

**Making Do in the City:
The Survival Tactics of London's Young Homeless**

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ABSTRACT

Youth homelessness is a pressing problem in contemporary British urban politics. The emergence of youth homelessness, in the context of wider homelessness, has been conditioned by economic, political and social changes in British society. Young people have been particular casualties of these social changes. Whilst homelessness has been the consequence of larger structural changes, the character of youth homelessness has very much been determined by the homeless themselves. The relationship between human agency and structural constraint, and the implicit power relations therein are explored by recourse to Structurationist theory. In this context, a theoretically composite approach is posited drawing on livelihood analysis and Michel de Certeau's "Science of Singularity." Livelihood analysis is developed by recourse to Grounded theory to produce an ethnography of homeless survival tactics rooted in the experience of young homeless people living on the streets in London's West End. The emergent ethnography is subjected to the insights of Michel de Certeau, who provides a means for understanding the relationship between critical action and social constraint. Recognising the implicit social criticism of homeless life, this approach posits a regime of commodities, skills and sources (the resource regime) as a basis for homeless critical livelihood. This critical livelihood contextualised by structural constraint, and explored by creative endeavour, is used by the homeless to make their lives and to forge identity. This approach is implicitly spatial because the homeless draw on urban spaces to forge livelihood, and their trajectories in the city both contribute to social reproduction and are central to the criticisms they make. Correspondingly, homeless identity, forged through the processes of critical livelihood, is at times contradictory. Homeless identity emerges as one that is purposive and critical, whilst at the same time being dependent on the very circumstances of marginality for its substance and character.

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INTRODUCTION

Dick Hebdige¹ wrote of post war youth that young people had come to enjoy an increased spending power. Yet, in the recessionary 1990s the experience of youth is a different one. Whilst young people may be growing up in a world which has been accustomed to youth consumption; unemployment, growing marginality and consequent social problems have mediated a somewhat more desolate world for contemporary youth. Young people throughout the country and especially from deindustrialising areas of the North have left their homes or remnants thereof in search of providence in the 'affluent' South East. Yet this affluence has too often been illusory. Instead of a culture of youth consumption, for those arriving daily in the capital, youth homelessness has been commonplace. Whilst homelessness has by no means been contained to the young, young people often bear the brunt of social change, and this is evidenced by the emergent homeless youth culture in London.

In the face of changes in the British political economy, and the emergence of large numbers of young people sleeping on London's streets, research into homelessness is timely. Recent governmental expenditure motivated by massive increases in homelessness and public outcry has led to the expenditure of over a billion pounds.² The new privatised dominion of social welfare is booming, with numerous societies and agencies expanding their role in the face of the contraction of official governmental provision.³ Public concern ranges from dissatisfaction with the unsightliness of the homeless on the streets, to frustration with a government which has allowed these circumstances to occur.

Growing marginality, and a recognition of the importance of multiple cultures in urban life has captured the interest of geographic thought, although British geographers have been slow to consider the implications of homelessness. The relationship between the processes of structural change and the actions of marginal groups themselves, is

¹Hebdige, D., *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Methuen, London, 1979, p. 78.

²Thames Reach, *Moving On: Thames Reach Annual Report*, 1991/92, p. 2; The Department of the Environment, *Single Homelessness and Rough Sleepers*, Pamphlet, 20 April 1993, p. 1.

³Canter, D., et al., *The Faces of Homelessness in London: Interim Report to the Salvation Army*, Department of Psychology, University of Surrey, 1989, p. 23.

becoming much more central in a pluralistic political geography of the city. Furthermore, because social life and the processes of social reproduction are implicitly spatial, geography has much to contribute to the debate on and investigation of homelessness. Investigating homelessness provides insight into one mode of life in the capital, one that is increasingly topical but also deeply misunderstood. The investigation of homeless survival tactics, and means of 'making do,' provide insights into the agency of marginal groups, and the way that they contribute to the urban landscape.

The homeless remain Other in contemporary society. Dwelling in what is often marginal space, the homeless are more associated with disorder than order. Their provocative ubiquity in the city brings them into immediate contact with the entire population. Few will not have been approached by the homeless for money. Yet, for the wider population, the homeless are enigmatic, their otherness remains impenetrable and the urban populace know not what to make of them. Consequently they suffer from widespread misrepresentation and misunderstanding.

This research, focusing on homeless action, in itself challenges popular stereotypes of the dispossessed. Very often the misrepresentation of those who have been made marginal in the city has contributed to their very marginality. Furthermore, in addition to challenging popular perceptions, action based research, particularly when informed by participant observation, is capable of offering sympathetic insight into the lives of those who are its subject. In this way the very power relations of story-telling are challenged, as the marginalised themselves, in their actions and in their involvement with the researcher, play an active role not only in what is written, but in the very formulation of a research agenda.

London's young homeless whilst they may be subject to social forces that they themselves cannot contain, are neither feckless victims, nor vanquished automatons leading shuffled lives without rhyme or reason. Whilst not underplaying the role of social change, the homeless make for themselves a viable, if at times unpleasant, life in the city, their lives being creative and purposive, as they cleverly 'make do' with anything they can.

Based on participant observation this thesis addresses the impact of social change, the experience and identity of the homeless, and the actions of the homeless themselves. However, in addition to providing an ethnographic account of responses to homelessness and homeless livelihood, the fruits of this research are taken further, by recourse to additional social theory. The experience of London's young homeless contributes to an understanding of the terrain of resistance. The investigation of homelessness, provides insight into the ways that individuals make responses to their constraints. The homeless create space for manoeuvre in even the most difficult of terrains.

Rather than presenting an encyclopaedic tract on youth homelessness, this thesis is principally concerned with the means that London's young street homeless use to 'make do' in London. Rather than dealing with the widest definition of homelessness (see Chapter 1, *Local Authorities, Housing Associations and National Housing Policy*), it focuses on those who live on the streets, or who do so from time to time. Particularly it is concerned with young people who spend much of their time in the West End of London. This research relates to those of 25 years and under, the age range popularly regarded by those who tend to young people in London, as the 'young homeless.'¹ This research is based on many hundreds of hours of participant observation and on thirty seven in depth and lengthy interviews with homeless young people conducted in 1991 and 1992.

In addition to dealing with a range of theoretical debates this work has practical implications. In discussion with policy makers, and many who work with the homeless in old fashioned institutions, it became clear that misunderstanding lay not only in the minds of the public, but also existed amongst those who were in the very field. Whilst this by no means characterises the entire body of people in the homeless 'industry,' (for much work in this area is very good) there is sufficient confusion to warrant a systematic ethnographic review. Like any population, the character of the homeless changes with time, as indeed does the population which perceives it. This work challenges the

¹ Many facilities for the 'young' homeless in London, are targeted at this age group.

debilitating stereotypes of homelessness, providing a perspective on youth homelessness that is up to date and rooted in experience.

Chapter 1 deals with the political, economic and social context of homelessness, focusing on those features which have precipitated conditions ripe for the emergence of youth homelessness. Chapter 2 considers the relationship between agency and social reproduction, asking to what degree London's homeless youth are capable of self-determined and critical action. The chapter reviews relevant literature on homelessness, marginality, social theory and youth culture with a view to contextualising the current research, and as a means of selecting approaches which are most fruitful. Recognising that statistics on homelessness are fraught with inconsistency, Chapter 3 sifts through a plethora of counts and estimates to provide some understanding of the parameters of youth homelessness in London. Based on perspectives introduced in Chapter 2, Chapter 4 posits an approach to homelessness used in this thesis. This approach, a combination of ethnographic method and social theory is considered in the light of the homeless world, producing a framework, based on livelihood analysis, and de Certeau's "Science of Singularity," which is widely employed throughout the remainder of the thesis. Chapter 5 reviews the steps in the compilation of data, and provides details about the way that research was conducted. It also reviews the ethics of ethnographic research as they relate to this project.

Chapters 6 through to 8 are concerned with the dimensions of livelihood analysis whilst at the same time utilising the advanced possibilities of de Certeau's "Science of Singularity," expounded in Chapter 4, demonstrating further levels of meaning in the actions and exchanges of London's homeless youth. Chapter 6 deals with the material and cultural commodities that the homeless seek in making livelihood. Chapter 7 deals with the skills and tactics the homeless employ to acquire these commodities, and Chapter 8 looks at the various spaces in which the homeless act in order to procure these material and cultural commodities.

Identity creation relates to and is dependent on the livelihood engaged in by the homeless. Where Chapters 6 to 8 investigate the process of homeless livelihood,

including identity as a commodity itself, the selfhood of the homeless is dependent on the entire process of livelihood. In the Epilogue, Chapter 9, amidst the contradictions implicit in homelessness, this identity emerges, as being greater than the sum of the parts investigated in the livelihood chapters. The character of the homeless emerges as one that challenges popular representation and one having particular implications for policy.

CHAPTER 1

YOUNG PEOPLE, HOMELESSNESS, STRUCTURES AND CONSTRAINTS

Homelessness has been a pervasive feature of London's street life from time immemorial. Whilst the existence of this population has been pervasive, it has also been changeable. Since the mid 1980s there has been a marked increase in the number of young homeless people living on London's streets.

The Young Homeless Group¹ estimates that in any one year in *Britain* 156, 000 young people have slept at least one night on the streets. With London being a prime site for youth homelessness, the numbers in the capital are high. Despite the inconsistency of statistics,² young people probably account for at least 20% of the population of people sleeping rough in London. Correspondingly, youth homelessness has been widely discussed and finds itself firmly on the agenda for problems in the contemporary metropolis.

With such interest in London's homeless youth there is, somewhat unsurprisingly, a plethora of commentaries, ranging from criticisms of the social order to criticisms of homeless youth themselves. Furthermore, there is a profusion of specialists with their respective social, economic, political and psychological views on the current situation. Few have considered systematically the quotidian life of the homeless, and it is why this thesis is based on ethnography, privileging that said by the homeless themselves.

Definitional Boundaries and Homeless Youth

Homelessness is a multidimensional phenomenon. In addition to social, political, and economic factors, there are microscale and macroscale features, historical contexts,

¹ Young Homelessness Group, *If Youth Matters why are 156, 000 Young People Homeless?*, Young Homelessness Group, London, 1992, pp. 1-2.

² See Chapter 3, *The Parameters of Youth Homelessness in London*, introductory paragraphs.

cultural changes over time and cultural differences between peoples. The understanding of homelessness is a complex task.

Homelessness can be widely or narrowly defined (A fuller account of the variety of definitions of homelessness may be found in §*Local Authorities, Housing Associations and National Housing Policy*, in this chapter). Popular definitions of homelessness range from those living on the streets, to carefully worded descriptions incorporating those who are homeless or potentially homeless. Many¹ are quick to point out that much homelessness in Britain is hidden in the form of individuals and families residing in unsatisfactory or temporary accommodation. Regional areas continue to publicise homelessness in places other than London, in an attempt to both raise awareness of homelessness in places less clearly on the national agenda, and to encourage philanthropic investment in local projects.

Despite valid claims from elsewhere in Britain that youth homelessness is a problem throughout the country, the scale and proportion of the problem is greatest in London.² Many of those homeless around the country will also have been homeless in London at some time, and many in London have experienced homelessness elsewhere. So it is with London, as perhaps Britain's capital centre of youth homelessness, that this thesis sets out to investigate the ways that London's homeless youth manage to make their lives in the capital.

Using ethnography as a means for relating singular experience to larger structures provides a focus, permitting to some degree the reconciliation of scales of analysis. Although ethnography concerns itself with the microscale of everyday life, it is the approach of de Certeau³ that permits closer analysis and provides a means by which singular experience may be related to the spaces in which it is lived out.

¹Gosling, J., *Young Homelessness: A National Scandal*, The Young Homelessness Group, London, 1992, p. 11; Thornton, R., *The New Homeless: The Crisis of Youth Homelessness and the Response of the Local Housing Authorities*, SHAC, London, 1990, pp. 5-6; Bramley, G., "The Extent and Character of London's Growing Homelessness Problem," in Bramley, G., et al., *Homelessness and the London Housing Market*, School for Advanced Urban Studies, Bristol, p. 52.

²Currie, E. and Greve, J., *Homelessness and Young People: A Report to the Prince's Trust*, Institute for Research in the Social Sciences, University of York, York, 1990, p. 5.

³De Certeau, M., trans. Rendall, S., *The Practice of Everyday Life*, University of California Press, California, 1988.

