

Choice, Constraint and Negotiating Housing Systems

Understanding Migrant Homelessness in the US and UK

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Abstract

Recently migrant homelessness has emerged as a growing challenge for social policy, particularly in the context of growing migration from Central Eastern Europe to the UK and Central Americans and Caribbean nationals to the US.

This thesis sets out to analyse the housing strategies of homeless migrants and explore the intersections between migration and extreme housing need. Using a comparative case study approach, the study provides a qualitative investigation into the causes and consequences of homelessness amongst migrant groups. In analysing the two case studies of Boston, Massachusetts and Edinburgh, Scotland, the thesis provides an interrogation of how these groups negotiate a complex ‘system of systems’ involving housing, welfare and immigration policies.

I found that, when faced with multiple competing demands, some households actively de-prioritise housing, to the point of homelessness. By proposing the concept of ‘housing sacrifice’, this research reveals how households forgo the privacy, safety, and security of a home to meet other financial demands and social needs. The case studies illustrate how agency can be deployed when structural and individual forces combine to constrain choice. The thesis argues that homelessness is not a ‘choice’, but the result of a lack of choice, when precarity demands individual sacrifices.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my friend and mentor, Dr Michael E Stone, whose dedication to advancing a right to housing and ending shelter poverty inspired this work.

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This thesis would not be possible if it were not for the participants in this study who shared their experiences, personal and professional, and the generous volunteers whose translation and interpretation services helped give voice and understanding to the individual stories presented in this thesis. I am grateful to those who supported this research by hosting and facilitating interviews with 70 people who collectively give testimony to the strength and magnanimity of the human spirit.

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And finally, thanks Dad, for always reliably lending an ear to listen, a mind to problem-solve, and a heart to give me security and confidence to persist.

Research Thesis Submission Declaration

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1.1 Introduction

Migrant homelessness has been an increasingly important focus of UK public policy, particularly following enlargement of the European Union in 2004 and 2007, and it is likely to gain more attention in the years that follow Britain's exit from the European Union, expected in 2019. Greater freedom of movement across Europe has increased the number of migrants to the UK and, relatedly, a greater number of migrants have experienced homelessness upon being confronted by a number of systemic barriers to achieving a stable home in Britain (Dwyer et al, 2018; Edgar et al 2004; Fitzpatrick et al, 2013). For some migrants, the interaction of several systems, such as immigration, labour, welfare and housing markets, creates a reinforcing cycle of poverty that, once trapped, is difficult to escape (Dwyer, 2018). Found in a 'catch-22' situation, migrants experiencing extreme housing need become unable to afford housing due to low pay or no income, which in itself is a barrier to securing employment (for example, due to travel costs) necessary to pay for accommodation (Maycock and Sheridan, 2012). This situation is made more complicated for those who have limited or no entitlement to welfare assistance (Le Mener and Oppenchain, 2012). Migrants facing work and welfare restrictions due to their immigration status have few housing options and in extreme cases can result in homelessness and destitution (Dwyer et al, 2018; Edgar et al 2004; Fitzpatrick et al, 2013).

While in the UK migrant homelessness has increasingly emerged as a focus for both research and policy, the issue has not received the same level of attention in the US, despite the prevalence of research on the housing inequality of immigrants in terms of physical conditions (Rosenbaum et al 2007; Huttman, 1991), market access (Nelson and Hiemstra, 2008; Krivo, 1995) and equity wealth (Menjivar, 2006; Krivo and Kaufman, 2004). Homelessness experienced by migrants to the US occurs in much the same way as in the UK, where limited resources compromise the ability to secure accommodation, and conversely, a lack of suitable housing becomes a barrier to employment opportunities. Similar to the situation of migrants to the UK, in the US these groups have limited access to state support or housing assistance although this is not necessarily due to immigration

status. Instead, it is access to assistance for migrants and non-migrants alike that is important - since eligibility does not impart entitlement in the American welfare state (Broder and Blazer, 2011). Here immigration status has greater implication for employment rights, rather than welfare provision. Nevertheless, as in the UK, legal status remains a major determinant of migrant homelessness, as this thesis demonstrates.

This thesis presents a comparative study of migrant homelessness in the UK and the US which has four main aims. First, to identify the causes of migration and the extent to which these factors contribute to homelessness amongst migrants. Second, it explores the relative importance of structure and agency in determining migrant homelessness. A third aim is to investigate how agency is deployed by homeless migrants in determining their housing strategies. Finally, it considers the implications for public policy in responding to migrant homelessness.

To introduce the thesis, this chapter outlines the motivations for undertaking an investigation into migrant homelessness, identifies the objectives of the research, the rationale for adopting a comparative approach, and the reasons for the choice of critical realism as a theoretical framework. The final section of this introduction explains the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Motivations for the research and objectives

There were many motivations for undertaking this research, most of which originate back to a strong commitment to social justice that has underpinned much of my academic and professional career, by giving expression to hitherto silenced voices and challenging the power structures which perpetuate inequality. The focus of this study marks a culmination of many years of housing activism and experience of providing front-line homelessness services. In America and Britain, I have worked with homeless migrant groups in different capacities and contexts, and my knowledge of the conditions experienced by these groups ultimately inspired this study. In this work, I witnessed first-hand the severe levels of disadvantage experienced by homeless migrants, reflective of their marginalised position in American and British society. As Egoz and de Nardi (2017) assert in most western countries, migrants in general occupy the most disadvantaged position in society, and are

frequently confronted with a landscape permeated with prejudice and hostility (Mountz, 2011). My experience as a homelessness practitioner in both places provided an additional motivation to investigate these questions.

The objective of this research is to identify the causes of migrant homelessness and the housing strategies of migrants in response to homelessness. Using a comparative approach, this research explores the importance of context by comparing (from a position of difference) a 'system of systems' (Fitzpatrick and Stephens, 2014) in both the US and UK, and to examine how different structural configurations cause homelessness amongst migrant groups, and the opportunity to which those experiencing extreme constraints have opportunities for agency.

This research employs a critical realist framework in order to investigate the ways agency can be both exercised and constrained, and to examine the values held, the ways that priorities are determined, and the preferences expressed when individuals are confronted with extremely constrained choice. Adopting a critical realist framework allows for an in-depth analysis of causation, which is of crucial importance in understanding the reasons which compel migration, the causes of homelessness, the actions taken by migrant groups and in identifying both formal and informal sources of support.

This study considers four core research questions:

1. What are the causes of migration and how do these factors contribute to homelessness amongst migrants?
2. What is the relative importance of structure and individual level factors in creating homelessness amongst migrants?
3. How do homeless migrants deploy agency in determining their housing strategies?
4. What are the implications of these individual housing strategies for public policy in responding to migrant homelessness?

1.3 Critical realism and migrant homelessness

As discussed in the following chapters, critical realism allows for the explicit exploration of causation and a clearer understanding of the causes of migrant homelessness to identify effective policy and practical responses to the problem. In the late 20th century, much of the research into homelessness sought to understand the causes of homelessness and largely reflected a wider debate in social theory concerning structure and agency (for example, Culhane and Kuhn, 1998; Kennett and Marsh, 1999; Pleace, 1998; Sosin, 1988; Stefl, 1987). In the 1980s and 90s specifically, much of the American and European literature conceptualised homelessness as being either a social problem (embracing a pathological model suggesting homelessness had its origins in individual failings/deficits) (Murray, 1984; Wilson, 1987) or a housing problem insofar as homelessness was the consequence of wider social processes (such as housing shortages and entrenched social inequality) (Anderson and Christian, 2003; Loftus-Farren, 2011; Hallett, 1993; Wright and Lam, 1987).

As the theoretical sections (Chapters 2 and 3) illustrate, the value of critical realism lies in helping to bridge the divide between structure and agency by hypothesising a stratified nature of reality, consisting of ‘real’ causal generative mechanisms which produce ‘actual’ social phenomena that exists independent of our (‘empirical’) knowledge of it. Critical realism in this way stands in contrast to interpretivism which in some variations questions the existence of ‘homelessness’ as objective fact (Fopp, 2008). Compared to the latter, critical realism focuses on how contingent factors, in structured combination, have ‘real’ causal force if observed to have produced ‘actual’ homelessness at least some of the time (Easton, 2010). Unlike positivism, critical realism does not require constant conjunction, or repeated occurrence, in order to have real causal force (Patomaki and Wight, 2000). The concept of ‘emergent properties’ in critical realism which refers to the causal force of contingent factors, allows for plural causation, or the possibility that multiple (and even conflicting) explanations for homelessness can exist (Fitzpatrick, 2005). Both structural and individual explanations can therefore be valid without one being more relevant than the other, as both combine to create emergent properties (Bhaskar, 2013). One explanation does not come logically prior to another, as the structure/agency debate suggests.

With regards to migrant homelessness, the ‘new orthodoxy’ suggests that it is structural forces which produce the conditions within which homelessness is possible, but individual factors make one more or less susceptible to this condition (Fitzpatrick, 2005). Critical realism therefore helps to unpick the contingent factors which have causal force, enabling an examination of the conditions under which these factors have specific applicability. Thus the risk factors are real if they show a tendency to bring about homelessness (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018). The risk of homelessness is therefore structured around identifiable individual, social and structural factors. This thesis attempts to demonstrate how these factors affected the constraints faced, decisions made and circumstances within which choices were available to migrant homeless groups. Chapters 6 and 7 specifically identify the respective structural and individual level factors contributing to homelessness amongst migrants.

1.4 A qualitative comparative methodology

The approach taken to methodology was based on a number of factors informed by a critical realist perspective. This research takes a comparative approach, focusing on welfare systems in the US and UK. The study involved case studies of two cities (Boston, Massachusetts, and Edinburgh, Scotland) selected for their relatively liberal approaches to homelessness. The case studies involved in-depth qualitative study, with a strong biographical element in order to provide a detailed understanding of the experiences of homeless migrants. Biographical methods reveal the social experiences and lived realities for this population, highlighting the ‘differentiated embedding’ (Ryan and D’Angelo, 2018) of the migratory experience, as well as the decision-making processes and cultural aspects which lay behind the decisions to migrate (Chapter 6). The study also involved a series of semi-structured interviews with key informants (from public, private and voluntary sector agencies responsible for supporting homeless migrants) in order to understand the policy context in which these groups experience homelessness (Chapter 5).

Crucially, the *case study* approach taken in this study enables a detailed exploration of difference and similarity; difference in the sense that the welfare state is clearly configured distinctly in the US and the UK, but similar in that the two case study areas adopted a comparatively ‘progressive’ approach, relative to the national context in which they are

both situated. Although both are considered ‘liberal’ welfare regimes, based on Esping-Andersen’s (1990) classification, the approach to social protection in the US is unlike the UK, which has a comparatively more generous welfare safety-net.

In particular, the existence of a statutory homeless system in the UK, which imparts legally enforceable rights to homeless households (Fitzpatrick and Watts, 2017) has created a system of entitlement with strict criteria for eligibility, compared to the American approach which imparts no entitlement to homeless households and which has much looser grounds for eligibility for (scarce) public resources. The consequence is that homelessness is manifested in very different ways. In the US, homelessness reaches a far wider cross-section of society and is rooted in affordability issues and deep-seated social inequality (Benjaminsen, 2016), whereas in the UK homelessness is less prevalent, but for those experiencing homelessness there tends to be a greater concentration of those with high support needs (Fitzpatrick et al, 2013). The thesis argues that, paradoxically, some migrants may in fact fair better in an American system where there exists at least the *possibility* of assistance (albeit in competition with a wider population for scarce public resources). In contrast, migrants in similar circumstances may be more severely restricted, or have no recourse to public funds in the UK.

Central Americans and Caribbean nationals in the US case study are broadly comparable to Central and Eastern Europeans in the UK sample, insofar as both groups experience similar levels of migration (largely for economic purposes), at a related scale over an equivalent comparable time period. Furthermore, both groups also experienced comparable levels of disadvantage upon resettlement. Several commentators have observed the interrelation between international migration and structural economic change in Latin America and Eastern Europe. For example, Iglicka & Sword (1999); Iglicka (2001); Jazwinska-Motylska & Okolski (1996); Massey et al (1987); and Sipaviciene (1997); and more recently Massey et al (2008) specifically note the parallels between Poland in Eastern Europe and Mexico in Central America in terms of considerable out-migration in recent decades and dynamics of economic change despite occupying different geopolitical locations. This study, however, acknowledges that there were significant cultural differences across, and between, the groups considered in the thesis.

In both case study areas, a variety of (voluntary) legal statuses were considered (such as those with indefinite leave to remain as well as irregular migrants or those without the Right to Reside), as well as a mix of household types (individuals and families with dependent children), and housing circumstances (including rough sleepers and ‘lesser’ homeless groups such as those ‘doubling up’). The extent to which these groups are comparable is specifically addressed in the limitations of the research in Chapter 3.

Complementing the case study approach in this thesis, the adoption of a *comparative approach* has offered a number of benefits. Firstly, the comparisons of the two countries’ approach to migrant homelessness (outlined in detail in Chapter 4) enables an understanding of the importance of context in shaping the choices and experiences of the groups under study. Pickvance’s (2005) principle of ‘variation with plural causation’ locates different causal processes in two (or more) types of societies, in which different causally relevant conditions combine to produce the same phenomenon. In this study, drawing comparisons between US and UK approaches to migrant homelessness, demonstrates how different (nested) configurations of systems, or ‘system of systems’, combine to produce homelessness amongst migrants in both contexts. Migrant homelessness is therefore understood as the result of complex patterns of causation embedded in an interconnected social system.

Secondly, the comparative research approach enables the development of conceptual tools to explain differences, similarities and change between the two systems. The study aims to demonstrate that in both cases, housing is the arena in which most personal financial negotiations take place and that in the context of highly constrained choice, housing can be de-prioritised (in extreme cases, to the point of homelessness) in order to achieve other housing or welfare goals. Housing therefore has a use beyond shelter, or a home, and a utility beyond its exchange value. Housing need can be negotiated in multiple ways in response to constrained choice, limited resources (such as low wages or restricted access to public assistance), and high demands (such as needing to consume more housing or needing to send remittances abroad). The concept of ‘housing sacrifice’ emerges from this comparative research into the housing strategies of homeless migrants (Chapter 9) and is discussed in more detail in the conclusion (Chapter 10).

As Chapter 9 reveals, the ways in which households sacrifice housing can perhaps be best understood through the conceptual analysis of ‘home’, insofar as the elements which collectively comprise a ‘home’ can be sacrificed individually, or in combination. Watson and Austerberry (1986) put forth that there are (at least) five ‘key signifiers’ of the concept of home, for example, *shelter* corresponds to decent material conditions, *hearth* relates to emotional and physical well-being, *heart* to ‘loving and caring social relations’, *privacy* in reference to the degree to which one can control their living space, and *abode* to describe the place where basic physiological needs are met, such as eating, bathing and sleeping. The housing strategies of homeless migrants revealed how these individual components of a home can be sacrificed to meet other priorities.

For example, *privacy* is an aspect which households might be most willing to sacrifice, at least for the short-term, by sharing accommodation or doubling up. Likewise, housing costs can be lowered by foregoing certain occupancy rights to one’s *abode*, such as taking up a living arrangement which restricts use of specific elements, such as sleeping or cooking facilities, to certain times of the day or prohibiting their use entirely. In more constrained situations, space might be sacrificed by occupying a home that does not meet space standards, in either absolute terms or relative to the number of occupants, which might amount to being denied of the ‘heart’ signifier, inasmuch as social relations are compromised by lacking space to perform these relationships. Equally, the *hearth* of the home can be sacrificed by disconnecting or severely restricting the use of utilities, and in the extreme situation, home as a *shelter* can be sacrificed by living in places not fit for human habitation. By proposing the concept of ‘housing sacrifice’, this research attempts to reveal how households forgo the privacy, safety, and security of a home to meet other financial demands and social needs.

1.5 Structure of thesis

Chapter 2 provides an overview of wider homelessness theory and analyses existing research on migrant homelessness, specifically. The purpose of Chapter 2 is to critically review the literature on homelessness originating from both North America and Europe, exploring different definitions of homelessness adopted and discussing the variety of empirical perspectives on homelessness causation. In this chapter the different ways in

which migrant homelessness is conceptualised in varying contexts is considered and the empirical evidence demonstrating the severe housing problems experienced by migrants is evaluated.

Chapter 3 provides the methodology for the study and an overview of the theoretical approach to the research, as well as outlining the design applied, methods used and approach taken to data analysis. The chapter explains the relevance of a comparative approach to examine the importance of context in the causation of migrant homelessness, explaining how a critical realist perspective provides a useful lens to view homelessness, and offers the theoretical foundation for this research. In doing so, this chapter provides a rationale for comparing the housing strategies of Eastern Europeans in Scotland and Central Americans in Massachusetts, through the specific case study areas of Edinburgh and Boston.

Chapter 4 analyses the policy context for the study, discussing the legislation relevant to each case study area and considering the implications for homeless migrants, in terms of access to housing and other welfare assistance. Chapter 5 discusses the ways in which homelessness policies are implemented in the UK and the US, and is then interpreted through interviews with key informants, consisting of service providers and policy makers in both case study areas.

Chapter 6 introduces the migrant participants in the study, through their narratives of migration. This chapter offers important insights into the factors which compel people to decide to move to a new country and establishes the linkages between migration and homelessness. The chapter discusses the multiple reasons for migrating, analysing their responses primarily through the core concepts of *survival*, *freedom* and *opportunity*. In considering the ways in which migration can limit or expand choice, a better understanding can be gained of how these experiences inform individual housing strategies (for example in identifying options available), the values held by these groups and how these values shape priorities.

Chapters 7 and 8 explore the structural and individual causes of homelessness amongst migrants, interpreted through qualitative interviews with key informants and migrants. Chapter 7 argues that a nested 'system of systems' interact to produce and perpetuate migrant homelessness, involving a combination of immigration, welfare, labour and

housing systems. This research thereby discovers how these *structures* influence migrant resettlement and how they interact to produce homelessness. However, that is not say that migrant homelessness is only the product of structural forces; there are individual level factors which makes migrants more vulnerable to homelessness than other groups. Such individual circumstances are explained in detail in Chapter 8.

Chapter 9 considers the housing strategies employed by homeless migrants. The use of the word 'strategy' is deliberate and as a concept, avoids the conclusion that homelessness is either a product of strictly structural or individual forces, but rather centres on a person's ability to deploy agency in the pursuit of specific housing strategies (Murie and Forrest, 1980; Thorns, 1981). The discussion challenges the perception of homelessness as an inability to integrate, or evidence of a failed migration project, but may instead be a reaction to limited opportunity. Choice and the ways in which agency is constrained (and empowered) is explicitly analysed through an examination of the strategies and coping mechanisms exercised by migrants. This chapter reveals the extent to which these groups de-prioritise, or sacrifice, housing in the face of other more pressing and competing demands.

Chapter 10 concludes the thesis and discusses the implications of individual housing strategies for public policy, specifically with regard to migrant homelessness. The concept of 'housing sacrifice' is therefore used as a frame in which to view the poor housing conditions experienced as a result of competing priorities and trade-offs that households make when faced with extremely constrained choice. Finally, the chapter considers the ways in which this conceptual frame is applicable to other homeless groups beyond migrants and makes recommendations for future research considering the interrelationship between individual housing strategies and public policy.

2.1 Introduction

There is a wide body of literature analysing experiences of homelessness, providing both theoretical understanding and practical explanations, however, less is known about the experiences of homeless migrants. Conceptually, the discussion uses Critical Realism - to determine underlying causal, generative mechanisms and to consider its contribution in deepening an understanding of the multifaceted interplay between individual and structural features of homelessness in relation to migrant groups. This chapter argues that Critical Realism can be most usefully applied to examine the complex causes of migrant homelessness, to provide explanations of the ways in which migrants experience housing need differently from non-migrant groups, as well as positioning migrants within wider debates around homelessness.

For the purposes of this thesis, discussion of the homelessness literature is restricted to the European and North American context - to inform the way in which homelessness is defined in this study, as well as to establish a conceptual frame to analyse the problem of homelessness, the solutions adapted and the practical solutions offered. The chapter begins by situating the discussion of homelessness within wider social theory, before discussing the various ways in which this concept can be both understood and experienced by migrant groups.

2.2 Homelessness and social theory

There has been a general recognition among researchers that adopting purely individual or structural explanations is insufficient in capturing the complexity of factors contributing to homelessness (Christian, 2003; Fitzpatrick, 2005; Benjaminsen, 2016). For example, individual explanations fail to recognise the context in which homelessness occurs, while structural explanations fail to address why many homeless people share traits that make them particularly vulnerable, such as mental ill health and substance dependencies. As Nicholls (2009) argues, agency can be explicitly explored without necessarily

pathologizing homeless people; there are individual factors associated with homelessness and therefore this issue cannot be accounted for by only examining structural forces.

Entering into the 21st century, a ‘new orthodoxy’ has emerged, positing that structural variables, such as housing shortages, provide the conditions which make homelessness possible, but that people with specific attributes, such as mental ill health or substance dependencies, are more at risk of homelessness and therefore a large proportion of the people that do become homeless have high support needs (Fitzpatrick and Christian, 2006; Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018). In challenging a strict individualist interpretation, Benjaminsen (2016) acknowledges that causation is multidirectional and that existing mental ill health, for example, is likely to be exacerbated by homelessness, and not necessarily the causal force underlying homelessness. The new orthodoxy therefore attempts to integrate structural and individual accounts, while asserting the primacy of structural causes (Fitzpatrick, 2005).

The new orthodoxy also suggests that there are forces in operation that make it more likely that some people will become homeless given a certain set of circumstances (Barak, 1991). Building on this premise, Shinn (2007) argues that it is the combination of policy, social exclusion and individual risk factors that make people most vulnerable to homelessness. More recently, analysis of official datasets containing time series and longitudinal data on social exclusion and poverty in the UK, refuted the mantra that ‘we are all two paycheques away from homelessness’ by clearly demonstrating that the incidence of homelessness is not randomly distributed across the population, but rather the likelihood of becoming homeless is structured around a set of identifiable individual, social, and structural factors (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018).

Despite reconciling apparently divergent views of ‘minimalist’ and ‘maximalist’ accounts of homelessness (the former referring to the literally homeless, and the later generally referring to the precariously housed), the new orthodoxy arguably lacks theoretical robustness needed to explain the causes of homelessness. Specifically, Fitzpatrick (2005) argues that the new orthodoxy is ‘practically adequate’ but lacks any clear conceptualisation of causation. The following discussion explores the ways in which social theory addresses the divide between structure and agency in its application to homelessness.

In the social sciences there is a debate about what can and cannot be known about social phenomena and, related to that, about the methods with which we can engage in such understanding. On the one side, there are a set of social theories derived from the positivist tradition, that social phenomena can be understood objectively to determine causality and can be explored using the scientific method, as is used in the natural sciences (Savidan, 2007). On the other side, so-called anti-positivist approaches to social science argue that the social world can only be understood subjectively and that generally there is no neutral and objective ‘truth’ that can be discovered through scientific inquiry into cause and effect (Rorty, 2007). Writing from a wider philosophical perspective, Engel (2007) observes the paradox derived from this schism in social thought, on the one hand, rejecting claims to ‘truth’ whilst lamenting its abandonment.

In homelessness research, American literature tends to draw heavily on the *positivist* tradition in its attempt to quantify behavioural outcomes and the meaning attached to concepts (Christian, 2003). Such positivist investigation embraces empiricism and assumes that causality is demonstrated by statistically significant correlations between variables (Clapham, 2012). In terms of explaining homelessness, positivist research demands statistically valid associations between proposed causal factors, as well as perfect correlation to prove a hypothesis (Fitzpatrick, 2005).

In the UK, hypothesis-driven theorising that is characteristic within the positivist tradition is largely absent from homelessness research (Anderson, 2003). European literature also tends to be dominated by an interpretivist approach that ‘rejects the discrete notion of causation arguing that behaviour is not governed by cause and effect, but by the standards used to interpret the social world,’ or social constructions (Christian, 2003, 86). Some interpretivists argue that human actions are not governed by ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ at all, but rather by the rules that we use to interpret the social world (Fitzpatrick, 2005, 2). Instead of seeking causality, interpretivists argue that the social sciences should concentrate on understanding the meanings that people apply to the social world and social phenomena (Clapham, 2012). For example, Jacobs et al (2003) employ a constructionist approach to challenge ‘self-evident’ problems in housing policy, pointing to the discourses and power

relationships that help to 'construct' a social reality of housing problems and their potential solutions.

At the same time, critiques of a strict *social constructionist/interpretivist* imagining of homelessness find the dismissal of a social reality of homelessness (namely the idea that is independent of our knowledge of it) as problematic; the implication being that homelessness is not a real phenomenon, but instead created by discursive labelling of certain circumstances that are seen as deviant or problematic (Nicholls, 2009). According to strict social constructionism, there is no fact to the matter of 'homelessness', just a range of symptoms that are termed as being as such. Fitzpatrick (2005) argues that by focussing only on the 'social construction' of homelessness, the crucial issue of explanation is bypassed entirely. Constructionism has therefore been criticised for ignoring the relevance of agency, using a seemingly inherent contradiction that homelessness is a construct, but at the same time thought to be caused by actual structural forces (Nicholls, 2009).

In contrast, *realism* offers an alternative theoretical framework to explain the causes of homelessness where positivism and interpretivism/constructionism are found to be lacking. Rather than reducing the concept of homelessness to mere 'symptoms' of a construct wholly open to interpretation, realists would argue that risk factors associated with homelessness are very real, if these can be shown to have a tendency to bring about homelessness (Fitzpatrick, 2005; Benjaminsen, 2016). Agreeing with positivists in this regard, realists argue that there is a real world that exists independently of our perception of it (Nicholls, 2009). But, unlike positivism, realism does not require a strict causal association between the variables considered to be risk factors and the incidence of homelessness. Instead, causation can be demonstrated even if such factors only bring about homelessness some of the time (Fitzpatrick, 2005).

Developing this analysis, *critical realism* focuses specifically on the nature of explanations in the social and natural world (Bhaskar, 2013). Similar to weak constructionism, critical realism posits that there is truth to the matter of interpretation, but our knowledge of that 'truth' is wholly fallible and open to alteration through criticism (Nicholls, 2009, 70). Directly challenging a relativist position that the world is the sum of all possible ways that have no determinate, intrinsic features, critical realists advance a view of causality that is

material if real powers affect other things in specific ways (Groff, 2004). Critical realism posits that there are three overlapping domains of reality: real (causative mechanisms), actual (events), and the empirical (perception of the events) (Hordyk et al, 2014). Specifically, what is termed 'real' is whatever exists and has causal powers, such as objects, structures and institutions. The 'actual' is what occurs when the causal power of the 'real' are in force, and the 'empirical' is how social actors experience the 'real' (Nicholls, 2009, 71).

Critical realists argue that by accepting multiple layers of reality, underlying causal mechanisms can be exposed without the presumption that one causal force is more fundamental than another. With regard to the agency/structure debate, a critical realist would therefore argue that both individual and structural explanations of homelessness can exist, without one set being more valid than the other (Fitzpatrick and Christian, 2006, 328). Specifically, since no structure is treated as logically prior and is instead taken as a 'multiple set of nested systems', then structural and individual factors can all be valid explanations for homelessness if they are shown to have a causal force (Fitzpatrick, 2005, 13). Causation in critical realism does not require 'constant conjunction' and 'events occur due to a complex relationship of causation embedded in an entire interconnected social system' (Nicholls, 2009, 70).

As a number of writers have argued, social theory underpins all housing research, explicitly (but more often) implicitly (Clapham, 2012). A-theoretical approaches to social policy, for example, which take housing problems *prima facie* are problematic (Jacobs et al, 2003) in ignoring the diversity of epistemological approaches towards understanding social problems and failing to articulate the ontological depth needed to advance (competing) explanations (Iosifides, 2016). In developing this argument, the following discussion indicates how social theory (and more specifically critical realism) enables a deeper understanding of the causes and experiences of homeless migrant groups.

2.2.1 Understanding the causes of homelessness

Much attention has been given to the causal factors associated with homelessness and a sizable body of research is dedicated to investigating why people are unable to secure

suitable housing, or indeed accommodation of any kind. In both North American and European research, explanations tend to fall within two broad categories, either hypothesising that people become homeless because of individual factors, such as ‘flawed character’, or because of structural reasons, such as ‘restricted opportunity’ in accessing housing (Schiller, 1971). Fitzpatrick (2005) argues that this individual/structural divide in homelessness explanations originates from a classic debate on whether it is strict agency or structure that is of primary significance in sociological theory.

Research adopting a structural view tends to frame homelessness as primarily a housing problem, whereas studies that purport that people become homeless because of individual reasons generally argue that homelessness is a social problem (Fitzpatrick and Christian, 2006). However, as explained above, more recently there has been a consensus that a strict reading of homelessness from either a structuralist or individualist view is overly simplistic, and many now accept the ‘new orthodoxy’ that homelessness can be explained by some combination of structure and agency (Benjaminsen, 2016). Still, much of the literature on homelessness, from a North American and European perspective, prioritises framing the problem from one perspective over the other, with the exception of those employing a critical realist approach (Fitzpatrick and Christian, 2006). The following section considers how individual and structural explanations of homelessness have been identified in the literature.

2.2.2 Individual explanations

Research that primarily explains homelessness as a social problem tends to focus on the personal characteristics and, importantly, behaviours of homeless people (Armitage and Christian, 2003). Studies taking a strict agency position either imply that homeless people themselves are responsible for their circumstances (a stance that has been criticised as a victim-blaming explanation) or take a softer position by concluding that some personal failing contributed to their situation, regardless of whether or not that individual was responsible for that failing (Barak, 1991). Both assertions employ a social pathology model that stresses the role of individual, deviant characteristics (rather than housing shortages) that contribute to homelessness (Sosin, 1988).

Individual explanations often adopt an ethical position about whether or not the person is deserving of assistance. Fitzpatrick and Stephens (2013) link the argument about desert and merit to a societal tendency to attach blame to deviant behaviours and characteristics, and contend that such normative social distancing produces an ‘Other’ class that exists outside society. The degree to which someone is considered an ‘Other’, and therefore the extent to which they are deserving of assistance, is determined by their control over neediness, level of need, identity, and attitude (Dwyer, 2013).

In the US, the social pathology model of homelessness holds even greater currency than within Europe in determining policy responses. Christian (2003) argues that the tendency towards individualist accounts suggest that the causes of homelessness are independent of the political process because people’s circumstances are ultimately the product of individual cumulative decisions and actions and are therefore out of reach of government intervention. The overemphasis of individual characteristics and dismissal of broader socio-cultural structures (Toro, 2007) as a causal force in part explains why, on the whole, homelessness is treated as a temporary emergency rather than an entrenched modern phenomenon deserving of public action (Shinn, 2007).

2.2.3 Structural explanations

Rather than viewing homelessness primarily as a social problem caused by individual choice or family failings, structural explanations seek to frame homelessness as a housing problem that is a result of wider housing market failure (Anderson, 2007). Such explanations consider the role of the housing market in the context of broader social and economic structures, locating the causes of homelessness in housing and labour market conditions, social security protection, poverty and family fragmentation (Fitzpatrick, 2005). Structural explanations argue that a lack of affordable housing and widening income disparity (Fiedler et al, 2006), for example, has led to increasing economic hardship, isolation and social dislocation. In American literature specifically, the structural antecedents of homelessness are found in the processes of economic restructuring generally (Gaber and Cantarero, 1997; Fitchin, 1992; Frank and Streeter, 1987). In its most extreme form, this long process of a shifting economic environment and accompanying market failure has culminated in rising rates of homelessness.

Structural explanations of homelessness have generally been advanced in response to a pathological model where poverty reflects personal failings, personal choice, and personal characteristics (Radu, 2012), obscuring the recognition of real housing need (Pleace, 1998). In recent decades, the understanding of homelessness in the UK has shifted from individual to structural explanations (Fitzpatrick, 2005) and has focussed on structural factors which emphasise housing supply, access to housing and social policies aimed at redressing gaps in welfare opportunities (Christian, 2003). Similarly, there has also been recognition in American research that structural factors such as poverty, lack of affordable housing, and unemployment have created growing numbers of people at risk of homelessness. For example, Shinn's (2007) longitudinal study of emergency shelter users in New York City found that access to subsidy was the primary predictor of homeless households securing long term residential security, rather than individual attributes.

The over-representation of African Americans in homeless samples in the US is cited by Conroy and Heer (2003) as evidence of structural forces rather than individual explanations of homelessness. Shinn (2007) argues that institutional, endemic racism in housing, labour, educational, health and judicial systems has put people of colour disproportionately at risk of homelessness. Furthermore, Dwyer et al (2018) explains that the legacy of systematic disadvantage in the US explains why race remains a significant predictor of welfare outcomes. A similar process of discrimination and exclusion from housing on the basis of race has been identified in the UK (Robinson, 2005; Ratcliffe, 2002; Henderson and Karn, 1984; Rex and Moore, 1969).

Growing income inequality provides another structural explanation for homelessness and goes some way to explain why it is comparatively more pervasive in the US and UK despite being wealthy nations that potentially have the resources to respond to extreme housing need (Shinn, 2007). In the context of widening wealth inequality, homelessness is seen as a product of extreme social inequalities associated with neoliberalisation globally (Del Casino and Jocoy, 2008; Brenner and Theodore, 2002; De Verteuil, 2005). Welfare regime theory, for example, explains that levels of social inequality are determined by particular forms of welfare states and therefore the nature of homelessness and responses to the problem will vary between different welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990). For

example, 'liberal' regimes are said to have limited government support for housing and a residualised social sector, whereas 'social democratic' regimes attempt to manage the market to increase standards and lower costs for all (Anderson, 2003). Similarly, Stephens and Fitzpatrick (2007) found that 'welfare regimes' impact profoundly on the scale, causes and nature of homelessness. The authors argue that responsibility for addressing homelessness, whether through the individual, state, family or private entity, varies by welfare regime, which is ultimately determined by shared social values. Though both US and UK are considered to be liberal welfare regimes, in the latter, personal responsibility for housing circumstances is somewhat downplayed, with primacy given to different levels of government in ensuring the adequacy of resettlement and the appropriate allocation of housing.

There are, however, limits to how far regime theory can explain homelessness and it has been observed that the scale and nature of homelessness in the US compared to the UK is substantively different despite both tending to be classed as liberal regimes (Benjaminsen, 2016). For example, Fitzpatrick and Christian (2006) argue that homelessness might be qualitatively different in the US and UK because the structural context varies so dramatically. Thus in the US, more households are vulnerable to homelessness because there are lower levels of welfare protection available to them, yet the proportion of homeless households that have high support needs is greater in the UK (Fitzpatrick and Christian, 2006).

This finding was reinforced in a comparative study of shelter use in Denmark and America which determined that social democratic welfare regimes which have comparatively stronger safety-nets and a lower incidence of income poverty tend to have lower levels of homelessness, but a much greater proportion of those who are homeless have multiple and complex needs compared to liberal welfare regimes which are characterised by a comparatively thinner safety net. It is argued that in liberal welfare regimes, such as the US, there is greater prevalence of poverty and homelessness, but a much higher proportion of the population becomes homeless due to affordability problems rather than social exclusion (Benjaminsen and Andrade, 2015; Benjaminsen, 2016). The importance of housing affordability rather than unmet social care needs for homeless migrants was

similarly echoed in Norway (Amundson, 2018) and in the 2017 *Homelessness Monitor* for England (Fitzpatrick et al, 2017).

The above discussion considered the ways in which social theory informs an understanding of the causes of homelessness. The following section explores how homelessness is explained further by distinguishing between different ways of understanding homelessness (such as severity and temporarily) and by identifying vulnerability associated with particular characteristics or profiles of homeless persons, such as migrants.

2.3 Understanding the experience of homelessness

The multidimensional way in which homelessness is conceptualised stems from differences in research traditions, theories, and explanations of homelessness (Anderson, 2003), as well as how homelessness is embodied in institutional structures, such as statutory and policy contexts. As a consequence, the targeted population of homelessness policy varies widely, and different vested interests will define the problem to suit their policy agenda (Fitzpatrick, 2005). Writing from a North American context, Fiedler et al (2006) argue that public policy has been compelled to respond to street and shelter homelessness with more urgency compared to other forms of homelessness, simply because of its visibility. The authors explain that since ‘hidden’ forms of homelessness, such as overcrowding and concealed households, remains largely out of sight, this form of housing need becomes less of a priority for public action, despite affecting a far greater number of households (Fiedler et al, 2006, 207).

As demonstrated above, homelessness as a construct is not straightforward and how it is conceived and theorised has important implications for resource distribution and public policy (Fitzpatrick and Christian, 2006) and real consequences for the lives of people included (and excluded) from such resource and policy decisions. Homelessness can be described as comprising a spectrum of *severity*, ranging from the ‘literally homeless’, including those sleeping rough or staying in emergency shelters, to the ‘precariously housed’ which encompasses a range of circumstances such as overcrowding, substandard housing and insecurity of tenure (Toro, 2007, 463). Importantly, the *temporality* of homelessness, where the duration of specific housing circumstances experienced, is also

used to determine who is and who is not homeless (Pleace, 1998). Furthermore, homelessness is differentiated by *characteristic*, recognising that different groups of people, such as single persons or migrants, experience homelessness in different ways.

The *severity* of housing conditions and circumstances experienced by individual homeless persons is a common frame for defining homelessness in research and policy. Using individual housing circumstances as a starting point for conceptualising homelessness has arguably polarised research, with studies broadly characterised by either using literal (Toro, 2007), minimalist (Nicholls, 2009), and absolute (Fiedler et al, 2006) definitions of homelessness; or adopting maximalist (Nicholls, 2009) and relative definitions of homelessness (Fiedler et al, 2006) by investigating the ‘precariously housed’ (Toro, 2007, 463). The former tends to narrowly focus on ‘visible homelessness’ (Nicholls, 2009, 74), whereas the latter takes a wider view to include ‘hidden homelessness’ in definitions (Fiedler et al, 2006, 207).

Minimalist accounts of homelessness include those staying in emergency shelters or people sleeping in places not intended for human habitation, such as public spaces or disused property. In contrast, a maximalist definition of homelessness also includes street and shelter homelessness, but further encompasses a variety of other housing circumstances that would place households at risk of becoming literally homeless. Precarious housing can describe the situations of people living in poor housing conditions, ‘doubling up’ with friends or family not by choice, or having insecurity of tenure (Nicholls, 2009). To make clearer the distinction of maximalist and minimalist accounts, other authors have employed the categories of ‘primary’, ‘secondary’, and ‘tertiary’ homelessness to refer to rough sleeping, residing in emergency accommodation, and other ‘lesser’ forms of homelessness, such as couch surfing, respectively (Mackie, 2015; Culhane et al, 2011; Parsell and Marston, 2012; Montgomery et al, 2013; and Szeintuch, 2016).

The ETHOS (the European Typology of Homelessness and housing exclusion) definition of homelessness can be viewed as a somewhat expanded minimalist account of homelessness. Used by FEANTSA (European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless) for the purposes of comparative studies of homelessness across Europe, the ETHOS typology of homelessness distinguishes the ‘roofless’ from the

‘houseless’, where rooflessness is used interchangeably with street or shelter homelessness, whereas being houseless describes households staying in hostels, transitional supported accommodation, temporary accommodation, or women’s shelters (Meda, 2010, 141). A similar framework to create a typology that has global applicability and resonance built upon the ETHOS typology, including forms of (inadequate) housing and housing need more commonly experienced in the Global South. As a frame of reference, the typology offers a global definition of homelessness: ‘lacking access to minimally adequate housing’ (Busch-Geertsema et al, 2016, 124).

Perhaps controversially, Pleace (1998) argues that it is ethically right and practically appropriate to focus public response on literal and absolute homelessness since widening the definition to include those living in insecure housing or ‘doubled up’ with friends and family would dilute the unique nature and distress of ‘actual’ homelessness (Pleace et al, 1997, 7). Similar concerns have been raised about the implications of stretching the boundaries of homelessness definitions with specific regard to whether or not non-settled communities, such as Roma or Irish travellers, should be considered homeless (Toro, 2007).

In addition to the specific housing circumstances of homeless people, *temporality* also determines how homelessness is conceived. Kuhn and Culhane (1998) suggest that there are three distinct forms of homelessness when the duration and frequency of incidence are taken into consideration. The authors posit three categories of homelessness in their study of shelter users in New York City: episodic, transitional and chronic. Episodic homelessness refers to when both the duration and frequency of homelessness is short, for example when a person requires emergency shelter following a specific crisis, but is soon able to move on to more stable housing. Transitional homelessness is similar to the episodic category in that homelessness is triggered by some unexpected or one-time only event, but the duration of homelessness is much longer as the individual struggles to move out of homelessness. In contrast, for the chronically homeless both the duration and the frequency of homelessness is much longer, where temporary shelters effectively act as permanent housing for the most extreme examples in this category (Kuhn and Culhane, 1998; Culhane et al, 2011).

Furthermore, McAllister et al (2010) argue that the timing and sequence of homelessness is also important to better understand the extent of the problem. By replicating the 1998 Kuhn and Culhane study, the authors suggest that homelessness can be better characterised by four distinct categories: temporary, structural/continuous, structured/intermittent, and unstructured/intermittent. However, defining homelessness by the sequence in which it occurs has been criticised by some for failing to take into account the full individual histories which contribute to homelessness and that taking ‘selected episodes of rooflessness’, for example, serves to diminish the humanity of homeless persons (Somerville, 2013, 384). The next section which distinguishes homelessness by *characteristic* turns to a ‘whole person’ approach to understand homelessness, directing attention to the human condition, by identifying common factors which bound specific categorisations of homeless persons while appreciating the diversity within these groups (Djuve et al, 2015).

2.4 Understanding migrant homelessness

Much of the research into migrant homelessness acknowledges the problem of operationally defining ‘migrants’ and ‘homelessness’, particularly for comparative studies, as these concepts vary considerably between countries (Pleace, 2010; Shinn, 2007). For example, in one study (Dwyer et al, 2018) a United Nations definition of international migration is used to define migrants as any person moving to a country other than their home residence for a period of at least a year so that the new country effectively becomes their new residence. In contrast, a study of homelessness in Britain defined migrants as any persons born outside the UK who migrated as adults aged 16 or older (Fitzpatrick et al, 2013). Determining who is and who is not a migrant can be devised by a number of characteristics, such as country of birth, citizenship, nationality, ethnic origin, migration pathway, immigration status and various temporal dimensions (Dwyer et al, 2018). However, previous research has questioned the usefulness of ‘migrant homelessness’ as a distinct category, arguing that the features which make a ‘migrant’ vulnerable to homelessness rest purely in the length of time of establishing residence, thereby emphasising the temporal dimension as having causal force, rather than immigration status itself (Lindquist et al, 1999).

Differing approaches to defining who is and who is not a homeless migrant present particular challenges for comparative studies. Difficulties arise in attempts to reconcile variations in methodology, definitions and sampling, in addition to differences in policies designed to alleviate poverty and homelessness (Fitzpatrick and Stephens, 2014). Likewise, relying on official homelessness statistics is unlikely to capture migrant homelessness in a meaningful way as this population may be less likely to access services from which these figures are largely based (Maycock and Sheridan, 2012). Furthermore, in countries that rely on data from social housing applications, such as France, homeless migrants are likely to be conspicuously absent from official counts as this group are less likely to apply, or be eligible, than homeless nationals. In most cases, irregular migrants without documented legal status will be missing from available data sets due to this population's need to conceal themselves generally for fear of being exposed to immigration authorities (Pleace, 2010; McDonald, 1998).

The definition of 'migrant' is very much dependent on context and is sensitive to place, time and personal circumstance. Using such a broad dichotomy as economic (those migrating primarily for work) and humanitarian (those migrating primarily for safety and security) classes of immigrants neglects other important reasons for migration, such as education, love, or family (Hiebert, 2009). Categories of migrants that may more accurately reflect the range of reasons and circumstances for being in a new country include asylum seekers and refugees, labour migrants, students, family joiners, and irregular migrants (Dwyer et al, 2018).

Further, Speak (2010) argues that the category of 'migrant homelessness' wrongly implies that migration itself leads to homelessness, when it is a combination of contextual factors which contributes to homelessness amongst migrants. Similarly, Edgar et al (2004) identify a range of attributes that make one more or less vulnerable to homelessness due to legal status, rather than their position as a 'migrant'. Writing in a European context, the authors suggest there is a 'hierarchy of vulnerability' among European migrants linked directly to the following rights conferred by legal status: residence, employment, welfare, political participation, naturalisation, travel, and the rights of dependent family members (Edgar et al, 2004, 28). The next section considers how these 'vulnerabilities' affect different categories of migrant groups.

2.4.1 Categories of migrants

Also writing from a European context but in contrast to Edgar et al's (2004) typology, Pleace (2010) sets out broad categories of immigrants to underscore the variation of vulnerability within migrant groups including: asylum seekers and refugees; failed asylum seekers and irregular migrants; women and children from outside the EU that lose their status when escaping domestic violence; A10 economic migrants who become homeless in A15 member states; and ethnic and cultural minorities who are not recent migrants (Pleace, 2010; Maycock, 2012). Each of these categories in Pleace's (2010) 'people-based' typology are discussed in turn.

