell into this category openly admitting that they were offered accommodation,

but did not like the confines of four walls, one participant even compared being housed as being locked in prison.

The performance of Auckland's CSO's in recent years has been exemplary but new concerns arise moving forward. In an economy extensively damaged by the restrictions put in place in response to the pandemic it will be important to monitor how the funding for these CSO's fares. Also, currently a large portion of Auckland's homeless are temporarily housed in hotel rooms across the city that will eventually need to vacate them when the borders open and tourism comes back. This is precisely why there is much need for future research to investigate if those temporarily housed end up back on the street, and if heightened resource access for the homeless suffers any decline. While Auckland's homeless are in large part temporarily housed in hotels across the city there is a prime opportunity to address housing issues for the homeless, pathways to permanent housing and substance and mental health programs addressing root causes of homelessness to begin with.

5.5 Daily Hazards vs. Large Scale Disasters

All ten participants stated that the daily hazards of their everyday lives were of substantially greater importance than the hazards and disasters of large scale. Many participants spoke of their resilience as a homeless person that had to manage day-to-day challenges with extremely limited resources. The findings suggest an immense sense of pride in their personal resilience and ability to overcome hazards of any type in many cases. This matches with Gaillard's (2019) findings in a similar study in Christchurch and Wellington that noted "natural hazards are of marginal concern to homeless people in

comparison to the everyday hazards that they experience and that makes their everyday life a disaster in itself ."

Many homeless are not only unsure of where they will sleep most nights, but where they might get their next meal. Participants all expressed this sentiment when being asked about their concern for COVID-19 in particular. Most participants never worried about the Coronavirus pandemic and stated the importance of their everyday needs over worrying about something they had little control over. In line with Gaillard et al.'s (2019) study, results pointed out how very few homeless people even wanted to discuss natural hazards as a risk, but only basic necessities like shelter, food and health. Gaillard et al. (2019) also noted that many in their study thought that those who had been housed were more significantly at risk of being trapped in collapsing or flame engulfed buildings. Participants in the present study had similar thoughts about the Sky City Fire and COVID-19 when they pointed out that they had already lived through so much adversity by living on the streets that they were hardened and could sustain more than those that are housed. This reflects the fact that they are used to dealing with a significant number of daily hazards, which makes them more resilient and/or not care as much about certain risks or challenges as perceived by non-homeless people. This displays how Auckland's homeless prioritize their needs and reinforces Gaillard et al.'s research demonstrating similar results. The results of this study also demonstrate homeless personal and community resilience in facing those hazards, highlighting their resourcefulness as a community.

5.6 Conclusion of Study

The key findings of this study suggest a need to address the long term sustainability of resource allocation for the homeless as a result of COVID-19. Following early onset of the pandemic many policies were put into place to meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness, and much attention and economic investment was allocated to build their resilience against those hazards. Disastrous events present an opportunity for the community to improve services to those who are the most vulnerable and develop disaster risk reduction policies that reflect an updated understanding of that knowledge as is often emphasised in literature (Christoplos, Ngoan, Sen, Huong & Lindegaard, 2017). Assessing the successes and failures we experience in response to disaster affords an opportunity to improve on future services provided for those individuals affected by it. It is by these means that the community as a whole can build resilience in the face of the hazards and disasters (Every, 2019).

This study has addressed the question of how Auckland's homeless population respond to hazards and disasters. The key findings suggest that Auckland's homeless are an incredibly resilient population, and often feel marginalised as if they are weak and destitute. The findings show that the homeless view themselves as a community, with tight family-like bonds that substantially increase their access to resources that build their resilience. The literature has shown that the homeless are disproportionately vulnerable to hazards (Walter & Gaillard, 2014; Bower et al., 2017), however this study has provided many examples of their mechanisms to reduce those vulnerabilities and persevere through hardships. This was undoubtedly the case in reference to the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings demonstrated their acute communication skills that further reduced their vulnerability to hazards and strengthened resilience in their community.