Structural Forces and Youth Homelessness

The everyday lives of London's homeless youth whilst they may be significantly affected by the larger scale structures of society, politics and the economy do not confront these structures directly (see Chapter 2, *introductory paragraphs*). A study of the circumstances of youth homelessness must accommodate an analysis of everyday experiences as well as the way that those everyday experiences are influenced by larger structural forces. The larger structural forces implicit in contemporary life, are emblematic of social power relations which have specific consequences for London's young homeless. Whilst these structural forces play an important role in the processes of homelessness and the character of homeless life, it is necessary to be mindful of the lives and actions of the homeless themselves, and the agency of the homeless.

Whilst Doogan¹ suggests of youth homelessness that it is necessary to “... locate the ... economic, political and social factors that explain the continual vulnerability of social groups ...” he expresses a “certain reluctance to push the subject under the lens of socio-economic analysis” for he suggests that “one can ... see that homelessness has the surface characteristics of an individuated experience and not a socio-economic phenomenon.”²

The relationship between structures and agency requires careful attention. This relationship exposes how individuals and groups may reproduce established value systems and power relations by the routinisation of action.

Anthony Giddens has written extensively on the duality of social structures and agency. In his³ work *The Constitution of Society*, he is concerned with the discernment of ways that action may become structured through recursive behaviour and also the ways that structural constraints operate to contain and enable action. For London's young homeless, a specific set of structural constraints have a significant effect on the emergence and reproduction of homelessness. These structures may be summarised as:

¹Doogan, K., “Falling off the Treadmill—The Causes of Youth Homelessness,” in Bramley, *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 87-88.

²*Ibid.*

³Giddens, A., *The Constitution of Society*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1984.

social security, the political economy, the housing market, changes in social values, and family relations and the prescriptions of representations foisted upon them.¹

These structures provide a larger context for the functioning of the city and indeed the production and reproduction of power relations in which the homeless are necessarily inculcated. What follows is a discussion of these larger structural domains in view of the way that such structures are expressed, assumed and reproduced by those whose livelihoods are made in the city.

Contemporary Conditions

Since the mid-1960s both the composition of, and provision made for, the homeless have changed markedly. As well as structural forces, individual responses to circumstances of deprivation have produced specific conditions of youth homelessness. Shelter² suggests that as many as 407, 000 persons are officially homeless in Britain and potentially up to 2 million “unofficially homeless.” Structural processes have not only had a significant impact on the emergence of youth homelessness, but also the institutionalisation of homeless youth culture.

Young people dealing with circumstances of increasing social strain have often opted, not irrationally, for fleeing the immediate circumstances of their constraint and discontent. Frequently ending up in London with few options and often little money, many find themselves sharing space with the homeless and before long becoming accustomed to that lifestyle and livelihood. Whilst the transition from London immigrant to homeless youth is a varied process, characterised by multiple forms of homelessness, for those young people living on the streets there is sufficient congruence of experience to draw on a corpus of concepts characterising youth homelessness.

The understanding of this corpus and indeed homeless livelihood itself calls for an understanding of the larger social and structural relations which have provided for its ascendancy and reproduction and which are outlined below.

¹ See Thornton, *The New Homeless*, op. cit., pp. 7-40.

² Shelter, *Homelessness in England: The Facts*, Pamphlet, Shelter, London, 1993, p. 1.

The Political Economy and the Labour Market

Amidst the many and varied structural changes in Britain in the last twenty years, perhaps the most important of these has been the changing political climate effected by the Thatcher administration. However, it is important to realise too, that decisions made during this period, have also been decisions made within a specific international context.

Throughout Europe international economic changes have been calling for solutions to new problems. Burton, *et al.*¹ identify “economic, social and demographic changes” confronting European Community countries in the last two decades, suggesting that following the end of post-war boom in the 1960s and early 1970s significant industrial shifts occurred, partially in response to increasing competition from newly industrialising countries. Job losses have occurred according to the nature of industry, particularly affecting steel, motor-vehicle and textile industries.²

Fothergill *et al.*³ suggest however that the decline of the industrial city has been less a consequence of changing patterns of competition, and more a political problem created by the failure of government to induce a “reflationary” fiscally-based recovery. Despite the potential culpability of the conservative government of the time, political action has also necessarily been a response to contemporary major international economic pressures.

These changes in the economy which have precipitated the ascendancy of quaternary industry, (information and white collar industry) have also led to the relative decline of primary and secondary skilled and semi-skilled jobs. In part a function of recession, in part a consequence of government policy and in part the natural consequence of such industry in developed nations,⁴ the process of primary and

¹ Burton, P., Forrest, R. and Stewart, M., *Accommodation and Social Cohesion in the Urban Environment—the Implications for Young People*, The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin, 1989, p. 5.

² Fothergill, S., Gudgin, G., Kitson, M., and Monk, S., “The Deindustrialization of the City,” in Massey, D. and Allen, J., eds., *Uneven Re-Development: Cities and Regions in Transition*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1988, p. 82.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴ Massey, D., *Spatial Divisions of Labour: Social Structures and the Geography of Production*, Macmillan, London, 1984, p. 134.

secondary industry contraction has had numerous deleterious effects on various parts of the country and its workforce.

The inevitability of primary and secondary industrial decline has not been regarded without suspicion. Job loss and its consequent social difficulties have been exacerbated by governmental action and inaction as well as economic instability. Massey¹ suggests that the degree to which the diminution of manufacturing occurred in Britain was a function of “long-term structural weaknesses in ^{the} British economy and society.” Such weaknesses Massey suggests lay in the failure of the economy to have been appropriately positioned in the changing international division of labour, an oversight which began in the late 1950s and provided a weakness for the later recession to aggravate. The gradual decline in employment throughout the range of manufacturing industries continued unchecked throughout the 1960s and 70s, beginning as the consequence of mechanisation, and ending in recession with outright industrial contraction.²

These changes in the demand for labour have sorely affected those whose employment was previously found in unskilled and semi-skilled secondary and primary industries. Consequently those areas and indeed those sectors in Britain most heavily dependent on such employment have been major casualties of change.

The ascendancy of quaternary industry, has also been accompanied by an increase in the demand for educational qualifications. The stimulation of demand for clerical and technical staff has further reshaped the pattern of labour demand. In the face of primary and secondary industrial contraction, Burton *et al.*³ suggest that “young working class males ... have been particular casualties of recent economic changes” (see figure 1.1). These changes have had significant implications for both London’s homeless youth and those soon to join their ranks.

¹*Ibid.*

²*Ibid.*

³Burton, *et al.*, *Accommodation and Social Cohesion*, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-9.

In deindustrialising areas, young people with working class backgrounds and few educational qualifications have had little reason for optimism. Hoch¹ suggests, “ ... the restructuring of the economy in the 1980s shifted the burden of economic decline once again onto the shoulders of those least able to escape—young members of the urban working class.” In the face of reduced opportunity and the likelihood of an unpleasant welfare existence, the attraction of London, and a chance at participating in the perceived prosperity of the South East has become a more attractive option for working class young people throughout the country. For those already homeless in London and faced with unemployment in the capital, unemployment and the likelihood of unemployability have become real burdens. Thus both for London’s young homeless and also those young people soon-to-move-to-London, prospects have been few, and the view of the future bleak.

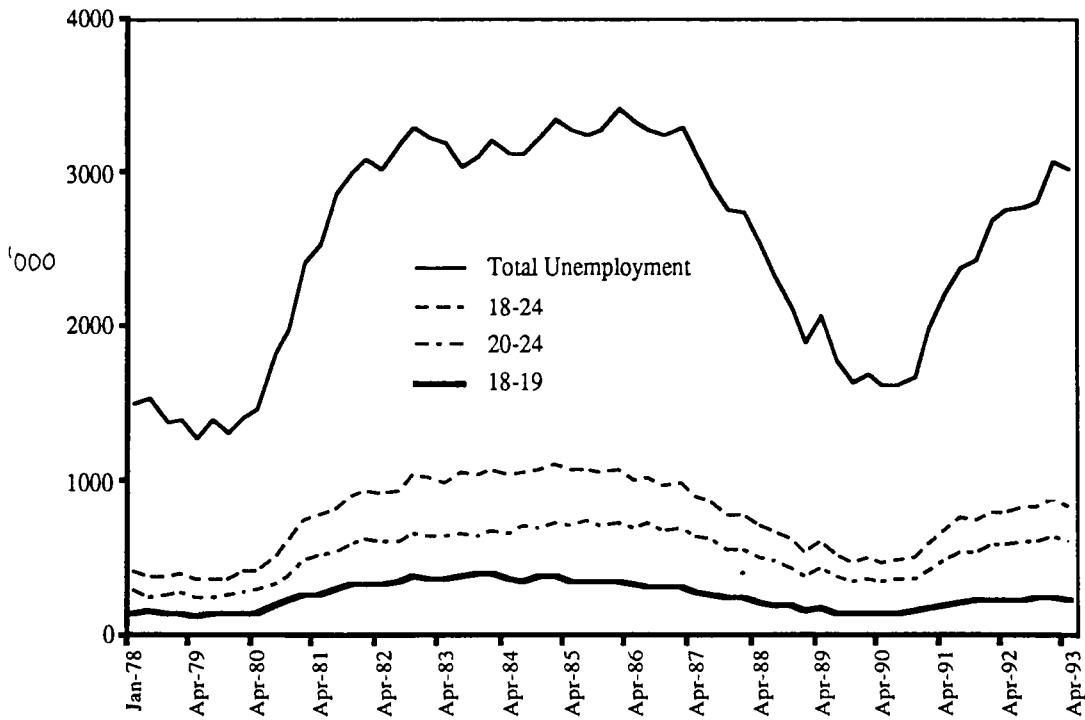


Figure 1.1 Unemployment (claimant), by age, 1978-1993.²

¹ Hoch, C., “The Spatial Organization of the Urban Homeless: A Case Study of Chicago,” *Urban Geography*, Vol. 12, No. 2, March-April 1991, p. 144.

² Department of Employment, “Employment Gazette,” 1978-1993.

Aside from these general economic changes, other circumstances and processes have made for even greater economic difficulty. Doogan¹ points to the demographic mushroom of “baby boomers” entering the workforce in the late 1970s; the trough of persons of retiring age due to the birth rate decline in the 1914-18 period; the development of worksharing practices, and the increased number of women entering the workforce, as further structural difficulties affecting the plight of the young homeless. Furthermore, the recessionary practice of “last in first out” has widely discriminated against youth as those most recently employed.²

Although the government has recognised the dangers of chronic youth unemployment, effective measures to combat decreasing employment rates have not been forthcoming. The Youth Training Scheme (YTS) of the late 1980s has been a great failure, for not only have there been inadequate spaces to meet the demand (causing delay),³ there has not been a satisfactory range of alternatives (leading to a high drop out rate), and those completing very often have failed to secure employment. Furthermore, Youth Training⁴ (YT) implicitly assumes young people on YT programmes are resident with their parents, as they fail to provide a viable living wage for those needing to live independently. Those unable to live with their parents or those from care are eligible for Income Support at reduced levels. At present the rates are set at £26.45, for those aged 16 or 17; £34.80, if forced to live away from parents, £34.80 for those aged 18-24, and £44.00 for those aged 25 or over.⁵ Independent life for many, however, is the only viable option, especially where the home is disturbed and conflict-ridden. The rates set by the government have, however, not recognised the need for independence, indicated by their staggered payment schedule which curiously implies that the younger an individual, the cheaper it is for him or her to live. This schedule places a greater pressure on younger people to remain at home.

¹Doogan, “Falling off the Treadmill,” *op. cit.*, p. 94.

²*Ibid.*

³Craig, J., *Fit For Nothing Young People, Benefits and Youth Training*, The Children’s Society, London, 1991, p. 30.

⁴The YTS (Youth Training Scheme) was replaced by YT (Youth Training) in May 1990.

⁵Benefits Agency, *Young People’s Guide to Social Security*, HMSO, 1993, p. 18.

In the face of limited opportunities in deindustrialising areas of the country, many young people have ventured towards the perceived prosperity of the South East. Although this immigration to London by unemployed young people has abated somewhat most recently, the capital still draws many from throughout the country.¹ For those heading to London from deindustrialised zones,² their move has often been a sensible and rational action, even though the actual prosperity of the South East may not have been as great as anticipated.