Asylum seekers and refugees are migrants who have left their home country for their own safety and are afraid to return (UNHCR, 2011). Importantly, different countries have different legal mechanisms in which refugees are admitted. A number of studies document the particular set of issues confronting refugees and asylum seekers, showing this group of migrants to generally face the greatest challenge in securing housing compared to other newcomers (Carter, 2005; Valenta and Bunar, 2010; Murdie, 2008; Forrest et al, 2012; Mirafatab, 2000). Pleace (2010) identifies characteristics of this group as having high support needs, little or no knowledge of the country where they have applied for refugee status, limited language ability, and a lack of financial resources.

Irregular migrants are people who enter or remain without legal permission (Dwyer et al, 2018), including failed asylum seekers. Irregular migrants can share many of the same characteristics as refugees and asylum seekers (Pleace, 2010), but are particularly vulnerable as a lack of legal status means restricted access to conventional labour and housing markets (Meda, 2010). Compared to other homeless groups, persistent homelessness among irregular migrants tend to be due to structural barriers rather than individual factors (Fitzpatrick et al, 2012). For irregular migrants that find themselves homeless, 'low threshold' services such as those provided by voluntary and charity organisations which do not require documentation of legal status to access services or homelessness services, are often their only recourse (Pleace, 2010).

In the European context, Pleace (2010) explains that women from outside the EU are at particular risk of homelessness when their immigration status is dependent on their relationship with their partner or other family members. This is especially so when the consequence of fleeing domestic abuse causes women to lose their immigration status (Maycock and Sheridan, 2012). Domestic violence in other contexts, such as America, contributes to homelessness amongst migrants, but intensifies the situation to a much greater degree in Europe since immigration status can be tied to that of an abusive partner, making leaving the violent relationship much more difficult and puts those fleeing at a greater disadvantage by losing status as a result of fleeing. Legal status becomes a barrier to women to leave abusive relationships when leaving would jeopardise their immigration status (Mostowska, 2011).

Pleace (2010) specifically identifies EU nationals subject to ‘transitional arrangements’ which restrict the ability to work but not the freedom of movement of nationals of countries who have recently acceded the EU (within seven years, the maximum period in which transitional agreements can be in place) as particularly vulnerable to homelessness. For example, In 2004, the European Union expanded to include the A8 countries of Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Unlike the original EU15 member states, nationals from A8 countries were subject to transitional arrangements that limited access to social support. This restriction in combination with the economic downturn, left migrants from A8 countries particularly vulnerable to unemployment as many services were unavailable or only accessible after a period of employment. Although most A8 economic migrants were found to have secured employment and accommodation (Pleace, 2010), there had been growing concern that the limited support available whilst transitional arrangements were in effect had left a number of A8 migrants destitute and homeless (Dwyer et al, 2018; Fitzpatrick et al, 2013).

Ethnic minorities were also identified as constituting a unique risk category for homelessness due to systematic disadvantage linked to racism and cultural prejudice (Pleace, 2010). In the US, for example, ethnic and cultural minorities tend to be disproportionately found in homeless populations (Toro, 2007; Baker, 1994; Conroy and Heer, 2003; Campbell and Lachica, 2013). In Europe, Meert et al (2006) identified ethnicity as the underlying force behind high levels of social exclusion and segregation which put

migrants at a greater risk of homelessness. In terms of ethnicity in itself being a key feature of a typology of migrant homelessness, Pleace (2010) notes that the distinction between 'citizens' and 'foreigners' varies widely across Europe and in some member states citizenship is based on ethnicity rather than place of birth (Pleace, 2010). Roma in Romania, for example, are typically denied citizenship despite that country being their place of birth, and were commonly only issued national identity cards rather than full passports (Pogany, 2012). Pleace (2010) leaves open the question of whether ethnic minorities who are not recent migrants should be included in studies of migrant homelessness.

2.4.2 Individualist accounts of migrant homelessness

Specifically relating to migrants, individualist accounts focus on individual circumstances, characteristics or preferences such as life events, cultural attainment and local knowledge, social networks, and engagement with formal support systems. Adopting a social work perspective, for example, Amundson (2018) points to the different interventions needed for migrant groups to escape homelessness, such as employment assistance, job training, and help with accessing housing, to address the individual circumstances that particularly act as barriers to housing for migrants. Having a limited social network of formal and informal support has been identified as a source of precarity for migrants, which in some cases has been seen to be abated by a strong reliance of social work to access housing and employment (Hersberger, 2003; Mostowska, 2011).

However, some migrants may have *limited knowledge of administrative support systems* (Fitzpatrick et al, 2012) and therefore have difficulty accessing social support. New migrants in particular might be unfamiliar with cultural norms or may face *language barriers*. Meda (2010) suggests that the risk posed by such initial cultural barriers abates with time as migrants build up an informal support network, become more familiar with the local culture, learn the local language, access the labour market, and secure housing for themselves.

Traumatic life events for anyone, not just migrants, can trigger a downward spiral of instability and, at in the worst cases, homelessness. In a study of multiple exclusion homelessness in the UK, traumatic life events were found to be more influential triggers of

homelessness for migrants than for UK born groups (Fitzpatrick et al, 2013). For some migrants, the process of migration itself may involve a traumatic life event, such as fleeing persecution, and may impact upon mental health and well-being later in life.

For a variety of reasons migrants may be less likely to access formal support services when confronted with or threatened by homelessness, for example as a result of the *stigma* attached to such services (Garapich, 2014). Migrants uncertain of their eligibility for support, particularly those with irregular migration status may fear criminal prosecution or repatriation when using homelessness services (Pleace, 2010). Others may feel ill-catered for by official support services. For example, in Toronto homeless youth from minority backgrounds were found to be more likely to exhaust informal social networks before resorting to formal agencies for assistance (Springer et al, 2006). Similarly, one homelessness services agency in Scotland found that Roma from Romania were not accessing critical services for fear of being stigmatised in their community (Sabou, 2011). To summarise, there are a number of individual traits and characteristics which make migrants vulnerable to homelessness, as a people-based typology of migrant homelessness suggests.

2.4.3 Structural explanations of migrant homelessness

The following reviews the various structural explanations for homelessness amongst migrants. These explanations relate to policies, labour and housing markets, discrimination on the basis of race, gender or other forms of segregation.

Immigration policy distinguishes who is and who is not a citizen, who does and does not have the right to enter or remain, and delineates the assorted rights and responsibilities associated with different immigration statuses. UK immigration legislation enacted within the last 20 years clearly links immigration status with rights of residence, work and welfare (Dwyer et al, 2018). Access to employment, welfare, and housing is determined by one's immigration status and therefore significantly impacts upon the resources available at any given time. Arguably, over and above any other contributing factor immigration policies determine the degree of vulnerability a migrant has in becoming homeless (Dwyer et al, 2018; Fitzpatrick et al, 2013).

As an example, a study of homeless refugees and asylum seekers in a suburb of Paris places the cause of homelessness squarely on failed immigration policy. In their research Le Mener and Oppenchain (2012) argue that homeless services have compensated for the deficiencies of reception structures for migrants, which is emblematic of the strong influence of homeless services on migration management policies. In lieu of reception services, migrants are being referred to homelessness services and placed in 'social motels' where temporary accommodation is offered without support services. According to Le Mener and Oppenchain (2012), the proliferation of social motels signified the interdependence of asylum and homelessness policy.

Race and racism impacts upon the housing outcomes of migrants both directly, in the form of discrimination in housing and labour markets, but also indirectly in the differential treatment of people from different nationalities in welfare and immigration systems. The formal operation of social security is in theory racially blind in both the UK and the US, yet inequality persists between different ethnic groups within the system (Spicker, 2011). Hiebert (2009) noted a similar pattern of racial inequality in North America where the proportion of immigrants in precarious housing situations drops significantly in the early settlement period, but notably this does not apply to immigrants of Black and Middle Eastern descent.

Related to race and racism, *segregation* is also an important explanatory factor in migrant homelessness whereby increased spatial isolation causes the social exclusion of entire groups of people (Meert et al, 2006). Fiedler et al (2006) observed that where recent immigrants are concentrated in poor areas this may worsen their situation and exacerbate social dislocation and exclusion. Similarly, Nordfeldt (2012) argues that segregation is an important explanation for migrant homelessness, insofar as that income, education and occupation alone cannot explain the extent of disadvantage experienced by new migrants. Maloutas (2012) contrasts American urban deprivation with that experienced in Europe by emphasising the role comparatively lower residential mobility plays in segregation and social exclusion.

An additional factor in explaining structural constraints is the influence of *patriarchy* upon migrant communities. Towards the end of the 20th century several commentators noted the changing profile of homelessness and how increasingly homeless people no longer overwhelmingly comprised single, older, white men. Dubbed the 'new homeless', this heterogeneous group included women and children, minority groups, those in retirement and young people with no job experience (Stefl, 1987). Nordfeldt (2012) explains a rise in female homelessness as a logical extension of the general trend towards a 'feminisation of poverty'. Female migrants may not only be disadvantaged by gender, but are also confronted with what Burkner (2012, 181) describes as 'triple oppression' on the dimensions of race, class and gender. Ruiz (1987, 269) adds citizenship to this oppression model to describe a 'quadruple whammy' faced by female migrants.

The *labour market* can provide an additional structural explanation for migrant homelessness. Varying restrictions on accessing public support and employment combined with existing individual disadvantage places many new migrants in a precarious financial position. Several studies of migrant experiences in North America document the level of shelter poverty¹ which often characterises the early re-settlement process. Hiebert (2009) explains that shelter poverty among skilled workers is mostly because they are more likely than other classes to be in single person households and therefore least able to pool costs. Similarly, Teixeira and Halliday (2010) found that new migrants to Canada viewed temporary overcrowding as an acceptable trade-off to afford housing and that many new migrants used doubling up, subletting, and couch surfing as a strategy to avoid shelter poverty and homelessness.

Compounding a lack of personal resources to secure a sustainable home, the re-settlement process is made more difficult by a *lack of affordable housing* available to migrants either as a matter of supply in general or for them to access specifically. For example, compared to the US and Canada, the UK has a sizeable supply of social housing, but these units may not be available for migrants to access due to legal status. However, in North America there

1 Shelter poverty is described as foregoing one or more major necessity, such as food and fuel, so as to maintain and afford accommodation (Stone, 2004, 16).

is less restriction on migrants being able to access social housing in principle, but there is a smaller pool of homes for social rent and greater competition for this housing with the population as a whole (Preston and Murnaghan, 2005; Hiebert, 2009). Preston (2009) found that barring the improvement of incomes or the increase of affordable housing, many migrants will continue to be at risk of homelessness.

Given how immigration and welfare policies tend to be mutually reinforcing, Maycock et al (2012) argue that understanding how *welfare regimes* intersect with immigration law is critical for understanding migrant homelessness. Without income from wages or benefits, migrants have to rely on alternative sources of income such as money from charities or friends and families. Destitution is arguably more common for homeless migrants than other groups as, depending on the source of funding, public services for homeless people are not always accessible to foreigners and undocumented migrants (Le Mener and Oppenheim, 2012).

Migrants, therefore may constitute a unique group with regards to the predominance of structural over individual causes of homelessness, when compared to other groups. For example, the lower incidence of multiple exclusion homelessness experienced by homeless migrants perhaps suggests that the inability to access welfare, housing or labour systems is the primary contributor for their homelessness as opposed to any 'deviant' behaviour (Fitzpatrick et al, 2013, 4). Elsewhere, economic conditions were found to be the dominant risk factor for migrants in Sweden (Nordfeldt, 2012), in Spain migrants were more susceptible to homelessness despite having higher educational backgrounds and stronger work histories due to restricted access to benefits (Meda, 2010), and in Denmark migrants were overrepresented in the shelter population despite having a much lower prevalence of 'comorbidities', such as substance dependencies and mental ill health, compared to non-migrant groups (Benjaminsen, 2016, 55).

2.5 Conclusion

In outlining the explanations and experiences of homelessness, this chapter has attempted to demonstrate the ways in which homelessness can be defined, in terms of the circumstances of homeless people (severity), the duration and timing of homelessness

(temporality) and the categorisation of people affected by homelessness (characteristic). The ways in which homelessness is defined follows from theories and assumptions about the causes of, and solutions to, the problem.

Homelessness research broadly falls within two camps, one which conceives homelessness as a social problem, and the other viewing it as a housing problem (Barak, 1991). Those believing homelessness primarily to be a social problem generally argue that some character trait or personal deficit is the cause of homelessness (Radu, 2012) and therefore the appropriate policy response is to treat the afflicted person with a gauntlet of services and institutionalisation or, worse, punish with sanctions, expulsion and incarceration. This camp tends to focus their research on the literally homeless, those living on the streets or in emergency shelters, often coming from a clinical psychology or criminal justice perspective (Fitzpatrick and Christian, 2006). In reaction to early pathological explanations of homelessness, the latter camp rejects the notion that people cause their own hardship, either deliberately or as a function of a cultural flaw, and instead argue that widening income inequality brought on by free market capitalism and neoliberal policies which creates severe destitution for the classes at the bottom of society. In this way homelessness is an extreme result of housing market flaws and therefore the logical response is to intervene and increase the supply of affordable housing (Fiedler et al, 2006).

More recent research (from the start of 21st century) into homelessness has acknowledged the shortcomings of stark division between individualist and structuralist accounts of homelessness, and instead arrive at a new orthodoxy that seeks to reconcile the two divergent and opposing debates. This hybrid of the two theoretical camps within social thought challenges the pathological view by recognising the correlation between rising income inequality and deepening housing need, but also questions structural explanations of homelessness by refusing to dismiss the sizable proportion of homeless households, especially the literally homeless, with support needs. Proponents of this ‘new orthodoxy’ would argue that certain attributes make one more or less vulnerable to structural forces which make homelessness possible (Fitzpatrick and Christian, 2006, 316).

The value of critical realism is in adding an interpretive dimension to homelessness and enabling an investigation of causal forces giving equal attention to both structure and

agency. The ability to examine the importance of agential factors within the context of structural constraints by unpicking which factors at its minimum contribute to homelessness from those which have causal force but do not require constant conjunction, allows for a deeper understanding of which factors contribute to homelessness and to what extent they may be a determining factor.

As homelessness research has developed, the understanding of the problem has evolved from that of an exceptional malady affecting a narrow segment of the population (namely single roofless men with unmet support needs) to that of a variously manifested social phenomenon affecting a wide spectrum of society. With this reinterpretation of homelessness as a much more complex problem than hitherto suggested, greater attention has been given to understanding the influence of wider social processes, and their interaction, in creating the conditions that contribute to homelessness, while providing greater understanding of how and why different groups experience homelessness in varying ways.

In this context, homeless migrants are caught at the interstices of multiple systems (housing, labour, welfare and immigration), or a 'system of systems' (Stephens and Fitzpatrick, 2007) in a way that is perhaps much more pronounced than for other groups. Further complicating this process are the variety of individual level factors, such as social networks and local knowledge, which might add to migrants' vulnerability to homelessness. Having provided an overview of the ways in which homelessness is understood and explained, and how the experience of homelessness for migrants vary from non-migrant groups, the following chapter considers in more detail how critical realism can provide the conceptual framework for the empirical investigation in this study.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical approach to the research, outlines the design applied, considers methods used and explains how the data was analysed. The thesis made use of a critical realist perspective to analyse causality, to identify the connection between structure and agency and to understand the ‘emergent’ qualities resulting from specific configuration of causal forces. The chapter provides a justification for using a comparative approach in the study of homelessness, looking at the housing strategies adopted by migrant Eastern Europeans in Scotland and Central Americans in Massachusetts. Furthermore, the specific case study areas of Edinburgh and metro-Boston are explained in detail and the chapter explains the reasoning behind the use of semi-structured, qualitative interview data with key professional informants managing homeless services and migrant groups who experienced homelessness. This chapter concludes with a reflection on the challenges involved in conducting comparative research by detailing the process involved in conducting fieldwork and analysing data.

3.2 Research questions

Having over 10 years experience of homelessness services, both as a service provider and researcher, I have been interested in migrants as a subgroup, due to the level of precarity associated with a legal status offering less than full citizenship. Such a legal status restricts one’s right to work, access to housing, eligibility for public assistance, and ability to move freely across borders. For migrants who are exceptionally constrained by multiple systems due to their immigration status, what latitude exists for people to be able to ‘get by’ when facing competing demands? Specifically, in this thesis, I am interested in the housing strategies adopted by migrants in response to homelessness, and to determine, when faced with extreme constrained choice, the priorities, trade-offs and values homeless migrants negotiate to satisfy housing (and other) needs.

As a service provider working with homeless migrants in both Massachusetts and Scotland, I became familiar with the housing strategies employed by my clients to make the most of very minimal means; including ‘doubling up’, ‘hot-bedding’, living in overcrowded conditions, ‘couch surfing’, living in substandard housing, living in places not fit for human habitation and utilising emergency shelter. Being unable to access sufficient resources required to secure decent housing due to barriers experienced in the labour market, and/or restricted access to social benefits or subsidised housing, I saw how households seek to limit their housing costs, which, for most families make the first and largest claim on household budgets (Stone, 2004). Migrant households provide a stark example of those facing constrained financial capacity.

Furthermore, I observed how some migrants were doubly disadvantaged through additional pressures on household budgets that do not burden most non-migrant groups. For example, some households have families in other countries which they support financially and will need to send remittances. It is also common for migrants to incur significant debt in the process of migrating that is needed to be paid back. Additionally, depending on immigration status, migrants may have to pay for health care costs out of pocket, as they may be ineligible for public health coverage and are compelled to purchase private insurance. Return travel is often required, particularly in the case of family emergencies, imposing a significant burden on incomes, less typically experienced by non-migrant groups.

In addition to limited resources (restricted access to work and benefits) and increased costs (remittances and debt), migrants can also have high support needs. This can be in the form of additional housing consumption, for example requiring larger homes for larger families, but also in terms of social support to address integration and resettlement. This can include needing support with language speaking skills, literacy or mental health support, particularly in cases of traumatic circumstances surrounding migration, as well as support to address social isolation and dislocation more generally. The individual and structural causes underlying the reason why some migrants become homeless are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

Limited resources, additional burdens on budgets and having a higher level of need all contribute to extreme precarity within the housing system. This thesis considers the

capacity for agency amongst homeless migrants when faced with such extreme constraints, by investigating the circumstances around migration, the causes of homelessness in the (migration) resettlement process, the housing strategies deployed to meet competing demands, and the policy responses to migrant homelessness.

Using a critical realist framework to allow the investigation of causality and examine the relationship between structure and agency, this study investigates the following core research questions:

1. What are the causes of migration and how do these factors contribute to homelessness amongst migrants?
2. What is the relative importance of structure and individual level factors in creating homelessness amongst migrants?
3. How do homeless migrants deploy agency in determining their housing strategies?
4. What are the implications of these individual housing strategies for public policy in responding to migrant homelessness?

To answer these questions this study uses a comparative approach, based on detailed case studies to determine the causal factors and consequent housing strategies used by migrants who are disadvantaged by immigration, labour, welfare and housing systems. In determining the range of housing strategies used by migrants, the thesis examines how in some circumstances, migrants sacrifice housing in the face of competing demands, and in extreme cases, to the point of homelessness.

3.3 Theoretical framework: Critical realism

In exploring the realities of homelessness as experienced by migrants, the thesis adopts a critical realist framework to enable an in-depth analysis of causation, to determine the reasons for both the initial decision to migrate as well as to explain the primary causes of homelessness amongst these groups. Furthermore, critical realism enables an investigation

into causal forces located at the levels of structure and agency without presupposing the primacy of one over another. The theory also allows for the separate analysis of what can be termed causal ‘generative mechanisms’, and in combination, as ‘emergent properties’ (Bhaskar, 2013) to describe the consequence when two or more causal forces interact. The following section offers a more in-depth discussion of critical realism as a theoretical framework.

Realism in social research was developed as an alternative to the positivist tradition in social sciences, but unlike relativist approaches which Danermark (2002) characterises as an ‘exaggerated reaction’ to ‘empiricist dominance’, the realist approach presupposes an objective existence of a mind-independent reality. Critical realism therefore falls between the two polar positions of positivism and relativism. It is *critical* in the sense that it recognises the fallibility of social knowledge and vulnerability to social criticism; and it is *realist* in its attempt to offer ‘explanatory critiques’ of a mind-independent social reality (Potter and Lopez, 2001, 1).

The metaphysical assumption underlying critical realism is that social reality and its entities exist independently of our knowledge and identification of them (Sayer, 1992; Fleetwood, 2005). Reality is consequently stratified into the different layers of ‘real’ generative mechanisms, ‘actual’ events which occur in the social world, and the ‘subjective’ experience of these (Hartwig, 2007). The ‘real’ is the domain of ontological depth and refers to the structural and causal powers of entities (Sayer, 2000; Danermark, 2002).

Importantly, these differentiated layers of reality are characterised by emergent properties which are irreducible to their constituent parts (Sayer, 1992). A quality is said to ‘emerge’ only when one or more entities interact, but separately these entities do not share this emergent trait. Emergence is a key concept in critical realism in its metaphysical approach to the structure-agency dilemma in social research. To the critical realist, it is the emergent properties of local social relations and the generative mechanisms producing the conditions of phenomena which are of concern. The task of the critical realist is therefore to reveal the generative mechanisms producing certain outcomes by examining social relations and their ‘structured combination’ (Iosifides, 2016, 57).

Critical realism does not assume that structure or agency is logically prior in methodological explanation (Fitzpatrick, 2005), nor does it elide the two to treat as

inseparable individual and social levels of analysis, as in structuration theory which investigates the mutual impact one has on the other. The emergent character of social reality allows for structure and agency to be analytically separate and as possessing distinct properties and powers. To the critical realist, social emergence is key to understanding the relationship between structure and agency, as well as the conditional and generative mechanisms operating between them which also cannot be reduced or conflated as one or the other (Iosifides, 2016).

According to critical realism, individuals are constrained or empowered by structural and cultural properties, and as such, decisions should be understood in this context (Scott, 2005). Adopting a critical realist frame is especially useful for deepening an understanding of migrant homelessness for a number of reasons. Firstly, the value of critical realism lies in its ability to examine causal forces without giving structural explanations logical priority over agency, or vice versa. It is particularly helpful in answering the first two research questions (relating to causality). Hence, it allows the study to investigate explanations of both migration and homelessness, and to reveal the ways in which agency is constrained and empowered in the responses taken to these situations. In this research study, structure and agency can be examined independently of each other, and their combination can reveal a range of 'emergent properties'.

Secondly, critical realism assumes that reality is differentiated in the layers of the real, the actual and the subjective. This stratification of reality is useful for answering the third research question (analysing housing strategies) in the sense that scrutinising the 'real' reveals the generative mechanisms causing migration and homelessness amongst migrants; unpicking the 'actual' allows for an investigation into how homelessness is manifested amongst migrants, paying particular attention to the housing strategies adopted in response to homelessness; and delving into the 'subjective' helps to identify the decision-making process behind these housing strategies, revealing the priorities, trade-offs and values held by homeless migrants.

Finally, this research attempts to unpick the (contingent) factors which generate migrant homelessness. Using a critical realist framework therefore allows for the examination of structural causes and individual explanations of migrant homelessness, as explained above, but within these causal forces can also identify conditions which produce homelessness (for

example, restricted legal status) and other contingent factors (such as loss of identity documents without the means to replace them, or whether having these documents are necessary in the first instance). A better understanding of the causal generative mechanisms underlying homelessness amongst migrants therefore establishes the groundwork for the fourth and final research question concerning policy responses to migrant homelessness.

In summary, the strength of critical realism lies in the ability to investigate causal forces by giving equal attention to structure and agency, offering the ability to examine the importance of agential factors within the context of structural constraint, and to unpick which factors contribute to homelessness amongst migrants, which aspects may be less significant, and finally to determine when and under what conditions they have causal force. The following section outlines the rationale and details the design used in this study of migrant homelessness.

3.4 Research design: In-depth qualitative investigation

In principle, critical realism advocates ‘critical methodological pluralism’ (Lopez and Porter, 2002) and does not favour one methodological approach over another. However, to offer causal explanations, critical realism places a premium on qualitative-intensive methods of social research. This qualitative-intensive research study attempts to ‘go deeper’ (Yeung, 1997) into the causes of migrant homelessness, to reveal the generative mechanisms which produce the conditions in which migrants become homeless. The study adopts a comparative method, based on contrasting approaches taken in the UK and US, considering a sub-national scale (Scotland in UK and Massachusetts in US) and using the case study areas of Edinburgh and metro Boston. Specifically, the study is concerned with migrants from Eastern Europe in Edinburgh and Central Americans in metro Boston. In total, 40 key informant interviews (with professional respondents) were conducted in both case study areas and 30 in-depth interviews containing a biographical element were conducted with homeless migrants.

3.4.3 Comparative research

The aim of comparative housing research is to understand, explain, evaluate or challenge assumptions about phenomena which take place in different contexts and scales (Oxley, 1991). Crucially, adopting a comparative approach explicitly allows for the importance of context to be explored. Considering the specific configuration of systems allows for a deeper understanding of migrant homelessness in that it is the way multiple and separate systems interact to limit choice and opportunity that ultimately influence a person's housing strategy and their present housing condition. By comparing two different 'system of systems' (Stephens and Fitzpatrick, 2007) this study aims to separate out the relative importance that each component (singularly and in combination) has on the housing strategies of homeless migrants.

Exploring causality is a major benefit of comparative housing research and as such is highly compatible with a meta-theory advancing a 'depth' ontology and explanatory models, such as critical realism. Likewise, the value of comparative research in housing is that the approach reveals the complex structured reality of housing systems to develop conceptual tools to explain differences or change (Ploeger et al, 2001); an approach which is perfectly in line with a critical realist analysis.

As Pickvance (2001) argues, comparative studies do one of two things: explain differences or similarities or make assumptions about causes using a principle of variation or universality. This study uses Pickvance's model of comparative analysis with plural causation. I have begun by using a similar outcome (migrant homelessness) and observed that this phenomenon is produced in multiple ways (as demonstrated by housing strategies) and in different types of societies (in this case, the US and the UK). The principle of variation with plural causation attempts to locate different causal processes in two types of societies to account for the same outcome (migrant homelessness) (Pickvance, 2005).

There are three parts of this process of 'differentiating with plural causation' that need to be unpacked, the first being an *observed similarity*. As a homelessness services provider in both American and Scottish contexts, I have observed that migrant homelessness functions in similar ways as examples of extreme social exclusion, despite a different configuration of systems governing the process. Homelessness, as defined by this study, takes a 'maximalist' approach (Shinn, 2007) and therefore the housing circumstances of participants ranged from the precariously housed to the literally homeless. Likewise,

migrant homelessness in this study runs the gamut of experiences to include households who reside in sub-standard living conditions, endure overcrowding, experience high cost burdens, poor housing quality, have no security of tenure, and rely on emergency accommodation or sleep in places not fit for human habitation.

Secondly, with regard to *different causal processes*, this research assumes causal pluralism in the generation of migrant homelessness. To use Ragin's (1987) terms, different causally relevant conditions, such as structural, individual and cultural factors, can combine in a variety of ways to produce migrant homelessness. Pluralism allows for causation to be established without a 'constant conjunction' between these causal elements, meaning for causality to be established a singular occurrence of causation is sufficient enough. Similarly, for a factor to have causal force, it does not always need to be proven to cause an event. This study scrutinises homelessness and its generative mechanisms lying in structural and individual factors, illustrating the interaction between underlying causal mechanisms and empirical events.

Thirdly, the thesis uses a comparative approach to demonstrate how migrant homelessness is experienced and responded to in *different societal contexts*. Although according to Esping-Andersen (1990) the US and the UK fall within the same 'liberal' welfare regime, there are observed differences between the two systems, namely with regards to eligibility and entitlement to social protection which are explored in detail in Chapter 4.

I approach this research from the assumption (rooted in my practical experience) that the different configuration of generative mechanisms, as governed by the variety of causal factors in these two different societies provide the context for migrant homelessness. This thesis employs in-depth case studies that aim to unpick the influence of, and interaction between, deep structural causes in addition to agential force within migrant homelessness in the two different contexts.

3.4.4 Case studies

Considering that comparative research necessitates the juxtaposition of similar phenomena in different contexts, the use of a *case study* approach is particularly useful. The three defining features of case study research are that the method involves an in-depth

exploration (Blatter, 2008) of multiple aspects of a phenomenon, through a holistic investigation (Easton, 2010) of a small number of instances of the subject of inquiry. For case studies, as with other methods used in qualitative research, there are two different levels of sampling involved: sampling of context and sampling of participants (Bryman, 2016). In this section, I describe the context sample with sampling of participants described thereafter.

Firstly, case studies reveal the importance of the policy context at a sub-national level, concerning welfare, housing and homelessness from a position of *difference*. The context sample of this study includes metro Boston in the US and Edinburgh in the UK. As explained earlier, the US and the UK have very different welfare safety-net provisions associated with differences in entitlement and eligibility for a range of benefits. In the UK, the State is largely responsible for delivering welfare benefits (and, to a lesser extent, housing) whereas in the US, government plays much less of a role, with service provision largely the purview of non-profits and charities. Case study areas provide the level for empirical analysis to extrapolate conclusions upwards to the sub-national level.

Secondly, case studies reveal the importance of context from a position of *similarity*. For example, Massachusetts and Scotland are broadly comparable in the sense that both subnational governments take a relatively progressive approach to homelessness within their respective national contexts. For example, Scottish homelessness legislation is unique in a European context in that all (eligible) homeless households (who are not intentionally homeless) have a right to ‘settled’ accommodation (Fitzpatrick et al, 2014). Comparatively, Massachusetts is unique in its American context insofar as Massachusetts is the only ‘Right to Shelter State’ in the Union, meaning the Commonwealth is obligated by state statute to provide emergency accommodation to all (literally) homeless families with dependent children, without restriction beyond means-testing eligibility (Haywood, 2002). The specific policy landscape involved in each case study area is discussed at length in Chapter 4.

Thirdly, case studies allow for the examination of the importance of culture as a mediating force in the sampling of participants both in terms of differentiation, but also identifying similar causal mechanisms across groups and different contexts. Using case studies which involve a sampling of participants from Eastern Europe in Edinburgh and Central America

in metro Boston allows for broader applicability of theoretical findings which have significance for how migrant homelessness is conceptualised beyond these case study areas.

This research compares groups from a position of similarity. The focus of the study is restricted to Eastern and Central European migrants exercising their Treaty Rights as workers (and jobseekers) in Scotland and economic migrants in Massachusetts from Central America and the Caribbean. In both contexts of the UK and US, these migrant groups, respectively, constitute the largest flow of economic migration in the 21st century in absolute and proportional terms. Furthermore, both broad migrant groups, in terms of nationality and ethnicity experience similar levels of social disadvantage. Commentators on migration studies have observed the similarities between Latin America and Eastern Europe with regard to structural economic change spurring international migration despite occupying different geo-political positions (Massey et al, 2008; Iglicka, 2001; Sipaviciene, 1997).

The sampling frame is not further restricted by other demographic characteristics, such as household type or gender. Due to the nature of homelessness services in Massachusetts being structured around the criterion of a 'Right to Shelter' which is limited to households with dependent children, the majority of participants in the US case study are families. In contrast, participants in the Scottish case study were a mix of families with dependent children and single males, due to recruiting from both a social enterprise and a low threshold 'drop-in' service for rough sleepers. Acknowledging the differences between family and single homelessness, the analysis takes care to make distinctions between the groups within the broader category of 'homeless migrant'.

3.4.5 In-depth interviews

Data collection was conducted throughout 2015 and produced a total of 70 in-depth interviews with homeless migrants and key stakeholders in Scotland and Massachusetts. Fieldwork in Scotland was conducted in the summer months, the timing of which is considered in the findings, since rough sleeping is more conducive in the warmer weather than during colder winter months and is of significance for the interpretation of findings. Data collection in Massachusetts was conducted during the winter months of 2015 and the

impact of this timing is considered in more detail below in the discussion on sampling and recruitment.

In both case study areas of Scotland and Massachusetts, interviews with key (professional) informants preceded the fieldwork to gain a better understanding of how policy makers and service providers interpreted homelessness amongst migrants, nationally and locally and how policies are implemented. These interviews were semi-structured and analysed the experience and causes of homelessness amongst migrants, and explored possible solutions to prevent and/or alleviate migrant homelessness.

Data collected from key informant interviews provided an additional interpretive dimension to the research findings by offering a professional view about the incidence of migrant homelessness and policies developed to address these problems, including a wider perspective of the issue beyond individual experiences of homelessness. Interviews with key informants also provided an opportunity to recruit study participants, including other key informants and homeless migrants. Interviews were carried out one-to-one, in person and over telephone. Table 1 offers a breakdown of key informants by case study area and by the scale in which they operate (national, subnational or local).

In addition to 40 key informant interviews, a total 30 in-depth interviews were conducted with homeless migrants in 2015, half of which were in Edinburgh and the other half in metro-Boston. See Table 2 for a split by nationality and housing circumstance.

Semi-structured interviews with key informants were used to provide mainly contextual material, to better understand policy developments and implementation processes (see Appendix 1 for key informant topic guide). The more detailed interviews were conducted with migrant groups to better understand how migrants perceived the opportunities and constraint facing them in negotiating housing (and wider welfare) systems. These in-depth interviews contained a strong biographical element, which covered the themes of migration, home, homelessness, housing aspirations, and attitudes towards the future (see Appendix 2 for topic guide used with migrant participants).

The first part of the interview asked participants to focus on the process of migration through their 'life story'. Topics covered at this point in the interview included a discussion about where they were born, what life was like in their home country, what were the reasons

behind their migration, how they came to reside where they were currently and how those experiences compared with their expectations for how they thought life would be in the ‘host’ country. Biographical methods were used to provide an understanding of agents’ social experiences and lived realities (Humphreys et al, 2006). In-depth biographical interviews reveal the linkages between actors’ interpretations of their experiences and identities in wider structural and cultural realities.

Table 1. Key Informant Interviews, by role and level of scale

	Scotland	Massachusetts	Total
Level			
National	-	7	7
Sub-national/state	6	10	16
Local	5	12	17
Organisation			
Government/ Local Authority	5	15	20
Non-profit/ social enterprise	5	10	15
Emergency shelter	1	4	5
Role			
Director	-	21	21
Manager	7	6	13
Caseworker/ officer	4	-	4
Legal services	-	2	2
TOTAL	11	29	40

Interviews also analysed the reasons for becoming homeless and analysed strategies to meet their housing and other needs; the biographical proportion of the in-depth interview illuminated individual decision-making processes and the personal, historical and cultural contexts (internal and external realities) which shape these decisions. As Ni Laoire (2000, 229) explains, when specifically applied to stories about migration, biographical methods ‘highlight the embeddedness of migratory experiences and migration-related actions within social agents’ lives and biographical trajectories, the complex, multi-layered and

multidimensional character of migration decision-making and the cultural aspects of migratory phenomena and processes’.

Table 2. Interviews with homeless migrants, by nationality and housing circumstance

Case study		US			UK		
		Dominican	Haitian	Belizean	Romanian	Roma	Polish
Boston-metro (US)	15	11	3	1	-	-	-
Edinburgh	15	-	-	-	3	7	5
Total	30						
Circumstance							
Emergency shelter/TA	12	7	3	1	-	1	-
Transitional							
housing/scattered site	4	4	-	-	-	-	-
Cost burdened	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Overcrowded/substandard	5	-	-	-	-	5	-
Street homeless	8	-	-	-	2	1	5
Total	30	11	3	1	3	7	5

3.4.6 Sampling

This study utilised a ‘mixed purposeful sampling’ method which combined various strategies (Miles and Huberman, 2016), including homogeneous, criterion and opportunistic sampling. *Homogenous sampling* was used in the sense that each respective case study area limited participants to nationals of specific countries of origin. In the case of Edinburgh, this was limited to Central and Eastern Europeans (CEE) and in metro-Boston recruitment included Central Americans and Caribbean nationals. As explained above, these nationals were targeted as they shared similar migration trends and experiences of immigration (i.e. having similar macro historical reasons for migration,

comparable contemporary scales and natures of migration, and generally experience the same type of barriers to cultural and economic integration into the respective host societies).

Criterion sampling was also employed in the sense that the criteria for participating in the study was that the prospective participant should be a national of one of the identified countries, but also must be in housing need, which included the parameters of being precariously housed or literally homeless as described above. Recruiting flyers provided to organisations hosting the study outlined the sampling criteria; including, economic migrants, from specific regions in the world, in particular housing circumstances. The study also made use of opportunistic sampling, to identify further respondents and organisations, following information gained during the interview process.

Recruitment in the Edinburgh case-study area achieved a sample primarily of Roma from Romania, typically residing as a family-unit in substandard and overcrowded rental housing. All of the Polish migrants participating in the study were street homeless and were unaccompanied by other household members, apart from one who was travelling with his brother. Recruitment in the metro-Boston case study area primarily attracted participants who were residing with children in emergency shelters. The Boston sample was heavily skewed to families as a result of the way in which the emergency shelter system operates, allowing access primarily to households with dependent children as a ‘Right to Shelter’ state (Haywood, 2002), explained above. The small number of individuals included in this sample and the degree to which these two groups are comparable is considered in more detail in the findings in Chapter 10.

3.5 Data collection

Fieldwork was conducted first in Scotland and then in Massachusetts. The data collection process for each case study area is described in turn. This section also describes important ethical considerations involved in data collection, and covers my approach to informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, harm or damage avoidance, and the recognition of power inequalities throughout the process. This section is then followed by a detailed discussion on data analysis and the development of theory.

3.5.1 Fieldwork in Scotland

In the spring of 2015, interviews with 11 key informants were conducted in Scotland. Outreach to the key policy areas within the Scottish Government produced interviews with senior staff within three policy teams: homelessness, equalities and social housing allocations. There is no one team which deals with immigration specifically since this is a reserved issue (reserved powers are the responsibility of the Westminster Government, and devolved powers are controlled within Holyrood in Scotland). An attempt to contact the UK Border Agency was unsuccessful as no named contact was found and emails to general mailboxes elicited no response. This was not pursued beyond initial contacts because focussing efforts locally in Scotland would have more direct relevance since the primary focus is on homelessness, and much of the information of importance regarding immigration specifically could be found in public documents available online.

I interviewed team leaders heading the homelessness sections of two rural local authorities who identified migrant homelessness as a particular problem in their area and who had argued for the issue to be addressed by the Scottish Government as a priority. I attempted to secure an interview with an informant in the 'housing options' section of the local government relevant to the Scottish case study, but this invitation to participate was rejected due to the timing of the study corresponding with pressing concerns regarding organisational restructuring.

Finally, several interviews were conducted with representatives from charities and pressure groups, operating at both local and national levels. These organisations were identified from my local knowledge of Edinburgh housing services and through information obtained during key informant interviews. Three of the interviews with key informants from the voluntary sector concerned roles involving policy, strategy and research, and two involved interviews with local service providers working with homeless migrants. The final key informant in Scotland was a manager within a local social enterprise, the majority of clients being Roma from Romania, and who proved critical to recruiting participants for the study.

Following the interview with a participant from the social enterprise organisation, the informant suggested that I undertake voluntary work for the host organisation to build a rapport with some of the vendors prior to recruitment. During the summer of 2015, I therefore supported the office by working on street outreach to recruit potential clients but

also to provide basic signposting to services for people who were begging and/or sleeping rough. This gave me an opportunity to interact with homeless persons outside of a service environment, enabling greater level of engagement with harder to reach groups, and helped to inform the design of the research instruments.

Volunteers for the social enterprise who were from Romania were also participants in the study and were extremely helpful with interpreting and recruiting study participants. One volunteer helped to translate the consent form and interpret during interview. The study sample recruited from this organisation was first identified by a member of staff as potential respondents who were then invited by the translator to see if candidates were interested in participating. An incentive of £10 vouchers were offered to study participants, since staff at the social enterprise were concerned that cash would cause disruption. In total, nine clients from this organisation were recruited, all of whom were from Romania and seven of whom were Roma.

In Edinburgh, another host organisation was identified as a possible venue from which to recruit nationals from Poland. I spent a week with a Polish translator at a low-threshold homeless service agency which offered a place where clients could seek advice and access services. Given the nature of the drop-in service, it was not possible to invite specific clients to interview ahead of time and instead I relied on a flyer in English and Polish (drafted by the volunteer interpreter) to recruit participants as well as from active encouragement from front line staff on shift on the days when I held drop in times.

In total, six participants were recruited from the drop-in service, five from Poland and one from Romania (non-Roma). The host organisation required lunch to be provided to participants in lieu of a £10 voucher, as there was concern that the centre would be seen as offering differential treatment to specific client groups. Lunch was donated to the centre but prioritised for participants. The host organisation was happy to host and promote the research but did not want to extend involvement beyond one week.

3.5.2 Fieldwork in Massachusetts

Sampling in Massachusetts proved to be much more challenging. Unlike in Edinburgh where much of the barriers to study recruitment lay in the lack of take up from would-be

participants, the problem with recruiting in the metro-Boston area was in finding a host organisation, or indeed anyone, willing to champion the study. For a variety of reasons, such as a lack of name recognition, unfamiliar institutional affiliation, unfamiliar topic of study, race and class background; and, a general resistance to research participation, due to fear of outsider involvement, the perceived risk of reputational or funding fall out, all acted as barriers to securing a host organisation. Furthermore, the timing of my fieldwork in Massachusetts was poor, if unavoidable. Data was collected during the winter months when under-resourced services, which are already cash-strapped and pressured, are over capacity.

These difficulties in recruitment applied to both homeless migrants and key informants. In the end therefore, a much larger number of key informants were recruited in Massachusetts, with a total of 29 agreeing to be interviewed. As with the key informant interviews in Scotland, the recruitment focussed on a mix of actors at national, state and local levels, as well as those involved in policy and direct service provision.

Similarly, efforts to volunteer time with various organisations to observe the context in which clients accessed services and as an opportunity to recruit participants, were largely unsuccessful, for much of the above-mentioned reasons. For example, I had contacted a network of grassroots community organisers fighting displacement in minority neighbourhoods with whom I had undertaken activism work ten years previously. As a result of this outreach work I was able to observe a legal clinic/organising training offered in one Boston neighbourhood where the Latin American community in particular were being displaced at a rapid rate.

Similarly, volunteering much of my time cooking at a community centre for HIV positive individuals did not yield results. This was partly due to suspicion about my motives, despite my personal connection with another colleague in another section at the centre, and also due to the (unanticipated) length of time required to obtain a CORI (Criminal Offender Recording Information) to disclose any convictions to enable me to work with clients. This requirement seemed to be added very late in the discussions despite my having already volunteered a number of days at the centre.

Despite these obstacles, I secured four host organisations: a low-threshold shelter, a housing advice agency, and two emergency family shelters in and around the Boston metro region. I received help from another previous colleague who was now working as a case manager

at the emergency family shelter. She was instrumental in organising interviews and ultimately seven participants were recruited with her assistance.

I paid for two interpreters to assist me with interviews conducted in Spanish, recruited from a popular recruitment website, specifically aimed at jobs and volunteering opportunities with the non-profit sector. I also had interpreters for Portuguese, French and Haitian-Creole as these languages are spoken in some Latin American and Caribbean countries.

The emergency family shelter in Boston took an active role in recruitment by identifying potential participants and scheduling interviews to be held on the weekend so as to have minimal operational impact. Three interviews were held here, all of which were in Spanish. The other host organisation in Boston did not assist in recruiting, but instead allowed me to post flyers advertising certain days for drop in and provided a separate room for privacy. Conducting interviews here was less successful, partly due to a low number of service centre drop in users but also because, unlike the service centre in Edinburgh, front line staff did not actively encourage participation. There were some instances of active discouragement as one case manager viewed my time spent with her client as taking away time she could be working with him on his case. Although the director was (verbally) very supportive of hosting the study, her colleagues were less enthusiastic. Nevertheless, two participants were recruited from this venue.

All the metro-Boston participants were compensated with \$20 cash. The host organisations here insisted on cash with some saying they specifically wanted their clients to benefit financially from their participation because Christmas was imminent, a time when many households face obvious financial pressures.

3.5.3 Ethical considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with the five guiding ethics principles for social science research as adopted by the Academy of Social Sciences (ACSS) and abides to the core ethics principles required by participation in Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) research.

Ethical considerations factor into each element of research design, from the purpose of the research, formulation of research questions, selection of methodology and instrument design through to data collection, interpretation and presentation of results (Preissle, 2008). The most common ethical principles adopted in qualitative social research include 'informed consent', 'anonymity and confidentiality', 'harm or damage avoidance' (Hopf, 2004, 337), as well as being conscious of power relations and the need for reflexivity during the whole research process (Dowling, 2000). Each aspect is addressed in turn, along with explaining how these ethical principles were adhered to during the course of the research.

Informed consent is central to the ACSS principle that 'all social science should respect the privacy, autonomy, diversity, values, and dignity of individuals, groups and communities'. Informed consent is related to the full disclosure of research purposes to prospective participants as well as to the use of research findings. Prior to the start of the interview, I explained to potential respondents that the study they were participating in was part of doctoral research into migrant homelessness. In situations where the interview was being conducted in a service setting, it was clearly explained that service provision did not depend on their decision to participate in the study, and that the research was wholly independent of host organisations.

Similarly, my role as a researcher was explained at the start of the interview, and it was clearly stated that the interview was not for the purposes of needs assessment or determining eligibility for services - and that it was not my role as a researcher to offer advice or assistance on individual matters. In situations where assistance was requested I offered to share their details with the appropriate staff person who could provide advice and support, but only when the participant asked me to do so. All materials relating to informed consent were provided in the participant's first language and were read to them by either myself or the interpreter (if applicable) prior to the interview. The informed consent form contained my contact details and the details of my supervisors and respondents were able to take this away with them for later reference.