The homeless community was receptive to authority figures like City Watch and the local police officers and many spoke of them fondly and with great respect. This sentiment suggests an inclusivity of the homeless and a potential breakdown of the barriers of marginalisation (Melnitzer, 2007). Auckland's homeless garnered little concern for the threats posed by large scale disastrous events, instead focusing on the risks of the daily hazards face on the street. The findings uncover how severely their earnings from busking and begging were affected by the lack of tourism and foot traffic as a result of the pandemic. Regardless, the participants expressed little concern from any threat of contracting the disease, but rather were frustrated by the chaos it created in the city. The findings also show that Auckland's homeless were overwhelmingly positive about the Government, city council and CSO's performance in response to the pandemic. This was exemplified when participants in this study asserted that there was an abundance of food, supplies and temporary housing for nearly anyone in the homeless community who wanted it. Overall this study has demonstrated how a community that has been marginalised as weak and destitute is indeed quite resourceful and resilient to disaster when working together with well managed and funded community service organisations.

The findings of this study point out the limited understanding about homeless people in the face of hazards and disasters. These findings emphasise the need for sustained focus on homeless people's wellbeing, especially when dealing with heightened environmental risks. Taking homeless people's welfare into account can only strengthen the greater community resilience and help stakeholders provide resources equitably when facing disaster (Every, 2019).

5.7 Limitations

This study has identified critical factors in the way Auckland's homeless fare in the face of hazards and disasters. However, findings from any study need to be explored for any limitations they might have. Firstly, although this particular study had ten participants, the results could have been bolstered by having a larger sample size. Having a smaller sample size can increase the influence of subjective opinions, and the studies singular location reduces the transferability of the data to other locations globally. All participants were recruited from the two main thoroughfares in downtown Auckland and therefore the study has limited scope and representation from what is a very broad and diverse homeless population spread across a large metropolitan area. In order to reduce these limitations AUT's proven academic theoretical processes were followed, as was a stringent and extremely thorough ethical review which explored some of these weaknesses.

Secondly as previously stated, all participants were recruited from the two main thoroughfares in Auckland's CBD. As was noted in the study, these locations are highly sought after and individuals must earn occupation of these locations through time on the street and earned respect. This means that the study was under-represented by those homeless who may be newer to the homeless experience, and because of that, potentially more vulnerable. Further studies would greatly benefit from expanding the locations of recruitment for research and getting the perspective of these homeless living off of the main streets, in the parks, parking garages and alleyways.

A third limitation is that this research, which had a broad scope of Auckland's homeless in the face of disasters, was conducted in the middle of a pandemic. This potentially limited the validity of several outcomes. Many participants had been housed

due to emergency funding allocated by the Government in reaction to COVID-19. That means many of the participants who had been roofless were now housed which would potentially skew their prioritisation of resource needs. Had this study been conducted prior to the pandemic it is quite possible the feedback would have been less positive as they would still be living on the street therefore more vulnerable to different hazards and in need of different resources.

5.8 Recommendations for Policy & Practice

It should be noted that there is currently an extremely unique opportunity for those organisations invested in building homeless people's resilience to hazards. This opportunity exists as a large number of Auckland's homeless are currently temporarily housed which has substantially reduced their vulnerability to both the day-to-day hazards and the threat of large-scale disasters. This relieves pressure on the organisations and gives them an opportunity to reassess and improve their strategies towards building resilience in the homeless community. This includes an opportunity to assess and revise disaster risk reduction strategies on both a micro and macro level.

There are several recommendations for future research in this area. Firstly, as this research was conducted following the initial lockdown in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial to follow up on the progress of Auckland's homeless over the next few years. Though it is now known how satisfied the participants were with the Government and local organisations' response to the pandemic considering homeless people's welfare, it remains to be seen if that response leads to a better situation for them in the future. This can be gauged by looking at several specific areas in the future. Participants overwhelmingly noted that they were nearly universally offered temporary

accommodation during the initial stages of Auckland's lockdown, but future research should assess whether or not that temporary accommodation leads to permanent accommodation for them in future months and years. This also includes the status of their improved access to resources during the pandemic. It is important that improved access to resources continue as this is vital for their personal and community resilience building. To ensure the past successes in this regard are carried forward when responding to hazards and disasters, a review and revision of disaster risk reduction strategies is also imperative. Lastly, a great amount of attention was paid to the homeless during the pandemic, but if that attention wanes in the years after the country has recovered from it, the situation might return to exactly how it was prior to the pandemic, or potentially even worse.