For the homeless and imminently homeless, economic processes engendered by global and regional change and policy have effectively conspired to deny them a viable future. Economic changes have conditioned and abetted the ascendancy of youth homelessness. Other structures such as the housing market, housing policy, local government, social security, social changes and prescribed representations have also played significant roles.

Housing and Housing Policy

Youth homelessness is not only a function of those features which discourage young people to 'remain where they are.' It is also a symptom of a lack of affordable, available and appropriate housing.³ Although homelessness as considered here refers to a specific age-banded social phenomenon, youth homelessness also fits into a wider context of general homeless trends. Since the early 1980s homelessness has shown marked increases (see figure 1.2).

¹ Centrepont, *Days to Remember: Annual Report 1991/2*, Centrepont, London, 1992, p. 1.

² Greve, J., *Homelessness in Britain*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York, 1991, p. 35.

³ Currie and Greve, *Homelessness and Young People*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

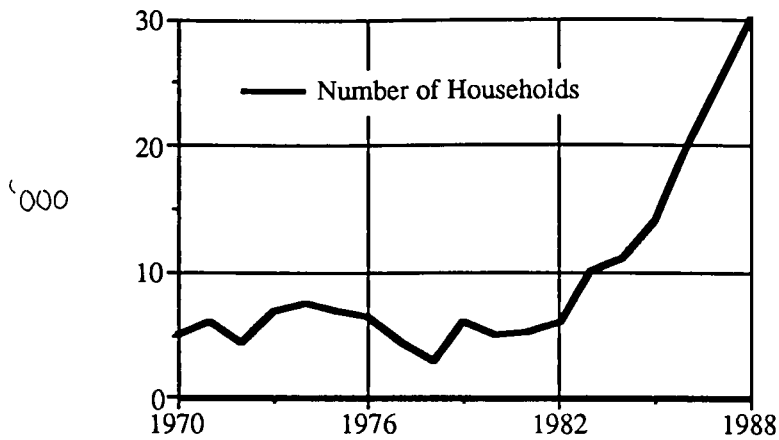


Figure 1.2 Homeless households in temporary accommodation at year ends (England), 1970-1988.¹

The provision of housing is often cited as the principal means of alleviating homelessness. Although this may appear self-evident for London's homeless youth, housing alone is no panacea for the homeless who commonly suffer from multiple deprivation. Although the procurement of housing for those new to London would naturally be advantageous, because London's young homeless often suffer from multiple deprivation, the provision of housing constitutes the alleviation of only one facet of marginality. The provision of housing does not solve problems of multiple deprivation, (such as unemployment, poor educational standards and often a background of domestic disjuncture) especially for those already adjusted to life on the streets. Young homeless people once provided with a home, frequently fail to maintain it and for a number of reasons often abandon or lose it.² Whilst housing shortage is an important cause of homelessness, multiple deprivation means that those without a home are in need of more than a roof over their heads.

With the contraction and relocation of industry, the inner city has become less important industrially, and more attractive for residency.³ The growing role in the city of

¹ Unspecified Department of Health and Social Security and Department of Environment Statistics. Cited in Audit Commission, *Housing the Homeless: The Local Authority Role*, The Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England and Wales, HMSO, London, 1989, p. 10.

² Some of the respondents and homeless people met at the London Connection noted that they had in the past had accommodation provided but for various reasons had been unable or unwilling to sustain it. This information was also reiterated by workers interviewed at the London Connection.

³ Wolch, J. and Dear, M., eds., *The Power of Geography: How Geography Shapes Social Life*, Unwin Hyman, Boston, 1989, pp. 16-17.

white collar quaternary industry has led to the revaluation of the inner city as a desirable locale for those with substantial incomes. The inner city has become rejuvenated and has been subject to gentrification. This has in turn reduced the availability of low cost inner city accommodation. Furthermore, government policies encouraging home ownership have led to the contraction of public housing, as housing units have been sold, and this has also led to the shrinking of the private rental market.¹

Greve,² in his major study *Homelessness in Britain*, notes:

At the end of 1989, the total stock of housing in the United Kingdom was 23 million, an increase of over a third since 1961. During that period, the number of owner-occupiers more than doubled to 15.4 million (66.5 per cent of the stock), the number of privately rented dwellings had fallen by more than half to 1.8 million (less than 8 per cent of the total stock). The number of housing association dwellings also more than doubled in the 1961-89 period but, at 600,000, comprised little over 2.5 per cent of the total housing stock at the end of 1990.

Moreover, in addition to national trends of private rental accommodation contraction, in London the situation has been more extreme. The stock of available dwellings can be seen as markedly down in 1988, compared to 1981 in table 1.1. Figure 1.3 shows the rate of decline in housing starts compared to the number of persons in temporary accommodation. For young people coming to London, the contraction of private affordable rental accommodation has played a major role in resultant homelessness.

Table 1.1 Trends in the stock of dwellings in London 1981-88³

Tenure		1981		1988		Change 1981-88	
		No '000	%	No '000	%	No '000	%
Rented	Local Authority	857	31.5	742	26.7	-115	-13.4
	Private	402	14.8	240	8.6	-162	-40.3
	Housing Association	117	4.3	149	5.4	+32	+27.3
	Total	1376	50.6	1131	40.7	-245	-17.8
Owner Occupied		1343	48.9	1651	59.3	+308	+22.9
Grand Total		2719	100.0	2782	100.0	+63	+2.3

¹Thornton, *The New Homeless*, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

²Greve, *Homelessness in Britain*, op. cit., p. 20.

³Brownill, S., et al., *Housing London - Issues of Finance and Supply*, Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust, York, 1991, table 5.1.

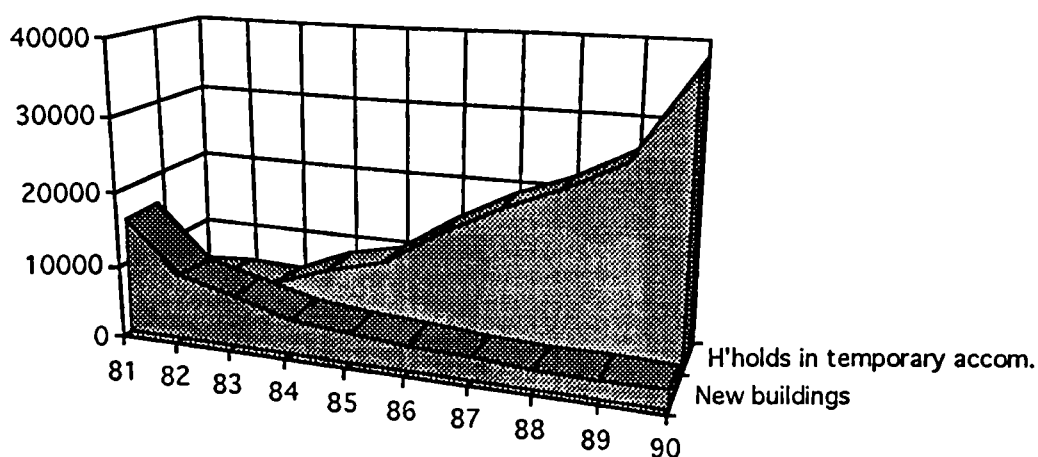


Figure 1.3 New dwellings by local authorities and housing associations compared with numbers of households in temporary accommodation, 1981 to 1990.¹

Although these policies have allowed working class council renters to become property owners, for those too poor to take up options, or for those without homes such policies have been of no benefit. The reductions in rental stock occasioned by these policies have had the effect of markedly increasing the cost of inner city private rental accommodation, accommodation which in the past has been relatively inexpensive. Further, because this housing stock has often been utilised by young new immigrants to the city, policies have done nothing to ameliorate the shortage of available and affordable housing for young people in London, and as such have added to the difficulties of young people in London, searching for accommodation.²

Local Authorities, Housing Associations and National Housing Policy

Before 1977 local authorities had few responsibilities for housing the homeless. Whilst the 1948 National Assistance Act had created a statutory responsibility for those authorities to supply temporary accommodation for those whose circumstances could not have been foreseen,³ it was not until the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, that clear statutory duties for local authorities were prescribed. However, the White Paper on Housing, published in September 1987 promoted a new role for local authorities; their

¹London Research Centre. Cited in Greve, *Homelessness in Britain*, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

²Thornton, *The New Homeless*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

³Audit Commission, *Housing the Homeless*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

role was to change from one of a housing provider to a housing facilitator. The White Paper stated, “Local authorities should increasingly see themselves as enablers who ensure that everyone in their area is adequately housed: but not necessarily by them.”¹

Malpass² suggests that in the context of a squeeze on public expenditure, local authorities fared worse than national initiatives, and public housing was earmarked for cuts as a means of controlling council spending. In every year of the 1980s the production of new council dwellings fell. Local authority funding constraints, in addition to curtailing the growth of public housing, led to the contraction of local authority aid to housing associations. Yet even as funding has contracted, the importance of housing association accommodation has increased.³ This has been encouraged by the government whose ultimate interests have been in increasing the role of voluntary and private sector accommodation⁴ (see figure 1.4).

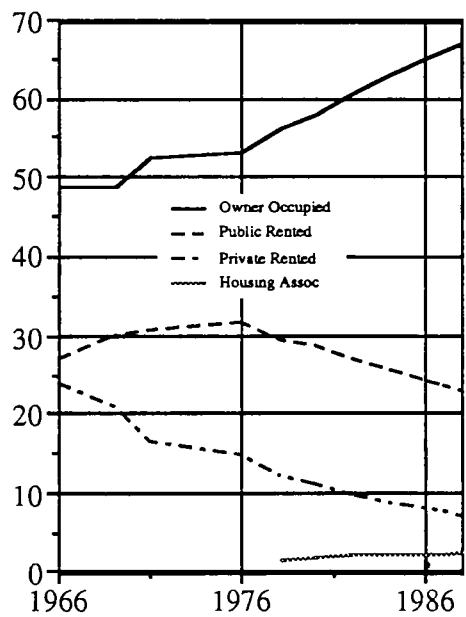


Figure 1.4 Housing tenure in Great Britain: percentages of total dwellings at end of year, 1966-1988.⁵

¹ Department of the Environment, *Housing: The Government's Proposals*, Command 214, HMSO, London, 1987. Cited in Birchall, J., ed., *Housing Policy in the 1990s*, Routledge, London, 1992, p. 10.
² Malpass, P., "Housing Policy and the Disabling of Local Authorities," in Birchall, J., ed., *Housing Policy in the 1990s*, Routledge, London, 1992, p. 14.
³ Thornton, *The New Homeless*, op. cit., p. 19.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Department of the Environment, *Housing and Construction Statistics, Great Britain*, Department of the Environment, Scottish Office/Welsh Office, Quarterly, 1966-1988. Statistics cited *ibid.*, p. 13. Prior to 1978, housing association figures have been aggregated with private rented.

Under current regulations¹ applicants are considered homeless if:

- they have no accommodation they are entitled to occupy, or
 - they have a home but are in danger of violence from someone living there, or
 - they are living in accommodation meant only for an emergency or crisis (for example a night shelter), or
 - they are a family who are normally together but are now living in separate homes because they have nowhere to live together, or
 - their accommodation is moveable (for example, a caravan or houseboat) and they have nowhere to place it.
- People are considered to be threatened with homelessness if they are likely to fall into one of the above categories within 28 days.²

If an applicant is deemed homeless then it needs to be determined whether or not an applicant is in priority need. Priority need is defined as:

- people who have dependent children;
- pregnant women;
- people who are homeless because of a fire, flood or similar emergency;
- people who are vulnerable because of:
 - old age;
 - mental illness or handicap;
 - physical disability;
 - other special reasons.³

Following this evaluation, an authority needs to determine whether or not an applicant is intentionally homeless. If ^{an applicant is} intentionally homeless and not in priority need the responsibility of the authority is advisory. Where an applicant is intentionally homeless and in priority need, the responsibility of the authority is temporary accommodation and accommodation advice, however, if the applicant has no local connection with the authority, applicants may be referred to the appropriately responsible local authority.

Local authorities have no responsibility to accommodate young people not qualifying for priority status. Thornton⁴ refers to a comment made by a housing officer in response to the current provisions, “Single homeless cases ... are increasingly pushed to the bottom of the pile as local authorities struggle to shelter families with dependent children.” Increasingly young single people have turned to housing associations for accommodation, for unlike local authorities they are not bound to accommodating those

¹Randall, G., *No Way Home*, Centrepont Soho, 1988, p. 11.