Anonymity and confidentiality are guarantees that the identities of research participants remain concealed and that their personal information will be protected throughout the course of the research. In terms of data storage, no documents were produced which

included full names, addresses or telephone details. Audio recordings were saved for the majority of the interviews and held on a password-protected laptop.

Confidentiality was ensured in the reporting and presentation of findings by obscuring features which disclosed identity and not including specific names of the host organisations in which they were clients. Efforts to protect anonymity and confidentiality throughout data collection and reporting of findings is in line with ACSS's principle that 'all social scientists should act with regard to their social responsibilities in conducting and disseminating their research' (ACSS, 2018).

Harm avoidance is a general principle that applies during the process of conducting research and after its completion and falls under ACSS's principle of beneficence and non-maleficence that 'all social science should aim to maximise benefit and minimise harm'. For example, many of the interviews with homeless migrants involved recounting distressing moments in their lives. At times, participants became quite emotional. At any indication of distress, I gave the participant an opportunity to end the interview. Many declined, and continued with the interview, wanting to share their stories. At the end of the interview, participants were sign posted to relevant services available within the service where the interviews were conducted.

Recognition of power inequalities and asymmetries (Dowling, 2000) is an important ethical consideration for qualitative research particularly at the point of data collection and is critical to meeting ACSS's principle that 'all social science should be conducted with integrity throughout, employing the most appropriate methods for the research purpose'. According to Iosifides (2016, 168) an ethical stance 'presupposes the close examination of the implications of power differentials by researcher(s) along with systematic efforts for their 'neutralisation' or mitigation'. An important aspect of mitigation is the relationship between service provider and service user. As discussed above, care was taken to limit the involvement of service providers in the study with the direct involvement with their clients. For example, case managers would not be involved in the interview process, even when translation was required. This is due to the fact that much of the information discussed was highly sensitive and potentially involved disqualifying eligibility for social assistance and

housing programmes which would influence future service provision. In this way acknowledging power inequalities and being aware of this was part of harm avoidance.

3.6 Data analysis and coding

I employed a retroductive approach to the analysis to conduct a ‘backward mapping’ process (Easton, 2010, 118) which is non-linear, reflexive and cyclical (Iosifides, 2016, 168) for the purposes of making comparisons and in order to examine extreme cases. In the first process of analysis I applied a coding frame to the interviews, and through a process of deduction analysed the data.

As discussed above, critical realism advocates an explanatory model based on the constant interplay between agency, culture and structure (Archer 1995). Iosifides (2016) recommends that realist researchers categorise, code and analyse qualitative data under three broad axes that capture data relating to agency, culture and structure: collecting material specifically relating to agential courses of action, data about subjective reflexivity of agents (including justifications in decision-making and interpretation of events), and data about social relations influenced by structural conditions. When applying this coding frame to this research, for example, data pertaining to ‘agential courses of action’ included various individual explanations of homelessness (debt, ill health, misfortune), as well as various housing strategies employed (sharing accommodation, sleeping rough, using emergency accommodation). This data refers to the ‘real’. Data about the ‘reflexivity of agents’ concerned their expectations of migration as compared to their actual experience, as well as their perception of housing and other opportunities available in the future. This data refers to the ‘subjective’. Finally, data about ‘structural conditions’ was captured through an analysis of the structural antecedents of homelessness amongst migrants. This data refers to the ‘actual’ strata of reality in accordance with a critical realist framework.

Danermark et al (1997) suggests that there are five different strategies that can be used to facilitate the employment and description of retroductive inference: counterfactual thinking, social and thought experiments, studies of pathological cases, studying of extreme cases, and comparative case studies. Comparisons and extreme cases were chosen as most relevant to this thesis and these are considered below.

Comparisons. In comparing different cases, the researcher can determine what (X) is, and the mechanisms that must be in place for it to occur, by identifying the different qualities and structures that are involved in different situations (Meyer and Lunnay, 2013). Comparisons are at the heart of my study given that the key purpose is to consider similarities and differences between experiences within two national contexts. Comparing two different groups of (voluntary/economic) migrants in these contexts shed light on the aspects of systems and configuration of systems that have causal powers. Using the coding frame developed in the first stage of analysis, I was able to draw conclusions relevant to research questions, separate findings for each case study area, then arrive at conclusions about migrant homelessness by identifying the similarities and differences.

Extreme cases. Investigating extreme cases considers either situations where mechanisms are disturbed, and conditions are challenged, or where mechanisms appear in an almost pure form. Studying extreme cases allows the researcher to learn about the conditions for the 'normal' area under investigation, by researching the extreme or the abnormal (Danermark et al, 1997). In the case of migrant homelessness, extreme cases are identified by looking at who has the least amount of choice, and who has the most amount of choice in order to get at the constitutive elements of choice.

Two different extreme cases were identified in the data. The first include severely disadvantaged groups of Roma in Scotland and Haitians in Massachusetts, and the second include Polish rough sleepers in Edinburgh as a distinct group that paradoxically seem to simultaneously be in the most extreme housing need, and yet have the greatest latitude of choice. These findings are discussed in greater detail in Chapters 6-9. These extreme cases were particularly important to developing a conceptual frame of 'housing sacrifice' in which to view migrant homelessness, which is discussed in Chapter 10.

3.7 Conclusion

As this chapter demonstrates, a critical realist approach provided an opportunity for a detailed understanding of causality, structure and agency as applied to migrant homelessness. This theoretical frame helped in identifying the key generative mechanisms underpinning individual decision making and therefore in explaining the motivations and

capacity for agency under extreme constrained choice which migrants faced in accessing housing and support services.

Critical realism as a meta-theory is well suited for a comparative study investigating the causes and responses to migrant homelessness for a number of reasons. Firstly, it offers ‘explanatory critiques’ whilst critically recognising the fallibility of our knowledge of a mind-independent social reality (Potter and Lopez, 2001). A central task of this research was to offer explanations of migrant homelessness that emerged from structural and agential causal mechanisms.

Secondly, critical realism posits that social reality is stratified into different layers of the ‘real’, the ‘actual’ and the ‘subjective’ (Hartwig, 2007). This study investigates the actual event of homelessness, the subjective ways in which migrants experienced homelessness and, crucially, the real generative mechanisms which constrain and empower the choice of homeless migrants.

In relation to analysis, retroduction enables a flexible, ‘dynamic’ approach which allows for continual reflection on both the application of theory and the empirical research findings. This approach helped to establish a reflexive engagement with the study and allowed for detailed analysis of the key issues and themes – for example, in examining the structural barriers, power relationships, motivations, choices and constraints facing homeless migrants.

The following chapters demonstrate the application of this approach to an analysis of the narratives of migration offered by participants (Chapter 6), explanations of migrant homelessness with regards to structural (Chapter 7) and individual (Chapter 8) causal mechanisms, and finally, an examination into the deployment of agency through the individual housing strategies of homelessness migrants (Chapter 9).

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the key structural constraints imposed by housing legislation in Britain and America and examines how these are exacerbated by immigration policies and complicated by welfare reform, determining access to services, eligibility for (and entitlement to) assistance and the level of support provided. The analysis illustrates how the interface between these policies imposes a complex, often contradictory range of constraints, whereby difficulties in gaining access to housing are accentuated by immigration policies designed to restrict access for migrant groups and further complicated by welfare reforms which impose increasing levels of conditionality in service provision. The chapter examines how these features have operated within each case study area in turn, establishing the national policy context in which respective sub-national and state legislation has evolved, identifying key themes and drawing out the implications for migrant groups. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the multiple disadvantage that this 'system of systems' imposes upon homeless migrants.

4.2 Comparing housing and homelessness policies

In order to understand the context for this study the next section provides a brief overview of housing and homelessness policy in both case study areas, outlining the fundamental principles of homelessness legislation in Britain and America - beginning from the late 1970s and early 1980; a period when homelessness re-emerged as a major social concern in both the UK and US (see Chapter 2). In order to examine how this context has affected migrant groups, the key similarities and differences between the two localities are considered.

4.2.1 Housing and homelessness policy in Scotland

Housing policy in Scotland has been the responsibility of the Scottish Government since the devolution settlement in the 1998 Scotland Act established the Scottish Parliament (Sim, 2004). However, the foundational principles of contemporary homelessness

legislation can be found in the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act of 1977, as is the case elsewhere in the UK. The statutory homeless system established by the 1977 Act is unique in that it constitutes the only housing legislation (apart from France) to create, in effect, enforceable rights to settled accommodation for homeless households (Fitzpatrick et al, 2013), effectively establishing a ‘progressive counter-hierarchy of power’ (Fitzpatrick and Davies, forthcoming) through establishing legal rights to housing (Watts, 2014). These individually enforceable rights to housing are the corollary of clearly defined local authority duties towards statutorily homeless households (Fitzpatrick et al, 2013). Specifically, the 1977 Act established an enforceable duty on local authorities to accommodate certain categories of homeless families with dependent children and ‘vulnerable’ adults (Loveland, 2017).

The 1977 Act established an exceptionally broad statutory definition of homelessness, and after taking into account subsequent amendments, ‘homelessness’ generally is taken to refer to households who have no accommodation which one can reasonably expect to live in, as well as being threatened with homelessness - originally defined as threatened to be homeless within 28 days (Fitzpatrick and Davies, forthcoming). However, there are some shortcomings. Generally speaking, legally enforceable individual rights to housing is different from a ‘universalistic’ housing policy as seen in Scandinavian countries, and instead follows from a ‘selective’ welfare system (Bengtsson, 2001; Gugushvili and Hirsch, 2014) characterised by means-testing and targeting (Watts and Fitzpatrick, 2018). Furthermore, strict eligibility requirements have accompanied deep entitlements assured to households who are eligible. Individual rights to settled accommodation are consequently only extended to eligible households (such as those with recourse to public funds and other qualifying categories of applicant discussed below), and those entitled to statutory assistance under the 1977 Act and subsequent homelessness legislation.

Under the legislation, entitlement was initially restricted to ‘priority need’ applicants (a category which largely excludes single persons - unless deemed ‘vulnerable’ for some other reason) and to those who have not become ‘intentionally’ homeless (Mackie and Thomas, 2014). The ‘local connection’ test provides a final hurdle for homeless applicants, which enables a local authority to transfer their duty to another local authority (following required statutory investigations) if the main housing duty to accommodate is owed elsewhere. The

result of these conditions was that there were significant gaps in homelessness legislation, and few options available to those falling outwith the system. Specifically, the 1977 Act and subsequent legislation excludes ‘ineligible’ households from the statutory system, including those who have no recourse to public funds or do not have a Right to Reside in the UK. This is the case for all constituent countries in the UK.

In Scotland, the legal framework for homelessness duties and powers is contained in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. Following devolution, the Scottish Executive established the Homelessness Task Force in 1999 to review the impact of homelessness legislation in Scotland, whose recommendations formed the basis of the Housing (Scotland) 2001 Act (Pawson and Davidson, 2008). The 2001 Act is widely acknowledged to be the point at which homelessness policy in Scotland first significantly diverged from the rest of the UK (McKee et al, 2017), introducing new duties on local authorities to provide temporary accommodation for non-priority homeless households, and extended the period in which one is considered to be ‘threatened with homelessness’ from 28 days to two months (Fitzpatrick and Davies, forthcoming).

Subsequent legislation sought to expand the rights of homeless households further by amending the restrictions imposed by the priority-need, intentionality and local connection tests. The Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 abolished the priority need test and since the 31st of December 2012, all eligible and unintentionally homeless households have had a right to settled housing in Scotland (Mackie and Thomas, 2014). The 2003 Act also made the investigation of ‘intentionality’ a discretionary power of local authorities and suspended local connection rules. Although these amendments were not yet in force, in 2018 the Scottish Government Homelessness Rough Sleeping Action Group (HRSAG) recommended to Ministers that local connection rules be abolished and that the intentionally homeless category be limited to the narrower definition of ‘deliberate manipulation’ (HRSAG, 2018) rather than behaviour which could simply be interpreted as ‘foolish’ (Fitzpatrick and Davies, forthcoming).

Thus, the strength of the Scottish system was in instigating a near ‘universal’ right to settled housing for all homeless people (Byrne and Culhane, 2011). However, homelessness legislation in Scotland post-devolution has been criticised for not placing a greater

prominence on preventative measures (Pawson et al, 2007), despite being internationally recognised as progressive (Tars and Egleson, 2009) and considered to be the closest to a ‘right to housing’ in Europe (Anderson and Serpa, 2013). Elsewhere in the UK, homelessness prevention has featured more strongly, for example in Wales where there has been a statutory duty on local authorities to prevent homelessness since April 2015 (Housing (Wales) Act 2014, Part 2) (Mackie, 2015) and similar duties introduced in England from April 2018 (Homelessness Reduction Act 2017).

In order to focus greater attention towards prevention efforts, in 2010 the Scottish Government promoted ‘Housing Options’, broadly mirroring the approach taken in England some ten years earlier. This model of homelessness prevention involved local authorities offering households a ‘holistic’ advice and information service, in an attempt to avoid the need for households in crisis to make a statutory homelessness application (Pawson et al, 2007). Although there is evidence that a Housing Options approach has fostered ‘gatekeeping’ practices which (unlawfully) erect barriers which obstruct otherwise entitled and eligible households from accessing statutory homelessness services (Alden, 2015; SHR, 2014), the associated reduction of statutory homelessness across Britain alongside an introduction of Housing Options is argued by some as evidence of a mix of genuine prevention and gatekeeping. In England where more assertive, proactive prevention techniques are routinely used, gatekeeping practices are less evidenced (Pawson et al, 2007). In Scotland, the approach has been described as being a ‘light touch’ version compared to elsewhere in the UK, since ‘Housing Options interviews’ frequently culminate in a statutory homelessness application (Fitzpatrick et al, 2015).

As an example of the approach in Scotland, one respondent who worked for more than 25 years in homelessness (in varying capacities) described how the Housing Options approach may not have made large reductions in statutory homelessness in absolute terms, but instead served to divert households in crisis (including migrants or other ineligible groups) to other more appropriate (or accessible) forms of advice and assistance outwith the homelessness system:

For some people a homelessness application is not appropriate for them and there are other ways they can get assistance in getting a better outcome. That is what the focus is on. It’s not taking away from them a statutory safety

net, but almost enhancing it into these other areas... That [prevention] work resulted in quite a lot of reduction in homelessness- well not in homelessness *per se*, but with getting people help through Housing Options, so they are not getting fed into the homelessness side (Civil servant, Scotland).

Increases in levels of homelessness and rough sleeping reflected elsewhere in the UK post-2010, particularly in the south of England, were not experienced to the same degree in Scotland (Fitzpatrick et al, 2015). Nevertheless, rising numbers of households in temporary accommodation and an increasing proportion of social lettings to homeless households (Perry and Stephens, 2018) indicated a need to concentrate efforts to prevent homelessness, rather than reactively respond to crises. As one local authority housing services manager explained: ‘we have absolutely the right safety net against homelessness in Scotland. It is a bit further upstream stuff we are focussing on, in order to prevent it from happening in the first place’ (Housing services manager, Local government, Scotland). To help address the tensions between supply and demand, a ‘Housing Support Duty’ was introduced under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 to promote prevention efforts and reduce repeat episodes of rough sleeping by placing a new duty on local authorities (from June 2013 onward) to assess and meet the housing support needs of statutorily homeless households.

At the start of 2018 the Scottish Government agreed in principle with the recommendations from HRSAG to move towards a rapid re-housing approach which would provide a greater number of homeless households with permanent housing, including ‘wrap-around’ support whilst eliminating (or severely reducing) time spent in temporary accommodation (HRSAG, 2018). To this end, the Scottish Government developed a framework for Rapid Re-housing Transition Plans, set to be adopted by all 32 local authorities in Scotland by 2023. Drawing on the Welsh example, the ‘Duty to Prevent’ also featured in recommendations to HRSAG to complement a rapid re-housing approach in Scotland, though not yet introduced (HRSAG, 2018).

There is evidence that under UK homelessness legislation, migrants have been disproportionately impacted by the intentionality and local connection restrictions, as the process of migrating has often been interpreted as intentionally abandoning a home (in another country), and for households having just migrated, may not be able to demonstrate

a local connection with a specific local authority (Crisis, 2018), which has been corroborated by respondents in this study (see Chapter 5). In theory, the amendments in the 2003 Act in Scotland would go some way (once in force) to address the disproportionate impact these intentionality and local connection tests have for (eligible) migrant households, particularly those who are more recently arrived. In addition, the final 2018 HRSAG report includes specific recommendations to the Scottish Government to address migrant homelessness, such as the development of an outreach model to provide legal and employment assistance available to any homeless person irrespective of immigration status, and establish short-term emergency accommodation specifically for those without recourse to public funds or other rough sleepers not entitled to homelessness assistance (HRSAG, 2018).

Extending homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing responses to ‘ineligible’ homeless households, such as those whose legal status restricted access to social assistance, has been identified as a specific solution within in housing policy to address migrant homelessness in Crisis’ (2018) UK-wide ten-year plan to end homelessness. Recently, the City of Edinburgh Council announced success from its 2018 rapid re-housing pilot programme, Rapid Access Accommodation, to address chronic homelessness and rough sleeping by offering what is described as a ‘high tolerance’ service model (City of Edinburgh Council, 2018). Uniquely, this local authority pilot provided temporary accommodation to six ‘ineligible’ households who had no recourse to public funds or did not have a Right to Reside, demonstrating the potential of local initiatives (backed by national funding) to respond to migrant homelessness.

Despite these measures, in Scotland, as elsewhere in the UK, migrants who do not have recourse to public funds or a Right to Reside are ineligible for statutory assistance (Fitzpatrick and Davies, forthcoming). Rights to housing are restricted by entitlement which excludes many migrant groups. However, housing and homelessness systems do not operate in isolation and help offered outwith statutory duties could more likely benefit migrant groups. As the later discussion demonstrates, even where there is political will to address a social problem, such as migrant homelessness, there are a number of factors which frustrate these efforts, including competing systems, contradictory policy agendas, and constrained economic environments. Before addressing these issues, the next section

considers how similar constraints operate on homeless households in the American context and more specifically in Massachusetts specifically.

4.2.2 The homelessness system in Massachusetts

Broadly speaking, when compared to European countries which have a longer history of social provision of housing and other welfare services, the American social policy context is characterised by a highly residualised public housing and welfare system, with concomitant ‘mass levels of unsheltered homelessness’ (Toro, 2007). In the American context, homelessness (in all its forms) is more prevalent than in the UK, and impacts upon a much wider cross section of society (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018; Benjaminsen and Andrade, 2015).

In contrast to the UK, there are no legally enforceable rights to housing under federal legislation. Instead, the responsibility for responding to homelessness lies primarily with individual states, which may or may not, elect to receive federal funding for that purpose. The majority of federal funding for homelessness relief is apportioned through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, which is a conditional funding programme. Whilst states participating in McKinney-Vento programmes are bound by the terms of the Act, states can opt out of the programmes (Schwartz, 2014). In such states the response to homelessness is mostly left to non-profit shelters and charitable soup kitchens, as had been the case elsewhere in the US in the years prior to 1987 (Rosenthal and Foscarinis, 2006).

In the US, a much more literal definition of homelessness is employed under McKinney-Vento than the statutory definition used in the UK (Fitzpatrick and Christian, 2006). Instead, the purpose of legally defining homelessness is to distribute federal resources to programmes administered at state level. Under the McKinney-Vento Act, a person is considered homeless if sleeping in places not fit for human habitation or in emergency shelter, or will be homeless imminently, without the resources or support network to secure permanent housing. To access support under McKinney-Vento, the homeless household must be income eligible for specific programmes, for example, falling below a maximum

earnings threshold - such as 60% of area median income (to qualify as 'low income') or below 40% to qualify as 'very low income' (United States Government, 2014).

Historically, the McKinney-Vento and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Continuum of Care programmes (which locally coordinate services for homeless persons) have largely been directed towards providing emergency assistance rather than using preventative measures. Culhane et al (2011, 295) contends that a tendency towards a residential 'linear continuum model' which requires participation in services so as to become 'housing ready' (making assistance conditional on such participation), has had the effect of creating a parallel social welfare system which provides services only to households after becoming homeless. Thus, one set of social services is available to homeless households in emergency accommodation, whilst mainstream welfare programmes are generally administered through the Federal Department of Social Services (DSS).

Nevertheless, in the years following the 2008 Financial Crisis, there has been an orientation towards prevention with the expansion of 'permanent supportive housing', which refers to an array of programmes and services which provide subsidised housing matched with supportive services. For example, the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Programme (HPRP), which formed part of Obama's 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), was enacted in response to the 2008 foreclosure crisis, and required HUD to set aside at least 30% of McKinney-Vento funding for permanent supportive housing (Berg, 2013). HPRP is credited with reducing chronic homelessness by increasing the overall supply of permanent supportive housing. Furthermore, the 2009 Homelessness Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act required an additional 10% funding on top of the 30% offered under HPRP to be set aside for permanent housing for homeless families (Culhane et al, 2011).

The prevention and rapid rehousing agenda, however, has been undermined by the Trump Administration's 'skinny budget', which in (financial year) 2017 cut HUD's budget by 13.2% and eliminated federal funding for the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), the federal body which coordinates homelessness programmes (Gee, 2017). Despite the withdrawal of federal funding, the Council's ten-year plan to end

homelessness, *Opening Doors* (2015), remains in effect at the time of writing (2018). The USICH rapid re-housing agenda mirrors similar efforts in the UK, in that both *Opening Doors* and the 2018 homelessness charity Crisis' UK-wide ten-year plan to end homelessness marks a shift towards a 'housing-led approach' to homelessness (Crisis, 2018).

Unlike homelessness policy in the UK, the McKinney-Vento Act does not create *entitlement*, but potentially widens *eligibility* for a range of household and housing circumstances in a number of ways. In contrast to the 'selective' welfare system in the UK (Fitzpatrick and Davies, forthcoming) where there are deeper entitlements, albeit with restrictions on eligibility, in the American system there are no additional stipulations (at the federal level) beyond means-testing and satisfying definitional criteria. One respondent who was a policy officer for a national homelessness charity, explained how specific eligibility criteria are determined by individual jurisdictions:

There isn't really an entitlement for anything under federal legislation. [However] McKinney-Vento is the biggest funding stream for homeless services and housing, it's a little over \$2 billion a year, and there are specific populations that it covers. It's not straightforward who is eligible for which programs because individual states which administer them will have their own eligibility criteria (Policy officer, National homelessness charity, Massachusetts).

The ability of states to determine eligibility for housing and homelessness assistance adds considerable flexibility to the system. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is notable for its policy ambition to address homelessness compared to other states. Massachusetts is classified as a 'Right to Shelter' state and has taken a similar approach to the City of New York where there is a judicially enforceable obligation within the state constitution to provide emergency accommodation to homeless households (Haywood, 2002). As one local homelessness service manager explained, 'Massachusetts is really only one of three or four jurisdictions which has a right to housing. Massachusetts has a number of progressive policies, and the fact that the state has protected a right to housing is fairly unique' (local homelessness services, manager, Massachusetts). However, unlike other

right to shelter jurisdictions, in Massachusetts this right is limited to households with dependent children (Haywood, 2002). Unlike the statutory system in Scotland, migrant groups are not excluded from the homelessness system in Massachusetts which specifically does not consider legal status in determining eligibility to access state emergency shelter.

To reinforce a right to shelter, Governor Duval Patrick's administration in 2008 launched a five-year plan to address homelessness in the Commonwealth. However, the economic fallout brought on by the financial crisis that year frustrated the ambition to expand permanent supportive housing across the state, whilst the homelessness system experienced increased pressure from shrinking revenues and growing need for services. Particular pressure was placed on emergency shelter systems immediately following the foreclosure crisis as unprecedented numbers of homeless families contacted state welfare offices for emergency accommodation (Routhier, 2014). When the emergency shelter system was overwhelmed, there was an increasing use of motels to provide temporary accommodation until more suitable shelter became available. In other cases, a right to shelter was realised by the Commonwealth through purchasing one-way tickets to other states (and in exceptional cases, other countries) where the family could more reliably secure accommodation (Boston Globe, 2016). The resulting tensions between political ambitions and economic constraints are explored in more detail in the responses of service providers and policy makers in Chapter 5.

There are clearly different approaches being taken to address homelessness in the US and the UK, namely the unique position of the British system which moves towards a model based on rights to housing, *vis a vis* a statutory homelessness system (Culhane et al, 2011), compared to an American approach which (historically) has revolved around emergency accommodation. Despite important failings in the ability to address homelessness in an American context, *access* to assistance is in fact less restricted than the *availability* of resources. As described above, Britain is able to ensure entitlement to assistance (because of accompanying strict eligibility criteria) which serves to restrict access; in contrast there are no additional limitations (beyond means-testing) placed on American households, but equally there is no entitlement to homelessness assistance.

4.3 Interactions with immigration policy

Given the issues highlighted above, housing policies in both the US and UK are complicated by national policy agendas which can frustrate or, in some cases, prevent the enactment of local decisions. This is particularly the case when devolved or state responsibility for local housing policy comes into conflict with high-level concerns such as national security, border control or other forms of social protection. The following section provides an analysis of the tensions between immigration and housing systems in Scotland and Massachusetts. As the analysis demonstrates, these intersections between national security and social protection (decided at the national level) have important implications for the implementation of local homelessness policies which attempt to support migrant groups.

4.3.1 Immigration and Border control in the UK

Control of the UK border is determined both by European Union (EU) statute and British law, which involve separate systems - with EU laws operating as an additional (superseding) layer of immigration law enshrined in statute following accession to the European Union (Treaty of Accession of Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom) (1972). UK immigration rules are based on a tiered system which restricts the immigration of Third Country Nationals (TCNs) largely to workers who satisfy a specific skills shortage in the labour market (Tier 5), and/or demonstrate they are a skilled worker (Tier 2) and satisfy a minimum earnings threshold. EU nationals emigrating to the UK on either a short or long-term basis, enter the country under an agreement the UK has signed to be part of the EU which guarantees their freedom of movement. EU nationals have the right to live and work in the UK conditional on the exercise of Treaty Rights. Transitional arrangements which restrict the ability of EU nationals to work (but not the freedom of movement) can be in place up to a period of seven years for nationals of countries who have recently joined the EU, such as the case when Poland (A8) joined the EU in 2004 and later Romania and Bulgaria (A10) in 2007. All such arrangements are now timed out, although having abided to restrictions in force at the time has shown to have implications on future immigration applications, such as being used as evidence of having good character required for legal

permanent residency [Secretary of State for Work and Pensions v Gubeladze [2017] EWCA Civ 175].

Although UK immigration policy is set to change when Britain leaves the EU (expected in 2019), the position at the time of writing (mid 2018) is that European Economic Area (EEA) nationals secure a Right to Reside in the UK by being a worker contributing to the system, a jobseeker with a ‘genuine prospect of work’ or economically self-sufficient and therefore not a burden on the benefits system. Crucially, within the immigration system being homeless is seemingly the one category into which an EEA National can fall where they are not seen to be exercising their Treaty Rights (as an employee, a jobseeker, a retired person or being economically self-sufficient). The consequence is that on this basis migrants can be subject to administrative removal (deportation). In 2017, the UK High Court ruled that the systematic expulsion of homeless EEA nationals was unlawful and contrary to the EU freedom of movement. However, administrative removal is still lawful under this ruling on a case-by-case basis (Taylor, 2017).

In addition to the implications of homelessness on the Right to Reside in the UK, the impact of housing law on homeless migrants is dependent on the applicant’s legal status. Entitlement to statutory assistance is determined by a household’s eligibility, which excludes TCNs with no recourse to public funds as well as European nationals (including some British ex-patriots) who cannot demonstrate a Right to Reside in the UK. Migrants falling in this category are thus perhaps the most vulnerable to destitution - as their legal status creates a barrier to accessing work, benefits and services (Pleace, 2010; Fitzpatrick et al, 2018). A Crisis (2018) report recognises the constraints migrants face in accessing housing lie outwith the statutory homeless system. The report identified several provisions within immigration legislation which directly impact on migrant homelessness in the UK, such as Section 95 of the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act which removed asylum seekers from the mainstream benefits system, and the 2014 Immigration Act - which institutes civil and criminal penalties for landlords or letting agents found to be providing accommodation to irregular migrants under the Right to Rent provision (though not applicable in Scotland) (Bowling and Westenra, 2018).

For ineligible households with children, the local authority can be compelled to provide accommodation – albeit under child protection laws that are separate from the statutory

homeless system, or in rare circumstances, can place the children in state custody or repatriate the family (despite the fact that it has been argued that these measures contravene the Right to Family, guaranteed under the 1953 European Convention on Human Rights) (NHAS, 2016).

In the UK (as elsewhere across Europe), there is evidence of increasing levels of anti-immigrant sentiment, particularly following the 2009 Global Financial Crisis and the 2016 referendum on leaving the EU (Ford, 2018). According to Bowling and Westenra (2018), the promotion of a so-called ‘hostile environment’ approach towards (illegal) immigration increases the criminalisation of immigrants through embedding the approach within institutional practices and therefore forming a bespoke ‘crimmigration control system’ operating separately from the domestic criminal justice system within the UK. Within this context, immigration policy has become increasingly restrictive; as one respondent in Scotland commented ‘there is a drive to keep everybody out’ (Officer, Local non-profit services, Scotland).

Notwithstanding this environment, the political ambition to create a ‘hostile environment’ towards immigrants was not universally shared, and the Scottish government opted instead to send a message to migrants who found their home in Scotland that they were ‘welcome’, as articulated by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon following the 2016 leave vote in the EU Referendum (McVeigh, 2016). In general, Scotland was seen as having a distinctly more positive view towards migrant groups than other parts of the UK. Two civil servants participating in the study specifically commented on a different atmosphere in Scotland with regards to migrants, compared to elsewhere in the UK:

The Scottish government sees migration/immigration as a positive thing. The Scottish government sees a value in diversifying communities. I think Scotland has become a lot more diverse over the last ten or fifteen years than it was, but the Scottish government definitely sees a value in that. Although we talk about sort of the economic benefits, you know, the cultural benefits as well. It’s not just about the economy (Civil servant, Scotland).

At the moment it is not clear how that [promoting immigration to Scotland] will play out and what that means, not just this Government, but previous administrations have embraced [migration]. I think because part of the issue is Scotland has a falling population and migrants play an important role and are a benefit for coming in and assisting the economy. Which is slightly a different angle you will get in England. It is a very different cultural approach, but again if you take it down to a smaller subset in the area, then I am sure you will get like pockets of racism, or whatever, but as a sort of wider approach we tend to be welcoming (Civil servant, Manager, Scotland).

Although there remain differences towards immigration in separate parts of the UK, legal status (either in terms of having, or not having, recourse to public funds or a Right to Reside) has significant implications for both access to homelessness assistance and eligibility for welfare benefits. These interactions between different systems are discussed in more detail below, but first, an overview of American immigration policy is provided in order to demonstrate parallels and differences with UK border control and immigrant entitlements.

4.3.2 National security and American immigration policy

Immigration law in the US is in some ways more straightforward than the UK. Essentially, legal status can be separated into the following broad categories: citizen, legal permanent resident and those with time-limited permission to work in the US or temporary protected status for involuntary migrants (Felter and Renwick, 2018). Unlike the UK, legal status does not impart eligibility to social assistance; rather the importance of legal status lies mainly in determining access to the labour market. However, legal status does have some important consequences in relation to eligibility for certain federal and state programmes, such as housing and welfare assistance, although these vary widely from state to state. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA, or welfare reform) restricted federal benefits for many legal immigrants, but states retain the power to fill the gap with state-funded benefits programmes, some of which do not consider legal status at all (Loprest et al, 2000).

Whilst legal status in the US can determine access to services (dependent on context) restrictions on eligibility are unlike those applying in the UK. In the US context, migrant groups are additionally disadvantaged by wider assumptions. Since 1996 immigration control has featured prominently in debates around national security, including the protection of limited public resources, but more importantly with regard to safeguarding the safety and security of American citizens. In the same year that PRWORA was passed to restrict access of foreign-born persons to welfare benefits, the Clinton Administration passed two immigration laws that have had a long-lasting effect on the lives of immigrants and their families. The 1996 immigration laws (the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act) constitute the main statutory vehicle used to ensure fast-track deportations and detention without just cause (Margulies, 2018). As one respondent (an immigration law specialist for a non-profit charity in Massachusetts) commented, the combined effect of the 1996 laws served to fuel anti-immigrant sentiment:

In 1996, it was more of a trilogy of laws that really were damaging especially for foreign born populations, [including] the first ever anti-terrorist law passed in April of that year. That law, among other things, said that if you were a foreign national residing in the country without immigration status, you were potentially a terrorist (Immigration law specialist, Non-profit, Massachusetts).

These processes have longer-term roots and in both US and UK contexts, immigration policies since at least the early 1970s have shifted from managing immigration, to controlling and restricting entry. The field of criminology provides interesting insight into how, increasingly restrictive (and punitive) immigration regimes, have gradually eroded the person-hood of migrants through what Bauman (1995, 137) terms ‘adiaphorization’ – referring to stripping ‘human relationships of their moral significance, exempting them from moral evaluation, rendering them morally irrelevant’. In the US (as in the UK) public hostility to migrant groups has become increasingly prevalent, owing to a range of factors, such as the belief that immigrants take away jobs as the labour market competition model suggests, resentment over having to pay for social services used by immigrants or their families, or deep-seated cultural factors that are difficult to change with policy tools

(Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2010). Economic fears have been identified by Simon (1989) to underlie anti-immigrant sentiment in the UK, and similarly by Borjas (1999) in the US.

Greater public anxiety over immigration, and wider social values which collectively can include provincialism, isolationism or protectionism, reinforce and perpetuate the structural and legal constraints faced by migrants and impose practical barriers in access to support. A manager of local government homelessness services in Massachusetts expressed the political difficulty in justifying assistance to migrant groups as follows:

Immigration has become so contentious, it is so marked by mean spiritedness... If you look at the immigration debate, how polarised the debate is, then if you are a restrictionist or you are someone who signs on to the narrative that we have so overextended ourselves when it comes to welcoming those who aren't citizens, and that we are doing that to our own detriment, or we engage in reckless action when we do that because of the national security implications... If you are in that group, then you are not really keen on casting this [migrant homelessness] as a human rights issue, or an issue that involves international duties and obligations (Homelessness services manager, Local government, Massachusetts).

Another participant was particularly well placed to comment on the social atmosphere in which public policy is created (as a Civil Liberties attorney for the Federal Government). Reflecting on the proliferation of measures to protect national security following the terror attacks in 2001, she explained how a new surge in protectionism reinforced a hardening of attitudes towards immigrants, particularly those in need of social protection:

Post 9/11 we've become a more xenophobic kind of country, we've become more unwilling to accept the Other. If someone were to look at the population we are talking about [homeless migrants] and say, 'wow these folks are homeless', then you would expect more compassion, and a certain level of openness and generosity (Attorney, Federal Government, Massachusetts).

As the above discussion demonstrates, the restriction of rights to foreign born households in the US, both in terms of the right to remain as well as rights to social protection, followed a succession of national security legislation in the late 1990s, and following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In contrast, the move to more tightly control immigration in the UK was largely been in reaction to the 2009 Global Financial Crisis and part and parcel of the proceeding years of government austerity (Crawford et al, 2016). In both contexts, the justification for restricting immigration in the interest of national security and continued social protection for citizens has followed a meta-narrative which is distinctly anti-immigrant. As if this context was not difficult enough for migrant groups, the following discussion illustrates the additional pressures resulting from a restrictive homelessness system, an overarching anti-immigration agenda and government welfare reforms.

4.4 The ‘system of systems’ and the additional pressures of welfare reform

As discussed above, tightening immigration controls in the two countries were either couched in terms of national security or economic policy, and since the 1990s increasing efforts to restrict the rights of non-citizens have impacted multiple policy arenas. The anti-immigration rhetoric that has permeated decades of national policy debates has fostered a growing culture of ethnocentrism (Dunaway et al, 2010; Burns and Gimpel, 2000) that has been capitalised on for political purposes, to legitimise the continued dismantling of public housing in the US (Espenshade et al, 1997) and deeper cuts to social welfare programmes (Borjas, 2001). A similar process has been observed in the UK, where immigrant-targeted welfare retrenchment has been part of the post-2010 austerity agenda (Careja et al, 2015) which followed the GFC. In developing this argument, the following sections examines the ways in which welfare systems in both contexts interact with immigration and housing policies to further compound the constraints faced by homeless migrants.

4.4.1 UK welfare policy in tension

As borders have hardened in the UK (and across Europe), increasing restrictions have been placed on EEA nationals in claiming welfare benefits. Whilst the UK is still a member of the European Union, EEA Nationals have a freedom of movement which enables migrants

to settle in other member states, to take up employment and to access (limited) parts of the welfare system. However, to be eligible for unemployment benefit (Jobseekers Allowance) and rental subsidies (Housing Benefit or Local Housing Allowance), claimants must demonstrate a Right to Reside, as well as being habitually resident in the UK (McKee et al, 2017). Crucially, some migrants find themselves in a ‘Catch-22’ position, as described by one participant, whereby they are entitled to statutory assistance under Scottish homelessness legislation, but unable to pay for (temporary or permanent) accommodation due to being determined ineligible for welfare benefits (as social security regulations are determined by the Westminster government). Local government officers described the difficult position there were placed in, as they were given greater responsibility (from the Scottish Government) to respond to homelessness, but at the same time faced with increasing constraints in their ability to act, without significant financial or legal risk:

What’s becoming a problem for local authorities is where before we were able to house those who had access to Housing Benefit, now we have to take a different approach in making sure that, first the applicant has worked three months in a job [to determine eligibility for benefits]. If you don’t have anything for those three months, you are not eligible for benefits, then you very well may be housed, but have no means to be able to pay and support yourself in that accommodation (Housing manager, Local authority, Scotland).

If you have no access to benefits from the start but you do get access to accommodation, because you’ve been employed, and then you lose your employment...you’re not able to claim benefits... Then what do you do with that household? Who picks up the rent? Do you move through to actually evict? (Housing manager, Local authority, Scotland).

[Addressing migrant homelessness] all hinges on employment. It doesn’t fall against the benefits system, because [working] is the biggest issue. For a long time when the European expansion happened, we [local authority] were happy with all the migrant workers and we were able to house them. Lots of good stories were happening then. [But] it’s when you fall outwith

the benefits system. When [homeless applicants] require [Housing Benefit] and then they are out of that system, that is when you ask, ‘are we able to house folk’? (Housing manager, Local authority, Scotland).

From the perspective of the Scottish Government, the ability to address homelessness amongst ineligible households (those without recourse to public funds or those without a Right to Reside) was strictly circumscribed as both immigration and welfare policies were reserved matters for the UK Government. One respondent involved in coordinating Housing Options approaches across Scotland explained that although migrant homelessness was not a priority issue everywhere, certain local authorities who had expressed concerns and sought guidance from the Scottish Government as how to respond to homeless households who were ineligible for benefit assistance:

Generally, what we’re finding on the frontline is that migrant homelessness itself isn’t such a huge issue, it’s when it hits into the no recourse to public funds group, or other ineligible groups, that it becomes an issue. So, obviously the UK government will make changes around access to benefits and eligibility status and the Scottish Government doesn’t have powers to address that... For the no recourse or ineligible ones, the Scottish Government position is that they can’t really do much about that because of being constrained by a reserved matter. So, even though our Ministers have particular concerns around that, they’re limited in what they can do (Civil servant, Scotland).

It was therefore clear the Scottish Government had few levers available to intervene in matters which straddled the division between reserved and devolved powers, such as migrant homelessness. This is not to say that policy solutions cannot be determined elsewhere, for example through responses by non-profit agencies or by local government, as seen in the City of Edinburgh Council rapid re-housing pilot (which received national funding via HARSAG) discussed above. The next section considers how such issues were addressed in the US context.

4.4.2 Migrant access to subsidised housing in Massachusetts

Whilst in Scotland homeless migrant groups might find themselves entitled to statutory housing assistance but ineligible for benefits which would enable them to pay for accommodation, the situation is very different in Massachusetts. Here legal status is not to be considered in accessing subsidised housing (whether permanent or emergency) by law. In contrast to a national policy trajectory which has sought to restrict the rights of immigrants, the Massachusetts government ensured access to state funded subsidised housing programmes for all (income-eligible) households, regardless of immigration status. Originally upheld in the State Supreme Court in 1977 (*Weeks v. Waltham Housing Authority*), the decision to prohibit housing authorities from considering legal status in application decisions (with the exception of federally funded programs) has subsequently been confirmed by the Massachusetts legislature, but not without controversy (Onyango, 2012).

As is the case in Scotland, individual states also have the power to use locally sourced revenue (from taxation or lottery receipts, for example) to fund state-run programmes (Olsen, 2003), which the Commonwealth has exploited to address all forms of (family) homelessness. According to a respondent who managed a local level state subsidised homelessness programme, individual states have wide latitude to be able to formulate local policy responses, in the absence of federal funding, although these powers are often not recognised or utilised by local housing authorities:

There are some [federal] statutes that basically make it very difficult for certain immigration classes to be able to access any benefits. For example, Section 214 of the Housing and Community Development Act restricts eligibility for certain [federal] housing programs, to certain citizens and certain non-citizens... State and local governments can spend their money however they want, as long as it's constitutional and doesn't violate federal laws... A lot of public housing authorities don't realise that, or don't implement [Section 214] (Homelessness service manager, Local government, Massachusetts).

Importantly, private not-profit (and for-profit) housing and service providers were similarly unconstrained by eligibility criteria unless in receipt of federal funding, or state funding

which imposed eligibility restrictions. This is a critical distinction given the scale and scope of non-profit involvement in welfare and housing service delivery which emerged in the vacuum left by a decades-long withdrawal of government intervention, particularly since the early 1990s (Salamon 1993; Marwell, 2004; Lipsky and Smith, 1989). In the American context, non-profits have a considerable role in addressing poverty and homelessness, particularly for those who are excluded from public sources of support. One respondent who headed a national level migrant rights organisation, noted specifically the important role that the voluntary sector has in serving migrant groups: ‘non-profits have had to kind of take care of, or at least respond to, the gaps that are in federal funding, and provide different kinds of services, housing and support for certain immigration classes’ (Director, Migrant rights organisation, Massachusetts). Interestingly, even non-profits who were in receipt of federal funding had the ability to circumvent eligibility criteria relating to legal status, if acting as an intermediary to administer funding to another organisation responsible for actual service delivery:

It's a little bit of a grey area, but typically non-profits don't have to ask about citizenship status, so if they don't ask and they don't verify their clients' citizenship status, then they can serve them in some way. But that is only when it is a non-profit administering the fund. It is kind of odd, it depends on who is distributing the money. For non-profits to be exempt [from adhering to eligibility criteria], it needs to get federal money and give it out. If it is a unit of local government, then it needs to impose certain verification requirements. It's a funny little loophole (Policy officer, National homelessness charity, Massachusetts).

Additionally, the ‘mixed family rule’ in federal statute also provides another route for homeless migrants to access federally subsidised housing, which requires at least one member of the household to have legal status (either as a natural born citizen, legal permanent resident, or holding temporary protected status) (HUD, 2009). In such cases, the rent is ‘pro-rated’, or adjusted, to reflect a proportion of subsidy attached only to qualifying members. The downside to the mixed family rule, however, is that subsidised housing will be less affordable to households who have at least one member of the household without legal status compared to other recipients without ‘mixed family’ status. Some housing

authorities disallowed such mixed families on the basis of unaffordability, rather than eligibility criteria, per se. Although, as one respondent explains, mixed families negotiate the pro-rata rule by electing to shift who was considered to be head of household based on the outcome that produced a more favourable affordability determination:

Some states sometimes will be more restrictive with federal government regulations, others can be less restrictive. There is something called the 'mixed family rule', for any public housing that is funded by the federal government, that if one member of the household is a US citizen, or an eligible immigrant (that could be a child, head of household), the family can actually live in public housing or get Section 8 vouchers, which is basically a permanent subsidy. The rent subsidy is then pro-rated based on the number of eligible persons in that household. Some members who do not have eligible immigration status, can be the head of household, for the purposes of things like determination of rent, rather than someone who is a verified citizen or of legal status, and that's okay (Policy officer, National homelessness charity, Massachusetts).

As the above discussion demonstrates, there a number of ways in which migrant groups are able to access housing and homeless services in Massachusetts, namely state funded programmes and, in cases of 'mixed families', even federally subsidised housing. However, the *possibility* of accessing assistance is different from the *probability* of receiving help. Unlike the UK, the American welfare system offers few entitlements and the same is true in individual states. In Massachusetts, homeless households are limited to a right to shelter, and this only in the case of families with dependent children. In the strictest sense, the same is true in Scotland where child homelessness is not tolerated, regardless of legal status and in such cases child protection laws will be triggered where the statutory homelessness system cannot respond. Still, in Massachusetts there are a number of routes out of homelessness afforded to migrant groups in principle, where households in comparable situations may not be assisted should they be deemed ineligible (either due to having no recourse to public funds, or not having a Right to Reside) in the UK. The constraints in the Massachusetts case lie more on a limited availability of resources more generally, when compared to a stronger UK welfare safety-net.

4.5 Conclusion

Despite the UK and the US being classified as ‘liberal’ welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990), both countries have historically taken different approaches to addressing homelessness; in the UK, selective legally enforceable rights to housing are advanced by a statutory system conveying a set of entitlements to homeless households, compared to an emergency management system in the US which offers no entitlements with loose eligibility criteria.