Secondly there is a need for further research to be conducted concerning the needs of homeless people in other communities around New Zealand in order to gauge their views on facing future emergencies and disasters. As Auckland is New Zealand's most populous city, smaller communities may have different resource access, accommodation access and thus experiences facing hazards and disasters. This is also a consideration that needs to be made as Auckland is located further north than many other cities in New Zealand and therefore has a substantially warmer climate. Colder climates in communities south of Auckland may have different priorities when facing both daily and large-scale hazards. This can affect their access to shelter and access to resources. Auckland's propensity for tourism is also higher than many other communities in New Zealand, which in turn might influence how they were affected with income from busking and begging.

The third recommendation is for newfound research concerning the homeless in their struggle with hazards and disasters to be made more readily available to the public.

This includes the findings of this study, as well as others that have shown how the homeless are misunderstood and often get marginalised by society and how that in turn greatly that affects them. It is also important for the general public to be more aware of homeless people's strengths and weakness when facing both the hazards of everyday life, and the large scale disasters that disproportionately affect them. It is important that this includes their strengths as well as their weaknesses, as it is also dangerous to assume a homeless person is always starving, intoxicated or desperate and destitute. A uniformed public leads to improper resource allocation, negative perceptions of the homeless and fear. The homeless are an important part of our communities and deserve to be better understood which will lead to greater community as a whole.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethics Approval

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Appendix C: Consent Form

*Note: All original documents were printed on AUT headed paper

Appendix A: Ethics Approval

4 May 2020

Loic Le De
Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Dear Loic

Re Ethics Application: **20/68 Homeless people in the face of severe weather, emergencies and disaster's Auckland as a case study**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Remove the following sentence from the Information Sheet 'Unless discussed in interactions with the Auckland City Mission's staff and volunteers, there will be no identification or invitation on the part of the primary researcher (Mathew St. Martin).' Replace this with: 'You saw a poster advertising this research at the Auckland City Mission and contacted me because you were interested in participating'

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: matwillsaint@gmail.com

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

10.03.2020

Project Title

Homeless people in the face of hazards and disasters: Auckland as a case study.

Invitation

Kia Ora, my name is Mathew St.Martin and I am working on my Masters degree in Emergency & Disaster Management. I'm trying to find out about the experiences of the homeless in downtown Auckland and how they react to severe weather, emergencies and disasters. Would you be interested in taking part in my study? Your input would be very helpful if you did choose to participate.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to better understand the present day experiences of Auckland's homeless when facing environmental hazards associated with severe conditions. This one on one phone interview will help us better understand Auckland's homeless and their abilities to adapt and overcome the extremes of Auckland's severe weather, emergencies and disasters. This research will also help me fulfil the requirements of my Masters degree and help me get jobs in industries helping people in similar situations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Unless discussed in interactions with the Auckland City Mission staff and volunteers, there will be no identification or invitation on the part of the primary researcher (Mathew St.Martin).

In order to take part in this study you need to identify as homeless, and reside in the Auckland Central Business District.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you would like to participate tell me (Mathew St.Martin) via e-mail, phone or inform the volunteer at the Auckland City Mission of your interest and we can arrange an interview. I will e-mail you, or ask for your verbal consent agreeing to the interview, which needs to be completed at the time of the interview. Our interview cannot take place without signed or spoken consent.

What will happen in this research?

After giving your consent we will set up a date for the interview, or conduct it on the spot over the phone after careful consideration has been given. If it is not conducted following our initial interaction, a date and time will be chosen for the phone interview to take place. I will ask you a series of questions that focus on all of the experiences discussed above. You will be encouraged to share your views and personal experiences. The interview will be recorded using an iPhone recording app.

What are the discomforts and risks?

Discomforts or risks connected with this research should be minimal, but it is important that you know that your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time. You will have the option of removing any information that can identify you or data that has been collected from the research and/or its findings. If you would like any information removed or data to be left out, inform the interviewer (or his supervisor who's contact details can be found at the bottom of this form) and they will permanently remove or destroy it from any and all documents and/or recordings.

You are not required to answer questions that you do not want to answer, and you are free to drop out at anytime.

At any time you can inform me (Mathew St.Martin) that you would like to stop the interview and you can request that all recordings and any documents be destroyed. There are absolutely no negative consequences for doing so.