²Audit Commission, *Housing the Homeless*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Thornton, *The New Homeless*, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

classified as 'priority need,' and are more capable of addressing immediate demand for housing.

Local authorities have therefore been subject to pressure exerted from the government. Their own lack of provision for young people is a result of changing policies and underfunding. Discretion and inconsistency make for even greater difficulties for the young homeless, who in addition to their exclusion from statutory responsibility have to deal with a bureaucratic system highly confusing and laden with inconsistency.

Social Security

At the outset of the Thatcher years conservative politicians much as they may have wanted to rationalise social security payments were unable to do so. The government had inherited a long tradition of welfare which, Vincent¹ argues, "had been gaining in coherence and force since the early sixties." He goes on to suggest that, " ... she [Mrs Thatcher] lacked the constituency for a wholesale dismantling of the system she had inherited."²

The conservative government was managing a social security system "enmeshed in a mutually destructive relationship" between the State and the poor.³ Demands made on social security were so great that their satiation was undermining economic and political stability.⁴ However, by the end of the Thatcher period, Britain had seen the dismantling of many of the welfare structures that had hitherto been erected.

Although Britain's social security claimants at this time and particularly in the late 1980s were enjoying a real increase in buying power, they were falling behind in terms of general prosperity. Instead of building social structures and systems of social interdependence through work, creating a forum for critical action, many were at home alone. This created a growing context of exclusion and dependence on isolating forms of

¹ Vincent, D., *Poor Citizens: The State and the Poor in Twentieth Century Britain*, Longman, Harlow, 1991, p. 201.

² *Ibid.*, p. 202.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 200-201.

entertainment such as the television. Whilst some initiatives built up in geographically localised areas of relative deprivation, such as housing estates, the conditions of social security were often largely uncontested by the claimants themselves, even though organised lobbying groups such as the National Unemployed Workers Movement had some successes.¹

Vincent² notes that despite the sympathy evoked by the underprivileged, there was still a widespread feeling that 'able-bodied' social security claimants were in some way illegitimate. He³ cites the findings of an EEC survey which demonstrated that, " ... the British were most prone to blame the poor for their own misfortunes, and whilst the subsequent leap in unemployment began to shift some of the attention to structural factors, the collective capacity of the minority organisations to overcome the orchestrated press campaign against them remained open to doubt."

The 1986 Social Security Act, becoming law in 1988, served to streamline social security procedures which by this stage were becoming increasingly unwieldy and expensive. Vincent⁴ suggests however, that the Act managed only to redistribute funds from the poor to the very poor, saying "in general it was estimated that there were twice as many losers as gainers, with most of the beneficiaries concentrated amongst the very needy."

The provisions in the 1986 Social Security Act included the creation of Income Support, which replaced Supplementary Benefit. Income Support thus became the principal means-tested benefit.⁵ Craig⁶ suggests that the introduction of the Act had four aims: "to target resources to the most needy; to make the system easy to administer; to encourage self reliance and independence; and to make social security more consistent with other government economic objectives including reducing public expenditure and strengthening work incentives."

¹*Ibid.*, p. 196.

²*Ibid.*, p. 199.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

⁵Craig, *Fit For Nothing*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁶*Ibid.*

Additional provisions were made to the Act, in September 1988, withdrawing automatic support to 16/17 year olds, instead guaranteeing them YTS places and allowances. Entitlement to Income Support was primarily made to those above the age of 18, with those under 24 receiving significantly less than the allowance for 25 year olds. Those under 18 had to satisfy numerous criteria in order to be eligible for Income Support.

1987 saw an increasing number of dependent family claimants, and in that year the number of children being supported on Supplementary Benefit reached some two million.¹ Children of the 1980s poor were growing up in a welfare environment. In this context young people became implicated in an environment of exclusion. Vincent² identifying the lack of citizenship (which he defines as inclusion and participation) as an important feature of poverty, comments on the lack of participation by children. In situations of deprivation and difficulty, children at this impressionable age are often the most maligned. Such is perhaps indicated by the incidence of homeless youth having experience of Local Authority care.³ Financial troubles amongst families having to depend on social security often lead to domestic disjuncture. Such domestic circumstances are commonly responsible for precipitating homelessness (see table 1.2).

It has been shown how changes in the economy have produced, to use Massey's⁴ terms, "spatial divisions of labour," and recounting the experience of the past ^{twenty} years, there is an evident geography of "job loss." Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that young people, having been particularly susceptible to job loss, have also been constrained not only by unemployment but also in terms of their entitlement to social security, and have been relegated to greater exclusion. Moreover, many young people in this situation, especially in the depressed regions in the North, where industrial decline has been the greatest, have known no experience other than exclusion, deprivation and hardship. Growing up in an environment where parents and other role models are often equally

¹ Vincent, *Poor Citizens*, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 204-208.

³ Randall, *No Way Home*, *op. cit.*, p. 22; Randall, G. and Brown, S., *The Rough Sleepers Initiative: An Evaluation*, HMSO, London, 1993, p. 58.

⁴ Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

demoralised, young people from working class backgrounds and a limited education have had little to look forward to other than unemployment. Such difficulties facing families and individuals have increasingly caused strain and domestic unrest.

Social Change

In addition to economic and political changes and partially as a consequence of these changes there has been a number of social changes in British society. Given the uneven industrial structure in Britain and the misery associated with recession, adverse pressures have been placed on households.

Greve¹ notes that the most common reasons for homelessness include:

- the breakdown of relationships (including those between young people and their parents or guardians).
- the failure of sharing arrangements with accommodation.
- unemployment.

Thompson² also provides a summary of Department of Environment statistics on reasons for homelessness, although this is not broken down by age. These may be seen in table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Reasons for homelessness.³

	1978(%)	1987(%)
Parents/relatives/friends no longer able/willing to accommodate	38	41
Relationship breakdown	15	18
Mortgage arrears	5	10
Rent arrears	6	4
Loss of private rented dwelling	16	10
Loss of service tenancy	6	5
Other	15	13

In the context of these descriptions of reasons for homelessness it can be seen that although the economy plays a role in the mediation of homelessness, the pressures

¹Greve, *Homelessness in Britain*, op. cit., p. 21.
²Thompson, L., *An Act of Compromise*, SHAC/Shelter, London, 1988, p. 23.
³*Ibid.* Columns do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

on individuals coping with exclusion, despondency and poverty, leads to social difficulties that may also serve to precipitate homelessness. These causes relate disproportionately to young people as they are hardest hit by unemployment and least catered for by social security.

Halsey,¹ notes the increasing incidence of domestic rupture and the growth of single-parent households. Further, he attributes a growing individualism implicit in contemporary society to a loss of social continuity produced by radical change throughout the century. This individualism characterised by hedonism and fashionability he proposes is a substitute for a “securely held morality,”² something he regards as having been lost in translation from earlier generations.

Those already homeless because of circumstances such as failed domestic relations and or a lack of local opportunity, frequently become despondent. Such despondency³ amongst deprived young people in London who have become homeless, has contributed to a shared culture of homelessness, one drawn upon by the homeless for a sense of identity and selfhood.

Representations of Youth Homelessness

In the same way that other structural institutions such as the labour market and the machinations of social change impose constraints upon the homeless, various institutions are responsible for producing prescribed representations of marginal groups and notably here, the homeless. Although the young homeless have little orthodox political power in themselves, their ability to engender public concern is high. As a pressing social issue, homelessness is a topic bandied around by government and social pressure groups. Homelessness becomes charged with political rhetoric becoming a vehicle of political pressure. In this way the homeless become subject to representations that serve political ends. Even charities offering advocacy for the homeless become

¹Halsey, A., *Change in British Society*, Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 110.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 113-4.

³Whilst the homeless are often despondent about their own situation, very often this despondency is channelled into defiant survival. See Chapter 7, *Means and Ends: Homeless Skills as Facilitators and Identity-Carriers*.

embroiled in the need to capitalise on imagery to effect their own political ends or even to engender financial support by using striking images in the press.

Whilst many of the representations of the homeless profess to be for their 'own good,' the images generated rarely originate from the homeless themselves. In this way the homeless are denied access to the way that they are represented and consequently become estranged, at least to some degree, from their own self-determination.

Whilst advocacy groups such as CHAR,¹ Shelter,² Crisis,³ Barnardos and Centrepont,⁴ produce imagery to heighten awareness of the plight of the homeless and to effect support, implicit in these images is a set of representations necessarily foreign to those they depict. Although the homeless may be the focus of these charities' concerns, they are also subject to the marketing machine and to the creation of effective imagery. Centrepont, for example, who have a close working relationship with the international advertising magnate Saatchi and Saatchi, produced the following advertisement (see figure 1.5).

¹Originally an acronym for the Campaign for the Homeless and Roofless, now known as the Housing Campaign for Single People, established 1973.

²The National Campaign for Homeless People.

³Formerly known as Crisis at Christmas and now a national charity for single homeless people.

⁴Housing charity for homeless young people.



Figure 1.5 Saatchi and Saatchi advertisement for Centrepoint.¹

The government is also responsible for producing imagery of the homeless. Underlying the principles of government policy is that the homeless are capable of returning home. It is perhaps instances of expressed governmental insensitivity² which are the most effective projected representations as with Edwina Curry's MP³ infamous comment, "I reject the case that there has been made for many young homeless people. They are not in housing need. A very large number of them have homes to which to go"

It has been in the interest of a government keen to largely dismantle social welfare, to decrease rather than provide for public welfare. In this way the government has been all too willing to deny young people's needs for independence, even where they

¹ Centrepoint, *Days to Remember*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

² Currie and Greve, *Homelessness and Young People*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

³ Parliamentary Debate, 14 December 1984. Cited in Thompson, *An Act of Compromise*, *op. cit.*,

have not had *homes to which to go*. Their various representations of the homeless reflect this predilection.

Whilst advocacy groups are quick to present homelessness in terms of governmental inaction and the paucity of housing (with some reason), they often neglect the parameters of other social forces as discussed earlier. The following statements made in various pamphlets are exemplary of these comments.

CHAR believes that homelessness is a housing problem. It is not the fault of people who are homeless. Governments have traditionally overlooked the housing needs of single people.¹

Myth: "Young people prefer to beg than work"
Reality: Studies indicate that homeless young people migrate to areas with good work prospects. But they find that they cannot get a job without an address and cannot get an address without a job.²

Although such representations of homelessness are written and designed in the best interests of the homeless, they are also distanced from the homeless who rarely have means to directly contribute to their formation. Correspondingly the images created are part of a system which obstructs the homeless from their self-determination, and in this case their self-representation.

Academic discourses too are responsible for fashioning images of homelessness, though most recent research is much more aware of the politics of representation, with contemporary research methods being grounded in experience (see Chapter 2, *Agency and Representations of Youth Homelessness*, and Chapter 5, *The Process of Making Ethnography: A Methodology*).

Homeless Youth as Multiply Deprived

Whilst various proponents will argue for the pre-eminence of various specific issues as 'the cause' of homelessness, in this chapter it has been suggested that many of the issues are closely related, and that no one constraint can fully account for the ascendancy of youth homelessness. It is certain, however, that each structural factor has

¹CHAR, *CHAR Housing Campaign for Single People: Report 1989*, Pamphlet, CHAR, London, 1989.

²Young Homeless Group, *If Youth Matters*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

played some role in providing a context for the emergence of a contemporary wave of youth homelessness.

Certainly in various publications and in various forums, the agencies involved have fought for a dominant reading of homelessness, one which prejudices a particular cause over the others. One could even suggest that the notion of homelessness is merely a device to define a problem of multiple deprivation, as a housing problem.

The problems confronting those young people in London who are multiply deprived, and who also happen to be homeless cannot therefore merely be addressed by housing policy alone. The circumstances of those who have become known as London's young homeless reflect some of the unequal relations that characterise contemporary urban life. Whilst this project examines these phenomena as a study of the homeless, it is understood that in fact the circumstances of the individuals concerned are not only the consequence of housing inequalities but also a range of other inequalities that permeate British society.

Youth Homelessness and Process

Power relations implicit in larger social structures serve not only to provide a situation in which a specific homelessness has developed, but also through their mediation of control have permitted the reproduction of homelessness. The welfare system, where the homeless are successful in securing payment, institutionalises dependence on the state. Housing shortages create despondency leading to the institutionalisation of the homeless living and sleeping on the streets. The very lives of the homeless whose geographies carve out trails in the city create a system of social reproduction in which the homeless may become recursively implicated.