Despite these important differences, some similarities can be observed in the two case study areas. Notably, both Scotland and Massachusetts take a comparatively progressive approach to addressing homelessness, relative to their national contexts. For example, rights for homeless households have been expanded in successive Scottish legislation post devolution, such as the abolition of the priority-need test, and in Massachusetts significant responsibilities of the state to address family homelessness have been derived from state court interpretations of Constitutional rights and subsequent acts of legislature to secure the Commonwealth’s position as the only Right to Shelter state in the Union.

Policy objectives, however, are not implemented in a vacuum and in both cases the objectives of housing and homeless policies were frustrated by competing and conflicting (national) policy agendas, as well as wider economic constraints. This is particularly true for homeless migrants who find themselves caught between systems, whether due to their legal status restricting their eligibility for social assistance or their employment status limiting their ability to pay for housing. In summary, migrants in both contexts are constrained, in terms of accessing employment and public assistance. With regards to accessing publicly subsidised housing and homelessness assistance, the situation becomes more complicated due to the multiple (and often, conflicting) layers of governance (in the US context, the relationship between federal and state governments, and in Britain the tension between UK and devolved governments as well as local authorities). The contradictions and inconsistency between housing and other systems in both contexts produce constraints within this ‘system of systems’. In order to further develop an understanding of how these systems operate in a practical sense the next chapter considers how these structural constraints affect the services provided to migrant groups in the two

countries - specifically looking at how service providers, and policy makers, have responded to the challenges presented in an increasingly hostile environment for homeless migrants.

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter (Chapter 4) discussed how the various conflicting policy agendas created by the interaction of housing, immigration and welfare systems in both countries resulted in a highly complex legislative and policy context for the deliverers of homelessness services. This chapter considers how service providers have negotiated these key challenges, analysed through processes of dealing with resentment, uncertainty avoidance, the exercise of discretion and direct interventions to prevent homelessness.

5.2 Dealing with resentment

In the American context, debates around immigration have largely been couched as matters of national security, which in turn has encouraged an atmosphere which greets foreigners with suspicion or fear. As Chapter 4 has demonstrated, a trilogy of legislation in the 1990s has served to criminalise immigrants through instituting a series of criminal penalties for immigration 'crimes', and simultaneously denies immigrants caught in violation their constitutional right to due process, such as in the cases of removing detention and expulsion matters from adjudication. The increasing criminalisation of immigrants has not only served to restrict rights, but has also galvanized wider welfare reform, a process paralleled in the UK post-2010. One participant in the study who was particularly well placed to comment on the changing political landscape in America, pointed to a new, socially acceptable, anti-immigrant ethnocentrism in the US, which undermined an ostensibly inclusive immigration agenda:

You have a lot of restrictions that come from Congress and the generalised climate where people are mad that someone is here illegally, and there is this push to kind of criminalise that. So, why are we even going to give you benefits because if we give them to you, then they take them away from me? (Attorney, Federal Government, Massachusetts).

The quote above alludes to a generalised anxiety about immigrants unduly taking, or stealing, benefits from someone else, presumably a person more entitled or deserving of assistance. Others in the study have noted that this fear has been felt more deeply and widely as welfare rights have been eroded more broadly. In both case study areas, immigrant-targeted welfare retrenchment has been pursued alongside welfare reform which reduced investment and shrunk the overall number of claimants and the generosity of assistance, and introduced greater conditionality (this combination often referred to as ‘workfare’) to limit the duration of claims (Peck, 2001; Lødemel and Trickey, 2001). As one participant who worked in migrant rights explained, the retraction of the welfare state during a time of economic recession, alongside the ever growing criminalisation of immigrants, gave rise to a prevailing agnotology and scapegoating discourse: The more [number of] white families become embattled in this social economic downward spiral, the more likely they are to actually buy the argument that it is the foreign nationals who are coming to eat their lunch (Director, National policy advocacy non-profit, Massachusetts).

In the UK, the government’s policies of austerity have disproportionately affected low income groups and disadvantaged the most vulnerable members of society (Beatty and Fothergill, 2013) and has reinforced anti-immigrant sentiment in a similar scapegoating fashion as in the American experience of welfare reform (Richardson and Codona, 2018). As expressed by a key informant working within local authority housing services, a move to further restrict access to assistance sent a message to those already here that they cannot rely on social protection, and acted as an intentional deterrent for those considering migrating to the UK: ‘People are getting less and less...because the whole aim of the government has brought to make it harder and harder to come here, and certainly harder to be here if you are not working’ (Homelessness services manager, Local government, Scotland).

Public support for reducing immigration in the UK legitimised the effort to restrict rights of immigrants in many policy arenas, with the (perhaps, unintended) consequence of blurring the boundaries of reserved and devolved matters. In the UK, there exists a complex interplay between housing and welfare policy, with the former a devolved matter (decided by the Scottish Government at Holyrood) and the latter reserved (under the legislative authority of the UK government at Westminster). Many respondents reported

that the speed with which changes were rolling out at the national level (largely under the banner of welfare reform) made working with migrant groups increasingly difficult, particularly in Scotland where the tone and tenor around immigration issues stands in stark contrast to the 'hostile environment' promoted elsewhere in the UK (Bowling and Westera, 2018).

According to respondents in Scotland, prejudicial attitudes towards migrants challenge the implementation of policies aimed at promoting equality and integration. Participants in the Scottish case study revealed how anti-immigrant sentiment added pressure to the workloads of hard-pressed service providers dealing with immigrant groups, and presented (increasingly) difficult positions for civil servants to defend policies promoting fair access to resources. One respondent in Scotland explained how, as a civil servant, she found herself increasingly needing to respond to concerns from the public about immigration despite her remit being confined to matters of social housing:

We get lots of letters from people, just tenants or random members of the public, complaining that the housing is being given to migrants. They write to ministers and usually they are writing saying 'I want a house', and they are not getting one, and 'all the housing in my area goes to immigrants', that kind of thing. Sometimes we write back and say that the data shows that that is not the case (Civil servant, Scotland).

Resentment on the basis of race was also discussed in the Scottish case study, such as being directed from other service users towards migrant groups. One service provider explained a dilemma he felt when migrant groups approached the local authority to access to shelter, due to the conflict he had observed between local (Scottish) service users with complex needs and foreign-born ethnic minorities:

We've got temporary accommodation and the suitability of that [for migrant groups] is a matter of concern. How suitable it is to put a person, a refugee for example, in with people who have multiple complex needs? Those kind of people [migrants] kind of experience, if not necessarily racial abuse, a feeling that is very, very uncomfortable with the way they are treated by other people around them... You have some of the hostels which are very good on the one hand, but then some of the other hostels people are very

mixed with quite intimidating characters (Homelessness service provider, Local government, Scotland).

Resentment can also be manifested in micro-aggressions on the part of service providers. One manager for a homelessness charity in Scotland went so far as to characterise resentment on the part of service providers as constituting direct discrimination:

Sometimes front line staff can be pretty lousy to EU nationals. They [front line staff] were shit, actually. If they [EU nationals] missed an appointment they were totally cast out and would have to go through this process again. Let's just call it what it is, it's racism that's what it is, and I think there's a culture of racism in local authorities (Services manager, non-profit, Scotland).

Although some respondents argued that racism was at the heart of the disproportionately poorer service that migrants received in homelessness services, others preferred to emphasise the general goodwill prevalent amongst social service providers; instead explaining substandard service as a consequence of fatigue and pressured caseloads. Work-related stress was a recurring theme amongst front line service providers, which was exacerbated by the complex legal environment in which they work, discussed below.

5.3 Uncertainty avoidance

The responses from participants particularly in the Scottish case study emphasised how legislative and procedural complexity created intense pressures on staff, many of whom explained how ill-prepared or poorly equipped they were to provide the advice required by homeless clients with complicated legal standing. In the UK context, measures introduced in 2014 to further restrict EEA Nationals to access UK benefits created a fast-changing service environment (Fitzpatrick et al, 2018) which made it incredibly challenging for (largely unspecialised) service providers to discern the rights of migrants at any particular point in time. Several service providers, particularly in the Scottish case study (where there are overlapping immigration systems), candidly explained how they struggled to keep abreast of the constantly changing policy environment, and frequently

felt ill-equipped to handle cases involving a highly detailed knowledge of the intricacies of immigration law, as evidenced by the accounts of these two local authority managers:

The non-EEA cases are more straightforward. Because quite often we'll say, right we'll look at your passport, are you entitled to public funds or not? And if you're not entitled then you're not entitled. And if you are then we can assist. I think the EEA national thing is more complicated (Housing services manager, Local government, Scotland).

Even with the guidance that's put out they [front line staff] are still unsure about [applicants'] rights and things like that. So, I think they struggle themselves with that to be able to advise people what they are entitled to. What's not helping is that there are constant changes coming out, one change and then six months later there is a further change. And it is trying to keep on top of it.... And [the changes] are not always well advertised. They [DWP] don't put much notification out. We've been aware of it, but we feel like it's just arrived on our doorstep and then we're scrambling around trying to put information out to staff to try and keep them as updated as we can (Housing services manager, Local government, Scotland).

In the UK, EU migrants in order to be entitled to assistance must satisfy the Habitual Residence Test, in addition to having a Right to Reside, by demonstrating having been in the country for a 'reasonable amount of time' and having a 'settled intention' to be in the UK (DWP, 2013). Specific measures included in the 2014 benefit changes include a requirement to have been resident in the UK for a minimum of three months before claiming Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), which then can only be claimed for a period of three months and without eligibility for Housing Benefit (HB). Those who have worked in the UK but have subsequently become unemployed (involuntarily) are able to access HB and JSA, but for a maximum of six months (Fitzpatrick et al, 2018). These new restrictions have had a disproportionate impact on nationals from Romania and Bulgaria as these measures coincided with the expiry of transitional arrangements for A2 countries, when these applicants would have been eligible for social protection on the same terms as other EEA nationals habitually resident in the UK if it were not for the rule change

(Dagilyte and Greensfields, 2015). Different rules applied to A2 nationals from Romania and Bulgaria, either as part of transitional arrangement in play or due to a disproportionate impact of certain restrictions, made it particularly difficult for service providers to serve this client group, as one participant explains: ‘With Roma [homelessness applicants] there is a lot of confusion, no one really knows what access they have to statutory systems’ (Non-profit services provider, Scotland). Another service provider who participated in the study explained the first time he came across the ‘genuine prospect of work’ test when he had assisted one of his clients from Romania who was Roma to claim for JSA. He described how defeated he felt after working closely with his client only for him to receive a refusal letter from DWP referencing regulations he had not heard of previously:

It is eye wateringly complex, migrant rights [specialists] having people there specifically trained to deal with EU migrants because it’s such a complex, complex case. Because the regulations change month to month, to month to month. You’re up to date, and you think you understand it, and then all of a sudden, this letter comes back with this new regulation and you’re like, what am I supposed to do with this? (Caseworker, Non-profit, Scotland).

Similar frustration was expressed in the Massachusetts case study area, where eligibility criteria varies between different programmes, as well as different local housing authorities which administer the housing programmes. As one non-profit services manager explained: ‘There are just other layers that come out, you know if you have some programs you are eligible for and some you're not, when all of these things converge, it becomes the sort of helter-skelter system of I am eligible for this, but this is working against that. It just becomes incredibly complicated’ (Manager, Non-profit services, Massachusetts).

An important consequence of these problems was a tendency to avoid customers who have high demand needs, such as migrants who might struggle to self-advocate, particularly when caseloads are already under pressure. Some respondents revealed, even with the best will, there still was a tendency to prioritise ‘easy’ cases to ease pressures of heavy caseloads. The tendency to ‘park’ difficult customers (Bruttel, 2005) disproportionately disadvantaged migrants with the most complex and time-consuming cases, as this service provider in Scotland explained:

We [caseworkers] hated getting Europeans. It wasn't that you don't want to help them. I think it was very difficult to help them. And the man hours you could put in to helping that person when at the end of the day they would get 'no recourse to public funds' and therefore would be refused accommodation, when you've got ten other guys that you know that you can help. You start to deviate and, and it's just a human thing, you know, that's how people get parked (Services manager, Non-profit, Scotland).

The consequence of 'parking' difficult cases, such as those involving complicated legal status or high support needs, is a poorer, more inaccessible service. In some situations, a reluctance to provide the necessary level of service acted as a deterrent for migrants in accessing services, who in some cases, dis-engaged entirely from formal support:

Migrants are less likely to make repeat presentations as the pressure on the service increases. Migrants need more time when getting support, so as the pressure on the services increases, migrants don't get that space. They avoid busier times, so they are not being served because they are just not coming back (Policy officer, Homelessness charity, Scotland).

The system just needs to get simpler in order for it to be less frightening and more easily accessible to people who are entitled and eligible, that would go a long way to help [homeless migrants]. I know how hard I find it, and I live here! I have always lived here, the language is my first language, and for these guys [homeless migrants], it's just mind blowing. I can see why they would feel totally disempowered by that. (Caseworker, Non-profit, Scotland).

In the US, much of the casework with homeless migrants seemed to revolve around securing a status which enabled them to work legally. One lawyer working with a non-profit organisation specifically serving destitute migrants explained the legal quagmire involved in a long and protracted process for what would otherwise be considered 'straightforward cases'. He explained how it was mainly the procedural demands involved in securing status which consumed the most resources and therefore limited the agency's

ability to serve those seeking assistance. He explained how those with ‘Special Immigrant Juvenile Status’, otherwise known as unaccompanied minors, involved petitioning three different courts for three different legal motions in order to achieve one outcome - such as obtaining a green card, or legal permanent residency:

We have a lot of cases, with Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. The people that meet the criteria, they tend to be relatively straight forward, but incredibly demanding on the amount of resources just because the procedures are really demanding... But if you work really hard with the client and have them develop their story, we can usually get it done, if the facts are there, but it is very demanding... which is fine except that it means we meet only a very small fraction of the demand for these cases (Attorney, Local non-profit, Massachusetts).

Despite the differing legal contexts, service providers in both case study areas stressed the complex environment which they had to deal with to serve their clients. In the UK, much of the difficulty seemed to lie in the swiftness in which regulations and directives were being passed as immigration control was made increasingly restrictive, at the same time as the welfare state was facing retrenchment. The combined effect of these processes made it difficult to ascertain rights at any given time, which burdened a largely unspecialised workforce within local authorities and non-profit agencies. In the US, the complexity did not necessarily lie in the dynamism of the systems, but rather its opacity around pathways to securing status which would enable a right to work. Highly trained specialists in immigration law were required to work intensely with individual cases, involving people who were often not equipped to self-advocate (due to language barriers, or other evidentiary difficulties) and/or without the funds to lodge costly, protracted legal petitions.

5.4 Managing conditionality

Recent government withdrawal from the so-called ‘national housing settlement’ (Fitzpatrick and Stephens, 2009Pe), of which the statutory homelessness system is part, has become clearer post-2010 as successive Westminster Governments have institutionalised

an increasingly ‘conditional, ungenerous and narrowly-focused social security system’ (Dwyer and Wright, 2014). Increasing conditionality in welfare added to the already complex legislative environment in which service providers operated to enable (or restrict) migrant access to housing and related services. The tendency to impose behavioural conditions attached to eligibility for a particular benefit, and to introduce further requirements relating to legal status (for example, the requirement to attend English language courses as a condition to claim Jobseekers Allowance), formed part of the UK government’s ambition to extend and deepen conditionality within the welfare system (Dwyer, 2013). Conditionality as it applies to legal status, rather than behavioural contracts, is referred to as ‘status conditionality’ where receiving assistance is conditional on one’s legal position (Watts and Fitzpatrick, 2018, 19).

One source of tension related to the intricate rules governing access to housing and the conditions for entitlement for benefits in the UK which enable a tenant to pay for that service, such as Housing Benefit (see Chapter 4). In England and Wales, there is some alignment between homelessness services entitlement and eligibility for benefits. However, since housing (and homelessness) policy is a devolved issue, the Scottish Government has not restricted (eligible and entitled) migrants from accessing homelessness services. This has created the difficult situation wherein a household may be entitled to homelessness assistance, but not be eligible for Housing Benefit which would enable them to pay for their (temporary or permanent) accommodation. One manager within the Scottish Government expressed her exasperation at this tension between reserved and devolved matters:

The UK government changes in the benefits system, is what we are talking about here. And then they also changed the homelessness legislation to remove eligibility, I don’t know what words they are using but that is the outcome of what they have done. What’s happening in Scotland is that we got the UK government doing the restrictions, but we haven’t changed the homelessness legislation. So, people still have rights under the homelessness legislation but will not necessarily have access to benefits (Civil servant, Manager, Scotland).

The respondent above captured how migrant groups can be caught between two systems, and this ‘Catch-22’ situation underscores the divergence between the devolved housing

system in Scotland and the reserved benefits system in Westminster, where the former seeks to actively expand the rights of homeless persons, whilst at the same time the latter restricts access to social support. Many respondents in the Scottish case study openly challenged this system logic, pointing to severely inequitable outcomes for otherwise identical cases, apart from their legal status. In reflecting on one case in which he could not assist a family due to immigration status, one caseworker characterised the rules as being unduly cruel and fundamentally unjust:

We've assumed wrongly that we've got this welfare state - that it's fair. That actually as time goes on it's becoming less and less fair so there's going to be a dropping more towards the American side of things where the charities will have the ability to move up. It's quite like the foodbanks where it is quite piecemeal development (Caseworker, Local non-profit services, Scotland).

Another respondent in the Scottish case study highlighted the inequity observed in the more extreme cases he worked with as a front line service provider. He remarked how the 'genuine prospect of work' test frequently disadvantaged clients he worked with from Romania (mostly Roma) who were deemed ineligible for Jobseekers Allowance due to their (presumed) limited ability to compete in the labour market, typically attributed to lack of English language skills. This caseworker also expressed his dismay at a system which would turn away a family with young children in need, due to the blanket application of ineligibility (in reference to the responsibility of the statutory system, not child protection safeguards):

If you're not seen to have satisfied this genuine prospect of work test, then...your entitlement to benefit is nil. So even if you do have children, who are vulnerable, or who do need that support, then it's not there for them (Caseworker, Local non-profit services, Scotland).

The consequence of not complying with status conditionality as it pertains to immigration status can be severe. In the American context, being found to violate the conditions of a subsidised tenancy, for example, contributes to homelessness. One homelessness services manager explained that violating rules of Section 8 subsidised tenancies by allowing unapproved occupants in the household disproportionately impacts on migrants as it is

common practice for a tenant to allow a friend or family member who does not have documented status to be doubled up with them for a short-period until they are able to source alternative accommodation. Unfortunately, even short-term stays can be breaches of tenancy agreements which are punished by the ultimate sanction of eviction:

They [Section 8 tenants] double up, sometimes with other families who are in subsidies or other situations that put them at risk [for breach of tenancy]. We do the overnight twenty-four hour response for the main hotline and we get many phone calls where they're just at breach with nowhere to go. They're not welcome anywhere. They've been denied through the state's welfare system. We get many phone calls like that (Homelessness services manager, Local government, Massachusetts).

The consequences of being found to be in violation of rules can be even greater for migrants with undocumented status. One attorney for a division within Federal Government conceded that the approach in Massachusetts to revoke subsidised tenancies for households found to be in violation of tenancy agreements can have severe consequences, but put this practice into perspective with other jurisdictions which would arrest and deport persons in such cases:

If they [homeless households] are in the country legally, then they need to be able to document that, and until they can document we cannot help them. Even with children. But Massachusetts is more lenient than other states. For example, in Texas it's just don't walk through the door, they [immigration authorities] will immediately handcuff you and put you in jail if you can't prove [legal status]. The children go to wherever they put the children until they figure out what is happening with the parents. It's a tough situation and I feel bad for them, but we do have a lot of undocumented immigrants all over the country and we can't help them all (Attorney, Federal government, Massachusetts).

The above examples reveal the disproportionate effect welfare conditionality had on homeless migrant groups. The inflexibility of the system presented caseworkers with a

moral conflict where they observed extremely vulnerable clients excluded from a system designed to assist precisely such households - due to that assistance being conditional on a specific legal status. In the process of internalising system logic (McNeill, 2018), these case workers felt they had violated their own personal ethics, by being complicit in what they viewed as an inequitable system.

5.5 Exercising discretion

Whilst the responses above suggested that there was not enough flexibility in the housing and welfare systems, other respondents highlighted how the ability to exercise discretion can create latitude for extending support to some households who might otherwise not be assisted, but this can also introduce opportunity for discrimination. The political will to harden borders and tighten budgets is not universally shared across the US or the UK, and less socially and fiscally conservative government administrations have actively pushed back against inward-looking policies with a more communitarian agenda. As discussed in Chapter 4, Massachusetts and Scotland are notable for a social democratic approach to governance relative to their respective national contexts. These tensions between federal and state, or reserved and devolved policy matters, can be most acutely observed in the contradictions produced when conflicting systems combine. As evidenced in both case study areas, some on the front line respond to ambiguity through administering ad hoc rules that may, or may not, be formalised in regulation or procedure.

In the Scottish case study, for example, one local authority manager explained how, in certain cases the local authority was able to suspend offers given to an applicant on the waiting list for social housing. This suspension was frequently used in cases where the household was eligible for assistance under Scottish homelessness legislation but was not entitled to benefits due to legal status. This respondent explained they could suspend someone indefinitely so that the council could still be seen as fulfilling their statutory duty without providing any housing offer for a period of time: ‘the landlord... can suspend somebody's right for an offer. In effect they can put in a time period, saying you are on the list, but we are going to make you wait’ (Housing manager, Local government, Scotland).

Similarly, a caseworker in Massachusetts explained how affordability rules in local housing authorities were being used to exclude eligible households. Here, public housing

rent is pro-rated (adjusted) based on the legal status of each household member. This caseworker explained that households with a low income and a large pro-rated rent, will not be given an offer of housing:

Some sneaky things that come into play, such as if the family can't demonstrate that they can maintain the house in terms of the cost, that might be a backdoor to render them ineligible...So you have a subsidised unit, we are going to subsidise it, we're going to do this pro-ration, in fact we did the formula and it looks like you will actually be paying 60% of your income towards housing – 'we can't house you here, you are a risk.' (Caseworker, Local non-profit, Massachusetts).

The combination of complex systems, a lack of transparency and severe financial restrictions also provides an opportunity for operational procedure that runs counter to policy intent. For example in Scotland, there are no clear directives on how to assist entitled homeless households without an ability to pay for housing. Local authorities have been left to determine their own protocols, which has led to wide variations in practice. One local authority manager explained how some councils were discharging their duty by housing homeless households and would simply 'take the hit' (write off unrecoverable costs) on the rationale that this is a marginal group in terms of overall numbers and the arrears would be negligible, whereas other councils were (wrongly) taking benefit ineligibility as grounds for refusing homelessness assistance:

Their stance is that until you are entitled to apply for benefits they don't actually have the Right to Reside and therefore do not have the right to access their service. I don't know whether a lot of people are just being quite ad hoc about it...there is no blanket policy so there is the potential that each individual case is treated differently. I don't know if they [the council] have taken the stance that everyone is entitled (Manager, Local government, Scotland).

Another respondent in the Massachusetts case study expressed ambivalence about her role administering an emergency shelter system where in certain cases she is required to exclude desperate households who do not meet the qualifying criteria for state assistance. She spoke openly about understanding the policy rationale behind the

qualifying criteria in principle, but in practice she felt the implementation of the eligibility rules were unfair in specific cases of need, suggesting a need for some discretionary scope in the system:

The system is a tough system, even folks that are trying to help other people sometimes run into road blocks and barriers, and it is not an easy system. I get why it needs to be as complicated as it is, I do understand that- that's my brain side speaking. My heart side says, wait a minute, this is a mother with three children, what do you mean she has to go sleep in the streets tonight? So, in those cases I say to people, show up at the hospital emergency room, and I tell them to say 'my child has a cough, she's been coughing all night, can you help me?' That is what happens a lot, because I don't want the mother and children sleeping outside. If it is cold, those children are going to be cold and they going to get sick. So anyway, that is my heart speaking. My mind understands all the process (Housing services manager, Local government, Massachusetts).

Similarly, in Massachusetts respondents commented on the extent to which individual housing authorities could restrict access to their own housing stock and devise eligibility criteria that cannot be found in any Federal statute or directive, despite receiving Federal funding and therefore bound by those conditions. For Federally funded public housing, a person without legal status can reside in the home as long as someone in the household has legal status (typically the qualifying person is a child who had been born in the US and therefore considered a 'natural born citizen'). However, as this respondent working in social services commented, it was not uncommon to have housing authorities require legal status of all household members:

A strange thing about the state, is that even though public housing authorities are funded by the Federal government, they tend to act differently from community to community. They are not monitored particularly well, they are not always aware what's allowable, so often times you will find a public housing authority that says 'no we can't accept anyone that is not a citizen; we can't accept people who, for example, have criminal backgrounds'. All of these things are local, kind of made up, rules basically.

They are not in the Federal legislation (Manager, Local non-profit, Massachusetts).

There was also considerable discretion in the ways in which the circumstances leading to becoming homeless were interpreted. For example, in Scotland a household can be deemed statutorily homeless; but if they are assessed as being intentionally homeless, then they will not be eligible for assistance. Several respondents in the Scottish case study explained that migrants were being disproportionately assessed as intentionally homeless, since the process of migrating was being seen as voluntarily giving up accommodation. One caseworker explained how he was challenging an intentionality ruling on behalf of his client who had become homeless in Edinburgh but was refused assistance due to obtaining evidence from the Romanian Consulate that he owned property in Romania, despite the property being undeveloped and ownership split between six of his other siblings.

In the Massachusetts case study there were similar examples where the process of migration is taken as abandoning a subsidy, which is punishable by being barred from shelters. Some caseworkers explained that migrants from Puerto Rico in particular were disproportionately impacted by this rule since being an American territory, public housing in Puerto Rico receives some federal funding from the US government. Others explained that households from the Dominican Republic were similarly affected by criteria requiring state residency prior to accessing the emergency state shelter system:

It's incredible the number of families that's shown up at the airports and have nowhere to go. They don't have [Massachusetts] state residency. A lot of families are that situation, particularly from the Dominican Republic. Also the number of families we get here are from Puerto Rico, are being denied basic shelter because of residency (Homelessness services provider, Local government, Massachusetts).

However, one respondent who worked in local government homelessness services explained that the state residency requirement to exercise a Right to Shelter was not as unsurmountable as many would believe:

There is a list of things that people can show to prove that they are a Massachusetts citizen. There are 69 ways you can prove that you are a Massachusetts citizen, and they have to show that they are citizens, really we are very lenient in that, it's as simple as going to the state registry and registering your car and showing up with the registration, or going and registering your child for school and showing up with your child's school registration. It's as simple as that (Housing services manager, Local government, Massachusetts).

The combination of active resentment, legislative complexity, strict conditionality and, at times, capricious exercise of discretion can all act as disincentives from engaging with the system. Below considers how service providers can counteract these barriers to directly prevent homelessness amongst migrants.

5.6 Direct interventions to prevent homelessness

In both case studies, respondents mentioned that migrant groups were particularly 'hard to reach' and many expressed frustrations at not being able to provide services and also how formal sources of support were avoided. One caseworker in Massachusetts put it simply: 'if someone is undocumented - my guess is a lot of undocumented folks do not show up at the DTA [Department of Transitional Assistance] office, because they know already that they are not eligible for services' (Caseworker, Non-profit, Massachusetts). In Scotland, some respondents felt that services were avoided out of a matter of pride and that some ethnic groups saw it as shameful to seek assistance. Other migrants were seen to view official systems of support as naturally to be treated with suspicion. As one respondent explained in reference to his Polish clients: 'this is a population who mistrusts authorities, and probably rightly so. Machismo maybe, I think pride may be something which stops people from presenting [as homeless] for accommodation' (Caseworker, Non-profit, Scotland).

In contrast, one outreach worker in Scotland was struck by the resilience of some of the longer-term rough sleepers he came across on his outreach nights. He spoke about how those who were newly arrived on the street were easier to persuade off the streets than

those who have been experiencing episodic or chronic homelessness, who he found the most difficult to engage:

There seemed to be a kind of acceptance about rough sleeping, that it's all right once somebody rough sleeps once, it's almost like turning a tap on. Once you've rough slept once and you get by it, it then becomes this thing this whole thing of ...It's all right, I was safe, I've got a sleeping bag (Outreach worker, Local non-profit, Scotland).

Some respondents more actively intervened in individual circumstances, to prevent the possibility of 'choosing' to sleep rough. Those in the study most passionate about preventing rough sleeping typically spoke of extreme examples. For example, one caseworker in Massachusetts explained how she was on holiday and upon passing a homeless family, she was compelled to call the police to a forcible intervention; that she had a moral duty to act:

I was walking down Michigan Avenue in Chicago, and I was shocked to see families with children sitting on cardboard! Visually for me, as someone who has worked on homeless issues for a long time, we don't see that [family homelessness] in Massachusetts. We don't have that. So, for all of the condemning that happens around, look at how many families are living in shelters. Sure, there are not good situations in the shelters and motels by any means, but the state should minimally be commended for at least providing a roof over their heads...It is costing us a lot, but the human cost of not doing it is probably far more severe (Attorney, National government, Massachusetts).

Front line providers in the Massachusetts case study stressed the ethical dilemmas they faced. One caseworker described how she would sometimes have to refuse emergency accommodation to a family with children because there were no overflow units in motels available on a particularly cold evening. Instead she explained how she would personally drive families to the emergency room, so they could shelter in hospital until she could see if there was availability in the motels which were used by the welfare office as emergency accommodation.

In perhaps the most striking example of intervention, one outreach worker in Scotland said he did not accept refusals, that he believed there were no conditions or circumstances in which it was acceptable to sleep rough. To him ‘disengagement’ was not an option. When asked if he felt he had the right to override people’s autonomy, he explained that by virtue of sleeping rough, individuals have provided sufficient evidence that their ability to exercise agency had been exhausted. For this respondent, homelessness was not a viable option: ‘I think that there are folk who say they choose to rough sleep, but I don't think that they are, and I would do everything to stop them from doing it’ (Outreach worker, Scotland).

The preceding examples are ways in which service providers themselves can find their own autonomy in the context of constraints exerted from complex, contradictory systems, to circumvent these barriers and respond creatively to difficult cases. Interestingly, in some cases, the ability of service providers to act on their will to intervene can actively override the autonomy of homeless persons in a paternalist fashion, such as in the extreme case of the outreach worker in Scotland who would do anything in his power to prevent rough sleeping. In other cases, however, the expanded agency of service providers via a scope for exercising discretion, as discussed in the preceding section, has provided the opportunity to expand the choice of homeless migrants.

5.7 Conclusion

The context for accessing homelessness services for migrants in both case study areas is fraught with multiple barriers as a result of restrictive homelessness policies, a desire to limit immigration, restricted access to financial support and highly conditional welfare systems. In the US, the main difficulty around having an insecure legal status revolves around the ability to access the labour market, rather than welfare assistance *per se*. The process for securing a green card which would enable a foreign-born worker free access to the labour market is notoriously opaque and requires highly specialised (and expensive) legal assistance. The availability of legal aid to cover the cost of a highly intensive and protracted legal process means few are able to secure this assistance, if unable to cover the costs themselves. In contrast, the primary barrier around legal status in the UK is the extent to which it prevents access to the benefits system (for EU nationals). Generic advisors in

local authority and non-profit offices who are largely unspecialised in terms of migrant rights are left to deal with highly complex cases in an ever-changing legislative environment. This, in combination with overly pressurized caseloads, means a poorer service for those who have high support needs and limited ability to self-advocate, such as migrants. As a result, many homeless migrants are deterred from engaging with formal systems of support.

In both case study areas there was considerable ambivalence about how to respond to disengagement, as well as ineligibility. Just as the outreach worker in Scotland explained how he would do all he could to prevent someone from sleeping on the street, there were also many front line providers in the study who explained going above and beyond their remit for clients who were the most difficult to serve. In contrast, there were accounts of twisting operational procedure to exclude otherwise eligible groups from housing, or worst, creating ad hoc rules capriciously, with no grounding in statute or regulation. Others were less inclined to serve a hard to reach group when faced with pressured caseloads and when ill-equipped to deal with the more complex cases. In either case, migrant groups received a poorer level of service than others, within the mix of a complex legal environment, stringent conditionality and capricious discretion, and creating a greater likelihood of disengagement. Although very different systems exist – one based on statutory systems and formal procedure, the other based on local level decision-making, the discussion illustrates how at the same time there are considerable similarities in the treatment of migrant groups. The next chapters will consider how these processes affect the experiences of participants in the study.

6.1 Introduction

This chapter offers insights into what compels people to make a decision to move to a new country, the aim being not necessarily to analyse the causes of migration per se, but to determine the linkages between migration and homelessness. Considering the ways in which migration limits or expands choice helps to better understand how these experiences inform people's housing strategies (for example in identifying options available), the values people hold and how these values shape priorities.

These narratives reveal the vulnerabilities of migrants in two ways; first they outline the relative disadvantages experienced by those coming from poorer countries, and second they explain the unavoidable financial and social costs associated with migration. Simultaneously, these stories also demonstrate resilience on the part of actors to overcome structural disadvantages and their ability to exercise agency and take control of their lives. The choice to migrate illustrates the process of leaving home, as well as subsequent routes taken in becoming homeless, the role of housing in resettlement and how actors balance competing priorities.

Explanations of migration are frequently characterised by bifurcations; migrants are either voluntary or involuntary, economic or humanitarian, compelled by 'push' and 'pull' factors, are legal or are extra-legal, temporary or permanent (King, 2012). However, these dualities inadequately account for the human reasons for and circumstances surrounding migration, which are varied and complex. As this chapter demonstrates, rarely do migrants leave their country for a single reason, but rather such broad delineations are used to determine immigration status, and therefore one's rights and responsibilities. However, this chapter does accept the explanatory power of 'push' and 'pull' factors as much of the discussion below could be viewed in terms of wanting to be free from something (push) and the desire to be free to do something (pull). Arguably, a push/pull analysis of migration is not sufficient in itself to account for the complex and multiple reasons why people migrate and by creating this dualism necessarily focuses on a singular aspect of migration;

for example ‘push’ explaining the reasons why one leaves a place, and ‘pull’ for the explanation why one comes to a place.

Therefore, a more nuanced categorisation looks at the purpose of migration and this study interprets the main drivers through a three-fold classification, in terms of *survival*, *freedom* and *opportunity*. The first two categories refer to some present condition, a deficit currently faced, or a push factor that motivates migration. The last relates to a future state, for example the possibility of improvement or the pull of potentiality. Furthermore, recasting migration in this light implies levels of need, in the sense that the first two categories (survival and freedom) involve basic needs, whereas the latter (opportunity) tends to involve higher level needs, for example to achieve self-attainment. These three categories help to frame the immediate priorities of migrants as well as their longer-term goals. Better understanding of these priorities, preferences and values which underlie the experience of migration helps to contextualise the housing strategies adopted by migrants in response to homelessness, discussed in greater details in Chapter 9.

6.2 Migration for survival

Migration motivated by *survival* is a response to the day-to-day struggle for subsistence and an inability to reliably meet basic needs for self and family members. Migration in itself is a survival strategy for those confronted by destitution, violence and persecution. In this study those participants migrating for survival were more likely to comprise nationals from Central American and Caribbean countries, than participants from Eastern and Central Europe. This distinction was not particularly surprising given the relative levels of economic development and social instability between the two areas. Further, limited freedom of movement to the US tends to make the distinction between voluntary and involuntary migration more stark, regardless of legal distinction, that desperation generally motivates greater tolerance to risk, including accepting the risks associated with moving cross borders (legally or extra legally) (Isacson et al, 2014). Although the sampling frame of this study specified ‘economic migrants’ the situation of these participants more closely resembled an involuntary or humanitarian immigration class, despite the lack of a formal refugee or asylum status. It should be noted that an important exception to this observation

was in the case of Roma who suffered significant persecution in Romania in recent history (Crowe, 1999).

6.2.1 Fleeing destitution and abject poverty

Food insecurity, intolerable living conditions and inability to access health and medical care threatened the lives of participants fleeing destitution and abject poverty. These respondents explained how remaining in their own country was no longer a choice for them and, at the extreme end, the decision to migrate was a matter of life or death. Material deprivation, for example, was a common theme in interviews with Haitians. Migration from Haiti to the US accelerated in the last quarter of the 20th century due to an oppressive dictatorship and relaxed immigration policies under the Carter Administration, and was later fuelled again by the humanitarian crisis caused by the 2010 earthquake, affecting over three million people (Seraphin, 2018).

For one Haitian participant, migration was a survival strategy to escape food insecurity. Mariana was in her early 20s and resided in an emergency family shelter with her newborn daughter. She explained how she came to be in Boston through desperation to leave her home once she was no longer a minor. She describes how her oldest sister also left at a young age to pursue opportunities in Canada and to support her family in Haiti. Mariana reflects on this as being the first time she became aware of her deprivation as her sister would play a crucial role in her reassurance and sense of security:

It's hard growing up and everyday you don't eat you wonder if you're going to be hungry. [My sister] was 14 when she left for Canada and that's when I really realised that I was hungry one day with no food...she makes things look easy and when we were hungry and the stomach is growling she'd say everything in your body makes music...because the nights we don't eat we spend the whole night...telling jokes or singing or looking at the stars, do anything to distract us until we fell asleep (Mariana, F, Haitian).

Mariana explained how her insecurity led her to migrate to a country she had never been to and to stay with a father she had never met. She expressed great trepidation about her decision to migrate because of 'rumours' she had heard in her village about her father being

disreputable and prone to alcoholism. Still, she was willing to risk living with a potentially dangerous stranger rather than continue to face the threat of starvation. It was within her agency to accept such extreme risks for survival. Soon after migrating Mariana became homeless after experiencing abuse by her father. Despite this hardship, she believed that being homeless in America still afforded her and her family more opportunity than had she remained in Haiti. Mariana could not see a future in a country where physiological survival is not guaranteed. Similar sentiments were expressed by other Haitian participants, as well as Roma, stating they had had ‘no choice’ but to leave.

Roma participants from Romania also made reference to having experienced material deprivation and having migrated due to their concern at not being able to meet basic needs. For many Roma participants the fall of communism in 1989 triggered chronic unemployment with the systematic closure of factories. In the following years, many Roma participants described being able to support their families only by working cash in hand in the informal economy. For Roma it is not uncommon for multiple generations to be living under one roof in a home passed down through the family or self-built after acquiring a government loan. These homes can be in informal settlements and often were not connected to infrastructure. Gheorgh, for example, described how migration was a survival strategy to escape intolerable living conditions. She explained how she lost her home due to its poor physical quality and lack of adequate shelter:

It was always hard, always poor like this. There was this heavy rain and our house just collapsed. It was made of sun-dried mud bricks, shabby. It was what I afforded to build. It was my home (Gheorgh, F, Roma).

Upon becoming homeless Gheorgh and her family stayed temporarily with her husband’s family, who also sheltered the families of two other siblings. She described being unable to endure the extreme overcrowding and her family’s desperation for a solution. Her and her family came to Edinburgh after being taken there by a friend of the family who was described as a ‘transporter’. Gheorgh explained she had no choice other than accepting the transporter’s offer, despite having no plan for where to stay once in Edinburgh. For Gheorgh, her family would have been homeless in Romania, or in Scotland, as they had exhausted their options and had nowhere to go. It was implied that being homeless in

Scotland was preferable to being homeless in Romania. Like Mariana, Gheorgh could not see a future in Romania without having the means to shelter herself and her family. A number of the Roma participants explained they were prepared to be subjected to homelessness in Scotland than Romania because of perceived level of opportunity available in a new country compared to their home land.

6.2.2 Accessing medical treatment

For other participants migrating was part of a survival strategy to access life saving medical treatment. One Romanian participant described how in her early 20s she decided to undertake seasonal agricultural work in Scotland in order to pay for her mother's operation. Alexandra explained how in Romania it was common practice to give 'tips' or 'bribes' to everyone responsible for providing her mother's care, including the surgeon and after-care nurses. Another participant, Isabella, explained how her son suffered from heart trouble and required specialist treatment that was not available in the Dominican Republic. After a failed surgery in Columbia she described how her sister in Boston encouraged her to migrate illegally so that she may save her son's life. She knew in Boston there were world renowned medical institutions which (by State law) would not deny life-saving treatment:

Before [my son] went into the surgery room he had heart attack and he died. The doctor said he was going to do everything possible, because he had a heart attack, but it seems that God brought him back to life because he came back to life. But he needs another surgery. [My sister] was the one that told me to come here, because here there were good doctors, so I came here looking for a cure for my son (Isabella, F, Dominican).

In the cases of Mariana in Haiti, Gheorgh in Romania and Isabella in the Dominican Republic, family survival would not have been possible had they not migrated. For Mariana the threat of starvation was real, as her mother struggled to feed her and her two sisters. It seemed unlikely that she would be able to contribute economically, as she was tasked with minding the household while her mother worked in the market. In Gheorgh's case she was left roofless after her home collapsed and she quickly found living in extremely overcrowded conditions untenable for herself and her family. Finally, Isabella had

exhausted all resources in flying her son to another country for an unsuccessful operation. She knew from her sister that joining her in America was her last hope to save her son's life. All three women faced huge risk and uncertainty, yet were willing to risk homelessness in their migration for survival.

6.2.3 Escaping violence and responding to displacement

Social instability was a recurring theme amongst respondents who migrated for survival. Some reflected how migration was vital to ensure personal safety for a number of reasons, such as a lack of social protection, lawlessness, political upheaval and corruption, and the inability of governments to respond to natural disaster. Living in an atmosphere of insecurity made participants vulnerable to constant fear, and many had either been victims of real or threatened violence. For some the threat originated in the home, whilst for others it was propagated by strangers, criminal gangs or militia. One participant explained how she believed her son's life was at risk. She explained that she feared her American-borne son would be kidnapped if they had returned to Haiti. As Sofia explained, kidnapping was not uncommon in Haiti:

My country is like that; it is an unsafe country. Since [kidnappers] knew that [my son] was born [in America], they wanted to take him. Because he was born here, they think that his family must have money. I wanted to save his life so stay here (Sofia, F, Haiti).

Nicolas told of a similarly harrowing tale of how he relocated from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico (A US territory) when he was just 18 as part of a witness protection programme. He explained how he was able to obtain a visa as part of a deal for providing testimony in a homicide case. Nicolas explains how his life was at risk if he did not flee the Dominican Republic:

I didn't want to leave, but the gang members were looking for me. So, if I didn't leave, they were going to kill my family. So, I upped and decided to leave (Nicolas, M, Dominican).

For others the threat of violence came from within the home environment and migration was a survival strategy to escape abuse. One Polish migrant, Antoni, explained how he left

home at a young age because he lived in a ‘pathological’ family where he and his mother endured years of physical abuse at the hands of his father who struggled with alcoholism. Another participant, Valeria from Guatemala, explained growing up with violence was a regular occurrence in the neighbourhood, including gang warfare - in addition to the brutality propagated by her father:

I was desperate to get out of my house because. My father’s abuse, with my mom and with me, was really violent. He would kick us out into the street...

It was very intense, the domestic violence (Valeria, F, Guatemala).

Violence not only had physical manifestations but could also be economic (instigated by State action). For example, one participant described how his family lost their home after the government removed private property rights and offered only limited economic restitution contingent on political support. Gabriel explained how he and his mother were displaced after being forced from their home in Bucharest and stripped of their assets. More than thirty years later, he was still seeking restitution for this injustice, in order to return one day to Romania:

We were demolished in 1984 when the communists abusively confiscated our house. I did not get it [the property] or its equivalent, not even today. It’s not [worth] a very big sum of money, but I could buy a house, where I could live. I wouldn’t earn this sum of money in Scotland even that I would work for 20 years. Restitution was made for people who have millions of Euro. And they shared half-half with the civil servants/clerks. What can I say, we have an embarrassing country. That is why I left Romania (Gabriel, M, Romanian).

These cases demonstrate how in extreme situations physical and economic violence compels people to migrate for survival. There are various dimensions of violence illustrated here: people migrate after becoming victims of violence or if they had good cause to believe they or their families would suffer at the hands of others; violence can happen within the home by those known to us, outside by strangers or those acting on behalf of government or other agencies; and violence can result in bodily, emotional and/or financial harm. People who migrate for survival seek security and are escaping places where, for one reason or another, social protection is not available to them or their families.

6.2.4 *Evading systematic persecution*

Finally, migration can be a survival strategy to escape persecution. People experience displacement when the State, or those acting in the capacity of the State such as an armed militia, persecute people on the basis of their ethnicity, religious beliefs, political support, sexuality or some other characteristic or trait. Persecution can take many different forms, including systematic subjugation, oppression and imposing second class citizenship, incarceration without due process, summary execution and other crimes against humanity. The displacement caused by ethnic persecution, for example, represents the destruction of 'home' on a mass scale (Porteous and Smith, 2001).

Scholars have observed that the Roma people have experienced persecution by different societies at different points in time, in similar fashion to that suffered by Jewish groups. In the early 20th century Weber (1920) described Roma as 'pariah peoples' and Pogany (2012, 375) has explained how Roma communities across Europe are characterised by 'political and social dis-privilege', 'far reaching distinctiveness in economic functioning', and 'ritual separation from mainstream society'. In Romania, for example, Roma are not afforded citizenship as a birth right and consequently many do not have Romanian passports (Pogany, 2012). This differential treatment has created a two-tier system of rights and obligations in Romania. Nine Roma participants in this study reported being treated as second class citizens, in terms of access to education, housing, health care and employment in their home country, compared to non-Roma Romanian counterparts.