We take the events of Covid-19 very seriously and are aware that these events may have had a greater impact on you due to your potential exposure to elements and/or lack of shelter. We would like to remind you that we are simply asking these questions to improve the situation of the homeless population both here and abroad. Your feedback will help us gain an understanding of both, how *you* were effected by this pandemic (and other events), and how *you* believe they can improve. However, it is very important that you understand that this is completely voluntary, and we will happily stop the interview at any time if it becomes difficult or uncomfortable for you. Your wellbeing is far more important to us than the interview.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

Your participation in this study is 100% voluntary and you are in no way benefiting by participating, or are you at any disadvantage for not participating. If at any time you feel uncomfortable during the interview you are not required to answer the questions and we can move on, or completely stop the interview. If you do wish to stop the interview and withdraw you will be given the option to delete all recordings and notes. It is of great importance to myself and AUT that this interview cause you no discomfort. If you wish to have a support person, friend or family member with you during the interview you are more than welcome to have one.

Should you feel upset or distressed in response to what is discussed during interview you have the option to contact/visit any of the social workers at the Auckland City Mission. They are available Monday – Friday from 9:30 – 5pm free of charge.

If you would like counselling outside the of the homeless services network you can also access counselling at AUT free of charge. Simply call 0800 543 354 to schedule an appointment; and if unable to schedule it yourself I will happily do it for you.

They can also be contacted at:

Phone: 09 303 9200

Address: 23 Union St, Auckland Central

What are the benefits?

In addition to receiving a $20 Countdown Gift Voucher you will be taking part in research that may help benefit or improve the lives of Auckland's homeless in the future. The $20 gift voucher can be mailed to the Auckland City Mission where you can pick it up at your convenience. Your participation will also help me fulfil the requirements of my Master's in Emergency Management at AUT University.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your identity will be kept private by myself (Mathew St.Martin) and the project supervisor (Loic Le De). We will not share your identity with anyone outside of the research process, nor will we share your contact details or other identifying details with the others I interview. Any email communication between myself and the participants will be kept private. When writing up the summary of what I've learned from the interviews your identity will be kept secret. Fake names will be used in the transcript to protect your identity. Data will be destroyed in line with AUT policy.

In extreme cases, if you disclose that you are at risk of harm to yourself, by others, or to others, I would be required to disclose your identity to ensure your safety. I would first discuss this with the project supervisor to determine the best course of action. This may involve speaking to other people such as the university or the police.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The interview is likely to take around 30 - 45 minutes.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You will have as much time as you need to consider this offer. You are free to ask any questions you would like in regard to this study, and we can discuss any questions or concerns you have now, or at any time before consenting to participation.

You can immediately consent, and the interview will be conducted on site, or I can take your contact information and it can be conducted in the next two weeks.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

If you agree to this on your consent form, you can be emailed feedback on the results in the form of a summary, or visit the help desk at the Auckland City Mission and request a copy free of charge.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor;

Loic Le De, *charmaine.bright@aut.ac.nz*, 921 9999 ext. 7613

640 Great South Road, Manukau

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Dr Carina Meares, *ethics@aut.ac.nz* , 921 9999 ext. 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. I am also more than happy to meet up with you following the interview to discuss anything in regards to this study. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Mathew St.Martin, matwillsaint@gmail.com, 021 023 29265

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Loic Le De, loic.le.de@aut.ac.nz, 921 999 ext. 7499

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on _____*(date) final ethics approval was granted*, AUTEC Reference number _____.

Appendix C: Oral Consent Form

Project title: ***Homeless people in the face of hazards and disasters: Auckland as a case study.***

Project Supervisor: ***Loic Le De***

Researcher: ***Mathew St.Martin***

The oral consent will be recorded at the beginning of the interview process before any interview questions are asked. The following questions will be asked by the primary to the participant:

- Have you read and/or do you understood the information about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 10 March 2020?
- Are you over the age of 16?
- Do you have any questions concerning the interview or the process?
- Do you understand that notes will be taken during the interview and that it will also be audiotaped and transcribed?
- Do you understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (your choice) and that you may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way?
- Do you understand that if you withdraw from the study that it may not be possible to destroy all records of the interview of which you were a part, you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.
- Do you agree to take part in this research?
- Do you wish to receive a summary of the research findings by email (please tick one): Yes ○ No ○

Note : If you do not wish to have a summary of the results of this study emailed to you, a copy of them will be available to the public at the Auckland City Mission by request. No personal identifying information will be included in this summary.

Spoken by primary researcher and recorded

Do you [full name of participant] agree to take part in this research? Please state:

I [full name] agree ☐ or **I [full name] do not agree** ☐

Participant's name (witness): .....……

Participant's Contact Details:

……..

……..

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on _____(date) on which the final approval was granted AUTEC Reference number _____.

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.