But at the same time that structures of deprivation are created and reproduced, the homeless manage to employ tactics to 'make do,' to persevere in the city. In the very acts which reproduce homelessness, the homeless also circumvent the conditions of constraint as they invert the standard ways of using the city, and transgress place-bound actions of legitimacy.

The values of contemporary youth homelessness in London, are directly related to specific contemporary social relations. Their lives are made from what the times and spaces of the contemporary city provide or leave available to them.

Structuration and the Specific Structures facing Youth Homelessness

Although various social institutions and contingencies constrain action, they also provide opportunity. Using various skills and tactics London's homeless youth circumvent constraint by local resistance. In this way the homeless maintain their sense of agency, their ability to effect change preserving the authorship of their lives. Whilst everyday circumvention of social constraints by the homeless is central to this work, it is necessary to investigate social processes which serve to empower structures of domination which serve to circumscribe action.

This investigation serves both as a backdrop to the microscale ethnographic analysis, and as an integral part of the consideration of the singular reactions of individuals to larger social constraints as they are manifest in the everyday life of London's homeless youth.

Giddens and Structuration Theory

To understand how social constraints and power relations affect homelessness, the notion of Structuration as defined by Anthony Giddens¹ is used as a handle on social practice. Giddens proposes a taxonomy of structured action and social change, where constraints operate in a dialectic with agency. Whilst individuals act in accordance to social constraints, they do so critically. Their critical action is capable of influencing social reproduction and effecting change. In this way social structure and social agency are interdependent.

Individuals are actively aware of their environment. Giddens² notes, "The reflexive monitoring of activity is a chronic feature of everyday action and involves the conduct not just of the individual but also of others. That is to say, actors not only

¹Giddens, *The Constitution of Society. op. cit.*

²*Ibid.*, p. 5.

monitor continuously the flow of their activities and expect others to do the same for their own; they also routinely monitor aspects, social and physical, of the contexts in which they move.” Individuals are therefore defined as being knowledgeable and acting in accordance to their evaluation of circumstance. Although action may become routine, Giddens¹ argues that individuals “maintain a continuing ‘theoretical understanding’ of the grounds of their activity.”

Complementing actors’ free and reflexively monitored action, is the prevalence of power relations. For Giddens, power relations reside in social practice. Individuals act in accordance with constraints because those constraints become embedded in daily life. Such power relations are in part conditioned by the rhythm of life shared by individuals in the city. Geographers have made wide use of Structuration theory because of the way that it informs an understanding of the socio-spatial dialectic. Thorsten Hägerstrand’s² work on time geography demonstrates how individuals’ daily interaction with space and time cements social relations through the routinisation of practice. Pred’s work, a development of Structuration theory, both on Boston merchant capitalists³ and on development and change in Sweden⁴ also demonstrates the relationship between space and social reproduction.

However, aside from the dialectic of structure and agency, many individuals are subject to flows and constraints of power. Although individuals are never incapable of exercising choice—as narrow as that choice may be defined—in the context of urban social relations, the political economy of power is one which the homeless are more subject to than able to produce. Like Gramsci,⁵ Giddens recognises that domination is never complete. Whilst power blocs negotiate to control the meaning of “objects and practices,” less powerful groups appropriate and reappropriate them ascribing them their

¹*Ibid.*

²Hägerstrand, T., *Innovation as a Spatial Process*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1967. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 112.

³Pred, A., “Structuration, Biography Formation and Knowledge: Observations on Port Growth during the Mercantile Period,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 2, pp. 251-75.

⁴Pred, A., *Lost Words and Lost Worlds: Modernity and the Language of Everyday Life in Late 19th Century Stockholm*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990.

⁵Gramsci, A., *Prison Notebooks*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1974. Cited in Cresswell, T., “Mobility as Resistance: A Geographical Reading of Kerouac’s ‘On the Road,’” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, N.S. 18. 1993, p. 251.

own meanings.¹ If one is to consider the politics of homeless defiance or resistance, then one needs to postulate ‘resistance or defiance to what?’ and it is the answer to this question that is characterised by the particular dominating social structures.

Giddens² introduces the term “domination” which he sees as being a part of social structure. He³ suggests that “‘domination’ and ‘power’ cannot be thought of only in terms of asymmetries of distribution, but have to be recognized as inherent in social association” Domination he suggests, “depends on the mobilization of . . . ” allocative and authoritative resources. Allocative resources relating to control over objects, goods or material phenomena, and authoritative resources relating to control over persons or actors.⁴ Power is created “in and through the reproduction of structures of domination.”⁵

Instead of structures being constraining, Giddens argues that they are the products of action and in fact often enabling because they imply a nexus of choice. However, at the same time, internal to structured action and social reproduction are the interactions of domination. Domination is active where individuals have a differing access to the allocation of and power over resources and individuals. Whilst it is suggested that neither society nor individuals have a greater influence over social relations than the other, some individuals or groups of individuals have greater power over resources than others.⁶

Even in the context of such domination, Giddens accommodates a “dialectic of control”⁷ in which he recognises that, “all forms of dependence offer some resources whereby those who are subordinate can influence the activities of their superiors.” Whilst Giddens⁸ recognises structure and agency, he also recognises the operative of power, but power he suggests is not a resource as such, but rather that “resources are media through which power is exercised.”

¹Cresswell, “Mobility as Resistance,” *op. cit.*, p. 251.

²Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-33.

³*Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 258.

⁶Gregson, N., “On Duality and Dualism: the case of time-geography and structuration,” *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol. 10, 1986, p. 185. Cited in Cloke, P., Philo, C. and Sadler, D., *Approaching Human Geography: An Introduction to Contemporary Theoretical Debates*, Paul Chapman, London, 1991, p. 98.

⁷Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁸*Ibid.*

For Giddens¹ an individual maintains his or her power of agency so long as an individual maintains his or her capacity to “‘make a difference’ to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events.” In Chapter 4 and subsequent chapters the ability to act critically, and to “make a difference,” by London’s homeless youth is demonstrated, and their capacity for purposive action is considered in the context of de Certeau’s, “Science of Singularity,”² to be discussed more fully in Chapters 2 and 4.

To summarise briefly, Giddens accommodates a notion of domination and of constraints, constraints marshalled by the access to or power over resources. Additionally structures of domination are internalised and reproduced. Yet in the face of structures of domination and constraint, Giddens holds that individuals maintain their critical capacity to contribute to social structures by means of reflexive monitoring of action, and thus they maintain their selfhood and the authorship of their lives. Although the degree to which individuals may be authors of their lives, or capable of crossing the bounds of recursive social action, will be discussed in Chapter 2, Structuration theory as it applies to the processes of London’s youth homelessness is addressed below.

Power and Domination

Structures of domination may be reproduced not so much through the reification of structural constraints, but through individual internalisation of constraint through the familiarity of practice. Thus an individual constrained in one time and place, may develop an attitude where the potential for oppositional action may be ameliorated due to repeated experience of a dominating structure. Thus instead of domination being a static feature of society, it becomes chronically reproduced.

Cohen³ explains that “... structures of domination, as asymmetrical distributions of resources, are routinely and repeatedly regenerated as agents draw upon the more or less numerous and effective forms of resources available to them during the

¹*Ibid.*, p. 14.

²De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*, p. ix.

³Cohen, I., *Structuration Theory: Anthony Giddens and the Constitution of Daily Life*, Macmillan, London, 1989, p. 153.

course of system reproduction.” It is therefore a feature of such structures of domination that they preclude possible options for action.

Exploitation occurs where there is a divergence of interest between superordinates and subordinates and where “domination ... is harnessed to sectional interests.”¹ Giddens also asserts that there are circumstances where the subordinate may not be aware (perhaps through a lack of education) of the best possible options. In this way subordinates are in a position of vulnerability, and open to exploitation.

Giddens uses a dialectic (duality) to characterise the relationship between structure and agency. For Giddens,² power lies in the capacity to effect difference. In the context of the dialectical notion of structures and agency power lies in the ability of individuals to utilise resources to effect ends. Whilst superordinates may be able to hold power because of their command of resources, subordinates retain the power to short circuit such demands, often as the result of the superordinate’s increased dependence on compliance. It is in this room for manoeuvre that Michel de Certeau’s³ “Science of Singularity” will be expounded.

Constraints to the Homeless

Given that Giddens perceives constraints in terms of reproduced structures of domination inherent in social relations, the lives of the homeless may be defined in the context of these dominating structures. The homeless also play a role in the reproduction and repudiation of such barriers. Whilst this thesis is principally concerned with the tactics employed by the homeless to subvert and transgress constraints, it is nevertheless important to understand the reproduction of constraint that the homeless, at least initially, live within. Although the opportunity afforded by such constraints is considered in Chapter 2, *Agency and Representations of Youth Homelessness*, and Chapter 8, *Spaces and Opportunity: Sources in the City*; it is important to consider the constraints to action in the context of structures of domination, and to understand the ways in which the

¹Giddens, A., *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism: Volume 1: Power, Property and the State*, Macmillan, London and University of California Press, Berkeley, 1981, pp. 60-61. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 189.

²Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

³De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*, p. ix.

homeless are immobilised, at least initially. Considered in this way, structures of domination may be connected with quotidian difficulties, and in turn the everyday practices and singular recriminations of the homeless may be read in the context of the structural constraints they ultimately act against.

Linking Taxonomy and Practice

Giddens' taxonomy of social institutions and the processes of structure and agency can be linked to real circumstances in the lives of the homeless. The institutions discussed in the first part of this chapter such as the labour and housing markets, local government, the social security system and the economy are marshals of allocative and authoritative resources participating in the reproduction of structures of domination. In so doing, they produce power. Guarding available sources, they provide very little for the homeless. Homeless livelihood then, based on the reproduction of structures of domination are characterised by an inaccessibility to allocative and authoritative resources. In Giddens' schema marginal individuals such as the homeless, are to some degree constrained for they are denied access to the resources that they need to create livelihood.

Whilst constrained by the reproduction of structures of domination the every day lives of the homeless do not deal with macroscale structures directly. That the young homeless may be unable to find suitable accommodation may well be the result of gentrification and larger scale changes in the labour market, but issues on this scale have little meaning for the homeless. On a quotidian basis their concerns are much more mundane, relating to finding a place to sleep or searching for a cigarette (see Chapter 2).

London's homeless young people's lives are immediate, their concerns are the concerns of the moment. Their trajectories carve out in the city everyday needs which are the symptoms of the larger social changes which have precipitated homelessness. It may well be that the routinisation of daily life consolidates and reproduces the structures of domination, and does little more than to replicate the status quo. However, it may also be that in amongst the routine and reproduction of the homeless lies another system of

meaning, one that inverts and even subverts the social order by ruses and scams which infiltrate and double back on the structures of domination.

From Here to Ethnography and Back Again

This thesis has two principal roles. Firstly it is a work of ethnography which details the small scale operations of daily life for the homeless. Secondly, using these small scale analyses and an understanding of the larger social processes at work in society, it attempts to draw from the conclusions of the small scale to issues on the larger scale through the utilisation of de Certeau's "Science of Singularity." This reunification is less about trying to unite the singular actions of individuals with large scale social forces, but rather it is concerned with the relations at work in the microcosmic world of London's young homeless to understand the ways that individuals isolate themselves from the constraints symptomatic of structural forces. Whilst there will always be a difficulty with the unification of such scales of analysis, the linking pin lies with the understanding of how individuals maintain their selfhood and agency in the context of dominating structures and constraints.

Despite the difficulties young immigrants find as they come into central London in search of fortune, the young homeless are not incapable, but rather their capability is sharpened by their determination to persevere and indeed to prove to those who would malign them that they can and will survive in London, at any cost. Theirs is a battle and a struggle which they execute with some dexterity in order to save face and to create identity. Their courage and determination in the face of the inhospitable city is a story that unfolds in subsequent chapters of this work.

CHAPTER 2

AGENCY AND REPRESENTATIONS OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

In addition to the structural forces providing a context for the emergence of youth homelessness in London, discussed in Chapter 1, are the actions of the homeless themselves. Although London's homeless youth may be ultimately buffeted by major structures, everyday life is characterised by more ordinary circumstances. Indeed homeless livelihood depends on the procurement of the most mundane of commodities.