Elsewhere, persecution is more violent. For example, Valeria explained how migration was a survival strategy to escape political persecution in Guatemala. She described how a military coup which put a despot in power placed her in great danger for having supported the democratic opposition. She was the only participant in the study who was offered humanitarian protection in order to flee persecution, however, she lost this Temporary Protected Status (TPS) once (relative) social stability returned to Guatemala. Although she no longer fears violence for her political beliefs, she does not trust that her security in the future will not be in jeopardy, given the trauma experienced during the political upheavals in the 1980s:

I came because I had political problems. When I came here, I requested legal permission for political asylum because I was threatened by political groups. Initially I was fascinated, when I graduated [the political party] offered me a position. A job, if I supported that candidacy, but later I was afraid because they [the rebels] showed up killing people, and I didn't want to get involved in that... so it got me scared (Valeria, F, Guatemalan).

With the exception of Valeria who was granted temporary protection (which later lapsed), the cases discussed in this section demonstrated how immigration status did not necessarily reflect the reason for migration - those participants migrating for survival were not granted humanitarian protection by the receiving countries despite claims that survival was threatened in their countries of origin. Whether fleeing poverty, violence or persecution, these participants all explained how the decision to migrate did not represent a choice for them, in the sense that opting to remain in their country of origin presented a threat to life. The latitude allowed for choice was more confined to *where* they chose to migrate rather than the decision *to* migrate. In contrast, others in the study were not subject to such an extreme level of fear. The following section therefore outlines how for other participants the decision to migrate was taken for reasons of autonomy, allowing the exercise of agency, and a measure of independence.

6.3 Migration for freedom

Freedom was a recurrent theme amongst migrants in the study, in terms of wanting to be free from something, or be free to do something. These reasons were similar to migration for *survival* in that all are about attaining basic needs, the lack of which provide push factors compelling migration. However, migrating for *freedom* implies greater agency. Migration for survival was motivated by humanitarian rather than economic reasons, with a perceived lack of choice resembling involuntary migration even if it is not legally considered as such. In contrast, migration for *freedom* is similar to migrating for *opportunity* in the sense that both imply goal directed behaviour, but the former involved basic physiological needs and push factors, whilst the later related to self-attainment needs and pull factors.

Freedom can be taken literally, as in freedom from incarceration or servitude, but is also about financial freedom, as in freedom from debts or being free to support one's family.

Freedom is also linked to civil liberties, including being free from social stigma or discrimination, and also free to form households and reunite with family. Interestingly, whereas survival was a predominant force for migration amongst nationals from the Americas, freedom was more likely to be articulated as the reason for migrating amongst Central and Eastern European migrants in the study, who have enjoyed freedom of movement since 2004. It is likely that the reason for this is that the former tend to originate from poorer countries, but also freedom of movement is a hallmark of Europe with fewer limitations on the ability to live and work elsewhere in the European Union. As such, choice is less constrained for this group of participants who were migrating for freedom and seemed to be able to exercise greater agency in their housing strategies than those migrating for survival, a point which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9.

6.3.1 Achieving physical freedom

Physical freedom encompasses the liberation of prisoners, indentured servants, trafficked slaves, bonded workers, military service personnel or minors. Some participants in the study migrated as a means to ensure their literal freedom, and in some cases as a means to escape a prison sentence. One Polish participant explained how he ran foul of tax laws in Poland and had fled to Scotland after posting bail. For Piotr, returning to Poland was simply not possible until he paid back over €40,000 in back taxes, plus fines and legal fees. He resented not having the option of returning for fear of punishment. When asked if he would go back to Poland if he could, he explained without hesitation, ‘Of course! If I haven’t problem with taxes, I’m back tomorrow’ (Piotr, M, Polish). Another Polish migrant explained a similar situation where he avoided a custodial sentence by being prohibited from leaving the country for five years. However, Dawid described himself as ‘disobedient’ and ‘always needing to win with the police and courts’ and therefore took the opportunity to defy the court order and leave for the UK despite proclaiming having no previous desire to migrate (Dawid, M, Polish). Piotr and Dawid are primarily constrained by the threat of administrative removal. Both have been threatened with deportation and largely avoid formal support for fear of losing their liberty.

Some Eastern Europeans in the study explained having been ‘tricked’ by promises of work abroad and upon migrating discovered that the offer of work was fabricated, or misleading

in terms of pay. Respondents explained how these false promises were devastating for them financially after having gone into debt to relocate themselves, and in some cases their families, for these often non-existent jobs. For some, the deception resembled bonded servitude insofar as fees associated with the privilege of work, such as the cost of recruitment, travel, or accommodation, were tied to salaries which were not large enough to cover the cost of debts. One young Polish migrant explained how he was ‘duped’ into such an arrangement, which incurred debts to his employer as well as other financial penalties. Jakub was left out of pocket once he realised he would never receive payment:

Every two weeks, there were new people in the hotel to get work. And you wait. One week passed. You must pay for the hotel, you get minus on your pay slip. Another week, they give you two days’ work. So, you get zero - you have no money for living, for the cost of travel and accommodation, because there is no work (Jakub, M, Polish).

Jakub, and other migrants in similar positions, told of having been taken advantage of and their labour exploited. For some, this led to their eventual homelessness and for others the scams compelled onward migration, described by one as having to ‘start from square one again’ with very few resources. For example, Jakob felt as though he was held hostage to his debt, although not physically restrained, and as a result, few resources were available to him to extricate himself from this exploitative relationship with his employer.

6.3.2 Seeking financial freedom

More than one respondent explained having migrated due to debt, either with a formal creditor or with an individual from whom they had borrowed money. Gabriel, a Romanian migrant (who was not Roma), incurred a large and growing debt after his property was confiscated from his family by the Romanian government. After having been stripped of his assets without compensation, he explained how he and his mother went into debt after being unable to afford the rents charged in the private rental market in Bucharest. His migration for work was compelled by threats of eviction and the need to earn money abroad in order to support his mother so that she would not lose her home for a second time.

Similarly, a Roma participant explained how a persistent cycle of debt in Romania made clear to him that his situation was unsustainable and that he had to migrate in order to support himself and his family. Vasile described how it was common in his community to accrue debts with local grocers, that some days he had money from cash-in-hand jobs to buy food for that day, while other days he was unable to bring home enough money. On those days that he was short he would buy food on promise that he would pay the next time he had the money. He explained how he took a loan to migrate to Scotland, and yet was still was paying back debts to other creditors in Romania:

I took a loan a year ago if we could go there [to Scotland] and now I still owe that person, I was unable to pay him back. What I do here, from selling newspapers, is for food and for livelihood. What made me come here was that I want to offer my children a good life, when I was working in Romania I was unable to save money.... I'm still in debt. I owe money for food, sometimes I went to take my money to him (Vasile, M, Roma).

Another Roma participant explained how he left Romania due to debts that he had no hope of paying back. Ioan took a loan to be able to build a house but then unexpectedly had to use those funds to pay for life saving treatment for his baby daughter, the result of which left him and his family in debt and without a means of shelter. Ioan explained how his debt burden left him with little choice but to migrate:

She [my baby daughter] stayed for more than two months in hospitals. And I paid this with the money I had for the construction of a house, in the end I didn't buy land. I still have two more monthly payments left so I still owe the bank some money from years ago (Ioan, M, Roma).

Gabriel, Vasile and Ioan saw little future for themselves and their families in Romania after having experienced years of cyclical debt. A poor economic outlook in combination with the burden of debt compelled them to seek opportunities abroad where they hoped to be able to earn enough money to support their families without the need of creditors. Unlike other participants who were migrating for survival, these participants were able to meet their basic needs, albeit amassing significant debts. For this group, migration promised freedom from financial precarity, for the longer term if not the immediate future.

6.3.3 *Attaining civil liberties*

Majority of respondents in both case study areas described having migrated because of an inability to achieve their aspirations in their home country, for a number of reasons. For some, the barriers went beyond obstacles presented by poor economic conditions; these respondents were prevented from securing basic rights due to oppression and structural disadvantage. They migrated to have the same rights as others with regard to education, livelihood or family formation.

Luciana is one such participant, having migrated as an unaccompanied minor from the Dominican Republic to Boston when she was 15 and pregnant. She described having come from a tight-knit religious community which strongly disapproved of teenage pregnancy and having children out of wedlock. She was ostracised at school and vilified in the neighbourhood and felt as though she were a social pariah. The repudiation she felt amounted to a daily harassment, to the point where she felt rejected by society:

I was harassed. Especially the neighbours, they look at me the bad way. The fathers [of my friends] say, oh, no talk too much with her because you know, maybe the same [bad reputation] gonna happen with you. I have to move. I need to leave here because that's not my place (Luciana, F, Dominican).

Luciana explained that having migrated she no longer felt depressed and that, unlike in the Dominican Republic, she felt she 'could do anything' she wanted, such as go to university and have a career. Similarly, Roma participants expressed a similar relief after having migrated to Scotland; that in general they felt free being in a community where they felt welcomed. These feelings of freedom were expressed primarily through cataloguing the new possibilities available to their children that many Roma were denied in Romania. As Andrei explains:

It's better here [in Scotland]. I have been thinking about these children, to make them a future. In our country it is very difficult. You can't live from one day to another. There is no place to work (Andrei, M, Roma).

Vasile elaborates further by explaining how he feels there are limitless possibilities in Scotland for his children, that there are many opportunities open to them for the future because his children could receive an education:

I have a better life. If I can stay here, and if they don't send us back home, my children will have a better life than I had. My children are going to school, they are already learning something. Every day I tell my daughter that she needs to work hard to learn because she has a chance to be somebody one day, to own a home, to have a better life than I had in Romania (Vasile, M, Roma).

Family reunification was another reason for migrating offered by respondents in the study. One respondent, for example, explained how for many years she lived in a transnational marriage where she was staying in the Dominican Republic raising children whilst her husband lived and worked in America. Valentina described how her family was fractured for many years until she was and her children were given legal permission to reunite with her husband. For Valentina migrating was the only option to reunite her family although she was reluctant to make the move with her children as she did not want to leave her support network in the Dominican Republic. She explained how her husband supported the family while working abroad and that his job prospects would have been poor had he remained in the Dominican Republic. Through migration Valentina was free to form her household and support her family.

As these narratives reveal, freedom can take multiple forms. 'Freedom' featured particularly strongly in the Scottish sample, particularly in the form of financial freedom. Freedom with regards to family formation and pursuit of social liberties were more a feature of respondents in Massachusetts, possibly due to the importance of family connections in the ability to migrate to the US. The following section provides contrast to *survival* and *freedom* explanations of migration by describing participant's pursuit of *opportunity*.

6.4 Migration for opportunity

All respondents spoke of opportunity in some form as a motivation for their migration. As argued throughout, the reasons for migration are multiple and complex. Although

'opportunity' in the abstract, or in the concrete, may not be a primary driver for some participants in the study, it was certainly recognised as a benefit, in some form, to all the participants in the study, that generally migration and its attendant opportunities was a positive aspect in their lives. Opportunities sought in a new land were largely economic for some, such as better career prospects, educational pursuits or the prospect of upward mobility, while for others the opportunities took on a more social complexion, such as migrating for love, adventure, or feeling of belonging. The following sections look at the economic and social opportunities participants offered as reasons for migration, which included the perception of structural forces as well as individual factors which influenced the decision to migrate.

6.4.1 Pursuing economic gains

Economic opportunity is a compelling force motivating movement across borders, both temporary and permanent. As discussed above poor economic conditions can force migration as a survival strategy when basic needs cannot reliably be met in the home country. Lack of confidence of future economic conditions could also influence the decision to migrate, including the fear of being unable to support one's household in the years ahead or pessimism about the quality of life one might secure in the future. There are structural reasons which compel migration, such as a lack of jobs in one place or more economic opportunity in another, but there are also highly individual and subjective factors which propel migration, such as the *perception* of these economic conditions and the imposition of personal values, when weighing up these perceived options. The following quotes from Alexandru and Jan highlight the causal force pessimism and optimism has on one's decision to migrate.

Alexandru lost his factory job following the 1989 Romania Revolution and had subsequently been reliant on casual work. Once Romania joined the EU in 2007, Alexandru began seeking work elsewhere in Europe, primarily in agricultural jobs as Romanians had been subject to employment restrictions until 2014. As a migrant worker the jobs Alexandru found were seasonal, non-secure, demanding and low paid which relied on undocumented labour. He described having become homeless in Spain after being cheated out of wages and then moving to France to seek refuge at a migrant camp in Calais. He had hoped he

could work as a day labourer as the camp provided a large and ready pool of workers to gang masters. Alexandru struggled to find work at ‘the Jungle’ and would get by on selling scrap metal or begging in town. He was pessimistic about the opportunities available to him in France given the number of other migrants competing with him for the few work opportunities available in Calais. Alexandru described how he used all of his savings to pay for a transporter to bring him to Scotland where he hoped to find work:

I heard that here [in Scotland] you can find a job. So I came with a guy with his family. He had three children, him, the wife and another guy were all in the car. I paid him €100 from there, what I gain there [in Calais] from begging and selling some scrap iron (Alexandru, M, Romanian).

Alexandru felt there were better opportunities in Scotland for work because there were fewer migrants to compete with for low skilled jobs. For Jan, in contrast, his reasons for migrating were not so much about the lack of opportunity in his home country, but rather the possibility of being paid a far higher wage in a British construction job than he would achieve in Poland. He explained that even though he was being paid less than British counterparts to do the same job, he felt this was a good deal for him since he would never hope to achieve the same level of pay doing an equivalent job in Poland:

It’s simple [the reason why I migrated]- big money. One pound [equals] six Polish zloty. English-Scottish bricklayer is about £10 to £12 per hour. And I am half price, this is Polish price (Jan, M, Polish).

Many respondents in the study described finding better economic conditions in receiving countries in terms of more numerous, better paid and more secure job opportunities (whether in absolute terms or relative to cost of living) than they would find in their country of origin. As Chapter 9 explores in further detail, this disparity plays an important role in the housing strategies of migrants. For those migrating for economic opportunity, the migration might be a permanent move, it might be temporary to accrue savings over a defined period, or it might inspire a transnational arrangement where migrants might work a job overseas in order to support a family back home.

Camila provided one such example of a transnational family and might represent the ‘feminization of migration’ (Morrison et al, 2007) where the gendered pattern of migration

is starting to shift from males working abroad to females migrating alone to support themselves, or to send remittances to their families remaining at home. Camila describes how she migrated to New York initially for a job opportunity with her uncle so that she could support her family in the Dominican Republic:

He [my partner] didn't have work. My uncle convinced me to come here [America] illegally. We entered through Mexico and from Mexico we went on a plane to New York with papers from other people...I had a son in Santo Domingo that stayed with my partner. And later, then I had a daughter who stayed with me in New York (Camila, F, Dominican).

For others, migration presented entrepreneurial opportunities. Cultural geographers note the appeal of self-employment in migrant communities as a means to circumvent barriers to employment such as legal status or discrimination (Naude et al, 2015). The ability to take advantage of business opportunities could also be a catalyst for migration. Matias described how a lack of financing available to small businesses combined with a limited customer base made him struggle to survive as an independent tailor in Haiti. Having migrated at the time of the Cuban/Haitian Boat Crisis during the 1980s, he felt migration provided an opportunity to establish a business in Florida to support himself and his family:

The government of Haiti is so bad. No jobs, no nothing. You got a profession, but you need clients to come to you, buying the stuff... If they don't have jobs, they can't buy anything. A lot of people leave the country, try to move to United States. So, I come here... Because United States is number one. To the country, to the world (Matias, M, Haitian).

Some respondents specifically migrated to realise educational opportunities. For example, Santiago migrated from the Dominican Republic after leaving school so that he could study music in New York and decided to stay after finishing his studies. He explained candidly how higher education provided him an opportunity to migrate permanently (extra-legally) to America: 'I came with a student visa. And I stayed here. That's everyone's purpose' (Santiago, M, Dominican). Similarly, Victoria migrated to America to pursue higher education, but unlike Santiago, she originally came to the US under a tourist visa in the

hope that she could obtain permanent residency through another legal route in order to resume her studies:

Life was ok [in Belize], I just wanted to experience something new. I wanted to go back to school to study business and I knew some friends who were living in Boston and they said to come join them... I just want to find myself. I need to find work. I want to go to school...I want to stay in Massachusetts. There are good schools here, good jobs. There is lots of opportunity here, to get a job, a career, that is my dream (Victoria, F, Belize).

Security and stability were common themes underlying the economic reasons offered by participants for migrating. Many of the Roma participants emphasised the opportunities available from migration not necessarily for themselves, but for their children. It was a common sentiment amongst Roma respondents, that 'it is too late' for them to realise their dream of a good job and a house, but that migrating to another country gave their children opportunities that they themselves were not afforded in Romania and were unlikely to be able to achieve had they remained. Constantin explained how migrating to Scotland had given him the opportunity to save for his children to be able to attend university in the future:

I want my children to settle here permanently. They go to school, I want to send them to the college, to study...to do what they want with their lives...as long as I am still alive I want to make them a future if I didn't have one (Constantin, M, Roma).

Not surprisingly given the scope of this research focussing on 'voluntary' movement, the majority of respondents emphasised economic reasons for their migration. Many felt the receiving countries presented them and their families with more opportunities for employment, business, education and career prospects. These sentiments were widely shared amongst participants in both case study areas.

There were however, two differences between the Central American respondents in Massachusetts and those from Eastern Europe in Scotland. Interestingly, the former tended

to focus on opportunities available for themselves in both the short and longer term. These respondents were concerned about the immediate need for work but many emphasised long-term goals such as higher education, career progression and homeownership. This might be because the immigration system in the US does not permit freedom of movement and a greater proportion of Central American respondents emphasised their intent to resettle permanently. Another explanation might be that ‘the American Dream’ is a seductive (and romanticised) belief that the US is the land of opportunity, which attracts ‘huddled masses’ and the ‘elite’ from the world over (Fry, 2007). Some respondents made direct reference to the American Dream, for example Victoria in summarising her list of goals: ‘I want to buy a house one day. Have my own car, my own home, a career. I want the American Dream’ (Victoria, F, Belize).

In contrast, the volume of migration to Britain has not largely been observed following World War 2 and therefore more idealistic promises engendered by an ‘American Dream’, for example, is not as deeply engrained in British ‘values’ (Wolton, 2006). Popular mythology may be one explanation, but freedom of movement may also explain why migrants in the Scottish case study seemed to have time limited, if not more modest aspirations; Central European respondents had security in knowing they could return to their country of origin and their migration did not necessarily have to be permanent. Polish participants, in particular, mentioned waiting for poor economic conditions to alleviate and planned to return to Poland once the job market improved.

One exception to these observations is in the case of Roma participants in Scotland. As mentioned above, many emphasised the economic benefits migration posed, specifically for their children. In this way Roma respondents shared similar characteristics to participants from Central America in that they also intended to settle permanently and that they had great ambitions, not necessarily for themselves, but for their children.

6.4.2 Realising social benefits

Younger participants in the study or those who had migrated at a young age tended to emphasise the social opportunities available in migration. These benefits were less tangible or material and tended to be more emotive, focussing on the excitement and the adventure involved in moving abroad. Other participants reflected how migration was part of their

coming of age, that they had ‘found themselves’ or a life purpose after migrating. Furthermore, other participant narratives involved love stories, explaining that seeking a job was part of living life abroad, but that the reasons for migrating were motivated by finding a partner, reuniting with a lover, or making a home with a lifelong companion.

Broad references to coming of age tended to be made by males who had migrated at a young age. Alejandro, for example, reflected on how he had migrated to New York in his late teens and prior to migrating had not known adult responsibility. He explained how in the Dominican Republic he ran with youth gangs and was involved in minor criminal offences. His mother at the time had encouraged him to join his brother in the US to perhaps change his life course and to improve the prospects for him in general:

[My brother] brought me here. Not legally, illegally. To make money, and to grow up a little. Life over there [Dominican Republic] it was good, I can't say it was bad...but being over here [America], you can get better opportunities in your life (Alejandro, M, Dominican).

Mateo shared a similar experience and spoke about how migrating to America made him see the priorities in his life. He explained how he migrated at a very young age after being told to leave the family home, and that he was more ‘adult’ for this decision:

I was behaving bad. I was 16 when my mother kicked me out...And then I had this great idea to move here [Massachusetts]... to change the path I was going. And it worked (Mateo, M, Dominican).

Mateo's partner, Blanca, also reflected on what it was like to move to a country she had never been to and how thrilling this was, particularly given that this was the first time they were living on their own: ‘I didn't really know anybody, we just went...a journey I think it is! And, we just sort of stayed’ (Blanca, F, Dominican).

General feelings of wellbeing and quality of life were also mentioned as opportunities presented by migration. These may not have been conscious motivations behind the decision to migrate, but some psychosocial benefits were specifically mentioned by participants. For example, many Roma participants made reference to feeling part of a community and described being welcomed in Scotland. Vasile, for example, provides an analogy to describe why he feels at home in Scotland, despite not having a home, compared

to his birthplace in Romania, explaining having greater love for a caring, adoptive parent, rather than a biological, neglectful mother:

First, it was a change [moving to Scotland], like changing a baby's place, taking him from his mother where he had a hard life and giving him to someone, and he discovers a better life with this new mother, that is not his mother. What's not to like? Maybe in the past you wondered what are you going to eat tomorrow, how to survive? And you came here and you see that every night you bring food to your home, you are loaded with products. It is another life; you have different thoughts here (Vasile, M, Roma).

Ana also shared Vasile's feeling of belonging and became very emotional when she described how she felt more human in Scotland, because others acknowledged her presence and strangers would greet her and get to know her while she sold street newspapers:

There where I sell the newspapers, all the people know me. I had a surgery, and they come to ask me 'how are you', or 'how is going on'...they are my family... after their leaving, I start crying and think 'look, how much they love me, they talk to me' (Ana, F, Roma).

Ana's story perhaps most acutely reveals the psychological harm inflicted upon persecuted persons and in an extreme way, is a reminder of the importance of being socially included.

6.5 Conclusion

Whatever the specific reasons for migrating, whether for survival, freedom, or to realise (economic or social) opportunity, these migrant narratives all reveal the desire for a better life and the hope for a greater future for themselves and their families. For the respondents the choice of destination was one where people believed they could flourish, be free and take advantage of opportunities. The narratives also reveal the structural conditions motivating migration, as well as the scope to exercise agency and choice.

Migrants in the study talked about immediate goals and future ambitions, which were often depicted as realising a life-long dream, intrinsically linked to migration. Furthermore,

personal identity was heavily connected to the prospect of a new life; for many respondents migration signified a fresh start or a new life, which ultimately necessitated a reimagining of their sense of self. Being positioned in a new place signalled a revival for those seeking sanctuary and refuge, and perhaps a rebirth for those simply seeking a new life elsewhere.

Importantly, these narratives demonstrate the importance of both structure and agency. Firstly, structural disadvantages, positioned within a wider geopolitical context, strongly influenced the decision to migrate, whether for survival or for economic opportunity. Secondly, legal status and immigration systems influenced the purpose of migration insofar as closed borders limited migration largely to those who wish to permanently resettle, whereas greater freedom of movement allowed for the possibility of temporary or cyclical patterns of migration. Furthermore, (as later chapters will demonstrate) these factors combine to influence the strategies devised for satisfying housing need and their responses to homelessness. These structural forces influence both vulnerability and offer potential to demonstrate resilience in exercising choices, values and priorities. In other words, these structural constraints do not deny the potential to exercise agency; the respondents demonstrated considerable ingenuity, creativity and autonomy in the responses adopted.

Finally, there are important distinctions across and between the case study areas with regards to the reasons for migrating. For example, those migrating for survival were arriving with very few resources and limited choice which increased a vulnerability to homelessness. Others in the study seemed to have much more latitude, with perhaps the exception of Roma participants who did not necessarily migrate for survival, per se, but nonetheless arrived with very few resources, few social connections, and limited access to services compared to other homeless groups. Likewise, migrating for freedom featured more strongly in the Scottish sample, particularly with regards to financial freedom as push factors. Migrating for opportunity was a theme which spanned all case study areas and was referenced to, in some shape or form, in all of the interviews. The opportunities presented in migration largely speak to the 'pull' factors which motivate transnational movements. It is notable in the Scottish sample that the Roma participants almost exclusively spoke about opportunities in relation to their children, rather than from opportunities they themselves would realise from migrating.

These introductions into the lives of the migrants participating in this study thus highlight their individual circumstances, each with unique backgrounds, resources, barriers, motivations and values. They highlight how respondents were not simply passive victims in their situation. The circumstances and explanations surrounding their migration provide insight into the causes of their homelessness, which are examined in Chapters 7 and 8, as well as the constraints they face and the trade-offs they make in their housing strategies, discussed in Chapter 9.

7.1 Introduction

There are a number of different reasons why migrants are vulnerable (or resilient) to homelessness. Explanations for migrant homelessness can be largely grouped into two categories: 1) structural explanations which include policies surrounding immigration, welfare, housing and labour; and 2) individual circumstances, characteristics or preferences such as life events, cultural attainment and local knowledge, social networks, and engagement with formal support systems. This chapter focuses on the structural origins of vulnerability.

Although attention is given here specifically to disadvantage within systems, this chapter argues that mono-dimensional explanations of homelessness are insufficient to capture the complexity of the problem, and that the reality of migrant homelessness in particular is better explained through an interplay between structure and agency, albeit with structure playing the dominant explanation. Individual factors may make someone more vulnerable to homelessness, but structural disadvantage creates the conditions which makes homelessness a possibility in the first instance. However, it is agency which gives resilience both in terms of surviving and escaping homelessness.

Structural explanations of migrant homelessness are largely determined by experiences of the immigration system in that legal status (determined by immigration policy) restricts or permits access to employment, welfare and housing and therefore significantly impacts upon available resources at any given time. Although this analysis of the structural causes of migrant homelessness points to the immigration system as a primary causal force, the subsequent sections build on Chapters 4 and 5 to consider how immigration policies interact with other systems, such as labour, housing and social security, to contribute to and amplify the causes of homelessness through an analysis of migrant experiences. The following stories, positioned within these wider forces, serve to highlight both the manoeuvrability and constraints experienced by migrants in their responses to homelessness.

7.2 The importance of the labour market

Much of the structural explanations of migrant homelessness can be located within a precarious labour system. Precarious or flexible labour markets are characterised by job insecurity, casual work and competitive pay. Flexible labour markets drive unemployment rates down, shifting the balance of power further towards employers and creating a highly insecure workforce (Standing, 2011). Migrants, regardless of skill, are at the sharp end of market liberalisation and more likely to experience job loss, low pay, insecure work, and frequently, discrimination and exploitation in the labour market. The combination of deskilling, or devaluing of skills, as a result of migration and a highly competitive labour market due to recession, disproportionately disadvantages migrants in the workforce (Garapich, 2014). As this study shows, the inability to secure sustainable and reliable work is a major cause of homelessness amongst migrants. Emphasising this point, a service provider in the Scottish case study stated: ‘I believe personally that you can’t talk about homelessness without also talking about employment and creating jobs’ (Service provider, Non-profit, Scotland).

Crucial to this disadvantage is that employment is the most commonly pursued path out of homelessness for participants in this study, as most must secure housing in the private market and earnings provide their only resource to be able to do so, due to restriction in both social security benefits and subsidised housing. As one service provider explained, employment, even in low paid jobs kept many from experiencing homelessness: ‘I think a majority of my clients aren’t homeless because they just work very hard, illegally’ (Caseworker, Non-profit services, Massachusetts). As explained later, the welfare state breaks the link between labour and housing markets (Stephens and Fitzpatrick, 2014), and for migrants who have restricted access to welfare benefits, a disconnect between wages and the cost of housing creates vulnerability to homelessness. These linkages are explored in detail in this chapter.

7.2.1 *Lack of available jobs*

As outlined in Chapter 6, a significant proportion of the respondents cited economic factors as the primary reason for their migration. The desire to find employment was most clearly evident in the interviews with Polish and (non Roma) Romanian migrants in Edinburgh. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, as the previous chapter explained, the motivations behind migration are driven by the need for survival, freedom and opportunity. Those migrating for opportunity typically were not compelled by push factors such as starvation or persecution, and were mostly attracted to a (comparatively) healthy job market. Unlike migrants from the Americas, this group had more freedom of movement to cross borders in search for work, and furthermore, originated from more developed countries with a lesser degree of disadvantage.

Secondly, as self-described 'economic migrants', Polish and (non Roma) Romanians were not accompanied by families, whereas the majority of the Central American respondents' participation in the job market was further constrained by child caring responsibilities; being disadvantaged in the labour market tended to be described as a function of being incapable to secure work providing opportunities to single parents, rather than being incapable of competing in the labour force, per se. Finding reliable and affordable child care was more of a barrier than a lack of jobs in these cases. For these reasons, Polish and Romanians are over represented in terms of their homelessness being primarily explained by disadvantage in the labour system.

A number of Polish and (non Roma) Romanians explicitly linked their homelessness to an inability to find work. A variety of reasons were offered by participants as to why they had been unsuccessful in the job market; a primary complaint being a lack of suitable jobs. Interestingly, participants acknowledged that it was not the case that there were too few jobs available in general, rather that there were few vacancies that matched their experience and skill set, and for those jobs that did match, there was too intense competition. One Romanian participant explained his exasperation at having continuously applied for jobs without success: 'You go and have interviews, it's in vain...I have a lot of jobs opportunities, I went to interview and they say, 'I call you tomorrow,' but I never get the call' (Gabriel, M, Romanian).

One Polish migrant directly attributed his homelessness to his inability to secure work. He described his experience of having originally migrated to the south of England and

surviving on a minimum wage job, whilst living in a shared house. He was made redundant from his job in the hospitality industry due to his lack of spoken English and he found himself unable to pay rent after failing to find work of any kind. He contemplated that if more assistance was available to him, his migration might not have failed initially:

I was homeless for about two to three months. I was looking for some job all that time, but I couldn't find any. It's much harder in England. They don't have that kind of agencies like here [in Scotland], where you can get a free lunch or apply for Jobseekers Allowance. I was really depressed about the whole situation, so I felt that the only solution was to go back home [to Poland] (Antoni, M, Polish).

Some migrants in the study who migrated many years ago observed a significant change in the job market, following the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008/09. In the years running up to the GFC the construction industry fuelled immigration to the UK, particularly from Poland, (Garapich, 2014), but with the recession in the house building industry many migrants found themselves out of work and had to reposition themselves in the labour market. Dramatic economic restructuring post GFC has led to a greater number of skilled tradesmen having to compete for a fewer number of unskilled manual jobs. One Polish participant described his experience in this rapidly changing job market:

Five years ago, work be all on building site, now construction stopping. After this crisis all people come to this factory. Too many people... Too many bricklayers, painters working now in the fruit factory or rubbish factory (Jan, M, Polish).

This respondent reflected on how it was only after the collapse of the house building industry in the UK that he experienced homelessness. Following the end of the recession in the industry, construction jobs returned and he described feeling more confident that he would be able to find both work and housing, illustrating how the labour market can be a crucial determinant of vulnerability to homelessness.

Migrants who arrived more recently having been in the country for less than a year from 2014 (when A8 countries joined the EU), found the tightened job market difficult to access

with some caught in the 'Catch-22' situation of needing to have experience in order to gain experience. Consequently, younger migrants who had little experience in the job market (either in their home country or abroad) were particularly disadvantaged and unable to compete for jobs that in healthier economic times would not have required any experience. A young Polish respondent described his persistence in trying to gain experience in the service industry as follows:

My biggest problem is that I don't have a job. There are a lot of offers but everyone is telling me that I don't have enough experience. For example, I found an offer. It says that they're looking for a member of staff as a part-time job. But I don't know what 'staff' exactly means. I don't know what kind of people they want (Antoni, M, Polish).

The above quote illustrated how a lack of knowledge of the local labour market exacerbated the barriers to gaining employment, highlighting the interplay between structural and individual factors. Another frustration felt by participants was that when they were able to find offers of employment, they either did not have the resources available in order to travel to work, or lacked the means to relocate closer to the place of employment. For example, one Romanian participant explained how he had to postpone accepting a job offer because of the cost of the roundtrip journey:

I have a promise to work in a storehouse, but it's not convenient for me. I cannot pay £10 because I don't have any money. I *do* have £10 in my pocket, which I need for life, for food today (Gabriel, M, Romanian).

Participants therefore felt trapped in a cycle of not being able to take up employment, due to skills, experience, knowledge or resources. As a result of their exclusion from the job market, they were unable to lift themselves out of poverty. As shown in the example above, some participants were confronted with the choice of using limited funds to travel to work (which would improve their situation in the longer term), or to use that money for a more immediate need, such as food. Being confronted with such trade-offs produces and perpetuates homelessness, as one Polish participant succinctly suggested: 'My main problem is... that I can't find any job so I don't have enough money to rent a flat. Or even room' (Antoni, M, Polish).

Many Roma participants felt excluded from the job market and explained that selling street newspapers provided their only option for an income. These participants acknowledged that various factors contributed to their inability to compete in the labour market, such as lack of formal education, inability to speak English and, in some cases, a physical disability. However, many expressed dismay that there were no ‘undesirable’ jobs available to people who had no other option but to work. Gheorgh, for example, said she was looking for work ‘anywhere now, even unloading merchandise, I am not picky. Anything’ (Gheorgh, F, Roma). Alexandru similarly explained that he would be happy to do any job, as long as it guaranteed him an income. He felt his inability to secure steady work trapped him in homelessness, that not having a job preventing him from accessing housing:

I would like to have any kind of job. I am used to ‘low’ work. If I would have a job, I would look to rent a flat, or a room, somewhere, something cheaper. For me, there is no hard work (Alexandru, M, Roma).

Another Roma participant was blunt about what he felt was the futility of his search for work, and his disappointment at his lack of assistance in looking for work (from the Job Centre). He explained how it made more economic sense for him to continue to earn money from street newspaper sales and use receipts to support his claim for Jobseeker’s Allowance, rather than ‘waste time’ dedicated to finding (fixed) employment:

No, I haven’t, [looked for work] honestly. I went to the Job Centre, there, but they didn’t give me a job, didn’t find one for me. They told me there was no job at the moment. And in this case, I thought that it was better to turn my back to the job instead of wasting time [there] and sell my magazines and make my money (Constantin, M, Roma).

As these stories from Central and Eastern Europeans reveal, the lack of jobs which matched their skills set served to perpetuate their homelessness. Some were skilled, such as Jan, but were unable to find work in their field, and others were struggling to compete for available low skill jobs, such as Antoni in the service industry or Ioan in manual or agricultural work. It may be the case that there are jobs available but there are too many people looking for too few jobs for unskilled work. The following sections explore further the reasons why Jan, Antoni or Ioan were struggling to secure work and therefore escape homelessness.

7.2.2 Deskilling and devalued skills

As mentioned above, deskilling is often a by-product of the migration process (Nowicka, 2012). Some respondents were skilled workers with a high degree of training or education, but found that their qualifications were unrecognised upon migrating, either for legitimate reasons, such as requiring qualifications from specific institutions for accreditation, or for illegitimate reasons, such as discriminating against job applicants with foreign credentials. For one service provider in the study who provided specialist immigration advice, expressed dismay at how he routinely saw talent and skills lay to waste due to being unable to compete in the job market or being unable to do so due to legal status, with severe consequences:

I think what is very backward about the system is, basically a family can be relatively educated, being tri-lingual is not uncommon, speaking Spanish, Creole, French and English. But, if they weren't legally eligible to work, but were willing to work and were able to work, but not legally eligible to work, they end up in the shelter system. It's kind of a waste, but that is the system (Immigration specialist, Non-profit, Massachusetts).

Some participants in the study reported that in order to practice their trade in the host country they would have to undergo a process of retraining or recertification. One Romanian participant who was trained as a plumber acknowledged that the practice was fundamentally different in the UK (compared to Romania) and that retraining was necessary for practical reasons. Gabriel's goal was to undertake training courses alongside English language classes, so that he could make a future for himself in the UK.

In contrast another participant saw the need for new qualifications as an artificial barrier to his obtaining work. As explained in the quote below, the requirement for health and safety certification was seen as a redundant exercise:

I'm bricklayer. But I haven't CSCS [Construction Skills Certification Scheme] card, health and safety card. This is stupid because every building site when before I starting, it's [covered at] induction. This is expensive because I got now only £100 for two weeks. And certificate it's about £80.

I know what can I do on building site. Hammer is the same, trowel is the same, scaffolding is the same! But [now I have to have] some answer for this question on a test. Stupid. (Jan, M, Polish).

The cost of retraining or recertification involved significant expenditure and for some was prohibitive, in the face of other competing needs. The above example was unusual in the sense that this participant chose to invest in training materials, despite experiencing extreme destitution and literal homelessness. Jan took the risk in covering this cost, at the expense of other higher claims on his income, in the expectation that recertification would provide a route out of poverty.

Another participant from Haiti expressed her frustration at having qualifications to practice as a medical doctor but despite having this highly valued skill she was unable to secure work in her field because her qualifications were not recognised in the US. Sofia explained that much of her financial troubles would be resolved if she were permitted to practice medicine. However, instead she found that she would need to return to school and faced the added barrier of needing her qualifications translated, before being accepted into a certification programme in the first place. Sofia's goals were further frustrated by a lack of legal immigration status:

I'm going to translate [degree] now. If I want to, I could take some medical classes here, but I need papers to be able to do all that. The main thing is to pass an exam to do my medical residency here (Sofia, F, Haitian).

The ability to practice a trade may not be a guaranteed route out of homelessness, but would certainly increase the options available to Gabriel the plumber, Jan the bricklayer or Sofia the doctor. Both Gabriel and Jan were sleeping rough and clearly saw recertification as a solution to their financial (and other) troubles. Gabriel hoped to save funds specifically for this purpose and Jan had already spent a significant portion of his money on training materials, one of the few personal belongings he had with him, in his tent he shared with his brother, in a public park. For Sofia her situation was complicated not only by the amount of resources it would take to become re-qualified, but her legal status was a further barrier to these aims. In her situation Sofia recognised retraining

would provide long term stability for her and her daughter, but that legal status was the primary barrier to this goal.

7.2.3 Low pay, casual work and job insecurity

As mentioned above, the work experience of migrants is often characterised by inadequate pay and infrequent employment. Partly as a consequence of migration flows, certain ethnic groups tend to be over-represented in low-paid work (Netto et al, 2015). Minimum wage jobs are therefore no guarantee against poverty, even for those in permanent and fulltime employment. For families with children, pressures are even tighter on household budgets. As one service provider explained, someone might have the ability to obtain a job, but it may not be economically feasible to take up low paid employment after taking into consideration the cost of childcare:

Low paying jobs is probably one of the number one reasons families can't make ends meet. Another thing is high day-care costs. If they have little children, sometimes it doesn't even make sense for them to go to work, if they are paying all their money out for day-care (Non-profit service provider, Massachusetts).

In both case study areas, but in Massachusetts specifically, employability work with clients was a specific strategy deployed with migrant groups, particularly those not entitled to benefits. One service provider explained the difficult position working minimum wages jobs poses for families with children when a minimum wage is not enough to cover costs, but enough to be considered 'over income' for welfare programmes:

We are really looking out for families and try to get them into good paying jobs that are going to really make them sustainable. The [minimum wage] \$15 an hour is not cutting it living in Boston- not even close! The majority of [clients] are single moms and paying for childcare because they're not eligible for a lot of the mainstream services, they're considered over-income for vouchers and such. So, we really focus on how do we develop this and help this person to potentially find a better job that's gonna earn them a liveable wage (Non-profit service provider, Massachusetts).

Others in low paid casual work are in a worse position. Seasonal employment often depends on migrant labour and poses significant job insecurity for those seeking longer term or permanent resettlement. A policy officer for a national level migrant rights organisation explained how many migrants are faced with the option of taking up low paid seasonal work, or rely on a homeless shelter without any resources to fall back on:

There a lot of daily work programs, where people pick undocumented immigrants up. They sort of take them to a farm or something, they work for the day. It's not an ideal situation, it's pretty difficult, it's not like they get any benefits or any support, it's just that it's all that they are left with to do. Either that or to go into shelter (Policy officer, National advocacy organisation, Massachusetts).

From the perspective of homeless migrants, the reliance on seasonal work causes significant financial insecurity. One Polish participant described being stuck in cyclical unemployment, relying on agricultural work then being under pressure to secure manual work, out of the harvesting season. Antoni explained how conditions for employment varied both by the nature of the work and by the recruitment agency selected. These pressures were exacerbated by constant renegotiation of his finances. Antoni described being compelled to accept increasingly inadequate working terms, if he wanted to stay in employment:

So, [after losing my job] I had to find another job very quickly. I got a new one with help of an agency. The salary wasn't very big and wasn't fixed. If you were working on a chicken farm for example, they were paying you from the moment you get into the car [to get to the farm]. If it comes to pig farm, you got paid from the moment you get to the place. It didn't matter if the farm was far away. (Antoni, M, Polish).

Some participants directly attributed their homelessness to the infrequency of their employment, rather than low pay per se. Like Antoni, Mateo's work history was punctuated by periods of unemployment because of the nature of the job. In Antoni's case it was seasonal agricultural work, and in Mateo's situation his employment was characterised by

a series of short-term contracts. Mateo explained how he was a machinist in a pharmaceutical plant in Boston where the machines would run in three month cycles, meaning he would have fulltime work for three months then effectively be unemployed for another three months. Although he made decent money during the periods when he was working, he found it difficult to budget for the periods when he was not working on the machines: ‘basically they will have work for me almost the third week of December, but until then I am broke’ (Mateo, M, Dominican).

One Polish participant explained how he could have been able to support himself on a minimum wage, albeit with difficulty, had the work been full-time. Jakub described how he became homeless after being unable to pay rent yet, remarkably, continued to work after having lost his home:

I got my CV, I go to different agencies, I work as wait-staff and another place, and I do not have many hours - I work three days a week. I notice I would not be able to pay the rent (Jakub, M, Polish).

Job insecurity is part and parcel of casual working and a flexible labour market is contingent on non-permanent employment and a flexible/expendable workforce. As discussed above economic migrants were more likely to take up casual work and, by extension, more likely than others in the workforce to experience job loss (Garapich, 2014). Many participants in the study explained how these job losses were frequently sudden and unexpected. Some participants planned for such contingencies by having a ‘rainy day fund’ specifically for these events. Others had fewer resources and were forced to call upon family, to bridge the gap from lost wages.

For participants who were working, wages or income often did not pay enough to support private sector housing. Ana explained the precarity of her situation, relying on selling a street newspaper to pay expensive private rent for her family: ‘We didn’t gain so much to pay the rent, yesterday I went in the village and I sold only two newspapers, you see, you must pay the £500 to £600 for rent’ (Ana, F, Roma). Similarly, Camila described migrating with her partner to New York from the Dominican Republic and quickly found that all of the wages they were earning were going to pay for rent and soon became homeless, after losing her job: ‘We were working to pay the rent, it was really expensive. I lost my job, so

my boyfriend's sister lived here in Boston and we came here, we had nowhere to go' (Camila, F, Dominican).

Other participants explained that they decided to leave a low paying job that was not covering costs, as Matias had, despite not having another job to go to:

I told him [boss] 'I don't think I'm gonna stay' because I don't make enough money for take care of my family. I got kids, go to school, I got take care for food, for pay everything. I leave my job like today, and tomorrow I'm going looking for the next job (Matias, M, Haitian).

Several participants in the study were working whilst sleeping rough, or staying in an emergency shelter. Low wages and infrequent pay prevented Antoni in Edinburgh and Mateo in Boston from securing housing for themselves and their family. Similarly, Jakub from Poland and Matias from Haiti found that they were unable to sustain their home due to a lack of hours given to them by their employer. Finally, Ana was finding that earnings from selling street newspapers would barely cover an expensive private rental in Edinburgh and Camila realised how precarious her situation was, once she lost her job and her and her family were suddenly made homeless in Boston. All participants in the study reported being on a knife-edge, between their in-goings and out-goings. Many described having to constantly negotiate the cost of living and resources available to them at any one point in time. This was true of homeless migrants in and out of work.

7.2.4 Exploitation and discrimination

Migrants without a legal right to work were particularly vulnerable to exploitation, whether manifested in very low or zero wages, bonded debt, unpaid wages, misleading recruitment practices, or poor (sometimes dangerous) working conditions. In terms of labour force participation, employers' racialised attitudes towards migrant workers in part explains marginalisation in the workforce (Netto and Craig, 2017). Nearly all the participants from Eastern Europe reported some experience of exploitation in first and second-hand accounts. An attorney specialising in immigration explained how some of his clients who do not have a right to work resort to 'survival crime,' whilst others rely on charitable hand-outs, a position which benefits no one:

[Society] ends up paying for it one way or another. People can either commit crime to survive or they can work off the books, which is not good for anybody. Or, they can rely on the church, state funded shelters, but no there is nothing for people without status. No thought out plan for what these people are supposed to do while they are waiting [to secure their status] (immigration specialist, Massachusetts).

Those respondents who were given employment and tied accommodation were especially vulnerable to homelessness. Some employment packages resembled a form of bonded servitude, when work is not guaranteed as part of the contract and accommodation costs are deducted from salary. Jakub, for example, explained how he found himself repeatedly in debt to his employer, who billed him for the cost of accommodation in the hotel where he worked (tied to his employment), without providing him the hours required to cover the cost. He explained how he left his job indebted to his employer, despite never receiving any earnings from the employment.