London's young homeless need to be skilled in urban survival. Begging, sleeping, 'finding a smoke,' finding a toilet and other activities, in the spatio-temporal world of the homeless city require a special knowledge of the streets. Furthermore, knowing how to protect oneself from physical and emotional dangers require additional skill. Whilst London's young homeless develop specific skills in the improvident city, everyday life can be bitter and lonely. Equally however, streetlife can be exhilarating or, in the words of the homeless themselves, a 'laugh' or a 'buzz.'

The oppressed are never totally powerless. Whilst their power may not amount to much, their capacity to 'make a difference' is not normally entirely *evaporated* by inequality. Indeed those whose lives are conditioned by constraints to action have at their disposal a range of symbolically and effectually empowering tactics. These actions verbal or active, may effect change on their own, either through collective action, or by serving as a cathartic release of anger. Irrespective of outcome or form, the actions of those caught in the tension between the dominant and the subordinate have a "forbidden identity,"¹ to some degree providing value, consolation, catharsis, and empowerment.

The everyday actions of the homeless occur at a much more mundane level than at the level of contextual structures discussed in Chapter 1. Pivan and Cloward² suggest, " ... people experience deprivation and oppression within a concrete setting, not as the end product of large and abstract processes,Workers experience the factory, the

¹Hebdige, *Subculture*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

²Pivan, F. and Cloward, A., *Poor People's Movements: Why they Succeed, How they Fail*, Vintage, New York, 1977, p. 20. Cited in Scott, J. C., *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, Yale University, USA, 1985, p. 43.

speeding rhythm of the assembly line, the foremen, the spies, the guards, the owner, and the pay check. They do not experience monopoly capitalism.” Whilst every day life, for London’s young homeless constitutes a mix of large and small scale inputs, responses can only be effected at the microscale. Pivan and Cloward¹ also note, “ ... it is in the concrete experience that molds their discontent into specific grievances against specific targets.” Neither the scale of institutional domination nor of immediate and individual action may be ignored; any approach to this duality needs to be mindful of both. Ley² suggests, “interpretive research requires an interpretive methodology ... simultaneously able to pick up the nuances of landscapes and their creators, while not overlooking the broader context which structures local life chances.” Any understanding of the lifeworld of London’s young homeless must also accommodate an understanding of both levels of process and the relationships between them.

Duality is a central tenet of the Structuration paradigm. This duality represents a dialectic between structures of social reproduction and individual agency. Having considered, in Chapter 1, the social institutions which retain control of resources through which power is marshalled, it is necessary to consider the actions of those making individual agency.

This chapter reviews past writings on marginal urban groups with a view to situating this work in an ontological stream of thought and as a means to evaluating different approaches to the study of similar groups. The parameters of homelessness are then considered in the history of British youth subculture. Having provided context, and having evaluated theory, the chapter leads to an approach, fully expounded in Chapter 4, which focuses on the material and cultural commodities used by the homeless. The viability of this approach is considered in the light of Giddens’ Structurationist paradigm.

¹*Ibid.*

²Ley, D., “From Urban Structure to Urban Landscape,” *Urban Geography*, Vol. 1, No. 9, 1988, p. 100.

Structuration and Marginal Urban Groups

The review of Giddens' Structuration theory in Chapter 1, is followed here by a discussion of the relationship between the *structuring of action* and the *reproduction of social processes* in terms of the politics and practice of everyday life. This relationship is considered by recourse to Giddens' theory of the way that action is structured, and Michel de Certeau's work on the practice of everyday life.

Giddens awards individuals with agency, yet at the same time by means of the routinisation of daily life, he proposes that social processes become entrenched and thereby action becomes structured. Although individuals are capable of independent action, their capacity to act in this way is conditioned by a political economy of power which marshals their access to resources, and consequently marshals their access to self-determined action.

Cloke *et al.*¹ note that the impetus for Giddens' work is drawn from the desire to "interlink" the "insights concerning both structures and human agency," thus providing "social science," with a "more realistic grounding for its thinking and practising." Having reviewed the determinant factors of homelessness in Chapter 1, this chapter which reviews and evaluates past work, progresses towards an approach to homelessness (fully expounded in Chapter 4) which is sensitive to both human agency and the constraints within which the homeless move.

Schools of Thought

Modern writing on marginal urban groups developed from the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago established in 1892. Research by Chicago sociologists had major implications for geographers at this time giving rise to a group of Chicago geographers.

Robert Park and Ernest Burgess were instrumental in the development of the Chicago School. Their inspiration was drawn from Georg Simmel b. Berlin 1858. Simmel, who trained Park at Heidelberg, was of particular interest in that he is regarded

¹Cloke, *et al.*, *Approaching Human Geography*, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

to have been the first to systematise sociological practice. Their interest in the city was conducted against the wider interests of William Thomas whose interest lay in the direct recording of experience from the “participant’s view.”¹ The work of the Chicago School was an important milestone in urban research. The notion of “moral orders,” in the city, pioneered by Robert Park was a highly influential concept which precipitated a large amount of further research by others working in the department. “Capable of thinking about urbanism both on a grand scale and in minute detail,”² Park provided new insights into the city, preempting later debates on scales of analysis.

Research building on Park’s platform had ranging successes. Louis Wirth’s³ work on the Jewish ghetto sought to explain the segregation by recourse to close ethnographic analysis. William Foote Whyte’s⁴ *Street Corner Society*, was interested in the depiction and consideration of social relations in the Italian slum, preempting David Ley’s⁵ more recent work on ghetto life. Here he depicted internal social coherence in the context of disengagement with the wider society. Nels Anderson’s⁶ work *The Hobo*, also demonstrated the internal coherence of a given marginal urban subculture. Thrasher⁷ and Suttles⁸ took the lead of Park, writing other interesting studies of urban life.

Herbert Gans⁹ too, approached the city from a qualitative fine grain perspective. Certainly his work followed on from Park, as he searched for moral order within a marginal urban environment. However, unlike Park or Wirth, there is no evidence of the ecological or organicist metaphors in Gans’ work. Instead he relied on the analysis of social cohesion and isolation in his analysis of Chicago slum life. His work identifies processes of working class estrangement from the larger society, relating it to educational inadequacies.¹⁰

¹Hannerz, U., *Exploring the City*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1980, p. 21.

²*Ibid.*, p. 23

³Wirth, L., *The Ghetto*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1969. (Originally published 1928)

⁴Whyte, W., *Street Corner Society*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1955.

⁵Ley, D., *The Black Inner City as Frontier Outpost*, Association of American Geographers, USA, 1974; Ley, D. and Cybriwsky, R., “Urban Graffiti as Territorial Markers,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 64, No. 4, 1974.

⁶Anderson, N., *The Hobo*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1961.

⁷Thrasher, F., *The Gang*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1963. (Originally published 1927)

⁸Suttles, G., *The Social Order of the Slum*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1971.

⁹Gans, H., *The Urban Villagers*, The Free Press of Glencoe, Macmillan, 1962.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 265.

Whilst the work of the Chicago School was in many respects path breaking, certain tenets of the School drew it into disrepute. The School was heavily, though not unilaterally steeped, in Social Darwinist pretensions. One of Park's principal interests for example was in the processes of "biotic balance and social equilibrium."¹ Wirth's comparisons related " ... to the competition [underlying] the plant community"² The organisicist metaphors widely utilised by the Chicago School brought disfavour on the School because of their unrealistic and arbitrary abstraction and determinism. Further, the growth in quantitative analysis—now in itself in disfavour—led to various members of the School such as Burgess to insert Social Darwinist concepts such as "dominance" and "competition" into their work.³ The ethnographic enquiry of the Chicago School has also been criticised for failing to call into question the inequitable power relations implicit in urban life. Although the Chicago School was not alone in attracting such criticism, their treatment of power and processes of marginality failed to address some of the most fundamental issues at stake.

Despite the valid criticisms of the Chicago School, Peter Jackson⁴ argues that the all too rapid dismissal of the Chicago School has been hasty, suggesting that much that was laudable was produced in that period.

However, it was not just in Chicago that there was an emergent interest in marginal urban life. Investment by the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute provided for the emergence of what is regarded as the Manchester School in Britain. Focusing more on the African continent they were keen to investigate the small scale social relations occurring in the urban context. Max Gluckman and the Manchester School sought the delimitation of small scale areas for investigation and social 'excavation.'

Mitchell⁵ with his "situational analysis," problematised the relationship between scales of analysis. Whilst Mitchell saw the importance of both macro and microscale, he

¹Park, R., "Human Ecology," in Turner, R., ed., *Robert Park On Social Control and Collective Behaviour*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1967, p. 84.

²Wirth, *The Ghetto*, *op. cit.*, p. 284-285.

³Hannerz, *Exploring the City*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁴Jackson, P. "Social Disorganization and Moral Order in the City," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, NS 9, 1984, p. 1.

⁵Mitchell, J. C., *Cities, Society and Social Perception*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1987, p. 3.

saw the microscale as having the capacity to reflect larger social relations. Hannerz¹ suggests that “... the analysis of the local system could show that the impact of external forces might depend on the form of internal community structure.” Focusing on the finer grain of urban life was thus not to disparage larger structural forces, but to allow for more detailed accounts of behaviour and social interaction. The Manchester School’s interest in the finer grain led it to be heavily criticised for its failure to address the larger social and structural issues confronting the social situations it addressed. Implicit ethnocentrism and a failure to address the basis of colonialism further compromised the integrity of the Manchester School’s work.

In any case, the anthropological approaches resident in both the Chicago and Manchester Schools, were to bear greater fruit in Erving Goffman, who having graduated from the University of Chicago in 1945, was most productive in the 1950s-1970s. His work² considered enigmatic and at times only para-scientific, has nevertheless played a major role on contemporary sociology. His³ notions of “front regions” and “back regions” were rooted in Park’s descriptions of social behaviour knitting well with Park’s notions of moral order and urban social worlds.

Goffman’s interests lay in the micropolitics of action. His work reviewed and systemised perspectives on human activity. By reviewing social vignettes, he demonstrated using concepts such as “regions” and “impression,” the ways that individuals construct their lives with theatrical precision.

Whilst Goffman, and indeed the Symbolic Interactionist School, have been criticised for failing to be critical of contextual structures, their work provides specific insights into the intricacies of everyday relations. Where the Chicago School studies looked at the fine detail of everyday life, most were concerned at relating such phenomena to the notion of a moral order, where Goffman’s interest is more deeply seated in the description and analysis of group behaviour in itself.

¹*Ibid.*, p. 145.

²Goffman, E., *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Pelican, London, 1971.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 28-82.

Goffman and the wider interests of the Chicago School have been criticised however for failing to incorporate an analysis of power flows. Goffman's work has also been criticised for its ahistoricism, i.e., his failure to provide temporal context for his social scenes. Goffman ignores the long *durée*, rather concentrating on the dynamics of immediate response. His avoidance of historical context, and indeed his lack of concern with larger structural forces renders his analysis highly time and space specific. Nevertheless, Goffman's focus is deliberate, and his approach to circumstances a useful one when considered in the light of these limitations. Giddens,¹ however, regards Goffman's work as being of greater value than evidenced by its "microsociological perspective," suggesting that his approach provides insight into social encounters which are the mainstay of social reproduction.

David Ley's² forays into the city have followed in part a Parkian logic with further development into social relations and the dialectical relationship with urban space. Using a taxonomy more related to the dynamism of social relations, Ley looks at the development of community via the notion of a shared cultural symbolic currency. Writing at a time when quantitative method and nomothetic approaches posited a deterministic view of culture, Ley with Samuels,³ Cybriwsky⁴ and Tuan,⁵ were challenging the anaemic individual producing scholarship that accommodated human agency.⁶ Ley particularly has investigated race relations and the degree to which race is the key to much social stigmatisation and segregation within cities. Unlike many earlier approaches, Ley is keen to directly address power in urban social relations. In *The Black Inner City as Frontier Outpost*, he discusses in detail the notion of racial inequality and the expectations of the white power structure.⁷ However, whilst power is broached, its discussion and investigation, at least in this edition, remains largely superficial. He⁸

¹Giddens, A., *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, p. 68.

²Ley, D., *The Black Inner City as Frontier Outpost*, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

³Ley, D. and Samuels, M., eds., *Humanistic Geography: Prospects and Problems*, Croom Helm, London, 1978.

⁴Ley and Cybriwsky, "Urban Graffiti as Territorial Markers," *op. cit.*

⁵Tuan, Y-F., "Literature and Geography: Implications for Geographical Research," in Ley, D. and Samuels, M., eds., *Humanistic Geography: Prospects and Problems*, Croom Helm, London, 1978.

⁶Jackson, P. *Maps of Meaning*, Unwin Hyman, London, 1989, p. 20.

⁷Ley, *The Black Inner City*, *op. cit.*, p. 245. (His emphasis)

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 250.

investigates the mechanisms by which the “self-organising system of the frontier outpost,” maintains its own momentum and in so doing serves to reproduce internal homogeneity and cultural identity, at the expense of communication with the larger social system.

Ley’s¹ analysis of cultural solidarity and territoriality, addressed in more detail in more recent works, demonstrates a significant development from the cruder analyses of the Chicago School. In addressing cultural imagery, he localises the venue in which meaning is located and contested. In his more recent work discussed below, Ley has used more sophisticated analysis to analyse power relations.

In Ley’s work on the ghetto one can see the development of themes that had been expressed both by Park and also by the Manchester School. Ley’s thesis sees the need for experiential learning, much in the same way that Park and indeed Thomas saw the need to *experience* social worlds. Similarly Ley’s,² “behavioural environment,” may be favourably compared to Mitchell’s urban situationism and levels of analysis. Ley³ cites Kirk in saying, “This internal environment we may call the ‘Behavioural environment’ and in this environment the gap is closed between Mind and Nature ... it is in this behavioural environment that physical features acquire values and potentialities which attract or repel human action.”

Although the terms are not entirely congruent, there is nevertheless a degree of conceptual convergence. For Ley and indeed for Kirk, the behavioural environment is an arena for cultural communication. Although the Manchester School may not have defined the microscale in this way, the basic tenet of examining smaller scale behavioural traits either in their own right or as a part of a larger critique on deeper structures demonstrates a similarity between these two approaches.

Ley’s interactionist view identifies the role of the media in shaping public sentiment and the creation of stereotyped images, and although he recognises the style of communication and the imagery of shared cultural systems, the theory which informs the

¹Ley and Cybriwsky “Urban Graffiti as Territorial Markers,” *op. cit.*

²Ley, *The Black Inner City*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

³Kirk, W., “Historical Geography and the Concept of Behavioural Environment” *Indian Geographical Society, Silver Jubilee Souvenir Volume*, 1951, pp. 152-160. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 5.

sign and cultural world is somewhat underdeveloped. Although his critique affords insight into the cultural contestation of imagery, it fails to demonstrate the political negotiation implicit in such symbolisation, and neglects the insights of semiotics as a means of affording insight into the layers of meaning in such symbolisation. Certainly however, in Ley's work with Samuels¹ and also with Roman Cybriwsky,² there is a stronger investigation into and awareness of power relations.

Ley's more recent work however, has a much more satisfactory treatment of power relations. He³ notes, "more generally, we might usefully identify the urban landscape as a text, as a cultural form which, when investigated reveals the human drama of ideas and ideologies, interest groups, and power blocs nested within particular social and economic contexts." In this context, Ley argues for a new humanised morphological approach to the city, in response to the highly quantitative work which has preceded it. Moreover the emphasis that Ley shows also directs qualitative research away from the previous emphasis of a static,⁴ disengaged populace towards one with a sense of "human agency."⁵

Where David Ley sees the investigation of the inner city as a socio-political and an anthropological project, and in terms of the communication and confraternity of similarly constrained individuals, Peter Jackson⁶ prefers a more closely pluralistic critique of urban social relations. Jackson's interest is in the development of hegemonic culture and peripheral subculture. He suggests that many of the approaches discussed here fail to adequately consider the microscale structures in the *context* of larger social and cultural structures. Furthermore, he suggests that the process by which subordinate groups contest dominant social meanings is inherently geographical, being necessarily negotiated over the politics of space or territory. Moreover, in discussing Bourdieu,⁷ and

¹Ley, D. and Samuels, M., *Humanistic Geography: Prospects and Problems*, Croom Helm, London, 1978.

²Ley and Cybriwsky, "Urban Graffiti," *op. cit.*

³Ley, "From Urban Structure," *op. cit.*, p. 100.

⁴Jackson identifies Carl Sauer as an influential albeit conservative geographer. The static themes of cultural geography, suggests Jackson still dominate American cultural geography today. *Op cit.*, Jackson, *Maps of Meaning*, p. 15.

⁵Ley, "From Urban Structure," *op. cit.*, p. 99.

⁶Jackson, *Maps of Meaning*, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁷Bourdieu, P., *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1984, p. 2.

in relation to the understanding of cultural codes, Jackson¹ calls for “detailed ethnography rather than ungrounded theorization” in order to build a well argued reading of urban cultures.

Ley’s comments at the beginning of this chapter call for an approach to the city and its marginal classes which accommodates the nuance of landscape whilst also accommodating the broader structural forces implicit in society. The structural components outlined in Chapter 1, need to be considered theoretically, with the immediacies of action evident in the everyday lives of the homeless. The approaches reviewed above demonstrate some of the ways that urban marginal classes have been theorised in the past. Where these approaches suffer from various shortcomings, many of the points raised, and perspectives used provide valuable insight into the contemporary relations of London’s homeless youth.

Many of the problems addressed by the scholars reviewed, thus far, continue to be problems for social research. Certainly the relationship between microscale and macroscale analyses has been a bugbear to research throughout this period. The Manchester School chose to treat the larger structural forces somewhat anecdotally, preferring instead to focus on the microscale relations of social situations. Their situational analysis has thus attracted condemnation because of its failure to properly address the issues involved at a higher structural scale of analysis. The Chicago School too, chose without being so explicit, to concentrate on the immediate circumstances of everyday life. For the Chicago School, the continued interest in organicist metaphors can be considered as a means of tackling the problem of the division between macro and microscales and also therefore the division between deterministic and voluntarist perspectives on the city.

Despite the various shortcomings of these approaches, there is much to be learnt from their strengths. William Foote Whyte’s² notion of internal order and external disorder has very specific parallels with the contemporary young homeless in London. Where the young homeless often fail to lead ‘productive’ lives in an establishment sense,

¹Jackson, *Maps of Meaning, op. cit.*, p. 65.

²Whyte, *Street Corner Society*.

their lives are characterised by an ability to 'get by' in the city which rests on a dextrous use of available resources. Like Whyte's conclusions on the Italian slums, the homeless do manage to create livelihood of their own kind, even if it is perceived from outside as being merely chaotic.

Nels Anderson's¹ work on Hobohemia demonstrates that the value and meaning of life can be characterised by lifestyle and action. This brings us to a point where livelihood is seen as an important part of the subculture of marginal life in the city. Homeless livelihood is therefore one which must be significantly concerned with everyday life and the means by which it is achieved.

Suttles² and Gans³ have been concerned with the production and reproduction of culture. Where Gans investigates the way working classes reproduce their own estrangement, Suttles is more concerned with the ways that social cohesion and identity are formed through the development of ordered segmentation. Clearly this is the terrain that Giddens treads as he examines the way that social constraints are reproduced and the way that individuals are able to maintain their agency.

What emerges from a reading of these past perspectives on marginal groups in the city, is that there is a prevailing need to be able to link the larger and smaller scales of analysis, in such a way that the operatives of power be accommodated, and that everyday life may also be considered. The ethnography and participant observation of the Chicago and Manchester Schools, and indeed in contemporary cultural studies, emerge as being the most appropriate vehicle for understanding the immediate meanings of everyday life and for understanding them in the context of the larger power relations implicit in society. Furthermore, a careful inventory and analysis of everyday livelihood expressed in its resources and dynamics are seen as being an important means of understanding the meanings implicit in social life.

Beyond a discussion of these issues is the need to consider the subculture of youth homelessness in the light of movements in youth culture. Ley's⁴ interest in cultural

¹ Anderson, *The Hobo*, *op. cit.*

² Suttles, *Social Order of the Slum*, *op. cit.*

³ Gans, *The Urban Villagers*, *op. cit.*

⁴ Ley, D., *A Social Geography of the City*, Harper and Row, New York, 1983, p. 104.

imagery and artefact calls for a review of such cultural movements in order to further understand the context of youth homelessness.

The range of approaches reviewed thus far, firstly demonstrate the ability of participant observation, the principal method of both the Chicago¹ and Manchester Schools to unearth insightful qualitative knowledge of marginal groups, and secondly, call for a perspective on the city that accommodates the role of structures and indeed the role of Structuration on the ultimate fabric of everyday marginal urban life. The cultural studies approach utilised by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) is one way that these difficulties have been dealt with.

Contemporary Cultural Studies, Youth Subculture and Homeless Youth

The limitations² and indeed the advantages of various aspects of scholarship as used by the Manchester and Chicago Schools were also identified by a range of scholars who in the 1950s developed an interest in the development of youth cultures. Especially they were concerned to consider the relationship between the emergent subculture and the parent culture from where they ultimately sprang. The CCCS in Birmingham developed as a central source for writings on youth culture.

Yet despite the CCCS interest in subculture and the difficult terrain of adolescence, the universality of troubled youth has been widely questioned.³ Davis⁴ takes great pains to explain that for the majority, youth is a relatively unproblematic period. He considers the growth in academic interest in youth as a part of the larger spectacularisation of youth culture.

Two principal approaches to the state of youth affairs have been predominant. Firstly, an early wave of interest in youth issues conceptualised youth behaviour in terms of delinquency and hooliganism. The second wave, suggests Davis⁵ was characterised by the “resistance through rituals” thesis of the CCCS. He suggests that this approach

¹ Although much qualitative work was conducted under the rubric of the Chicago School, it is arguable that the largest impact that the School had on geographic thought was quantitative in nature.

² Hebdige, *Subculture*, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-9.

⁴ Davis, J., *Youth and the Condition of Britain: Images of Adolescent Conflict*, Athlone, London, 1990, p. 1-9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

characterised youth as being intrinsically resistant and generally politically motivated. Political motivation, however, was not only expressed on the shop floor but also in terms of leisure based and often middle class subcultures such as punk. Punk was for Hebdige, alienation made tangible.¹

Davis² suggests that despite the often sensitively handled ethnography which has characterised much of the writings on marginal youth culture, there has been a tendency to try to explain subcultural conditions by immediate recourse to “an elaborate theory of historical class struggle or the contradictions of capitalism.” When Willis³ for example suggests that counter-school culture “... provide[s] concrete guidelines for living for when capitalism is overthrown,” one can begin to see the degree to which grand theory is twisted to accommodate the experience of the microscale. Davis’ argument however, is less to disparage the political project of cultural investigation, than to suggest that the ‘resistance’ notion has been imputed rather than demonstrated.

Although the emergence of a homeless subculture may in many respects be seen as a development from other subcultural forms, the specific relations surrounding homelessness make its interpretation more complex. Where subculture is normally a deliberate if sometimes confused ploy to effect certain ends,⁴ the homeless are not entirely willing actors. Although some will become accustomed to and entrenched in the lifestyle of homelessness, as any other subcultural adherent may, his or her initial brush with homelessness is normally by misfortune or miscalculation rather than design. Moreover, where an individual’s intention may have been to leave home and head for London, and where many will have become homeless; at the outset, few will have left home or a previous place of abode with the deliberate intention of living on London’s streets.

¹Hebdige, *Subculture*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

²Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

³Willis, P. *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids get Working Class Jobs*, Gower, Aldershot, Hampshire, 1978, p. 122.

⁴See Chapter 9, *The Politics of Identity*.

Implicit in the notion of “style” utilised by Hebdige¹ and Brake² is the recombination of meaning *bricolage* and the creation of cultural commodities. For the homeless whose conventional commodities are few and whose poverty disengages them from commercial consumption, the annexation and revaluation of urban resources is not only an act of material and emotional survival (the creation of livelihood), but also an act of symbolic subversion.

Whilst youth homelessness is clearly subcultural in character there is much to suggest that this particular experience is a qualified kind of subculture, i.e., one which may be the result of unintended consequences.³ Nevertheless it is possible and indeed profitable to briefly consider the development of youth cultures in Britain in order to shed light on where some of the subcultural aspects of homelessness fit into the larger domain of subcultural expression.