Several participants reported being cheated out of agreed wages, when either a promised job never materialised, or work was not fully compensated. One Romanian participant was left destitute after being paid only a fraction of the wages he had earned and relied on, to cover basic costs. These missing wages left Gabriel without the resources needed to provide shelter for himself, when he travelled onward for work:

I earned £1,600 but he gave me £500. Food and accommodation and the rest of the money I did not [get]. I bought a tent in Glasgow and I stayed like that about three weeks. (Gabriel, M, Romanian).

Jan was similarly out of pocket when he and his brother came to Edinburgh to work and found that the accommodation that his employer had arranged was of extremely poor quality, housing six persons in a single room. In addition, Jan and his brother were never compensated for their time on the job:

Terrible place. Like this room [gestures to the small room where interview is being conducted], six people. I'll never forget that guy. We finished the job, but he didn't pay us anything (Jan, M, Polish).

Female participants also reported being cheated out of wages owed and left out of pocket by significant sums of money. Mariana, for example, who had become homeless after being abused by her father, had befriended a woman and trusted her promises of payment in exchange for babysitting her children, while she was at work:

She didn't pay me for the whole year. I'm a single woman and didn't have any kids and don't see any reason I can't help her. So, I say yes to her and every weekend with my own money I'd bring her kids to the movies, bowling and to the park. I'd put gas in the car every weekend. No money never got paid (Mariana, F, Haitian).

Participants who were cheated in such exploitative arrangements found it particularly difficult to recall these traumatic experiences. Gheorgh, for example, explained how she and her husband spend two years working in Spain, only to be compensated for the cost of travel from Romania to the farm where they worked:

I worked there [in Spain] for about two years on a garlic farm. And we were duped there. They only gave us money for tickets. I don't feel like talking about this. My heart is crying (Gheorgh, F, Roma).

Participants also reported experiencing exploitative practices in other countries prior to migrating and because of such deception, for example, they were extremely disadvantaged from the point of arrival to the UK. In Alexandru's case, for example, being cheated out of earnings in Calais (France) was the reason why he ended up migrating to the UK in the first instance. Another Roma participant recalled a similar experience where he had to move to one country for work, was not paid money due to him and then migrated to another country, only to be short-changed yet again:

I worked there [Germany] and I lived in a rental property. We were tricked. I was supposed to be paid with €1,700. They only gave me €600... In Spain, there I also got [tricked]. After one month and a couple of days he was supposed to pay me €1,300, and did not (Ioan, M, Roma).

Other participants described examples of having to accept unreasonably low payment for 'under the table' informal work. Jan, for example, described accepting jobs paying £3 per hour during bouts of unemployment, by taking up irregular cleaning and car washing jobs

in the south of England. These cash in hand jobs covered only the most basic of costs for participants who were sleeping rough, as Antoni explained:

I had lots of problems to find a new job. That was very hard time for me. I work illegally at a car wash, but I was paid just £100 to £200 per month. I couldn't afford to rent a flat, so I slept in parks or cemeteries (Antoni, M, Polish).

Job insecurity for those working legally was often the result of exploitive working practices. Antoni explained how the Polish workforce became expendable after migrants from other parts of Eastern Europe began migrating to the UK, who were prepared to work for a subminimum wage. He described how he lost his job after his employer made over 100 people redundant, many of whom were Polish:

I was fired by a new boss. Maybe they didn't like Poles... The boss decided to employ some workers from Lithuania. They were living in terrible conditions in some cabins provided by the company. He didn't pay any taxes because they were working illegally. He was paying them less than us and they had to pay him for the accommodation. So, it was much cheaper for him to get rid of us and employ those guys from Lithuania (Antoni, M, Polish).

As well as exploitation, participants experienced considerable discrimination in the workforce, although none described it as such. For example, several respondents offered examples where they were paid a lower wage due to their nationality, or were unable to access certain jobs because they were (or were not) a certain ethnicity. Jan, for example, described how there is a 'Polish price' and a 'British price' for jobs, with Polish nationals compensated at a much lower level than the native workforce. Interestingly, he excused such discriminatory practices by explaining the rationale for underpayment - that Polish currency is undervalued compared to the British Pound. In this way, higher skilled migrants better position themselves in the market if willing, and able, to accept a lower wage for the same work as a native worker.

The Romanian experience of the labour market marked a strong contrast to that of Polish respondents. Whereas Polish migrants reported an element of positive discrimination, typified by the stereotypical British belief that they would ‘work hard for less’, Romanians were painted with a similarly broad brush and discriminated in the workforce based on the belief that they were poor or unreliable workers. As one Romanian participant explained:

I came in Scotland and from what I heard what people talked, the people were friendly in comparison with people from England. Here [Scotland] there are not many Romanians. There are a lot of gypsy and they made us a bad reputation. But not all the gypsies are the same. There are also gypsies who are doctors of medicines in Romania, there are gypsies who are engineers, there are gypsies who studied in university. Not everybody is the same (Gabriel, M, Romanian).

Gabriel explained how this negative stereotype of Romanians, which he attributes to Roma, had been detrimental to his employment opportunities: ‘There are a lot of Polish and you have no place because of them and they talk bad about Romanians by saying that we don’t work and it’s exactly the opposite’ (Gabriel, M, Romanian). Inadvertently, Gabriel reinforces the stigmatisation of Romanians by distancing himself from Roma Romanians.

The incidence of discrimination and exploitation in the labour market provided a notable example of how migrants can become vulnerable to homelessness. However, it should be noted that the existence of poor material conditions and a high level of competition in the workforce opened the door to widespread discrimination and exploitation, which created further vulnerability.

Exploitation in the work force as well as less malicious functions of disadvantage in labour systems, such as the inability to compete for work and job insecurity, creates the conditions which place people at risk of homelessness. Migrants in particular are vulnerable to homelessness due to their precarious position in the labour market, which is exacerbated by their reliance on the private rental market (either due to eligibility restrictions or need for flexible tenure), and dependence on wages for income (either due to lack of other sources of finance or inability to access welfare benefits). Overarching this relationship between housing, labour and welfare is the immigration system, insofar as one’s legal status restricts a migrant’s ability to work, which cascades onto the ability to secure housing.

However, agency is important and the stories above not only reveal hardship faced by migrants, but demonstrate considerable resilience, particularly for those participants managing to sustain employment during extended periods of homelessness. The following section develops the argument further by describing how labour and housing systems interact to reproduce further, disadvantage that contributes to migrant homelessness. At the same time the analysis pays close attention to the ways in which participants negotiate the constraints they experience within the housing market.

7.3 Housing

As considered above, precarity in the labour market undermines migrants' ability to access housing and sustain a home. Due to restricted access to social housing and limited resources for homeownership, migrants tend to rely on the private rented sector for housing (Perry, 2012). Compared to other tenures, private renting offers little security of tenure and can be expensive and of low quality. This combination leaves migrants vulnerable to homelessness, particularly amongst those disadvantaged by the labour market in ways outlined above.

7.3.1 Rent arrears and insecurity of tenure

Pay cuts, reduced hours and job loss creates a high risk of rent arrears, as housing is often the first and largest claim on household budgets (Stone, 2004). For those with few resources to absorb the shock of reduced or zero income, rental debt can mount quickly forcing one to leave, either by abandonment or eviction proceedings.

Rent arrears due to job insecurity were a major reason for homelessness at some point amongst participants in this study. As is typically the case with households falling behind with their rent payments, participants who accrued arrears rarely lost their home due to eviction, but instead chose to leave rather than incur more debt. For example, Jakub who was only able to secure a minimum wage job for three days per week, chose to abandon his private tenancy after being unable to pay the rent and slept rough soon afterward:

I had a kitchen, a bedroom, (shared with) two other guys, and the owner. And when I noticed I would not be able to pay the rent, I fuck off. And I end up on the street. I have nothing now (Jakub, M, Polish).

Another Polish migrant shared a similar story where rent arrears were the result of job loss and ultimately led to him becoming homeless. Here, Antoni describes the stress he endured after losing his job and having to eke out savings in order to cover rent. Despite borrowing money from relatives to pay the debt, he ended up losing his home after being unable to find work:

I couldn't cope mentally. I had to move out because I wasn't able to pay for the rent anymore. A month before I moved out I'd lost my job. I paid the last month using my sister's money. So, I had to leave (Antoni, M, Polish).

In some situations the landlords were sympathetic about rent arrears- to an extent. Mariana, for example, described how after she lost her job and could no longer pay rent, but her landlord was charitable enough to let her stay in her rental because she was pregnant and had been a good tenant up until that point. She describes how this reprieve delayed her homelessness by a month or two but impacted negatively upon her credit history, which later became a barrier for her to access both private and subsidised housing:

I told the landlord I couldn't pay anymore, and he was okay with it. He was like, 'I still want you to stay around because you never give me trouble.' After a month, if you can't pay me, you let me know.' Then, it was just... bad credit (Mariana, F, Haitian).

The private rented sector offers little security of tenure and renters can lose their homes due to no fault of their own if the landlord wishes to retake possession or raise rent after the natural end of a tenancy. This is true for both case study areas. Households residing in a home under an occupancy agreement, for example, have even less security of tenure and can be asked to leave at any time, as in the case of lodgers. For those who share accommodation through being 'doubled up' or 'couch surfing', which was common

amongst participants at some point in this study, there is no security of tenure as the person has no legal right to occupy the property.

One Polish participant offered an example of how a lack of security of tenure caused repeated homelessness and is illustrative of a downward spiral experienced by many in his position. In the first instance he described renting a room from a family and having to leave once the daughter returned (to take her room back). He had to find alternative accommodation within days and in desperation took a room in a house, and exclaimed that 'the conditions were terrible, same as the people' (Antoni, M, Polish). Antoni soon found this situation was intolerable after experiencing harassment from flatmates and left to live with his brother, staying on a couch in his living-room. This arrangement was short lived as they soon found their lifestyles to be incompatible. He left to stay with his partner and her family, which came to a similarly abrupt end:

I stayed with her and her family. I had a job. I was paying every month. I was trying to be polite and quiet. It was ok. But one day when I arrived from work, she told me to move out immediately without giving any reason why. She gave me only one day to leave the room. I couldn't go back to my brother's flat so I decided to sleep on the street. I didn't have a choice (Antoni, M, Polish).

Another participant described the upheaval she and her family experienced when her landlord unexpectedly took back possession of the property after years of making timely rent payments. Valeria explained how her family tolerated poor housing conditions as a trade-off for comparatively cheaper rent and found that once she was asked to leave could not afford anything else, even of substandard quality, for her budget. With little notice, Valeria and her family were homeless and in a very desperate situation as her son had a congenital heart condition and was vulnerable from having recently undergone surgery:

I lost the apartment, the owner kicked us out because didn't want to fix the apartment, she didn't want to fumigate, she didn't fix the heat. I had one four year old and a one year old, and they had a lot of medical problems, and she kicked us out for no reason. I didn't have the money to move (Valeria, F, Guatemala).

Valeria and Antoni's stories illustrate the precarious position of tenants and lodgers, respectively, in the private rental market. With little notice, families can be removed from their homes regardless the length of time of residence and due to no fault of their own. For households with few resources insecurity of tenure is a direct cause of homelessness. Jakub and Mariana were similarly vulnerable in the private rental market, and ultimately became homeless. Given the limited protections available to private tenants in both case study areas, these participants were extremely vulnerable to homelessness particularly in combination with having a precarious position in the labour market and not having resources available to absorb the economic shock of unemployment.

7.3.2 Inability to live in poor living conditions

As demonstrated by Valeria's story, those at the bottom end of the private rental market endure the worst living conditions. Several participants in the study reported living in substandard housing, largely as a result of poor wages commanding only the cheapest available accommodation on the market. Living in poor conditions leaves households vulnerable to homelessness should the situation become intolerable, and in the case of Boston which has strict by-laws concerning the habitability of housing, substandard living conditions were a direct cause of homelessness for several participants after losing accommodation that was in violation of fire codes. In an overheated rental market such as Boston it is not uncommon for households to live in illegal 'basement apartments', and in fact the majority of participants explained having lived in such accommodation at some point in Boston. Illegal basement apartments are particularly common in migrant communities, such as East Boston and Chelsea, where there is intense affordability problems. Enforcement action, unfortunately, is extremely punitive on the tenant who is deemed to have no right to the property as it was not a legal let in the first instance. The state has no obligation to provide re-housing assistance unless a child is in the household, which is typically the case as more stringent standards apply to circumstances involving minors, as Matias discovered:

[I had] a basement [apartment]. It got a room, for your bed for sleeping, got a living room, got a little kitchen...The problem I move, I don't know too much about law in Massachusetts. ...They [Department of Social Security]

told me the law in Massachusetts said if you got little kids, you can't live in a basement. The law you must exercise it. That's why I move [left accommodation] (Matias, M, Haitian).

Victoria had a similar experience in Boston when she first emigrated from Belize. She was undocumented and her low earnings from child minding only permitted her to take up the cheapest rental she could find. She explained how she paid a submarket rent for substandard accommodation in a poorly ventilated, unfinished basement. Later, she had a child who developed a respiratory infection that required hospitalisation. Victoria describes how within an evening she found her and her family homeless after authorities were alerted to their poor living conditions by medical social workers:

I was evicted for living in a basement apartment with my baby. The fire department came and said it was illegal. The baby got sick because bad air [quality], very bad. Needed an ambulance. They [fire code enforcement] locked the door and told go to office [Department of Social Services]. But was refused because I needed a letter saying I no longer allowed entry... He [landlord] let us upstairs [in his home] for two days. Until we got shelter (Victoria, F, Belize).

Valentina was similarly made homeless due to occupying an illegal basement apartment in Boston, although the circumstances surrounding the situation are more involved. For many years Valentina was in a transnational relationship where she lived with her children in the Dominican Republic whilst her husband lived in Boston and sent remittances to support the family. During this time Valentina was unaware he was living as husband and wife with another woman until she emigrated to reunite the family. She was devastated to learn upon arriving in Boston with her children that another woman and her children were living with her husband in the house. The other woman prohibited her and her children from occupying the upper level of the home, forcing them to take residence in the basement. After a period of time the other woman no longer tolerated the polygamous relationship and threatened to report Valentina to Department of Social Services (DSS) so that the children and herself would be removed from the house for living in an illegal basement apartment. For fear of retribution, Valentina voluntarily went to DSS to access emergency shelter:

I'm falling dead because the woman invented that they would take my kids away because they were at the basement, and the basement wasn't really in good condition, there were rats and a lot gas smell, there was a lot of mould. I had to leave because I wouldn't let them to take my kids away, I did not come from Santo Domingo to have my children removed just like that, and I had to grab and hold the pride and all morals and go to [Department of Transitional Assistance]. I told them my case, I had no home, had three children, the older one suffer from asthma every night and he had attacks so then they sent to investigate and monitor the area and because of the kids they gave me housing (Valentina, F, Dominican).

Matias, Victoria and Valentina directly attribute their homelessness to poor living conditions. Specifically, it is the strict law in Massachusetts which prohibits the occupancy of children in basement apartments which caused all three participants to lose their accommodation. For Matias and Victoria, it was State intervention which propelled them into homelessness, whereas for Valentina it provided her a route out of an abusive, hostile and unhealthy living environment to be able to access emergency shelter for herself and her children. Had these participants not had children in the household they would not be able to access State homelessness assistance as that is only an entitlement for families.

7.3.3 Security deposits as a barrier

As the cases above reveal, many causes of homelessness lie within the functioning of the (private) housing market, for example losing one's home due to rent arrears, insecurity of tenure, or due to substandard living conditions. The housing system also serves to perpetuate homelessness by creating barriers to accessing housing. Hefty security deposits required by private landlords was a major barrier identified by homeless participants to accessing housing, and in some cases, were the single reason why families remained homeless. Some participants who were sleeping rough explained that they would be able to afford to rent privately were it not for the deposit, which could exceed the cost of two month's rent. Tight rental markets, such as in the case study areas of Edinburgh and Boston, command high rents and hefty deposits as landlords have their pick of tenants. The use of estate agents and property managers adds further to the cost of renting as some tenants were

expected to cover these additional fees. One Polish participant explained having to save up money specifically for the deposit while working and sleeping rough:

I have £260. When I got a room, they always want a deposit, and I don't have right now. I'll get paid on Monday, another £300, so I wait. One more week on the streets and then maybe. If they don't want a deposit, and I have £260, I can move now, but once I get pay slip- woo! Then I looking for a room (Jakub, M, Polish).

The deposit can also be a barrier to those in receipt of a housing subsidy as this cost is not covered in the payment. Furthermore, benefit payments are made in arrears, requiring the tenant to cover the first and sometimes second month's rent. For one Polish migrant in Edinburgh this cost was insurmountable. He and his brother were sleeping in a tent and their only source of income was his Employment Support Allowance (ESA) after suffering an injury and being unable to secure work in the construction industry. Although he was eligible for Housing Benefit he was unable to save the amount required for the deposit on his limited income:

Our problem is money. I can take flat or a room from private landlord. City council give me Housing Benefit because I've got ESA. But I must have minimum for month. Deposit for room is about £100 to £180. I must pay this and rent for one week or two week or month, so between £150 and £200. It is impossible for me. When I pay the rent, I haven't nothing for life (Jan, M, Polish).

Isabella, a migrant from the Dominican Republic, was also in receipt of a rental subsidy (Section 8) but was unable to transition out of emergency shelter because the subsidy did not cover the cost of the deposit or the letting agent fees. She explained her exasperation of having obtained the much sought after voucher after being 'lucky' on a waitlist lottery draw but found she could not use it in Boston where it is extremely rare to be able to secure a private let without having to pay a non-refundable broker fee that could range anywhere between one month to six month rent. Brokers fees, in combination with the security deposit, was insurmountable to Isabella who had a voucher that would cover the cost of rent and now faced the possibility of losing it if she did not use it:

I found [an apartment], but only if I have \$1500. The real estate broker takes also \$1500, the same that the rent costs. So, I said 'how can I give them \$1500?' If I don't do it then I have to keep looking and I might end up losing Section 8 [rental voucher]... I don't have the money to hand over to the guy who shows the houses... otherwise I would have already moved (Isabella, F, Dominican).

Isabella was understandably disheartened by her search for housing. She explained that she was saving from work the additional funds needed for the deposit and fees but by the time she was saving this money her voucher will have likely expired because of the low wages paid to her at a Laundromat. In Isabella's case and in the others described above, the ways in which migrants are disadvantaged by the housing system are largely connected to their precarious position in the labour market. Low wages create difficulty in accessing and sustaining expensive private lets which offer little security of tenure. This is a particularly important point as many migrants are already limited in their housing options due to their immigration status. Next, it is explained below that some migrants may have restricted access to subsidised housing or limited eligibility to benefits which would help pay for housing.

7.3.4 Restriction to subsidised housing

Some participants in this study were limited in the options they had for moving on from shelter due to their immigration status restricting access to subsidised housing. The respective rules for eligibility are discussed in great detail in Chapter 4. Most participants in Massachusetts, however, did not identify a restriction to subsidised housing as a significant reason for their homelessness per se, as they would be eligible for State subsidised housing; however, it was recognised that this is a more expensive option with a longer wait for those without documented status. Luciana, for example, was very knowledgeable about the rights she had in Massachusetts being undocumented. For her it was a clear priority to obtain legal status so that she did not have a restriction to subsidised housing:

Maybe they change now, because when you no have immigration status you only can apply for public housing, with state housing. So too much people

apply for that and it's the longest waiting list. And I can't apply for [federal housing], because you have to be not illegal here, you have to be citizens and all that stuff here.... Yes, I have been applying for MRVP [State rental voucher], they told me that the waiting list is longer. I think so when I get the [legal status] in March, my legal stuff, I think so I can apply for other places. Because it's better when you a citizen, more opportunities, more stuff you can do (Luciana, F, Dominican).

In Scotland, the barriers to accessing social housing identified by participants were largely due to difficulty paying rent, rather than eligibility criteria. For example, one Polish migrant explained how an inability to access secure employment caused him to accrue rent arrears in temporary accommodation, which otherwise would have been paid by Housing Benefit, had he not been restricted to benefits due to his immigration status. He was therefore unable to access affordable housing unless he paid back the debt owed to the Council. According to Jan, his only option was to rent privately which he could not afford to do, due to job insecurity: 'My situation is simple. When I lost my flat, I was evicted. I don't have any rights to get a new one' (Jan, M, Polish).

It is clear from Luciana's story in Boston, as well as Jan's situation in Edinburgh, that the barriers they experienced towards accessing subsidised housing was related to their immigration status. It is argued throughout this chapter that immigration status is the primary determinant of homelessness amongst migrants. Legal status limits available resources due to restrictions in the labour market and welfare system, and subsequently places migrants in a vulnerable position within the housing market, in terms of the likelihood of accruing arrears, experiencing insecurity of tenure, and enduring poor housing conditions. In addition to making migrants susceptible to homelessness, limited income earning potential as a result of one's immigration status also presents barriers to migrants escaping homelessness, as seen in the cases where potential renters could not afford deposits and fees whilst on a low income, even with a rental subsidy.

7.4 Social security

In the UK benefit eligibility is contingent on a variety of factors, such as nationality, date of entry, length of residence, nature of migration, immigration status, amongst other criteria

(see Chapter 4). None of the participants in Scotland had the same rights as UK citizens and were therefore restricted in accessing social security benefits, which in turn closes possible routes out of homelessness that would otherwise be afforded to qualifying nationals.

As Chapter 4 demonstrates, claiming assistance is also conditional on a claimant actively seeking work and realistically improving their chances of securing employment. One Romanian migrant described his difficulty in having to wait three months before gaining assistance and then once having claimed Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), outlined the difficulty of surviving on a minimal income. Although in temporary accommodation, Gabriel was still liable for some rent and after this was deducted from his benefits he struggled to cover the cost of basic needs:

I am here for three months. And I got this paper, [Jobseekers Allowance] written for six months because then I have to go a job. If you don't go to [English] classes and then they say you take money for nothing. I pay the £60 monthly contract (for shelter), but I need food too (Gabriel, M, Romanian).

The level of assistance was also a concern for migrants in the Boston case study who subsisted on very low levels of welfare support. Several participants in the Boston case study explained that this prorated level of assistance failed to alleviate their experience of poverty. For example, Sofia expressed her dismay once her welfare entitlements got recalculated at a lower level after her temporary admission (legal status) expired:

They're [Department of Transitional Assistance] not going to give me more. When I got here they gave me more. And then they gave me less. Now is not enough to live (Sofia, F, Haitian).

Similarly, Isabella explains at length how welfare assistance paid to her children who are American citizens falls far below the actual costs to her to support her family even when complemented by other forms of State assistance, such as Food Stamps and the subsidised Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). She goes on to explain that even with a rental voucher she still struggles to support the household:

Even when the Section 8 vouchers would help a lot, I still need money for many things. My son gets his medicines free of charge, but I suffer from high-blood-pressure and I have to buy the medicines myself, because I have temporary health insurance. I have to buy a weekly transport pass to be able to go to my work... there are times when I don't get the coupons [Food Stamps] and I have to buy milk for my son... I have to buy many things... like the school uniform, the shoes... there are so many things that I have to pay for and cannot (Isabella, F, Dominican).

For some participants the low level of assistance, coupled with strong conditions for claiming the assistance made it not worthwhile to claim. Piotr, for example, was sleeping rough in Edinburgh and recognised he was eligible for JSA but rejected the option as he could not see how the low level of support could help him secure stability, explaining: 'This [JSA] is £70 per week. This is funny money. What can I buy, cigarettes?' (Piotr, M, Polish).

Other participants also found taking up public assistance to be burdensome, and some noted that relatively low-income thresholds which made a claimant ineligible for assistance were a disincentive to work. One young migrant from Poland explained his confusion at how holding a minimal wage job made him ineligible for assistance despite sleeping rough and unable to secure housing in the private market: 'At the [drop-in centre] she told me I had too much money per week to take the Housing Benefit. And I told her, 'I can work less' (Jakub, M, Polish).

Similarly frustrated with work restrictions, Jan explained how claiming Employment Support Allowance (ESA) became a disincentive for him to take up opportunities of work because it would impact upon his claim. He described how if he was not claiming ESA he would be able to take up short term jobs lasting a week or two, but because he did not want to jeopardise his claim he rejected these opportunities because he was not willing to 'come off benefits' unless it was an employment of a longer duration to make it worthwhile experiencing an initial drop in income:

Sometimes I got many offers from [employment] agency but it is often for three days, one week, two weeks. After this I haven't any money [from benefits]. A long time offer this is important for me (Jan, M, Polish).

In addition to the level of assistance and sharp income eligibility wedges/tapers, the timing of assistance was also a concern for homeless migrants. Oftentimes claims take many months to process and in the time between applying and receiving assistance, one could lose their home. Vasile, a Roma participant, explained he was doing everything in his power to prevent his homelessness in terms of working and applying for benefits, but was worried that it had been over five months and had not yet learned of a decision on his application:

I didn't receive anything yet, no response. What can I do? I am going to work, there's nothing else I can do. I'm worried about eviction (Vasile, M, Roma).

In addition to restricted access to benefit assistance, some participants explained that their homelessness was directly linked to violating conditions for assistance. For example, Section 8 housing attaches strict rules about acceptable behaviour as well as requirements for annual recertification in the tenancy agreement. One participant explained how she missed crucial correspondence from the local housing authority regarding recertification whilst she was visiting family and returned home to find that the locks were changed after her absence was mistaken for abandonment despite contacting the authority in advance to advise of her temporary leave:

What happened (when I lost my Section 8) was that one of my family members in New York got sick. They [housing authority] contacted me three times...and I wasn't here in Boston. So they kicked me out of the house for that. I even tried to let Section 8 know that I was in New York and I had a sick family member and they still closed my case, evicted me (Camila, F, Dominican).

Similarly, Valeria lost her Section 8 housing after failing to certify change of circumstance. She had a joint tenancy with her adult daughter meaning they were both severally and jointly liable for rent. Tenants are eligible to enjoy subsidised rent under Section 8 whilst

studying in school and in effect do not pay rent when eligible income drops to zero. Recipients of the mobile voucher must recertify every time their income changes and unfortunately for Valeria her daughter failed to report income from a job between semesters and subsequently had to leave the accommodation after this lapse was discovered by the authority despite being a dutiful tenant for 17 years:

There was an error in the payments, I mean, the rent was being paid normally but my daughter was studying. And the person from the office said that as she was studying she didn't have to pay her rent, and she started to work, then she didn't pay, when they realised she started to pay, then she was laid off, she didn't have money, and they called us to court like that. And when my dad died, we didn't notice the letter from, from court, I mean they thought we had violated the rules and they took it to court... they kicked us out, seventeen years living there... we lost the apartment, after, we were homeless for seven months (Valeria, F, Guatemalan).

For some participants, state assistance was a last resort. In both case study areas, all respondents viewed income from work as a primary solution to their economic troubles, with many viewing state assistance as something only to rely on in their most desperate hour of need. For Valentina, for example, being deemed ineligible for homelessness assistance led her to needlessly endure an abusive relationship. With persistence she was able to plead her case to a more sympathetic case worker a second time around but was initially refused. She explains the devastation she felt when she was trying to work out the logistics of returning to the Dominican Republic with her three young children:

It was heart-breaking; imagine I was here, I had no family, I had no money, it was better to tell me to leave [the country], but leaving implies expenses, four flights, the kids and mine, she [social worker] told me to go back to Santo Domingo, what am I doing here? It was shocking. You think you will find something positive and they [DTA] turned their backs, I left crying because I didn't had a place to go, and that day I didn't wanted to go back to that place, to the house, but I had to go back (Valentina, F, Dominican).

Restriction to benefits was not the primary cause of homelessness amongst any of the participants in the study, but having this safety-net removed, or partially available, denied households a route out of poverty that would have otherwise been available if it were not for lacking full citizenship rights. Social security in the form of income redistribution, out of work payments, disability insurance and housing subsidies all help to cushion the blow from economic shocks. As explained above, migrants are precariously positioned in the labour market and generally have few housing options available beyond the expensive and insecure private rental market. For migrants, negotiating housing and labour markets is the equivalent of a high-wire act without a safety-net. There is little room to manoeuvre and a lack of social protection when it is most needed can have devastating consequences for households, including destitution and homelessness.

7.5 Conclusion

Legal status restricts a person's access to the labour market, housing, and social security, and for this reason lacking full citizenship is arguably the primary determinant of homelessness amongst migrants. When participants were asked about the reason(s) why they were homeless, none mentioned legal status in the first instance. The majority of responses in both case studies included being unable to get a job, being unable to afford rent, or being denied benefits that would supplement low incomes or assist in paying rent. But when unpacking these explanations further, each 'reason' that was offered in some way linked back to their legal status or to their status as a migrant generally.

Structural disadvantage located in the labour market poses a special vulnerability for migrants. A process of deskilling, or devaluing of skills, is observed in the act of migrating where qualifications and experience are not recognised to the same extent as they would be in the job markets where they were originally acquired. A corroded skill set encourages migrants to seek lower level and lower paid jobs where there is also much more competition. This unique combination of disadvantage depresses wages and income earning potential and in the worst form creates the opportunity for exploitation. The expendability of migrant labour creates special disadvantage for a workforce almost wholly reliant on wages for subsistence, for those with few personal resources, access to credit or eligibility for public assistance. The private housing market places additional pressure on

fragile budgets with expensive private rents placing the greatest demand proportionally and absolutely on the incomes of most households. Most participants made reference to being in this precarious state, where they are constantly having to negotiate their finances, making trade-offs between competing needs at any one time, generally living on a knife-edge. Some are faced with the hard choices of devoting resources to immediate needs, such as food or shelter, or putting towards costs that would help their long-term prospects, such as travel costs for work or retraining. Interestingly, work in itself was not a reliable antidote or immunity to homelessness as most in this study were working whilst homeless.

As the following Chapter 8 reveals in greater detail, individual level factors compound vulnerability, or contribute to resilience. The few examples above hinted at this, for example in the case of older Polish migrants who had migrated many years ago have a greater ability to compete in the British job market compared to younger and less skilled migrants from Poland. Additionally, other individual factors, such as social network, family composition, and English language ability, impact upon one's ability to compete in the labour market. These individual factors serve to amplify or buffer structural forces.

8.1 Introduction

As explained in Chapters 4 and 7, legal status represents the primary contribution to migrant homelessness, insofar as one's position within the immigration system determines access to work, housing, social security and other welfare services. There are, however, other more individual level factors which may make one more or less susceptible to homelessness. This chapter provides an analysis of the underlying causal factors behind homelessness by understanding how individual explanations interact with structural forces to *precipitate* and *perpetuate* homelessness. Such an approach provides a more nuanced depiction of structural barriers and individual constraints which create the potential for homelessness. Scrutinising idiosyncratic and contingent factors which relate to specific circumstances provides insight into the extreme pressures that respondents face and the trade-offs people make in addressing crisis situations.

Specifically, this chapter examines the life events (with a less direct structural origin) which contribute to social disadvantage and lead to greater vulnerability, such as a troubled childhood or relationship breakdown; individual circumstances which can either increase or diminish resilience to crisis situations such as access to family support or possessing specialist knowledge; and finally random and unexpected events which, in the context of disadvantage, have the potential to create violent upheaval and long-lasting instability. This analysis differentiates factors which precipitate from those which perpetuate homelessness.

8.2 Precipitating homelessness

In the study, respondents were asked directly about what they believed were the reasons which led to their homelessness. The majority referred to some immediate circumstance or a singular event prior to entering shelter or sleeping rough, such as job loss or being asked to leave their accommodation, whilst others made reference to the barriers which prevented them from having a home, such as not being able to get work or not being able to afford a

security deposit on a private letting. Although single events were referred to, most acknowledged that the reasons for their homelessness were complex and plural. This section unpicks the various, idiosyncratic reasons why migrants become homeless and is followed by a discussion of the individual factors which serve to perpetuate homelessness.

Historic legacies such as trauma in childhood, domestic abuse and relationship breakdown can be a source of individual disadvantage. These events in individual histories in themselves may not have triggered homelessness, but can have a cumulative impact and compound disadvantage experienced years later. Each are discussed in turn.

8.2.1 Traumatic childhood

Some participants took a wide view of their misfortune and reflected on the disadvantage they experienced over the course of their lifetime, viewing homelessness as the consequence of a culmination of crises. These *longue durée* explanations pointed to traumatic childhood experiences being at the root of problems later experienced. These stories were offered by participants to emphasise that life had always been difficult and that the current state of affairs was simply an extension of lifelong struggle, suggesting an unresolved or underlying trauma currently impacting on their ability to cope with everyday life. Regardless, these troubled beginnings were significant to participants and factored into their experience of homelessness.

Interestingly, for participants who indicated that a troubled childhood was largely to blame for their later problems, each story identified a father figure who was unpredictable, violent or neglectful. This domineering parental figure played a central role in one young Polish rough sleeper's explanation, that his emotionally absent father drove him from his home and is therefore (possibly, as he contemplates) the one responsible for his homelessness, although stops short of identifying the neglect as the primary source of his problems:

Childhood was like this, 'Here is some money, go hang out by yourself.'
But, I don't know it's to blame my father. I don't know who is to blame for my situation (Jakub, M, Poland).

Another Polish rough sleeper explained that a similarly difficult childhood punctuated by financial insecurity and alcohol-fuelled physical abuse caused him to leave home at an early age:

At home, it wasn't perfect. I was growing up in a dysfunctional family. That was mainly because my father, he was drinking a lot. He was beating us, especially my mother. We didn't have much money because of my dad's drinking problem. He was drunk at work. Or, he didn't come to work at all (Antoni, M, Polish).

Valeria shared a similar story of an abusive father whom compelled her to leave the family home once she was able. For Valeria it was particularly painful for her to recall her formative years, but the emphasis she placed on the terror she endured as a child suggests an unresolved trauma that she continues to struggle with:

Well my childhood was really poor. And very long suffering. My parents were poor with very few resources, and my father... he would drink too much, and the truth is that I had a very, very violent childhood. I endured domestic violence, and I suffered a lot, in many ways (Valeria, F, Guatemala).

Jakub, Antoni and Valeria all point to a neglectful or abusive father as the compulsion for leaving the family home which later contributed to their desire to emigrate, possibly for lack of family attachment. Each point back to this experience as being significant to their circumstances felt today.

8.2.2 Domestic abuse

Abuse in the home suffered later in life also has disastrous consequences for physical and emotional health, and in Mariana's situation, could be directly attributable to homelessness. Like Jakub, Antoni and Valeria, Mariana also endured a troubled childhood. Mariana described how her father's drinking made her family's life difficult but had no direct personal recollection of it since her father left for America when she was a young child. Despite warnings from older family members and neighbours, she left Haiti to reunite with a father she did not know in the hope of a better, more secure life. Tragically, Mariana

became homeless soon after migrating in her early 20s when her father began to abuse her. She described the hurt she felt when she realised the stories about her father were true:

Well, first he is the type of dad who is alcoholic. I didn't know he was alcoholic. How I was treated, now I know about who he really is, I find out with my eyes, it was true (Mariana, F, Haitian).

In addition to the emotional pain, she described the physical torment she endured by her father whom she feared when he was intoxicated. At such times he would force her out of the home for several hours during the winter without warm clothing or a place to seek shelter from the elements:

Every time he is home I have to leave the house...He lock me outside. If I were falling asleep he would wake me and try to talk with me... tell me to go back where I from then lock me outside the door. This was during winter (Mariana, F, Haitian).

Domestic abuse largely explains how Mariana became homeless although there are other aspects which made her vulnerable in addition to her father's mistreatment, such as having few personal resources and limited ability to self-advocate. Valeria from Guatemala also suffered domestic abuse, but unlike Mariana, this was not such a driver of homelessness. Although she was able to expel her abusive partner from the home, the subsequent effect was that she suddenly found herself with one less source of income to pay the rent. She explained how she was unable to support herself and three children on just her income alone:

I had already left the father of my daughters because of domestic violence. I stayed there, and I kicked him out because the apartment was in my name. I stayed there with my daughters until I could not pay anymore (Valeria, F, Guatemalan).

The domestic abuse experienced by Mariana and Valeria manifested into homelessness in different ways. In Mariana's situation being deprived of a home and basic shelter from the elements was a form of the abuse itself, where her father would lock her out of the house for hours at a time without being suitably dressed for winter or any place to go. Valeria, in

contrast, was able to liberate herself from her abuser but removal of her partner from the household had the knock-on effect on the financial resources available to her to support and house her family.

8.2.3 Relationship breakdown

Non-violent relationship breakdown also contributed to homelessness for some participants. Some younger males in the study, for example, explained at some point having short (or no) notice to need to find a place to stay after a dispute with a housemate or partner. For other participants the relationship breakdown was within the family and as such had greater consequences both for access to financial resources and emotional support. For example, difficulties in the home were indicated as a direct cause of homelessness for Dominican migrants, Santiago and Mateo. In Santiago's case, homelessness was brought on after his wife asked him to leave the marital home due to his alcohol consumption, which resulted in his being accommodated in emergency shelter:

I'm separated from my wife. We didn't have any children. We split up because I was drinking too much. I left because we separated, so now I am here [in shelter] (Santiago, M, Dominican).

Like Santiago, Mateo also found himself (along with his pregnant wife) unexpectedly homeless after being asked to leave the family home. He and his wife, Blanca, who also participated in the study, had lived with his sister temporarily, after emigrating from the Dominican Republic. However, with very little notice they were told to leave by his sister after a dispute. Mateo described how in the night he and his pregnant wife had to leave and after having nowhere to go ended up sleeping in their car for a few nights before being required by law enforcement (in Massachusetts) to seek emergency shelter:

We left because I don't want no problems, I'm not here getting arrested because I'm trespassing. I packed up my stuff and I left. For three days I was sleeping in a car and an officer escorted me to [shelter]. He was just worried about our safety. He said people could try hijacking us or robbing us (Mateo, M, Dominican).

Violent and non-violent relationship breakdown and family dissolution can create an extraordinary upheaval. For Santiago alcohol had a cascading effect, causing stress on his marriage to the point of being asked to leave the marital home without another housing option. Relationship breakdown is a cause of his homelessness, in addition to alcoholism which contributed to the break up and his inability to secure rehousing. For Mateo and Blanca, having a dispute with a family relative, in conjunction with insecurity of tenure, precipitated homelessness.

Personal capacity and behaviour can also contribute to vulnerability and susceptibility to homelessness. The following discussion focuses on the ways in which personal vulnerabilities, such as a lack of knowledge and information, limited language skills, poor health condition, and substance abuse or dependency contributes to homelessness amongst migrants.

8.2.4 Limited language skills

Most participants in the study indicated that a lack of English language ability contributed to their homelessness in some way, typically identified as a key barrier in accessing work opportunities, or other resources which might help to resolve their housing situation. This was true in both case study areas. Notably, one participant maintained that failing to learn English triggered his descent into homelessness. Antoni explained how his employer warned him he would lose his job if he did not attain a basic level of English-speaking ability. Antoni describes the surprise he felt when he lost his job and the contrast to the confidence he once had in the language prior to migrating to the UK:

I knew some English. I'd been learning it at school, but when I first came to England it turned out that I couldn't say a word. I was working at the company [and] my boss told me that I had to learn some basic English in three months in order to understand the customers, otherwise he would fire me. And he did (Antoni, M, Polish).

For others, a lack of language skills hindered the job search and without being able to secure employment, could not obtain housing. Some participants explicitly mentioned learning English as a key part of their strategy to resolve their homelessness. In the Scottish case

study, Gabriel, Gheorgh and Ioan all make the connection between learning English, obtaining a job and securing a home for themselves and their families:

I didn't find work because I don't know well English. I am going to school; I am obliged to do the course to get the [English as a Second Language] diploma for Jobseekers Allowance (Gabriel, M, Romanian).

Who will receive you [in a job] if you don't speak the language? It will be great [to learn], but it's a barrier for me. Because I'm not able to communicate and it's really frustrating not knowing English (Gheorgh, F, Roma).

Before anything else, I want to learn the language. When I heard that I can go to school I was getting there first (to class) every time. I'm really interested in that because my profession [plumbing] is in demand here and I need English (Ioan, M, Roma).

Lack of English-speaking skills were also identified as a handicap to self-advocacy, for example in being able to challenge bureaucratic decisions, to enter into contracts or to exercise other rights. This inability could affect individual resilience to homelessness as explored in greater detail in the section on disadvantage below.

8.2.5 Inability to self-advocate

Self-reliance and the ability to advocate for oneself forms an important part of resilience, especially when there are few people within a social support network that can be called upon in an emergency. Many participants in the study describe their resourcefulness with pride, which is outlined in detail in Chapter 9 with regards to the housing strategies migrants employ in order to cope with their situation. As mentioned above, lack of language ability was the one aspect mentioned in the interviews that specifically undermined independence and the ability to exercise self-advocacy. One Roma participant explained how not being able to speak the language had an infantilising effect and she was, humiliatingly, dependent on her school-age children to translate for her. Gheorgh mentioned crucial moments where

she was confused because of her lack of English, for example in meetings about benefits or about her temporary accommodation.

In Boston, Valentina similarly recognised the importance of being able to speak English and offered a specific example of how she nearly lost her emergency accommodation because she was instructed to sign away her rights without understanding the significance of the paperwork. She explained how she had requested a move out of the motel (used for emergency accommodation) into transitional housing because it was negatively impacting upon her children's health. She had filed an appeal after her claim was rejected and described how she felt her social worker had coerced her to sign a form nullifying her original request. She had trusted that the social worker was acting in her best interests and later learned the full meaning of the document after showing the letter to a friend to translate. From that point she realised how critical language ability was for her to be able to act in her own interests, and that she could not necessarily rely on others to do so:

The letter arrived but there was no one to read it to me. I signed an appeal without knowing what I was signing... and it could've bring me problems, for them to take the housing away from me.... ... I have signed things involuntary, I have heard insults without knowing what they are telling me. The most important right now is the English, to be able to defend myself (Valentina, F, Dominican).

8.2.6 Physical impairment and chronic medical conditions

Some participants in the study had a physical disability or recurring ill-health which prevented or limited their ability to work and support their family, particularly in the absence of State assistance (both in the US and UK). For example, Vasile expressed his frustration at being unable to secure work after losing his leg in a tractor accident in Romania. He was disheartened by the way he perceived how others viewed him as an object for charity and described the sort of work he is capable of doing as an amputee:

There's nothing holding me back. But, with only one leg, they won't hire me. They say I'm handicapped. They prefer giving me £10 to go away...For instance, I'm a good butcher. Back home I was butchering everyone's pigs.

There, in a butcher shop you have to sit and cut meat only... I would really like if someone would come to me saying: 'look, I have a job for you' (Vasile, M, Roma).

Valeria also was refused work because of her health condition, fearing that employers would soon dismiss her after discovering the extent of her ill-health. She was extremely frustrated at losing work opportunities for something outwith her control and she felt that despite her range of health ailments she was still fit for work and, more importantly, needed the work to pay for her medical bills as she was not entitled to US government subsidised health insurance:

I also had physical problems. I've had six operations already... they operated on, on my foot, after that I had a hernia operation... I'm not working because they [employers] found out I have a lot of physical problems (Valeria, F, Guatemalan).

For Isabella, medical conditions directly impacted on her ability to secure a home, rather than impeding her ability to obtain employment. Her teenage son had congenital heart problems which required him to be close to where he received medical care. Furthermore, his health condition required that the home be at ground level as he was unable to manage stairs. Unfortunately for Isabella, the combined constraint on location and property type effectively rendered her Section 8 rental voucher useless, since she could not find a home which met her requirements within the cost limit of the subsidy:

I am looking for an apartment or a house, but it can't be far away from [hospital] or far away from the public transport route in case something happens to my son... If it is an apartment, it needs to have a lift... or it can be a house. And, if it is an apartment it needs to be on the ground floor... but I don't know how to look for it, because I don't know the area very well, so I have asked my friends for help and they are trying to help me... I don't want to lose my Section 8 (Isabella, F, Dominican).

8.2.7 Illness and ill-health

Unexpected periods of ill-health or illness can also trigger serious setbacks. In the case of Ioan and Sofia, a sudden health episode eradicated their financial resources and acted as a major factor in their homelessness. Sofia suffered a similar health crisis that continued to impact on her life. She had come to visit a relative in America late in her pregnancy and soon experienced complications that required hospital care. Although she had come to America only as a visitor she had unexpectedly had to give birth to her child in the country and had decided to remain (at least for the short term) in order to continue the medical care, she was receiving for her daughter:

When I was pregnant I wasn't well, my lines were low, I couldn't eat, I was throwing up every day, but I cannot travel now, otherwise I'll lose the child. So, then I stayed. I did not have family to live with, I cannot be here, I did not come to stay, I came to visit (Sofia, F, Haitian).

Poor health, disability, or illness can contribute to homelessness, either by precipitating it or by perpetuating it. For Sofia ill-health was unexpected and in addition to existing vulnerabilities, had devastating consequences for physical and financial recovery and ultimately contributed to family homelessness.

8.2.8 *Substance misuse and dependency*

Those identifying alcohol as a contributory factor largely explained misuse as an additional obstacle to fulfilling goals, rather than lying at the root of homelessness, *per se*. Some participants did, however, point to alcohol as facilitating a crisis point. Jan, for example, contemplated the role alcohol played in his losing accommodation, explaining how he prioritised drink over rent and used alcohol to cope with an impending eviction, rather than taking action to prevent homelessness:

We leave this flat. Doesn't pay for it. What happened? Alcohol. I think can't do nothing stopping it. No documents. And so started drink. Too much drink. Now I try change this situation. Slowly, slowly (Jan, M, Polish).

Dawid similarly suggests alcohol was an essential ingredient in his (ongoing) instability, pointing to a singular event in which he became homeless for the first time following a

period of binge drinking. He describes his confusion at arriving in London after having spent all his money on a bus ticket from Poland and having no personal belongings with him. Jan discussed candidly how unprepared he had been following an (admittedly) impulsive decision to migrate and how alcohol significantly impaired his judgement:

When I arrived in London I slept on streets and started to drink, didn't know anyone. I arrived with only six bottles of vodka in my bag and just arrived there. I cannot explain it, no reason. First time homeless. I don't know how I came to England. Was drunk! Was on bus then I got surprised people were not speak Polish... It was like this. I just left my car and got drunk. Then, London? (Dawid, M, Polish)

For Santiago the process of recovery from alcohol dependency played a role in his homelessness. As explained previously, Santiago first became homeless when asked to leave the marital home. Following his relationship breakdown, he slept on living room sofas, drank heavily and was ultimately hospitalised for alcoholism. He explains that the reason why he was in shelter when interviewed was because he had nowhere to go after being discharged, that simply 'a doctor who was there said to come here, to shelter' (Santiago, M, Dominican).

The individual explanations for homelessness offered by the participants were not straightforward. Stories focussing on the events which led to homelessness involved a complex mix of factors which played a role in varying degrees of significance, and the importance of each factor changed in different circumstances, particularly for those which focussed on specific episodes of homelessness rather than homelessness in general. For some participants homelessness was cyclical and moved in and out of housing at different points and for different reasons. It is clear from the narratives that these personal and idiosyncratic explanations involve an interplay with structural explanations (such as access to housing and labour markets). These factors rarely had a singular, point of origin. Importantly, participants made the distinction between individual reasons which caused (episodes of) homelessness and other factors which prevented re-housing. This latter category is therefore discussed in the next section, alongside the ways in which diminished resilience can perpetuate homelessness amongst migrant groups.

8.3 Perpetuating homelessness

As the preceding section discussed, disadvantage (e.g. due to a poor childhood or abuse) and vulnerability (e.g. as a result of poor English-speaking skills or substance dependency) manifests in homelessness in complex ways. To an extent these individual explanations point to some kind of personal deficit (related to background, abilities or behaviour) contributing to homelessness. At the same time there are other individual shortcomings which may not have caused homelessness but prove to be a critical chink in the armour fending off crisis, such as family intervention or local knowledge. The following narratives illustrate how a person's resilience can become diminished by broader factors which contribute to and perpetuate homelessness.

Social support is an important defence against the worst consequences of crisis for most people. For some participants lacking this safety-net contributed to their homelessness. It is quite possible that had this social support been in place, the aspects which create disadvantage and vulnerability (discussed at length above) may not have resulted in homelessness had key pieces such as social network, ability to self-advocate, and financial resourcefulness been in place to bolster resiliency.

8.3.1 Lack of social networks

For most having family or friends to call upon in emergency situations can provide a lifeline when in urgent and unexpected need of help. Those lacking loved ones who can intervene in time of crisis, for social support, to act on their behalf or to provide emergency resources, are missing a crucial safety-net that for others could prevent or help to resolve homelessness. Alexandru, for example, was direct in his response when asked what social support was available to him, explaining that he had family in Romania whom he could call on the phone but who were not in any position to intervene, beyond providing emotional support, because they were barely managing themselves:

There is nothing that I can get help while they there in Romania. They are managing. Everyone is doing for himself. Everyone with his business, with his problems. And I, mine (Alexandru, M, Romanian).

Others acknowledged that they did have some social support, but the ability (or interest) of family or friends in intervening was limited or unreliable. Sofia, for example, had limited support from her husband who remained in Haiti sending funds when he had the means to do so. However, having experienced bouts of unemployment, this assistance was unpredictable and inconsistent, as she stated: ‘when he has work he can send me, but it is not much’ (Sofia, F, Haitian). Similarly, Valentina explained how the father of her children provides some maintenance support but only enough to barely meet the basic needs of her three children and not substantial enough to lift the family out of homelessness:

Sometimes we didn’t have food or anything, in the fortnights, one week he would- the other he wouldn’t take us food... he gives them their maintenance but it’s not the same as him there, when you undergo things you were not expecting or some emotional things. It’s a mess that I don’t want to remember (Valentina, F, Dominican).

When asked if there was anyone in her life she might be able to call on for help, she reflected on how she felt lost and left to deal with her problems alone. Valentina contemplated the possibility of approaching her brother but ultimately dismissed this, since he was struggling with his own problems: ‘I didn’t know what to do, I don’t have anyone to guide me, so I stayed with my problem and I didn’t look for anyone’ (Valentina, F, Dominican). Santiago felt similarly isolated when he saw his support network disappear upon becoming homeless: ‘I have friends, but what I’ve noticed is that when one has sincere friends, and they see another friend in problems, they should help. But no one helps anyone else’ (Santiago, M, Dominican).

8.3.2 Lack of knowledge and information

Some participants interpreted the question ‘why are you homeless’ as ‘why are you sleeping rough’ and reflected on the reasons why they had not made use of temporary accommodation or other formal support. For Gabriel from Romania and Jakub from Poland, for example, a lack of knowledge or information about formal support contributed to their crises after being unsure of where to turn for help. Ambiguity, uncertainty and unfamiliarity

with systems and support coloured most of the participants' stories in terms of how they got where they were or where they were headed, but these two participants emphasised the connection between the lack of knowledge about formal support and having to sleep rough. Gabriel explained how he could have saved himself from homelessness much sooner had he known where to go for unemployment assistance:

I toiled for about two weeks and I asked those Romanians, 'tell me where the Job Centre is' because I didn't know, and I need to go. Here you enter and see, they said. Well I passed 100 times Job Centre and I didn't see anything (Gabriel, M, Romanian).

Similarly, Jakub described not knowing what to do or where to go when he found himself without a place to sleep and how eventually he learned what services were available to alleviate the worst effects of homelessness. Interestingly, he contrasted his current experience of homelessness with how frightening it had been a year previously when he first had to sleep rough, and how he saw this same fear in others who were homeless for the first time:

Now I know not to die from hunger or cold because even if I lose my sleeping bag I can come here [homeless drop in centre]. Lack of information caused this situation. When the person knows about where to get help, it's easier. Sometimes I notice that in wintertime shelters, not a homeless person, but a person who had just leave their flat – I see the scare in their eyes. Normal person who never been on the street have to spend one night, and I see the scare. Now I don't have that scare (Jakub, M, Polish).

Such responses indicated how powerful access to information resources could be. For a number of respondents their inability to locate effective sources of support was crucial in both preventing homelessness in the first place, but also in terms of their experience when homeless. Lacking familiarity with systems also diminishes one's resilience against homelessness, which is discussed in more detail in an analysis of the factors perpetuating homelessness.

8.3.3 Dislocation and the unfamiliar

Being familiar with bureaucratic systems, such as in accessing social housing or welfare benefits, and the labour and private rented housing markets, can help facilitate resilience and reduce the risk of homelessness. Lacking information about the structures which have the potential to liberate agency puts one in a position of disadvantage, compared to those who have that local knowledge about jobs that are available, the relative cost of housing, and where to find assistance, when in need of employment or housing. Many participants in both case study areas emphasised the confusion they felt when navigating complex systems of social support. For example, in Boston, Mariana understood that she needed to apply for welfare but was intimidated by the complicated forms she was expected to complete on her own. She felt that if someone was available that she trusted to help her fill in the application forms then she would be able to secure a home more quickly:

I don't know anybody. It makes me feel like shouldn't get too attached to people or, I'm afraid to ask for help. You need someone to help you fill out the application (Mariana, F, Haitian).

In Edinburgh, Andrei expressed similar confusion at being able to access the right support and explained that the whole system was completely new to him and that he had no experience of State support as it does not exist in any comparable form in Romania: When I came here I saw that things are different than in our country, that here is an authority, the agency that helps the poors, to help find something to work (Andrei, M, Roma).

Accessing subsidised housing prompted a similarly confused response among participants. Matias, in Massachusetts for example, was unsure of what sort of housing he had applied for, trusting his case manager at the emergency shelter to advocate on his behalf to secure him the appropriate housing for him and his family:

Public housing or, Section 8, or... many different options. Because this the first time I've been on that situation. I can't explain you, we not clear about that. My social worker knows (Matias, M, Haitian).

Ioan was similarly adrift when being confronted with a Scottish local authority's 'Choice Based Lettings' allocation system, which considers the priority status of the applicant who then is required to 'bid' for specific properties of interest. Ioan, however, did not understand that he needed to actively bid for a home, or why he would be required to do so, given that

he was in temporary accommodation. To avoid interacting with a system he did not understand, he relinquished responsibility to his case worker, whom he trusted would act on his behalf:

I've sent all the documents, they told me to wait for a code, so I can bid. This lady, the one from the city hall, she looked on the internet and she found a house, and she told me not to go to bid because she will bid in my place (Ioan, M, Roma).

Some participants were unaware of temporary accommodation available or the existence of emergency shelters, prior to becoming homeless. Sadly, for Valentina this lack of knowledge caused her to endure abuse at the hands of her husband because she assumed there was no place of refuge she could seek. She explains having emigrated from the Dominican Republic with her young children to reunite with their father, only to discover he was living with another woman. She describes being forced to live in an uninhabitable basement with their children for three months before becoming aware that she could flee to emergency shelter: 'I didn't know what to do... I didn't know what a shelter was until I heard someone talking about shelters, and I said I need to get out of there because I just can't do it anymore' (Valentina, F, Dominican).

In Scotland, Alexandru was similarly unaware of temporary accommodation available to him, until approached by an outreach worker. In temporary accommodation, he was unclear as to whether he was expected to pay, or how long he was able to stay. A combination of being unable to speak English and unfamiliarity with homelessness assistance available created a great deal of uncertainty for Alexandru:

I talk with her [case worker] in my third language Spanish because I didn't speak English. They gave me a paper on which was written something, and they sent me there. I don't know what they wrote on the paper. And the people gave me that room. I was told that I am there temporarily. I know that I will be convoked [asked to a formal meeting]. They told me about that payment. I told them that I would agree to pay it if I would have the money and a job. For the moment I don't know what will happen (Alexandru, M, Roma).

Most participants referred to a lack of familiarity with various systems, such as the housing or labour market, and system of subsidised housing, homelessness assistance and social security. For some this lack of familiarity caused pro-longed and unnecessary hardship, and for others this lack of knowledge prevented one from acting in their own best interest, hindering their ability to make an informed choice, and caused dependency on (disinterested) service providers to advocate on their behalf. Having this familiarity may not have prevented homelessness in the first instance but having this knowledge could add to one's resiliency and help to resolve their housing problems faster.

8.3.4 Lack of financial resilience

Most are able to stay resilient and function well in a time of crisis by having a financial cushion (cash or credit) to fall back on, in addition to relying on a social support network and personal resourcefulness. Many participating in the study did not have access to personal savings or an ability to put urgent expenses on credit. Some participants explained that they were forced to incur debts in the process of migrating and exhausted their personal resources early into resettlement. Others, like Vasile and Alejandro, remain financially indebted to those who sponsored their migration in addition to the disadvantage of low wage or insecure employment. Alejandro explained how he survived on just \$5 per day when he first arrived in New York City from the Dominican Republic, despite working 60 hours per week. He described how his brother had supported him being trafficked into America illegally and in order to repay the debt to the 'wolves' (transporters) he had to surrender his pay check to his brother, who would then provide him with a small subsistence rebate:

When I came from over there [the Dominican], my brother spent like \$6,000 on me, so I had to pay that money back to him. It took me 18 months to pay. I was working. He was giving me like \$35 a week. So, he was keeping the rest until I pay him back (Alejandro, M, Dominican).

Needing to survive on such a paltry sum, Alejandro had no option but to accept an offer from his brother to sleep in the back room of his shop. It was not until he paid off this debt that he was able to save for a private let. Similarly, Vasile in Scotland described the debt he was burdened with from Romania and how paying back his creditors remained an

obstacle, more than a year after emigrating. When in Romania he was unable to meet the cost of food, he would take a debt out from the shop to buy essentials. Vasile was still in debt, owing to the cost of feeding his family in Romania, in addition to the loans he took to cover the cost of migrating:

I took a loan a year ago and now I still owe that person, I was unable to pay him back. What I do here, from selling newspapers, is for food and for livelihood. What made me come here was the fact that I said that I want to offer my children a good life, when I was working in Romania I was unable to save money. I'm still here in debt (Vasile, M, Roma).

Alejandro and Vasile's stories both reveal the cost of immigration in terms of a drain on resources, but also the legacy of that debt post migration. In these examples both participants were trapped in a vicious cycle of debt owing to the costs of immigration, combined with a lack of suitable employment opportunities and the prohibitive cost of housing.

Social support, self-reliance, knowledge, and personal resources forms one's resilience at a time of crisis. Starting from a position of disadvantage in one or more regard (e.g. socio-economic factors) in addition to diminished resilience creates precarity and deprives a person of the (financial, emotional and physical) resources needed to prevent the incidence of homelessness. Disadvantage can be further compounded by misfortune or unanticipated negative events such as accident, ill-health or being victim of a crime. For many such problems are temporary and soon recovered from, but for those who are already vulnerable or have diminished resilience these setbacks can have devastating and long-lasting consequences. In some cases, unexpected downturns in life can contribute to homelessness, as the following narratives from migrants reveal.

8.3.5 Loss and theft

Loss of important documents pertaining to identification, residence and ability to work was a recurring theme amongst some homeless migrants in the study. These crucial items were costly to replace, or in some cases, required returning to their home country in order to

obtain replacements, such as professional qualifications and driving licenses. Jakub, for example, explained the experience of having lost his passport. Without any personal resources he had to seek assistance from a charity to be able to afford the bus fare to the city where the Polish embassy was located. To his dismay he discovered that he did not have the correct documentation to prove his identity in order to obtain the passport and spent half the year sleeping rough and doing casual work, until he was able to successfully plead his case:

I lost my entire wallet on the bus: bank card, driver's license, ID. I hadn't anything to prove who I am... I spent six months on the street, doing nothing, smoking, getting high. I have a driving license but to get it back, I must go back to Poland. I just talked the consul, 'I've been pulled onto the streets for six months, I want to pull myself out. I really need this passport' - and the next day, I had one. Everything is possible. You must show you must really want it (Jakub, M, Polish).

Piotr experienced a similar catastrophe when he discovered the campsite where he had been staying was washed away in a flood which ruined all his belongings. For him the consequence of being unable to prove his identity was possible deportation, following an encounter with the police:

I lost in morning all clothes, all what I have. I was arrested in evening because police ask me where I live, and I can't answer because I lost all. Next day I talk to sheriff about this situation and he ask me where I live and... And I answered: 'I don't know!' I was first time in this area (Piotr, M, Polish).

Other participants had important documents taken from them by others. Mariana, who became homeless after being forced out of the home by her father, explained how he compounded the damage by stealing her identity, making payments with her credit card and refusing to return her Social Security Card, which was required for her to gain legal employment:

I end up being broke. Because I find out my dad bought things in my name, bills that I have to pay. And that is when I had the bad credit. Because when

I went to help him he's taking my social security numbers and using my numbers to buy things online - my card. I tried to pay those and ended up being broke (Mariana, F, Haitian).

Mateo also encountered hardship when he discovered his sister had lost his and his partner's life savings, money that they were saving up for a down payment on a home. Mateo explained how he did not have the documentation required to open his own bank account so instead he entrusted his wages to his sister by signing over the payslips to her each month. His savings of over \$7,000 were lost after the IRS seized the sister's assets after she defaulted on federal taxes:

Right now, it's hard. I have like \$7,000 saved in our bank account from all the jobs I was doing in Lawrence and I was also working at the company and when I go home I do some work, and, on the weekends, I have off I'll do some other work. And we changed a check in June for her sister. We deposited a check in her account.... The money that we had saved away was taken away, deducted. Gone (Mateo, M, Dominican).

Loss and theft can happen to anyone and at any point. However, the likelihood of misfortune happening is arguably greater for those living chaotic lifestyles or in upheaval, such as many of those participating in this study. For most, even if the loss represents significant sums or incur large costs to remedy, that in itself will not result in homelessness. However, as these stories reveal, such unexpected contingencies can have a disproportionate impact when living on very low incomes.

8.3.6 Victim of crime

Falling victim to crime can also be unexpected and have serious repercussions in life. Experiencing random acts of violence, for example, can traumatise individuals and can cause long lasting physical (and psychological) harm. For Matias, experiencing an assault by a stranger caused him to flee the area he was living in, with little preparation, fearing that his safety was at risk. This disturbance in his life disrupted his employment and contributed to long lasting instability:

Month and a half after moving to the United States, and I walking down street. The assassin tried to kill me. Knocked me behind, my head and I fell down, I spill lot of blood, and the nurse came picked me up, they bring me to hospital. Could not return after this (Matias, M, Haitian).

Threats of violence can also affect people deeply, in some circumstances (such as extortion) forcing people to make payments involuntarily. Mariana described how she lost her entire savings after the woman whose kids she watched threatened her with physical violence after she had caused damage to her car, while taking care of her children. Mariana explained how she should have given the woman a fraction of what they ended up taking, but for fear of her safety she drained her bank account: ‘after I give her that \$4,000 somebody say that the car is \$1,200... but I gave her it because she said ‘you easy to kill. If you want to stay alive you give me the money’ (Mariana, F, Haitian). This extortion financially devastated Mariana and left her unable to pay for her housing after simultaneously losing her job and her savings.

8.4 Conclusion

Disadvantage, in all its forms, has significant causal force in migrant homelessness, and all are contingent on underlying structures behind these superficial explanations. For example, the incidence of misfortune would not have such devastating consequences if it were not for disadvantage, and the reality of disadvantage is often amplified by one’s structural position within society.

Individual factors which can contribute to homelessness amongst migrants are complex and multiple. For example, a lack of English-speaking ability may make one less competitive in the job market, and therefore reduce the available resources needed to maintain a home. However, although language ability plays a role in the equation it would be wrong to conclude that a failure or refusal to speak English is the cause of homelessness.

This chapter has argued for a distinction between those factors which *precipitate* homelessness and those which *perpetuate* homelessness. For example, it may be that lack of English causes the loss of a job and subsequent homelessness, as in Andrei’s case (above), but the lack of English language ability may also perpetuate homelessness after

being unable to obtain jobs and earn the wages needed to obtain a home. The following chapter explores the housing strategies of homeless migrants, bringing to light the ability of individual agency to overcome disadvantage, and counteract vulnerability imparted by multiple systems which conspire to constrain choice.

9.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to demonstrate how households can actively de-prioritise housing, to the point of homelessness, when faced with multiple competing demands. Building on the concept of ‘shelter poverty’ (which explains how basic needs go unmet to sustain a home), the corollary notion of ‘housing sacrifice’ is introduced here to reveal how households forgo the privacy, safety, and security of a home to meet other financial demands and social needs. By analysing the strategies deployed by migrant groups when faced with housing precarity or literal homelessness, the following sections considers the level of choice and constraint when faced with extreme housing need.

Both case studies illustrate how agency can be deployed when a ‘system of systems’ combine to create extreme constrained choice. This chapter first examines how migrants *share accommodation* with others to reduce cost, increase mobility and access support. It then considers the housing strategies of those *coping with homelessness*, revealing the surprising utility that sleeping rough offers some individuals in terms of financial savings and personal freedom, as well as the ways in which utilising emergency shelter connects families to services and access to subsidised housing. Through examining differences and similarities between Scotland and Massachusetts, this chapter reveals the role of homelessness (in its varying manifestations) in individual housing strategies and how causal agents de-prioritise housing (at least in the short-term), to meet longer term housing goals and other needs.

9.2 Sharing accommodation strategies

For most, housing is the first and largest claim on household income (Stone, 2004). Migrants, and others on a constrained budget with limited earning potential, inevitably look to minimise expenditure on housing. Participants on extremely low (or zero) incomes explained having to look outside the market to meet their housing affordability needs, saving on the cost of rent by ‘couch surfing’ (sleeping in living rooms, typically ad hoc and

for a short period and often in successive moves), ‘doubling up’ (staying with others who would not normally be part of the household, often for a longer period and pre-planned) or overcrowding (being in accommodation that is too small for the needs of the occupants, which may be with or without others who would normally form one’s household).² Often referred to as being ‘precariously housed’ or examples of ‘hidden homelessness’ (see Chapter 2), these households are concealed in other people’s homes, or are living in accommodation that is too small for their needs, primarily to save on the cost of housing, but also as a means to secure support.

In some cases, as shown below, the gap between the cost of housing and what one can afford can alter household formation; pushing multiple families to share the same living space, or breaking up families and dispersing household members across to several hosts, when accommodation is not accessible to the whole family. These sharing arrangements can be ad hoc, one-off events when the opportunity arises to stay with friends or family, for example, or can be planned longer-term agreements with more distant connections. Lack of security of tenure is a concern for most concealed households as typically these scenarios do not impart (legally enforceable) occupancy rights. These situations do not always entail overcrowding, and this issue is treated separately to account for circumstances where families are intact and singular but are unable (or unwilling) to spend more on more suitably sized accommodation.

9.2.1 ‘Couch surfing’

Participants in the study outlined the various financial benefits of being able to stay with people familiar to them (such as family members, friends and other acquaintances), on a short-term basis. Those migrants who slept in living-room accommodation or ‘couch surfed’ were typically single and male, although some participants did refer to periods of

² There is considerable overlap between these categories, but there are distinctions that are made clearer in the narratives of migrants. For example, someone who is staying in someone’s living room is ‘couch surfing’ and ‘doubling up’ with others, but someone who is staying in a spare bedroom in another family’s home would be considered ‘doubled’ up but not thought to be ‘couch surfing’. Furthermore, one could be ‘couch surfing’ or ‘doubling up’ but not necessarily be living in overcrowded conditions, just as a household who is not living with others not normally considered part of their household could be overcrowded if their family is too large for the space being occupied.

having to move several times, from house to house with children and/or spouses accompanying them. ‘Couch surfing’ involved arrangements that were temporary and insecure, but also ad hoc and generally spontaneous, normally involving a concatenation of short-term stays with acquaintances over a period of time. Participants who ‘couch surfed’ mostly enjoyed not having housing costs, in that being accommodated for a night or so was seen as a token of friendship and love, although some said they did contribute a nominal sum in payment. Though not seen as an ideal scenario for anyone, several participants explained ‘couch surfing’ as having its financial advantages; particularly by unaccompanied (mainly, but not exclusively male) individuals.

As an example, Antoni, a young migrant from Poland, explained how he began to accrue rent arrears in his private flat after having lost his job - being able to stay with friends was a way for him to avoid debt. However, like others who relied on friends and family for help, he discovered that this was a short-term solution to a long-term housing affordability problem, as he soon found that he had exhausted his social network. Antoni explained how initially he could rely on his friends in his hour of need to shelter and feed him, but eventually had to sleep rough after running out of options:

The debt was growing every month, so I move out. I stayed with one friend, then with another one and another. I thought that they were my friends, but they just let me stay in their flats. Finally, I said: ‘That’s enough!’ Then, the street (Antoni, M, Polish).

For Antoni, staying with friends temporarily postponed his homelessness for a short time but ‘couch surfing’ also enabled him to avoid inevitable eviction proceedings. Valeria, a migrant from Guatemala, similarly relied on the good will of others (in her case, family members) to shelter her as she did not have the financial resources to secure her own accommodation upon resettlement. She explained after migrating illegally to America she relied on a network of family members who gave her a place to stay for the short-term until she was able to get a job and save for a deposit on a private rental. Valeria explained that there was no housing available for the price that she could afford and that at the time, staying with family was her only option to live within her means:

I lived with different siblings, first with a sister, then with another. They charged very little. I was paying them, every week I gave each one

something because practically all five [siblings] chipped in a little (Valeria, F, Guatemala).

Vasile, a Roma migrant from Romania, also explained being able to call upon a social network to ease his resettlement, and like Valeria, was able to dramatically reduce his housing costs upon arriving. Vasile explained how he stayed with multiple families he was distantly connected to through his own family. Being part of the Roma community, he explained that it was not unusual to ‘couch surf’ between different host families, each sharing the burden of providing a place to stay free of charge with the unstated expectation that once securing their own accommodation that they too would return the favour to another newcomer from their community. For Vasile, this arrangement suited him early in his migration, prior to his family joining him, and that after reunification nearly one year into his resettlement, he became desperate to secure his own place. However, in the longer term this strategy of saving on the cost of housing had an impact on the wellbeing of his children:

They [host family] were sleeping in a bed and I was sleeping on a mattress. But here I didn’t pay rent, they let me stay with them. It was good then just me, but It’s true that is unpleasant to stay at someone’s place without paying rent. I’m with my family now, and I don’t want to be on the road anymore. We are sleeping in the living room. You can imagine that when I was waking up at 6am, my child was also waking up (Vasile, M, Roma).

Vasile’s experience exemplified how ‘couch surfing’ is appealing for single persons as a (short-term) financial strategy but becomes a crisis situation for those accompanied with children. For others, ‘couch surfing’ was a means to be able to support children and a family who remained abroad. Matias, for example, had migrated to America and for many years sent money he earned to his family in Haiti. He explained how it was important for him to stay as mobile as possible so that he could follow job opportunities as they arose, often over state borders. His wide social network within the Haitian community in several Florida towns gave him options to move flexibly for work, enabling him to send larger remittances. Matias explained how his social network offered the short-term support he needed to be able to give himself time to establish himself in new communities:

When I move, I meet some friends. I live with my friend for shortly, until I got job. I got paid so I make money to take care of myself and send the money for my family.... They [friends] let me stay so low [cost] space for a living, until I got job.... I don't like living with friends for long (Matias, M, Haitian).

Piotr, a young Polish migrant, also extolled the benefits of being mobile that 'couch surfing' offered. Like Matias, Piotr enjoyed the freedom of being able to move as he pleased. He explained how he would stay in one place until it no longer suited him and valued being able to leave as he wished. Piotr was unusual in the sense that he viewed homelessness as a safety-net, rather than a worst-case-scenario. Having been homeless for several years, Piotr was used to cycles of staying with people temporarily, until the relationships, whether platonic or romantic, inevitably soured. At the time of the interview, Piotr described how he was staying with a woman 'for now' but knew that if it didn't work out he could 'escape' to the street:

I don't want to do anything about that [find permanent accommodation].
No! I live with this Scottish woman now. I don't know how long but probably if it will be problem with her, I will have to leave the flat, I will go on street. No problem for me... I'm not scared (Piotr, M, Polish).

Perhaps with the exception of Piotr, this strategy of 'couch surfing' whilst not ideal, did offer an important stop gap, whether transitioning between jobs, between places, or to prevent, or at least postpone, street homelessness. This option, however, was much more attractive to unaccompanied individuals; in contrast for families it was preferable to be 'doubled up' or, in some cases 'tripled up', and have (comparatively) more stability.

9.2.2 'Doubling up'

A second strategy involved participants who were sharing accommodation on a longer basis to save money, for example to afford a deposit or to support a family abroad. 'Doubling up' is distinguished here from 'couch surfing' to describe situations where households are living with others who would not normally form part of their household, but for the longer term and (usually) involving a shared responsibility for (some) costs. 'Doubling up' could

involve sleeping in rooms not intended for that purpose, similar to ‘couch surfing’, or could involve sharing a bedroom.

For example, Elena, a Roma migrant from Romania, explained how she and her family were invited to stay with some people she had loosely known from her village in Romania. In her description, she underscored the destitution experienced by her and her family, having very few resources to support her migration and income only from selling street newspapers. Despite her friends offering a submarket rent, Elena and her family faced material deprivation and would forgo meals so they could save money more quickly to be able to secure a private let:

I came with the whole family. We had some friends that told us we can live with them until we find a house or until we can make enough money for a house. We were always saving. We were eating less so that we can also pay them rent and also to save some for us. They weren't even allowing us to cook. The whole day we weren't eating and we were dressed poorly. We didn't have where to stay. We were there to sleep only (Elena, F, Roma).

Thankfully, Elena and her family secured their own accommodation but due to the lack of comfort offered in the shared arrangement she felt that she had to rush into a decision to move out before being able to make the savings that she had intended to accrue from doubling up. For many, ‘couch surfing’ and ‘doubling up’ is not tolerable for any extended period of time, and relationships tended to break down, due to living in close quarters and in difficult circumstances.

One Dominican migrant, Isabella, described how a particularly tense relationship developed after overstaying her welcome. She had originally decided to move in with a friend after staying with several of her brothers, immediately after migrating. She had wanted a more settled option so that her daughter could join her from the Dominican Republic and had thought that ‘doubling up’ would be an opportunity for greater independence. Unfortunately, her friend was discovered to have broken the rules of her Section 8 tenancy by allowing Isabella and her daughter to stay with her, and soon after

moving in she put pressure on them both to move out³. As a consequence, the family broke up with emergency accommodation becoming the only option:

I went to a friend's house and we were there like a month... it seems that she didn't want me to be there... She was saying that she couldn't have people in her house because if Section 8 knew about it she could have problems with her house... So, we left and I looked for a place in a shelter. My daughter is at a friend's house now until I can move out [from the shelter] (Isabella, F, Dominican).

It was ironic that Isabella's quest for independence and family reunification resulted in the break-up of her family and her reliance on emergency shelter for accommodation. Sofia, a migrant from Haiti, had a very similar story of both 'couch surfing' and then finally securing a longer-term arrangement that would allow her son to stay with her in the same room in the house she shared with a friend. Sadly, both Sofia and her son could stay no longer and ultimately ended up in a homeless shelter:

I went to their house, although she didn't have space for me to stay there, since she had a daughter who was studying when I came. But when the daughter finished university, she returned home and there was no room for me... I had another friend who, although she did not have space, let me stay in her children's bedroom with my son. From there [my friend] came with me to apply for shelter (Sofia, F, Haiti).

Elena and Isabella both described very negative experiences in their efforts to save money through 'doubling up'. Living in confined spaces with others who were not normally part of the household raised tensions in the home, especially when the arrangement was not permitted in an occupancy agreement and had to be kept clandestine. Lacking rights to

³ A condition for being in receipt of a Section 8 voucher is that no one else live in the property who is not on the occupancy agreement. Section 8 occupancy agreements have strict rules about the number of guests and how long guests can stay in any given period. Breaches of these agreements can be discovered in annual inspections or by the landlord or their managing agent who lodge a complaint with the Housing Authority if they suspect others are in the property without permission. Violation of the occupancy agreement is grounds for eviction and disqualification for Section 8 assistance (HUD, 2009).

occupy the property, as in Isabella's situation, or having others being able to restrict normal use of the property, as in Elena's case, compounded vulnerability. For some, 'doubling up' can be a route to securing permanent accommodation by being able to save resources, but for Isabella and Sofia the lack of security of tenure led to homelessness, despite striving for self-sufficiency.

9.2.3 Tolerating overcrowding conditions

Severe overcrowding was a sacrifice some participants made to make accommodation more affordable. Ana, a Roma migrant from Romania, endured more than a year of 'tripling up' in a two bedroom flat with two other households, which were comprised of eight other more distant family members. Despite the undoubted hardship she and her family faced during that year, she explained there was a financial benefit to living in such overcrowded conditions, over and above saving on who could look after the children. Having this resource in the home allowed Ana to free up some time to earn money by selling street newspapers. In this household, there was a reciprocal arrangement shared among the women:

We lived with one of my husband's sisters. We were three and they were six, so we were nine in two bedrooms. About a year, we lived together like this. My son was young and I couldn't work every day. My sister-in-law helped me because they had a small child. It was easy for me to go to work because she could look after my son, too (Ana, F, Roma).

Although the informal support offered in the crowded home allowed Ana additional time to earn money, she stressed that her extreme circumstances were borne out of necessity and that she had no other option but to endure this hardship. Overcrowding was not a deliberate strategy, but enabled her to make the most out of a hard situation:

What else could I choose, there was no other choice to make. We wanted to be alone, to have our privacy, because is no good to be many people... No matter how well you care the house, when it's crowded, is crowded! (Ana, F, Roma)

Luciana, a migrant from the Dominican Republic, was slightly more ambiguous about her feelings towards living in overcrowded conditions. As a pregnant unaccompanied minor, Luciana migrated to Massachusetts to stay with her aunt. Being a teenager who had never had to care for herself, she now found herself with her own children to take care of. She was therefore very thankful to have the loving support of a relative, despite having to share a bed with her two children. She reflected how when she was required by social workers to move out of her overcrowded housing and into shelter with her children, her aunt was sad to see her go and she, herself, was reluctant to leave:

My daughter likes sleeping in own bed, my boy too, so when we sleep together in same bed they make me crazy! I'm happy, but it's a little hard because I'm in [my aunt's] space... And she help me. She told me do you want to do it [move out]? She's very sad when I moving, I don't wanna be too much away (Luciana, F, Dominican).

Luciana's story reveals how she was willing to trade-off satisfactory housing conditions (arguably, emergency shelter is at least an improvement in this regard) for the ability to be close to family and a network of support. Antoni, a migrant from Poland, also found that being in overcrowded situations helped him to combat loneliness and emphasised the importance of social support networks in dealing with his situation. Like Luciana, he migrated at a young age but without family nearby, quickly felt isolated and struggled to make friends due to his poor English skills. Antoni had secured a room in a house shared with others and explained that with his job he could reasonably afford the rent, but felt there was room enough to have his friend, who was also from Poland, stay there with him:

I stayed there to save money as well, but I was the only one from Poland. I felt quite lonely there. It was good to stay with my friend... but others in the house they were teasing us, calling us gays. They didn't let us sleep at night. They were very loud and usually drunk. We were attacked few times in the kitchen, which was always really dirty. (Antoni, M, Polish).

In addition to not being alone, there were also clear financial benefits to sharing the cost of living in a shared house by staying in a shared room intended for single occupancy. In this

way Antoni was able to provide not only necessities for himself, but also be able to save for a holiday:

I just wanted to save some money to buy some new clothes. Some better quality clothes. I needed also new glasses because my eyesight was getting worse. I wanted to go to Poland for holidays, you need some money for that (Antoni, M, Polish).

Sharing accommodation involved a series of compromises. Many of the participants who were ‘couch surfing’, ‘doubled up’ or overcrowded emphasised the financial benefit of a reduced housing expense, but this came at a cost of privacy, security and, in some situations, wellbeing. For some participants, sharing accommodation was a choice, typically for younger unaccompanied men looking to maximise earnings in the shorter term, for others being in a ‘concealed household’ was a function of necessity rather than a desire for economic gain. Families with children who were sharing accommodation seemed particularly vulnerable to displacement, either by being asked to leave or being required to leave by official intervention.

There did not seem to be a discernible difference between migrants in Scotland and those in Massachusetts in the ways in which accommodation is shared as a housing strategy. Differences varied much more by household composition, with unaccompanied persons more likely to choose a short-term ‘couch surfing’ arrangement to maximise savings and mobility for work. This contrasted with households with children who experienced ‘doubled up’ and overcrowded conditions out of necessity due to an inability to access subsidised housing or to afford market rent for a suitably sized home for their family. This was the case for both case study areas.

9.3 Coping with homelessness

For a small number of participants, ‘literal homelessness’ was an active strategy in order to maximise savings or achieve other welfare objectives. Polish participants, in particular, spoke about the financial benefits of avoiding housing costs, by opting out of the housing market entirely and rejecting social housing.

It should be acknowledged, however, that for Polish participants whom stated that homelessness was an active choice, certain conditions made this decision more tolerable. For example, these interviews were conducted in the warmer and dryer summer months, and it was likely that these participants would not adopt the same housing strategy during a colder, rainy season. Some participants explained making use of winter shelters or temporary accommodation when sleeping rough became too dangerous at colder temperatures. This is discussed in more detail below.

9.3.1 Sleeping rough

Several Polish men in the study explained how they ‘chose’ to sleep rough to make the most of their low wages and limited funds. Some described sleeping rough as a preference over other options, such as ‘couch surfing’, staying in emergency accommodation or even renting, because of the freedom and cost savings this afforded them.

Others choose to sleep rough as an act of defiance. For example, one Polish migrant, Piotr, was facing deportation⁴. He had rejected temporary accommodation and refused to apply for Jobseekers Allowance despite advice from the Home Office that doing so could prevent ‘administrative removal’. For Piotr, sleeping rough freed him from debt and expense, and liberated him from other societal obligations and responsibility. Such an anti-authority attitude amongst younger Polish men has been commented on in other homelessness studies (Garipech, 2014; Mostowska, 2011).

The interpreter employed during Piotr’s interview explained that in Poland anti-establishment beliefs were commonly described as being ‘choked with freedom’, that after the fall of Communism in Poland many in the younger generations rebelled against any form of State control, including State assistance. To Piotr, accepting State aid or housing assistance would violate deeply held personal ethics about independence and self-efficacy. He would rather the State impose its rule on him through deportation, than to accept its control wilfully via welfare conditionality.

⁴ EU migrants who are homeless are at risk of being deported from the UK as this group is unlikely to be able to prove a Right to Reside in the UK. See Chapter 4 for more detail about UK immigration rules.

During the interview, these beliefs were explored further by way of a counterfactual. The question was put to Piotr that if given the same set of circumstances he is experiencing, but in Poland as opposed to Scotland, if he would 'choose' to sleep rough, to save money and secure independence. Piotr explained that in Poland rough sleeping would not be an option at all, for practical reasons, such as a much colder climate at winter, but also because being homeless carries a much stronger stigma than he believed existed in Scotland. It might also be the case that he had a degree of anonymity in a foreign country where he was unlikely to encounter family or close friends who would repudiate him upon discovering that he was sleeping rough. More pertinent was that he felt homelessness in Poland was seen as a condition for the truly degenerate and deviant within society - according to Piotr, only 'pathological alcoholics' became homeless in Poland. He saw his status as much higher than this group of homeless, and that homelessness in Scotland did not occupy such a low social acceptance as it did in Poland. He described these differences and because of these was reluctant to explain his circumstances to family in Poland:

It would be worse [to be homeless in Poland]. I have family! Friends! Live on street... in Poland? Different level than here. Somebody [would] say, 'Hey! You live on street? Come on! This is Poland!' Maybe there small people know about my situation but many, many small. I can live here on street. No problem. But no in Poland! (Piotr, M, Polish)

Jakub, also a migrant from Poland, similarly adopted homelessness as a strategy to stretch limited resources. Although personal independence was less of a concern for Jakub than for Piotr, it still featured in his interview as a personal value secured through sleeping rough. It was also clear in Jakub's description of his experience of sleeping rough that homelessness has different connotations in different cultural and social contexts. Like Piotr, Jakub described his surprise at being able to manage without a reliable place to sleep at night, that such a prospect would be unthinkable for him in Poland, albeit mainly for practical reasons. He described how he circumvented barriers to getting a job whilst homeless, by using public showers and keeping an address at a homeless drop-in centre so that he could collect his post. Jakub emphasised the support mechanisms which enabled him to secure and hold down a job while homeless:

I didn't look for work when I was [first] homeless, I didn't think it was possible. But now I know it's possible... Now I sleep in the park, sometimes I sleep in the church. I have all the clothes for work in my pack, and change at work. I the first homeless guy to get a job! No one hires a homeless guy. I give them an address for the postman, at the showers. I didn't think they would hire me if they think I was homeless (Jakub, M, Polish).

Alexandru was the only participant in the study who had slept rough as an active choice that was not Polish. Like Piotr and Jakub, he remarked how in Scotland he was able to maintain a normal life (for example by working and socialising) whilst homeless. Alexandru, who is not Roma and is from Romania, explained how he had travelled for work through several European countries (Spain, Belgium, France) and would sleep rough if accommodation was not provided as a condition for his employment. Like others in the study, homelessness was a means for him to be able to maximise his (low) wages. Alexandru remarked how this strategy was particularly 'easy' in Scotland compared to elsewhere:

I was thinking to settle here because I have no other hope. But I knew it will be difficult. Like it was when I went in Spain for the first time. There I also slept outside on the streets. I was thinking that it would be the same here. I didn't imagine it would be easier, and it is (Alexandru, M, Romanian).

Those who actively 'chose' to sleep rough appeared to exercise more agency than other similarly positioned participants in the study. For other respondents, sleeping rough was a last resort, arising out of necessity. Another Romanian migrant who was not Roma, for example, was very explicit about not having any choice but to sleep rough because all the money he had was only enough for the cost of food: 'I have no choice. I eat what we have' (Gabriel, M, Romanian).

Others in the study also noted a financial benefit to sleeping rough, but explained that it was the result of constraint. Andrei, a Roma migrant from Romania, had hoped that securing temporary accommodation would enable him to reunite with his estranged family upon securing some stability. Andrei explained how he, along with his wife and two young children, had slept rough for two weeks upon arriving in the Scottish city from Romania. Upon his brother-in-law learning of their desperate situation, he convinced his sister to take

the children and join him temporarily where he lived outside of London. Shortly thereafter Andrei secured temporary accommodation but felt pressured to leave by council staff because his immigration status as an A2 national disqualified him for Housing Benefit which otherwise would have paid for the prohibitive rent and service charges. Andrei explained how he felt he had to leave and stay on the street if he were ever able to save enough money to be able to secure a home so that he might convince his family to return to him:

[Sleeping rough] is to save some money, to help me to have a house and bring the children. Because they said they don't come unless they had a house to stay. They don't want to stay on the street as they stayed before. They stayed on the street for two weeks and they said, 'we don't want this, but if you buy a house or make a way we will come'. That's why I here, this situation! To save some money and make a house (Andrei, M, Roma).

Although some may interpret this participant as choosing to leave temporary accommodation for the streets, Andrei felt that the rent was so much greater than he could afford from his wages selling a street newspaper, that it was not actually a viable choice. He had wanted to pay in good faith, but he felt that doing so it would eliminate any hope of him being able to save the money required to rent in either the private or social housing sector. For Andrei, sleeping rough provided him an opportunity to save to be able to meet this goal in the future. He could afford no other option.

However, even for those participants who explicitly claimed that sleeping rough was a choice, it was questionable how much agency was exercised in this decision. It could be interpreted that sleeping rough is the least bad option out of a range of bad options. For example, Antoni, the Polish migrant who was 'couch surfing' between friends after being unable to afford rent, explained how eventually he left his friends after they would no longer support him and that he 'preferred to sleep on a street' (Antoni, M, Polish). For Antoni, sleeping rough may not be a preference generally, but rather a preference to 'couch surfing'.

Similarly, Piotr, who was the most vocal and proud about his choice to be homeless, sleeping rough was preferable as an option because it afforded him the most independence, a value he clearly cherished. It could be argued that a private flat on his own would also offer a similar level of independence, but because of the cost this was not a possibility. If

his choices were to stay on a friend's couch or in council-run temporary accommodation, then it becomes easier to understand why he might choose to sleep rough, if such a high premium is placed on independence and freedom.

In contrast to the above cases, another respondent in the study explained that homelessness was not only his choice, but his preference when compared to *hypothetical* housing options. In this case it was more persuasive that sleeping rough was a matter of exercising agency. For Dawid, a Polish rough sleeper, homelessness was a long-term economic strategy. Unlike other Polish migrants in the study, he migrated to the UK prior to Polish accession to the EU in 2004 and benefitted from a booming UK construction sector at that time. He explained how he stretched his pay-packet further by staying in very crowded situations with other workers on a particular jobsite, or when a job was in a more rural setting he stayed in a tent. According to Dawid, the best arrangements he secured was when he was staying in squats. He explained how squats offered him what resembled the security and privacy of a rented home, but without having to pay for it, and that on balance, this was more 'convenient':

I worked illegally on construction sites, then I got a job in a bakery that was legal and was working while in the squat. It was comfortable because I had everything there. Now I going to take a private let, a room. There are no squats. Squat is ideal choice. Life is more convenient in squats (Dawid, M, Polish).

As seen in the Scottish case study, there are varying degrees of choice exercised by homeless participants when sleeping rough. As an extreme example, Dawid explained that even in hypothetical situations, sleeping in places not fit for human habitation was 'ideal'. Similarly, Piotr enjoyed the freedom of sleeping rough and Jakub the financial benefits, although unlike Dawid, it was unclear how far this was an actual preference or merely a choice amongst worse options. With perhaps the exception of Romanian migrant Alexandru, the Polish participants were distinctive in the sense that they had the least secure housing (no shelter, in most cases) and (by their account) the most degree of choice. For other participants in the study, sleeping rough was the result of exhausting all other choices.

It was not clear why Polish participants in the study seemed to be exceptional. Possible explanations include the *Homo Sovieticus* thesis in the desire to disobey authority at all

costs (Garepich, 2014), perceptions of social acceptability of rough sleeping compared to attitudes in a home country in which the availability of social services reinforces such a belief, or that most of the Polish participants were young, unaccompanied and had migrated with the primary purpose of accruing as much savings in as short a time as possible. In this sense, the Polish participants had the greatest degree of choice, being relatively free of responsibility or restrictions related to family composition, health or social status. These practical matters in combination with certain cultural attitudes and a short-term economic goal of migration together encourages a higher tolerance for what most would regard as unacceptable conditions and the deliberate de-prioritisation of housing, to the point of homelessness.

Just as sleeping rough was a distinctive act of defiance largely amongst Polish participants and exclusively in the Scottish sample, there was also important distinctions as to how emergency shelter was utilised in the two case study areas. As the discussions below reveal, Eastern European participants in Scotland tended to use emergency accommodation in a much more temporary and ad hoc basis, when the conditions made it more convenient for them to do so, whereas the respondents from Central America relied on emergency accommodation in Massachusetts for the long-term and as a means to secure stability for their families. Because of these different uses of emergency accommodation (which varied possibly due to the differences in eligibility criteria between the two systems, but also because of variations in the household composition between the samples in the two case study areas), the participants emphasised different benefits. Participants in the Scottish case study largely emphasised the financial benefits and the freedom and flexibility shelter offered (depending on eligibility for assistance), whereas participants in Massachusetts enjoyed the services they accessed and opportunity for permanent re-housing. The variation in these strategies around emergency shelter between the two case study areas also related to varying goals (and permissions) afforded to participants in their wider migration strategy. These comparisons between the two case studies are drawn in detail below.

9.3.2 Utilising temporary accommodation in Scotland

Emergency shelter and temporary accommodation were used strategically by some respondents in the Scottish case study. For many of these participants, temporary

accommodation was time limited due to ineligibility for homelessness assistance and/or Housing Benefit, and most emergency shelters were only available during the winter months and not intended as a longer-term option. Those informed of which shelters were available and when, and/or knowledgeable about their rights to access temporary accommodation, spoke of being able to manoeuvre between other arrangements ('couch surfing', sleeping rough) and shelter depending upon the concessions they were willing to make at the time; for example, in sacrificing a warm and dry place to sleep at night so as to be nearer to work (choosing rough sleeping) or paying for commuting costs when it was dangerously cold out (choosing shelter).

Jan, in particular, was well informed of the options available to him as a Polish migrant with restricted access to homelessness assistance and benefits. He explained how he was living in a tent with his brother while picking up casual work. Like Dawid, who maximised his earnings by staying in squats, Jan was long-term homeless while moving from job to job, typically within construction when building work was available. He explained how he was surprised to learn at first that emergency shelters at churches were available and that he could go to the council for assistance. Having been to make a homelessness application previously, Jan was aware that he had a right to temporary accommodation for a period of 28 days whilst the council was deciding on his application. Jan anticipated that he and his brother would be refused homelessness assistance on the basis of their legal status, and he explained how he was 'saving' their right to 28 days temporary accommodation for during the colder winter months:

I got some job but we live in a tent. After this we sleep in a church. Have you ever heard of something like that?!... Then I can get B&B. This is only for 28 days and I'm waiting for winter. Now it's warm and no problem (Jan, M, Polish).

Another Polish migrant, Jakub, explained how he attempted to make use of temporary accommodation and was discouraged by the cost. Having migrated to the UK after 2014 when further benefit restrictions were placed on EU migrants (see Chapter 4), Jakub explained how he was unable to claim Housing Benefit that would enable him to pay for the expensive rent charges and that his entire pay-packet would be spent on rent had he accepted temporary accommodation. He expressed his frustration at not understanding why

some homeless persons are required to pay full cost of temporary accommodation while others are subsidised:

I get my pay slip, I get £300. They [council] take £250 from me, and I get £67.90 for living from Jobseekers Allowance. I will not work only for accommodation... I will not make my hard money - you know, I sweat, tears and everything for that money for one week accommodation? ...So, someone else doesn't work, do nothing, and pay £10 per week. And why he have B&B and I working and trying to do something? I say no thank you (Jakub, M, Polish).

When asked about using emergency shelters as a cheaper alternative to temporary accommodation, Jakub explained he would only access this support when it was too cold for him to sleep rough, because he generally did not feel safe in some of the shelters. Additionally, he was discouraged by not being able to anticipate where he was going to be placed on any given night, which made it difficult for him to plan how to get to work. Jakub explained how there would be an added cost if he made use of emergency shelters as doing so would likely add to his commuting costs:

I working now, so the shelters - every day is different place. So, it will be hard to get to work every day. Every night is different church. One time is 10 miles away, another is in the centre. When I was still working, it will be difficult to move to a different church every day (Jakub, M, Polish).

Another young migrant from Poland, Antoni, explained how he accessed temporary accommodation but lost his place after failing to return one evening. Unlike Jakub, he qualified for Housing Benefit and expressed his surprise at how swiftly he was offered accommodation after making a homelessness application:

The [council] let me sleep in the B&B provided that I have a job or earn any money from Jobseekers Allowance, for example. They asked me if I had any job. I said that I had and I was homeless. I didn't have any place to stay. I told them my story, how it happened, and I got a B&B the same day! I stayed there for about half a year. (Antoni, 29).

For Ioan, a Roma migrant from Romania, temporary accommodation was an ideal arrangement as he saw it as a means to save money that he would have spent on private rent upon being reunited with his family. Like Antoni, he was surprised at the swiftness the council provided temporary accommodation for him and his family:

For one month, I was moving from place to place. Then I heard that I can register as a homeless and then they will provide a place to sleep. I have some money but no place to live. I have five children and that I would like to bring my whole family here... She [caseworker] told me that if in one week if I manage to bring my children, she'd give me a house I've never seen anything like this before! (Ioan, M, Roma).

Alexandru, who is also from Romania but not Roma, also expressed relief at being able to access temporary accommodation, and so swiftly. He explained how prior to being accommodated he exhausted his social support and resorted to sleeping rough when he could not find any friend to stay with:

Indeed, it was difficult until I got a home. I did not even think to find a solution, to receive a room in such sort period of time. That was the only solution. I had no possibility to live with other friends (Alexandru, M, Romanian).

Alexandru believed he was faced with the only option of sleeping rough or staying in temporary accommodation, and for him the choice was straightforward. For others, such as Jakub or Dawid who were not entitled to benefit assistance, temporary accommodation was less attractive. Others in the study also noted other downsides in addition to cost, such as the unpredictability of where they were placed, the concern for safety, and the added burden of accommodation being highly conditional on behavioural contracts. As explained above, for Polish participants in particular, sleeping rough was a preferable option to temporary accommodation or emergency shelter.

9.3.3 Accessing emergency family shelter in Massachusetts

Some participants in the study had personal experience of the difference being considered a priority, or not, had on their ability to access service and/or housing. Luciana, for example,

was conscious that her priority for assistance was based on her daughter and not her herself, that had she not had children she would not have been eligible being an individual or as a person without legal status. She explained how she could not get welfare assistance to cover her expenses, or access support for other issues such as immigration or employment training, that were not directly related to the welfare of her children. Luciana describes how state assistance was limited to food and shelter for her children:

Social worker not helping *my* problems. Only the priority is my daughter. She gonna stay good, she has to be eating good, and she has to have someplace good for her, so that's the priority for DTA [Department of Transitional Assistance] (Luciana, F, Dominican).

Blanca similarly observed the differential treatment afforded to individuals compared to families with children when she and her husband were without a place to sleep after being asked to leave by a relative unexpectedly. Blanca described how they were escorted by police to a low threshold emergency shelter after being discovered sleeping in their car, and how frightened she was being the only female in a 'wet' shelter and separated from her husband, as there were no family rooms. It was only until she explained that she was in her last trimester of pregnancy that the couple was transferred to emergency family shelter. Blanca explained her relief at having been transferred to family shelter because she felt safer and more secure knowing that she could stay until she was re-housed and her time was not limited to a 30 day stay as it was in the wet shelter. Her husband, Mateo, went on to explain how being placed in emergency family shelter was like 'winning the lottery' and that had they been placed elsewhere, such as the overflow motels, they would not be able to access the support they needed to be able to secure re-housing, at least not as swiftly as they would while being in shelter:

How long [re-housing] takes depends where they put you. Cuz I know people that told me they've been in the motels and there's terrible help going towards them. It takes weeks until you see a case manager versus being in a shelter, it's like you hit the lottery. Cuz you have a case manager, a case worker 24/7. Say we didn't have the baby, we would have been [placed] in the motel (Mateo, M, Dominican).

Valentina, also a migrant from the Dominican Republic, explained the difference between being accommodated in a motel compared to family shelter first hand after having stayed in overflow accommodation for nearly a year with her two young children. She described having three people share a single motel room for ten months akin to a jail sentence and that in this time she received very little help to resolve her housing problem. Like Blanca and Mateo, Valentina also expressed optimism in being re-housed due to the support she was receiving in shelter:

When I came here [to shelter] I saw a light, I saw hope, I was positive. Unlike when I arrived at the hotel, I'm like in a jail, because it was depressing. I already have one year and three months in a shelter but in here you feel more included, more protected, everyone is helping you, they are working for you to get things solved. In here they are aware of what you need (Valentina, F, Dominican).

Isabella, also Dominican, shared Valentina's relief at being accommodated in emergency family shelter and expounded at length at the number of benefits her and her family received in shelter. Prior to shelter Isabella was in a motel with her young son who suffers from cardio-vascular disease and was shortly transferred due to being a medical priority. Isabella and her son had been moving between friends' homes and after her son's health deteriorated she sought homelessness assistance. Having never engaged with formal systems of support, she explained how shelter provided an opportunity to secure a permanent housing solution for her and her son, stating that: '[Section 8 programmes] give more preference to the people living in shelters than to those who live elsewhere' (Isabella, F, Dominican).

Isabella was clear that to her the shelter represented a crucial safety-net, that regardless of whether or not she was able to bring home a paycheque that week, she could at least rely on knowing that her and her son would be safe and have food and shelter. She reflected on the ways in which she depended on the shelter and its services and how it may be difficult for her to retain this level of security without this support upon rehousing. Isabella explained being worried that she may not be able to achieve stability, even with assistance from subsidised housing, and that the consequences of failing were severe without the readily available support that she enjoys at the shelter. Isabella felt that because of her son's poor health condition and having no one else available to provide financial or emotional

support, she needed additional help over and above affordable housing. She pondered how it was going to be when she had to ‘stand up on her own two feet’ after moving on from shelter:

I have no worries here. When I come back from work I know that I will see people... here I have the team to look after my son... I do *have* to move, and I do *want* to move. I want to become independent, but I am not desperate to leave this place because I feel good here. I want to leave because it is the time to leave. I let it in God’s hands. (Isabella, F, Dominican).

There were some participants, however, that had a much more negative experience in shelter and that having waited for a long time were not optimistic that they would be rehoused. Valeria, for example, explained that her case manager at the shelter ‘don’t offer hope’ and that she was in shelter because she had no other choice (Valeria, F, Guatemala). Sofia expressed a similar degree of hopelessness, and having no other option, did not see how there could be anything positive about her family’s situation, explaining simply ‘I have nowhere to go. I needed a place to live with the baby, since I did not have anywhere to go, that’s why I’m here [in shelter]’ (Sofia, F, Haitian).

As explained at the beginning of this discussion, the use of emergency shelter as well as the benefits received from being temporarily accommodated, varied greatly between the two case study areas, for a number of important reasons. In the Scottish case study, temporary accommodation and shelter was typically a short-term option, participants felt they could rely on when other options were not feasible, such as sleeping rough when it was too cold or when they did not have a friend they could stay with that night. The Polish participants in particular noted drawbacks associated with temporary accommodation, and because of these deterrents tended to look for other options. The right to homelessness services and entitlement to benefits also factored into how attractive this option was, or if it was an option at all. For those relying on temporary accommodation as a longer-term option, such as Roma migrants who were entitled to assistance, the financial benefits were emphasised, commenting on how they would not be able to make ends meet or be able to save as much as they were had it not been for this emergency assistance. Family

reunification was also a benefit which particularly emerged from interviews with Roma participants.

Participants in the Massachusetts case study used emergency shelter in a different way than respondents in Scotland. Where the participants from Eastern and Central Europe largely emphasised the financial benefits of temporary accommodation and the availability of emergency shelter as an ad hoc housing option, the respondents in Massachusetts tended to use shelter as a longer-term option and as a means to access support services and, eventually, permanent housing.

These differences may be largely explained by the different ways in which emergency shelter operates in Massachusetts compared to Scotland. As explained in Chapter 4, Massachusetts, being the only 'Right to Shelter' state in America, is required by state statute to provide emergency shelter to any homeless family with dependent children without eligibility restrictions. Given this important distinction, all the participants in the Massachusetts study who were residing in shelter had dependents in their household, whereas in the Scottish case study many were unaccompanied younger men. It is interesting, therefore, that financial benefits were not identified by the participants in the Massachusetts case study considering the in-built affordability (one-third of income going to savings rather than rent) in the Massachusetts sample compared to the more expensive temporary accommodation (depending on benefit eligibility) in Scotland. Instead, access to support, services, and re-housing assistance was emphasised, possibly because this has a higher value to families residing in emergency accommodation for the longer-term, viewing shelter as a gateway to permanent accommodation.

9.4 Conclusion

The responses considered in this chapter illustrated how the degree of agency participants exercised varied in both case study areas. Some, like Romanian migrant Gabriel, expressed having no choice in having to sleep rough, and similarly Sofia from Haiti felt being in family shelter was her only option. This contrasted with the examples of Polish migrants Jan and Piotr, for example, who explained that homelessness was their 'choice' and, in fact, expressed a preference to sleep rough or in places not fit for human habitation. Similarly, some of those who were sharing accommodation, such as Matias from Haiti and Luciana

from the Dominican Republic, explained that ‘couch surfing’ or ‘doubling up’ was an active choice for the financial or social benefits staying with others afforded. Others, particularly those in family shelter or temporary accommodation, explained having sought emergency assistance after having exhausted all other choices, but that there were some benefits associated with being in shelter (such as access to services and re-housing as well as ability to save) even if not ‘choosing’ shelter for those reasons.

Migrant responses to homelessness are dependent on the context in which homelessness occurs and the degree to which choice is constrained, but ultimately these responses are the result of a decision-making process involving the weighing up of options and making calculations based on one’s values and preferences. There are underlying causal mechanisms which determine the degree of choice afforded, namely, immigration and legal status in the case of homeless migrants, and the ways in which people responded to these constraints depended on an array of highly idiosyncratic factors, such as cultural attributes and personal characteristics, which interact with these structural forces.

The housing strategies of homeless migrants varied between Massachusetts and Scotland insofar as the conditions which constrain choice varied by case study area, but there were also striking similarities between the groups. For example, Polish migrants in Scotland in many ways had the most degree of choice of all the participants in both case study areas, in that these participants had freedom of movement and (in some cases) were eligible for state assistance (in a way that was not available to any of the respondents in the Massachusetts case study), but were also had more latitude of choice available being younger, unaccompanied single adults. These respondents did not necessarily intend to permanently settle in Scotland, nor did they express an interest in permanent re-housing.

The Polish participants seemed to be the worst housed, some without shelter of any kind, but paradoxically exercised the greatest degree of choice. Others who experienced more constraints with regards to immigration status and family composition, in particular, seemed to have less choice but be relatively better housed. For example, participants in Massachusetts had limited or no freedom of movement, and if involving a family with dependent children, had little choice but to occupy emergency shelter after being unable to secure public or private housing. Structural and individual circumstances combine to

influence the housing strategies of homelessness migrants in ways similar to these causal forces generate homelessness amongst migrants.

10.1 Introduction

As noted in the introduction, growing civil unrest in large parts of the world has led to historic numbers of externally displaced persons in the 21st century, alongside unprecedented economic migration in the years immediately preceding and following the 2009 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) (Buckley et al, 2018). In response to this latest wave of migration, receiving countries (namely in the west) largely responded by turning inward and hardening borders (Egoz et al, 2017). In the US and the UK specifically, efforts to limit immigration (voluntary and humanitarian forms) accompanied a period of economic austerity, and more recently, a rise of far-right conservatism and ethnocentrism which is directly hostile to immigration (and migrants) (Harell et al, 2017). A distinctive shift from *managing* towards *controlling* migration has become an increasing priority justified by national security imperatives as well as for more populist reasons (Hogan and Haltinner, 2015). In the US context, restricting immigration has mostly been justified as a matter of ensuring public safety based on the fear of foreign threats (Ewing et al, 2015), whereas in the UK anti-immigration rhetoric has largely focussed on protection of the welfare state (Ford, 2018).

It is in this context of extraordinary global displacement, recent economic recession, wide and growing global social inequality (Milanovic, 2016), and hardening public attitudes towards immigration (Ford and Lympelopoulou, 2016), that migrant homelessness has become an important and increasingly contested issue for both America and Europe. This thesis has analysed the causes of, and responses to, migrant homelessness, looking specifically at how vulnerable migrants respond to disadvantage and deprivation. More broadly, the study of migrant homelessness provides an illustration of how housing systems interact with other social structures to produce extreme precarity. The extent to which agency can be exercised in the context of extreme constrained choice, reveals the preferences, underlying values and negotiations made in the housing strategies of migrant groups. In focussing on migrants as a distinct category, whilst recognising their diversity, the study engenders an appreciation for the ‘whole person’ in understanding homelessness

(Somerville, 2013) and the identification of common factors which bind specific groups together.

Whilst in the European context where increasing attention has been given to migrant homelessness, there is scant research in this area prior to the early 2000s. Migrant homelessness is also largely unexplored in the American context; the most relevant literature centres on race and ethnicity (particularly, Latino and African American populations) rather than explicitly focussing on foreign-born populations. The concept of ‘migrant homelessness’ appears limited to Canadian studies, although the problem of a growing number of immigrants particularly from Latin American countries sleeping rough in Los Angeles (Burmudez and Vive, 2017), Washington D.C. (Gomez, 2017) and New York City (Spivack, 2017) has recently arisen in media headlines as ‘undocumented homelessness’. These narratives link the issue to the increasingly hostile landscape confronting irregular migrants following the Trump Administration’s January 2017 executive order to withdraw federal funding to ‘sanctuary cities,’ so-called for their limited cooperation with the national government’s efforts to enforce immigration restrictions (Bauder, 2017). Evidence is emerging that street homelessness amongst the foreign-born population is growing in major American cities as the 2017 deportation order to remove undocumented immigrants from the country suspected of committing (non-violent) crimes has deterred homeless persons to access the shelter system for fear of expulsion.

This thesis therefore attempts to offer an enhanced understanding of the differing causes, implications and consequences of migrant homelessness through providing a detailed analysis of the experience of these groups. Through the key findings of this comparative, in-depth qualitative study, this concluding chapter considers the implications for public policy in responding to migrant homelessness following on the key findings concerning 1) the connection between migration and homelessness, 2) the structural and individual causes of migrant homelessness, and 3) the housing strategies of homeless migrants.

10.2 Key findings

The thesis used the concept of ‘housing sacrifice’ to show the extent to which housing presented an arena in which difficult negotiations were made, by demonstrating the conditions wherein housing was actively de-prioritised (in the more extreme cases, to the point of homelessness) and how the abnegation of (some aspect of) shelter had respective utility in relation to other goals. If ‘shelter poverty’ asks to what extent do households forgo necessities in order to maintain a roof over their head (Stone, 2004), ‘housing sacrifice’ asks in what ways are households forgoing housing to achieve other necessities?

The evidence presented in the thesis showed how the housing strategies of homeless migrants revealed a capacity to create opportunities where few exist, particularly in the context of what were undoubtedly extreme circumstances. A variety of housing strategies were employed by participants, demonstrating conscious and active decisions to manipulate housing need/consumption - to achieve both immediate and longer-term social and economic goals. Some participants, however, were at pains to emphasise that their current circumstances were the result of having ‘no choice’; for example, one participant explained how she was forced to reside in extremely overcrowded conditions, purely because she saw she had no other option. Others explained their actions being a consequence of ‘last resort’; for example, sleeping rough was a bad option, out of range of worse options. The options available to homeless households were strongly influenced by the circumstances surrounding their migration, for example the conditions which ‘pushed’ them from their sending country, and the reasons which ‘pulled’ them to the receiving state.

In these cases where housing choice was the most constrained (and sometimes non-existent), the exercise of personal agency was nevertheless still apparent, in the preferences, values and trade-offs respondents made in their need for day-to-day survival. Further, it should be understood that the perception, knowledge and attractiveness of choices available determined whether or not alternatives were viable options. Cultural attitudes, for example, strongly mediated individual decision-making and prioritisation, which can change over time. For example, some participants specifically spoke of how the availability of opportunities led to shifting priorities - as in the case of one participant who was only able to consider other goals, when no longer living hand-to-mouth and preoccupied with day-to-day survival (as had been the case prior to migration).

As explained earlier, the focus on housing strategies in this thesis was deliberate. Although routes in and out of homelessness are typically described as 'housing pathways' (Clapham, 2002; Clapham, 2012), this concept was rejected for its implicit passivity, ascribed to actors who seemingly pass through different tenures without an explicit purpose or (subjective) value assigned to housing options. Similarly, the concept of 'housing careers' (Rossi, 1955; Michelson, 1977) was rejected for its linear imagination of housing, which being value laden, carried implicit assumptions about housing aspirations and the primacy of homeownership. The concept of 'housing strategies' (Murie and Forrest, 1980; Thorns, 1981) most accurately depicted the ways in which households were active agents participating in housing systems and acknowledging the role of housing in achieving wider goals and ambitions.

As the empirical findings suggest, for most households, housing was the first and largest claim on family incomes (Stone, 2009). When faced with competing priorities, the largest savings could therefore be found from reducing housing costs. In extreme cases, the de-prioritisation of housing amounted to a level of sacrifice, when it reached below a level most would consider to be acceptable. Sharing accommodation, either by couch surfing, being doubled up or tolerating overcrowding, was (and continues to be) a common strategy amongst migrants to reduce housing costs. For some, particularly single persons who did not intend to permanently resettle, this presented an attractive, short-term solution to what otherwise would be a long-term affordability problem. For others, particularly households with dependent children, sharing accommodation was simply not an option, for practical or legal reasons, such as contravening child protection laws. For households with less ability to negotiate housing consumption, substandard and submarket housing provided a cheap (albeit inadequate) way of providing shelter. Across the case study areas, households who actively sacrificed some aspect of their housing were willing to accept less tolerable circumstances in the belief that their situation was temporary.

In a minority of cases, the use of emergency shelters and temporary accommodation formed individual strategies for meeting immediate needs, and also at times offering the chance of upward mobility (in contrast to those in the study who explained that utilising emergency shelter was a last resort, after having exhausted all other opportunities). Families in the US case study, for example, explained how making use of the shelter system was preferable over other (tenable) options, such as expensive private rent, due to inbuilt incentives for

savings (enforced via refundable rent payments upon moving out of shelter), and the direct route the shelter system provided for subsidised housing, that would not have been available if renting in the private housing market. Similarly, participants in the Scottish case study explained how temporary accommodation (when subsidised by benefits) enabled them to amass savings much faster than if they had secured accommodation on the private market. This 'choice' to utilise emergency shelter, however, should not be interpreted as evidence of manipulating or abusing public assistance. For most in this position, the shelter system was one option out of a range of poor options, and emergency accommodation was far from an optimal position. However, the 'advantages' offered by emergency shelter systems were mentioned by participants when compared to worse alternatives. In some extreme cases, some participants went as far as to suggest that sleeping rough offered a similar cost-saving benefit, but without the behavioural conditions attached to being sheltered in temporary accommodation (this was a particularly notable feature of the responses from Polish participants in the Scottish study).

There were multiple reasons why households 'chose' to sacrifice some element of their housing. As explained above, for some participants housing sacrifice was borne out of necessity. For others, however, this decision was an active although never 'ideal' choice (apart from one Polish participant who proclaimed a preference for residing in squats above all other *hypothetical* housing options). However limited, this still suggests some autonomy. Each housing strategy, if discussed as such, had different benefits (along with obvious costs). For example, sharing accommodation not only afforded some households with critical financial savings, in some cases it also had social benefits such as a (less than ideal) solution to chronic isolation and unmet child caring needs. As explained above, emergency shelter use had very specific benefits in creating access to specialised support and offering a clear route to permanent housing, which reflected the American orientation towards emergency assistance rather than homelessness prevention. Sleeping rough was even purported to provide the psychosocial benefits of freedom and independence (though, most would very reasonably argue the costs of sleeping rough in terms of health and wellbeing dramatically outweigh these more abstract benefits).

The financial benefit from housing sacrifice enabled participants to accrue savings faster (which was particularly important to participants whose long-term aim was to return to their home country and, for example, eventually to buy a home). Additionally, as explained

above, many participants were sending remittances (despite having extremely pressurised incomes to be able to support themselves) and these housing sacrifices enabled participants to support more than one household (even if not very successfully). Interestingly, the lack of security of tenure afforded some participants the flexibility to pursue far flung/ speculative work opportunities at a moment's notice. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier many participants accrued large debts in the process of migrating, and reducing their housing costs as much as possible allowed them the possibility of becoming financially free from their creditors – these creditors might be families but in some cases were described as ‘wolves’ or ‘transporters’, implying a veiled (or explicit) threat of violence in cases of default. Finally, housing sacrifice enabled households to meet other non-housing related needs, for example access to life-saving medical care, or other meeting expenses such as higher education or training, even if at the expense of privacy, security or wellbeing (at least for the short-term).

10.3 Policy implications

The ambition of public policy to address the incidence of homelessness amongst migrants, can approach the problem from one of two angles – either by removing the conditions which create the need for households to make hard choices in the first instance, or by enabling households' greater ability to negotiate housing need. With regard to the latter policy option, the following discussion explores the ways in which public policy can expand the choice of homeless migrants.

The elements which collectively comprise a ‘home’ can be sacrificed individually, or in combination. Watson and Austerberry (1986) put forth that there are (at least) five ‘key signifiers’ of the concept of home, for example, *shelter* corresponds to decent material conditions, *hearth* relates to emotional and physical well-being, *heart* to ‘loving and caring social relations’, *privacy* in reference to the degree to which one can control their living space, and *abode* to describe the place where basic physiological needs are met, such as eating, bathing and sleeping. The housing strategies of homeless migrants revealed how these individual components of a home can be sacrificed to meet other priorities.

The first two elements of a home, *privacy* and *abode*, are perhaps the only acceptable areas in which housing policy might seek to expand the choice of households to forego housing.

For example, online platforms which broker sharing arrangements such as AirBnB, have become increasingly popular in creating short-term lodging agreements as a means to offset housing costs or to provide a source of income. For example, a 2017 study found that the city of Boston was one of the top three American cities where the largest financial gain can be made by taking in a lodger with an average savings of \$920 each month earned from the rental income of a roommate (Miller, 2017). Policies which would facilitate safe sharing arrangements between strangers might include creating provisions in private tenancies which protect tenants from falling foul of sub-letting clauses - either through the exemption of lodgers, or by creating allowances for rental income from lodging which is tax-exempt under a certain threshold.

The issues of *heart*, *hearth* and *shelter* are much more problematic for housing policy if seeking to expand opportunities for de-prioritising these aspects of housing. Sacrificing these housing elements puts a household at risk of residing in overcrowded, cold or substandard housing. Moves within housing policy to further constrain choice, to override a person's 'choice' to forgo housing, for example, might resemble 'harder' enforcement measures such as urban camping ordinances which criminalise behaviour and force those to stop sleeping rough, or coerce those to come off the streets by removing or limiting the infrastructure which makes sleep rough an easier option (such as food banks or soup kitchens). Alternatively, 'softer' interventions might be employed to influence one's decision making when considering forgoing housing, such as the active persuasion of service providers to consider other alternatives, including repatriation (Johnsen et al, 2018). Those who might bristle against policy interventions which serve to constrain the choice of homeless households further might argue that such severely inadequate housing might be preferable to *no* housing at all, but this is hardly a position housing policy should aspire to. Therefore, segmenting housing into distinct components (privacy, abode heart, hearth and shelter) might help reframe the ways in which housing policy might (ethically) support households to exercise agency in the context of extremely constrained choice *vis a vis* housing sacrifice.

If addressing migrant homelessness presents a dilemma insofar as facilitating the ability of households to sacrifice some aspect of their housing compromises basic living standards, then public policy should prevent the need for households to make these hard choices in the first instance. The thesis argues that public policy should do more than to simply expand

the choices available to homeless migrants (and other vulnerable groups) by addressing the reasons which drive households to forgo housing and lose out on some aspect of 'home'. As explained above, housing sacrifice was a strategy adopted by households to enable them to meet competing needs, when faced with extremely constrained choice. Therefore, increasing access to housing would reduce the need for households to make such trade-offs. For example, incentivising subdivision of property to create multiple, smaller units on the proviso that a rent cannot surpass a 'fair' (locally determined) level whilst strengthening fire codes and standards, would add to the supply of affordable units in the private sector and remove substandard property from the market. A 2017 study into the prevalence of homelessness amongst Romanian migrant workers in the UK offered a similar solution, suggesting that cheap, flexible accommodation rented on a weekly basis at around £8 per night (including sharing arrangements) should be made available for this group which has few options available (Rice and Sebok, 2017).

On the income side of the affordability equation, these solutions lie outwith housing policy and are more a concern for immigration, welfare and labour systems (which, as this thesis demonstrates, all interact with housing and homelessness systems). With respect to existing immigration laws in both countries, specific measures to relax controls would make considerable material improvements to households lacking full legal status who become homeless during the resettlement process. National immigration policies also frustrate the intentions of local level policies to alleviate housing problems. In the American case study, for example, the Central American and Caribbean nationals who participated emphasised the need to access employment as a route out of homelessness, and the important role that low paying 'under the table' work played in supplementing meagre state assistance, such as Food Stamps. Many participants were frustrated that a lack of official documentation stood in the way of self-sufficiency and that obtaining status was key to achieving their 'American Dream', a concept specifically articulated in some cases. One solution, for example, would be to temporarily suspend work restrictions while an application is pending (in some cases involving appellate courts, which could take over ten years to resolve) would provide significant relief to households stuck in the impossible situation of not being able to work but unable to return to their home country after surrendering their passports.

In contrast, the main barriers identified in the Scottish case study revolved around restrictions to accessing social security benefits, as all participants in the study had a right

to work in the UK but struggled to access employment. Whilst the UK is still a member of the European Union, EEA Nationals have a freedom of movement which enables economic migrants to settle in other member states, to take up employment and to access (limited) parts of the welfare system. Specific measures introduced in 2014 to further restrict EEA Nationals to access UK benefits, for example, were specifically identified by homeless migrants in the Scottish case study as being significant barriers to accessing emergency accommodation and permanent housing, and which if either had been secured, would enable them to take up offers of work, a connection made notably by Polish participants. Reversing these measures (such as time limited benefits, and restrictions on claiming multiple benefits) would crucially remove the barriers homeless migrants faced in accessing local authority temporary accommodation – such groups are statutorily entitled to assistance under Scottish statutory homeless legislation but find themselves unable to pay for it due to their ineligibility for HB. The ability to realise homelessness assistance they are entitled to receive is particularly important for households who have limited employment opportunity and few options to access informal forms of support.

The scope for government intervention in migrant homelessness extends beyond immigration policy, there is a role for non-profits to play in facilitating access to housing. For instance, encouraging the development of community-led communal housing solutions through innovative mortgages packages and robust governance structures was identified as a way to address ‘extreme housing exclusion’, which includes homeless migrants (Netto et al, 2015). The capacity for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to respond to aid those whose legal status would otherwise make them ineligible for public assistance is striking when comparing migrant homelessness in the US and the UK. Despite having a comparatively weaker welfare safety net, migrants appeared to be better served in the US, in contrast to the Scottish case study (where traditionally public bodies have primarily borne the responsibility for homelessness). Due to a lack of entitlement and loose eligibility criteria within homelessness assistance programmes in the US, migrants at least have the *possibility* of competing for (scarce) resources, whereas in the UK they might be excluded automatically due to their being deemed ineligible for benefits as an EEA migrant, or a Third Country National (TCN) having no recourse to public funds.

10.4 Conclusion

This study has attempted to demonstrate the ability of homeless migrants to exercise agency and to determine their housing strategies despite extreme constrained choice; negotiating housing need and creating opportunities where none seemingly exist. Housing sacrifice was an option for participants in this study (in varying degrees depending on latitude of choice) to achieve housing and economic goals through a cost saving exercise, for example in order to amass savings faster or support other households, albeit at the expense of privacy, security and wellbeing (at least in the short-term). The practice of housing sacrifice is conceptually related to shelter poverty, insofar as this concept seeks to understand the ways in which housing provides the arena in which competing priorities are determined. However, instead of focusing on what is forfeited in order to maintain a roof over one's head, the notion of sacrifice explains the circumstances in which housing is de-prioritised to meet alternative (housing-related or other) needs.

Furthermore, this thesis has indicated that migrant homelessness may not only be a problem for housing policy. This study has attempted to demonstrate the number of ways in which this group can be caught in the interstices of multiple systems and is therefore very much a concern for other policy arenas, namely immigration, welfare and labour. The responsibility for migrant homelessness creeping into multiple areas of social policy does not excuse government inaction. This thesis recognises that the landscape in which migrant homelessness is emerging as an issue for social policy (in American and European contexts marked by deteriorating economic conditions, the enthusiasm for government austerity, and hardening of State borders following the Global Financial Crisis), in many ways runs counter to the current 'rapid re-housing' agenda observed in both Massachusetts and Scotland (and other places in the US and UK) which pushes towards a right to housing approach to homelessness. Rather than the difficult structural conditions in which migrant homelessness occurs legitimising a 'benign neglect' approach to the problem, these conditions make the issue of critical importance for housing policy specifically, and for social policy more broadly.

Should public policy move to expand the choices available to homeless migrants, a set of policy measures could facilitate the choices available to severely constrained households,

as discussed in terms of households forgoing certain aspects of a housing, such as ‘privacy’ or a home as an ‘abode’. This option, however, should not be taken as a signal for the state to abandon its responsibilities to ensure good quality, affordable housing provision. Alternatively, the state could address migrant homelessness by alleviating the conditions which serve to constrain choice and prevent the need for households to sacrifice any aspect of home. The above discussion provided recommendations which offer some specific policy measures – such as increasing housing access, relaxing welfare restrictions, and reversing unjust immigration controls - which would go some way to alleviate the worst effects of homelessness for migrant groups in the US and the UK.

More research is needed to focus on how homelessness can be prevented in the first instance for migrant groups, at all stages of the resettlement process. For example, the recent expansion of Housing First initiatives in Massachusetts, and a rapid re-housing approach in Scotland, provides the opportunity to incorporate those who are confronted with the most extreme constrained choice into a prevention approach towards homelessness.

The implications of ‘housing sacrifice’ suggest that, as a survival strategy, the de-prioritisation of housing is not only a matter for housing policy, but instead spans wider policy arenas, such as welfare, labour, and in the case of migrants, immigration law. Without systemic change in these areas, it is tempting to suggest that some latitude for choice (even if that choice results in being housed poorly) needs to be retained so that households can exercise their preferences, values and decisions, even where this involves difficult and undesirable trade-offs in the context of extreme, constrained choice. This thesis does not advocate inaction in social policy, but instead argues that in the case of migrant homelessness (and other extremely disadvantaged homeless groups), these problems cannot be resolved by housing policy in isolation. The causes of migrant homelessness, in particular, predominantly lie within the restrictions of immigration law and policy, but are exacerbated by welfare reform, financial austerity and incoherent national housing and planning policies.

It is hoped that the significance of the findings of this thesis extend beyond migrants and are relevant to other similarly constrained households who, for a variety of reasons, face the same sort barriers with vulnerable migrants face, and also find themselves caught between competing and contradicting systems. For those households who are in the difficult

position where sacrifices are demanded, an option to de-prioritise some element of housing should be a possibility, barring any radical improvements to the economic prospects of the most precarious households. The extent to which 'housing sacrifice' should be socially acceptable (or tolerable), and the way that under current systems specific aspects of housing are foregone, deserves greater scrutiny.

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Appendix One: Key informant interview topic guide

Introduction to the research

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. Before we begin can I ask if it is ok that we record this interview? It will help me to collate your response along with other key informant interviews in the most systematic way possible through analysing complete transcripts rather than notes. Also, I can assure you that this interview is confidential and care will be taken to report on your responses anonymously.

For ease of reference I have provided you with an information sheet detailing the purpose of my research. Essentially, I am seeking to understand the nature of migrant homelessness in Scotland and Massachusetts through comparative research between the UK and the US.

In particular I would like to discuss with you the:

- Scale and scope of migrant homelessness
- Extent in which certain groups of migrants engage with statutory homelessness services
- Housing strategies employed by migrants who are not entitled to public assistance
- Policy responses to migrant homelessness

I thought that given your position xxx, you would be the ideal person to begin discussions with to explore migrant homelessness. If it is ok with you I will now proceed with the interview, first establishing your engagement with the issue, then moving onto your views on various aspects of migrant homelessness.

ABOUT YOU AND YOUR ORGANISATION

As Homelessness Team Leader within the Scottish Government, can you tell me about your role in general and how you are involved in delivering homelessness policy?

Moving on to migrant homelessness specifically, can you describe for me how you have been involved in this issue as Homelessness Team Leader? [probe: delivery of homelessness policy specifically impacting upon migrants as a group]

Thank you for your perspective, I am interested to hear more about policy responses to migrant homelessness, but I will leave this towards the end. I thought before we go into the detail and nuances of policy it might be good to layout first some conceptual groundwork concerning homelessness and migration in general.

DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

This is a rather broad question, but it is intentionally so. Can I ask, in what circumstances do you consider someone to be homeless? (probe: what other categories might be included? What are your views on someone who is in ___ situation? What about situations where someone is not considered statutorily homeless?)

Changing tack somewhat here, but still considering broader concepts, in what circumstances do you consider someone to be a migrant? (probe: on various dimensions of migration)

PROFILE OF ISSUE / PEOPLE AFFECTED

Considering our discussion of homelessness and migration generally, can you describe for me your understanding of migrant homelessness. For example, who are the main groups affected by homelessness?

(probe on: demographics such as gender, age, household type, ethnicity, etc; as well as circumstance such as legal status, finances, physical/mental health, dependencies, when they migrated, importance of social networks, education level, etc)

Is homelessness among migrants growing or diminishing in scale? Are any other trends apparent in the nature of homelessness or among particular subgroups of migrants?

CAUSATION

In the previous question you described different trends you have observed about migrant homelessness generally and particular trends among subgroups. Now I would like to ask you about what you think are some of the key drivers that explain these trends.

You indicated ___ seem more at risk for homelessness than others. What do you think causes homelessness amongst ___? What about for ___ group?

Has this changed over time? What do you think has caused this change? What about location, does migrant homelessness look different in different parts of the country?

(probe: welfare policies; immigration policy; housing/homelessness policies; general economic conditions; labour market conditions; personal vulnerabilities/ background risk factors (substance misuse, mental ill-health, trauma, social capital/resources, etc)

A particular concern of mine in this research is what degree of choice migrants have in changing their situation. I have heard anecdotal evidence that some migrants chose to de-prioritise their housing in the face of other competing priorities. In your experience, have you found any evidence of this?

(If struggling, provide example of economic migrant choosing to save maximum amount of money for remittance by staying in a squat rather than pay expensive private rent)

[introduce concept of subsistent homelessness] Is it meaningful? Do you recognise it? Is it useful conceptually? Useful in terms of policy and/or practice?

Are there buffers/protective factors that prevent some migrants from becoming homeless *(probe: personal resources (material and non-material); family/friends/other social networks; community resilience; third/faith sector support, etc.)*

Are there typical pathways for migrants to become homeless? (e.g. crisis events, gradual exhaustion of protective resources, etc.)? *(probe: if distinct pathways/triggers identified, do these differ from non-migrant homeless groups?)*.

STRATEGIES

We talked a lot about the different ways migrants become homeless, but I am curious as to how once in this situation what are the ways in which they get by. What *strategies* do homeless migrants employ (to survive and/or avoid destitution)? (e.g. access services/benefits/advice, engagement in acquisitive/survival crime, personal resources, etc.)

What choices are available to homeless migrants in terms of housing? General well-being? In your experience, have you seen trade-offs being made? *(probe: different housing options available in different circumstances such as choosing overcrowding situations over street homelessness for example)*.

EXPERIENCES/IMPACTS

Moving to specific strategies migrants use to cope with homelessness I am now going to ask a few questions specifically about the impact of homelessness. For a start, do you think the experience of homelessness is felt different by migrants than other groups?

What are the main (short-term and long-term) effects of homelessness at the *individual level for migrants*? *(Probe insofar as there is time/seems relevant: physical health (e.g. impact of poor nutrition, cold, bad housing, etc.); mental health (e.g. psycho-social wellbeing, self-esteem, stigma, loss of dignity, etc); social relationships/capital (including family functioning, children's well-being, wider support networks, community integration, etc); integration with formal societal structures (schools/education, health services, social work, etc); labour market participation, caring roles, other work/societal contribution.)*

Clearly, homelessness can be a traumatic experience for someone to experience. Going back to our previous conversation about this idea of 'subsistent homelessness' what do you think the benefits might be from making these tradeoffs? From deprioritising housing for example? (*probe: example about squatting and remittances*)

CURRENT RESPONSES

What is the main current response to migrant homelessness?

Who responds? (Probe: central government, local government, professional charities, churches, local community/diaspora, family, individuals, etc.)

What is it they do? Is this response sufficient/appropriate? How effective are these policies/projects? (Probe for evidence re effectiveness? What else could/should be done? Are there any gaps in provision?)

What, if any, influence does the pattern of media reporting have on: a) Public perceptions of destitute people?; b) Prevailing political priorities? Any changes in such reporting that you think would be helpful?

We talked a little about the impact of homelessness on migrants themselves, but I am curious as to the impact of migrant homelessness on the wider public as well. What are the *societal consequences* (costs and externalities) of migrant homelessness? (*probe: costs to health service, acquisitive crime, children into care, heightened awareness of/desensitisation to extreme poverty, discrimination towards groups affected, etc.*)

In light of these societal impacts, do you think the current policy responses addresses these issues?

NORMATIVE

Who *should* take responsibility for responding? (*Probe: individual vs family vs charitable/civil society vs state responses vs market*). Why does responsibility lie there? Is it being taken? If not, why not?

Where homelessness forms part of a strategy to survive or 'get by' *should* the state intervene in excising that choice? What are the limits of choice one should exercise? What are the limits of intervention by the state? What do you think the rationale is behind such policy decisions?

Thank you for your perspective, it has been invaluable. Before we close this interview I am wondering if there is any advice you can offer going forward in terms of key contacts and information.

DATA

Any evidence/data we can access on these points – esp scale, trends, profile?

Strengths/weaknesses of them as sources? How do we go about accessing? Key contacts?

Appendix Two: Biographical interview topic guide

Introduction to the research

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. Before we begin, I have given you a short information sheet about the research. Could you please take a few moments to read, or I could go over this with you if you would like?

If happy with this, I will proceed with the interview. Is it OK that we record this interview?

Please be assured that this interview is confidential, and your responses will be reported anonymously. Your participation is completely voluntary and will not impact on any service you receive.

YOUR MIGRATION STORY

One of the main reasons why I am doing this research is to learn about people's experiences with immigration.

Could you tell me about where you were born?

Prompt: Where have you live since you were born and over what time frame. Nationality in any other countries.

Could you tell me how you came to be in Scotland?

Prompt: Reasons for moving (work, school, family, excitement).

How has living here compared to your expectations?

Prompt: Hopes for what they'd achieve in migration, expectations around arrival for short and longer term, first impressions on arriving, any adaptations having to be made, any barriers and how they may or may not have overcome them, day to day experience.

YOUR HOME

You told me a lot about your background, where you come from and why you are here. Now I would like to ask you to think about your home- where your home is now and places you have called home in the past.

Can you tell me about where you live right now?

Prompt: What is the arrangement? (renting, staying with friends/family, etc) Who lives with you? How long living there? How does it compare to places you have live previously? What do you like about it? What do you not like about it?

Would you call where you are living just now a home?

Prompt: What is it about the place that makes it/ does not make it home for you? Is it because it is permanent/temporary? If it is not home, where would you consider home? When and where was the last place you would call home? In any of the previous places you lived you would not consider home?

STRATEGIES

Now the next set of questions will ask you about the sorts of impact your housing has had on other aspects of your life.

How much choice would say you had in living where you are just now?

Prompt: What are some of the other options you have for housing, how did you find the place you are living currently, were there other choices, what made you choose that option over another?

Are there any benefits to living where you do?

Prompt: If cheaper then what do you do with savings, if location then what value do you get from being in a certain place, etc.

What kind of home would you want to have?

Prompt: How would better housing change your life? Are there things you want to do but can't because of your housing?

RESPONSIBILITY

You told me about where you are living and what you would change about your home. I am curious about your thoughts about how this situation should change and who is responsible for making this happen.

Should the government do something to help your situation?

Prompt: What specifically should the government do? Why is the government responsible?

Is there anyone else that could help improve your situation?

Prompt: Role of family, community, non-profits etc. Why are they responsible?

Is there anything you can do to improve your housing situation?

Prompt: What is preventing you from having better housing? What steps can you take to overcome this in the immediate and longer term?

THE FUTURE

We are nearly done with the interview but before we finish I would like to ask you a few questions about the future, generally and not just about housing.

What do you want to happen over the next year?

Prompt: Priorities for housing, work, family, settlement etc. What specifically needs to change in order for this to happen?

What about in the longer term? Is there an over-arching goal that you are working towards?

Prompt: How does housing help or hinder this larger goal(s)? What are the plans for making this happen, what are the barriers to achieving goals, who can help overcome these barriers (yourself, family, government, charities, etc), what needs to change in order to fulfil goals?

OTHER PARTICIPANTS?

Thank you for sharing your story with me and contributing to my research. I have really enjoyed talking with you. Given my interest in the housing experienced of migrants, do you know of anyone else who would want to tell me their story?