Davis⁴ suggests that youth cultures have been “overemphasis[ed] [as] problematic and spectacular.” He suggests that despite the implicit predilection of the “resistance through rituals” approach of the CCCS, for young people the period of youth and adolescence is unproblematic and smooth. However, whilst this is the case Davis⁵ also suggests, “if images of youth, and constellations of images, are linked to broader perceptions of social change, it is perhaps not surprising that they should embody many of the contradictions that are present in adult society”

For the structural reasons explained in Chapter 1, it is not surprising that youth, who often bear the brunt of the difficulties of social change, should react most strongly to the changes causing contradictions in their lives. It is with this in mind that the role and development of youth oppositional culture as it has impact on the experiences and values of homeless youth is discussed.

¹Hebdige, *Subculture*, op. cit., p. 17.

²Brake, M., *Comparative Youth Culture: The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures in America, Britain and Canada*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1985, p. 11.

³Snow, D. and Anderson, L., *Down on their Luck: A Study of Homeless Street People*, The University of California Press, California, 1993, pp. 39-40.

⁴Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain*, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 22.

Youth Subcultures

Dick Hebdige,¹ after considering the sizeable social changes that occurred after the Second World War, notes that perhaps the most pressing change for youth at this time was an increased general spending power. Concomitant with a growth in the spending power of young people came a “generational consciousness”² which filtered through all echelons of society.

For Hebdige, and indeed the general project of the CCCS, subculture has been read as a political expression of resistance. Although Hebdige³ recognises that the *bricolage* of subcultural forms, in part, reproduces the dominant readings of mediated images, it is also capable of undermining the logics to which previous utilisations of such artefacts and images had been attached. Even in the apparent embracing of dominant values and behaviour can lie an experience not of domination, but of inversion and negotiated compliance. De Certeau,⁴ whose approach is to be developed later, provides a politics of the “production of consumption” i.e., the productive utilisation of consumed imagery, asking what individuals do with the images they are fed.

Where the experience of the emergent post war subcultures such as Teddy Boys consolidated as well as provided critique of the dominant social order, other subcultural movements were less accommodating. Punk for example, instead of embracing and reassembling parent cultures as was the case with the Teddy Boys, sought to “parod[y] the alienation and emptiness,” characteristic of contemporary life.⁵ The punk experience—as much as it may have been later commodified—was in the first instance a pure act of resistance, a general and unfocused resistance against all convention. However, even when conventional commercial icons are utilised their use does not necessarily celebrate their commercial value or meaning. Willis⁶ considers the way that commodified items can spell uncommodified meanings. In relation to the way that young

¹Hebdige, *Subculture*, op. cit., p. 78.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

⁴De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, op. cit.

⁵Hebdige, *Subculture*, op. cit., p. 79.

⁶Willis, *Learning to Labour*, op. cit., p. 17.

people use music, he¹ suggests that commercial music may be given its own authenticity by its use, meaning “missing from its original commercial generation.”

Where oppositional subcultural expression in the period up to and including the 1980s was characterised by an offensive subculture, more recent subcultural expressions have in some sense been less violently offensive.² Where Punk was aggressively punk, and Teddy Boy culture aggressively and evidently Teddy Boy, the late 1980s and early 1990s have witnessed with ‘New Age’ travelling and youth homelessness, a sort of subculture of resignation. Although not passive, such subcultural expression is more characterised by satyagraha,³ obstinacy, and defiance rather than offensive action. Furthermore, rather than drawing on gratuitous offensive expression, the homeless direct their energies toward survival, creatively utilising and valorising urban refuse and paraphernalia as resources. Where the behaviour of the homeless *is* offensive it is a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

In these more recent subcultural forms, such as New Age travelling⁴ and youth homelessness, whilst individuals remain defiant and determined, very often their expression is more of disengagement than of being intrinsically political. Where Teddy Boys and Punk sought to deliberately affront and offend, more recent subcultures have been more demonstrative of disengagement and disassociation. The use of the city by the homeless is one characterised more by opportunity where it can be found and easily made, than by a deliberate attempt at systematic reprisals for social disaffection.

However, the subcultural features of homelessness still, in part, relate to the general development of oppositional youth culture in Britain. Like other oppositional youth cultures, youth homelessness as subculture shares a critical stance against the prevailing social order. Although homelessness differs from other subversive oppositional youth culture, in that it does not utilise commercially commodified artefactual symbolic expression (such as leather jackets, a particular music, or even a

¹*Ibid.*

²Football hooliganism being perhaps one notable exception.

³Satyagraha is the form of resistance utilised in India by Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) which was characterised by non-violent civil disobedience.

⁴Travellers have always been a part of British Society, however, the popularity of such a nomadic existence has become more commonplace in the last ten years.

combination of disparate everyday items such as with the safety pins of Punk), it does create subversive expression through its abuse of an establishment urban logic. Furthermore, where conventional subculture often employs commodified cultural forms for its symbolic expression, the culture of homelessness rejects the efficacy of such commodities, instead using the inverted commercial world of the city and the commodification of refuse—inverted by means of tricks and ruses—to supply them with sustenance.

Geographers and Contemporary Homeless Research

There has been a spate of scholarly interest in homelessness in North America, but this has not been the case in Britain. In March of 1991, *Urban Geography*,¹ devoted an entire edition to writings on homelessness. Jennifer Wolch's² introductory article, *Urban Homelessness: An Agenda for Research*, runs through some of the current work on homelessness, principally in the USA, but not before she notes the dearth of geographical interest in homelessness, saying: "geographers have been slow to explore the dimensions of homelessness." She suggests that "human geography can provide profound insights into the dynamics of homelessness."³ Her agenda includes issues of structural and economic change, the changing geography of welfare and local provision, the "shelterisation" of the homeless city, the use of local social networks amongst the homeless, and the social use of space as a coping mechanism. Recognising that the contemporary geography of homelessness is in its infancy she provides a wide range of options for further research. Surprisingly, however, she makes no call for an emphasis on youth, instead the mainstay of her interest remains with the larger homeless population.

The other writings in this dedicated edition of *Urban Geography*, address some of these issues. Wolch⁴ calls for a social geography which addresses the perspective of the "least advantaged." Her work is also deeply aware of the need to address questions

¹ *Urban Geography*, Vol. 12, No. 2, March-April, 1991.

² Wolch, J., "Urban Homelessness: An Agenda for Research," *Urban Geography*, Vol. 12, No. 2, March-April, 1991, p. 99.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

about the processes of social reproduction of homelessness whilst also accommodating the actions and agency of the homeless themselves. Furthermore, she calls for research that appreciates the relationship between spaces in the city and strategies for survival. She refers to the relationship between places and resources, and the efficacy of local social networks available to the homeless.

Dear and Wolch's¹ work on homelessness and deindustrialisation similarly portrays the deinstitutionalised homeless as being active agents in the shaping of their lives and in the shaping of the geography of the city. They extend the thesis that the homeless in Northern America have exercised real choice in the creation of their social conditions and that whilst their situation has in part been forged out of what has been left available to them, they have at the same time effected change and have capitalised in ingenious ways on available options.

Rowe and Wolch² employ an ethnographic methodology using it to inform the sociological method that integrates behaviour with an analysis of social networks. Their work on homeless women in Los Angeles draws on participant observation to illuminate the integration and the reintegration of time-space continuity for street dwellers. Using cartographic and other illustrative techniques they demonstrate people's "life paths," in the delimited skid row area. They demonstrate how self-esteem is dissipated by the transience of street life, where attachment to place is obfuscated. Linking sociological techniques with information drawn from interview, they produce a convincing argument that connects personal disorganisation exacerbated by transience and disjointed spatial-temporal integrity, with continued homelessness.

Like Jennifer Wolch, Susan Ruddick³ makes no call for an emphasis on youth homelessness, but she does comment on the means by which the homeless engage in purposive and cogent action. Like Wolch she understands the homeless as agents saying: "But the point is that the homeless *do act*, and in their tactical reproduction of daily life is

¹Dear, M. and Wolch, J., *Landscapes of Despair: From Deinstitutionalization to Homelessness*, Polity Press (Blackwell), Oxford, 1987.

²Rowe, S. and Wolch, J., "Social Networks in Time and Space: Homeless Women in Skid Row, Los Angeles," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 80, No. 2, 1990, p. 185.

³Ruddick, S., "Heterotopias of the Homeless: Strategies and Tactics of Placemaking in Los Angeles," *Strategies: A Journal of Theory, Culture and Politics*, (Special Issue: In the City) No. 3, 1990, pp. 184-201.

perhaps not much different than (sic) the office workers in the stories above their heads that De Certeau (sic) so fondly describes.”¹ She suggests that much of the writing on homelessness “downplay[s] any role that the homeless might have themselves as agents engaged in the complex process of city building”²

Using the perspective of de Certeau³ she provides insight into the ways that the homeless make a tactical use of space which confound “*strategic* attempts to organize and control the symbolic meaning of this space and its intended users.”⁴

Aside from the slowness of geographers to respond to homeless issues, Snow and Anderson⁵ suggest that whilst there has been no shortage of research into homelessness, from a social policy perspective, there has been a paucity of contemporary research that deals with social process.

The North American writing on homelessness is convincing and lucid. The approach seeks to win back a sense of agency for the homeless who for so long have been represented as victims. Perhaps one of the dangers of this approach, however, as is the case with any dichotomy, is the possibility of downplaying the effect of macroscale constraints on the circumstances of homelessness. It is with some care that research of this nature needs to progress in order that it does not remove a sense of social culpability for the conditions of homelessness. Although these various authors may, rightly, intend to win back the purposiveness of action for the homeless, care needs to be taken that in so doing, the consequences of macroscale social constraints for the homeless are not undervalued.

This recent writing by geographers on homelessness represents a new focus on the marginal in the city, it looks at the processes that are implicit in homeless experience and the ways that social change has mediated growing marginality. But most importantly, the research investigates not only the processes of marginality, but individual response to that marginality. The marginal are not just victims, they are agents, actively involved in

¹*Ibid.*, p. 197.

²*Ibid.*, p. 186.

³De Certeau, M., *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁵Snow and Anderson, *Down on their Luck*, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

the creation and the shaping of their lives. Previous writings have tended to underestimate the actions of those who have been marginalised. The city emerges as a landscape that is made by those who are banished to its nether spaces. The liminal zones of the city, become not dark, shrouded corners, but locales of resistance, where individuals make what they can from that which they have been left.

Resource Based Approaches

Sandra Wallman¹ coming from an anthropological background chooses to investigate the livelihoods of inner city households. She identifies three factors which affect household process: “developmental factors;” “ecological factors;” and “strategic factors.” Developmental factors refer to the cycle of domestic splits (family breakdown) and change, ecological factors to the impact of the environment and strategic factors to the strategies of each household unit to assess and deploy available options. Her interest in the “structure of livelihood” relates to the utilisation of a “system of resources,” permitting the principal elements of everyday life to be considered in a systematic way. This approach allows for the systematic consideration of the processes of livelihood creation and is a valuable means for the investigation of the processes and circumstances of homelessness. It will therefore be dealt with more fully in Chapter 4 *Resource Based Ethnography, the “Science of Singularity” and Critical Livelihood: An Approach and Framework*.

Subculture and Agency

Chapter 1 reviewed the structural context of homelessness and indeed the factors permitting the ascendancy of youth homelessness, whilst this chapter has so far looked at development of perspectives on marginal urban subcultures and the development of youth subculture in Britain culminating in homeless youth as subculture. In the review of this literature it is evident that the world of homeless youth is an alternative reality in the context of the city. The utilisation of the city according to another logic or alternative

¹Wallman, S., *Eight London Households*, Tavistock Publications, London, 1984.

reality begs the question, “to what extent are the homeless free agents?” contrasting the differences between voluntarist and determinist perspectives on urban experience and addressing the relationship between structures and agency.

Whilst subculture constitutes a response to collectively felt circumstances or grievances,¹ and whilst subcultural action or practice is often critical of the establishment, the degree to which individuals marginalised by the social order are capable of action which in any way refutes, or undermines that social order is a matter of conjecture. This is an important issue because it relates to the understanding and validity of subcultural expression. Two important questions arise in response to the notion of subcultural expression, firstly, whether the action of the individual or even of the collective is capable of effecting change, and if so how much? Secondly, it remains to be seen to what degree critical action needs to effect change in order to be considered subversive, or indeed of value, cathartic or otherwise to the individuals concerned.

Whilst Giddens’² Structuration approach and de Certeau’s³ “Science of Singularity” are essentially complementary, these two approaches offer some scope for debate in the degree to which individuals are capable of critical action, and or capable of effecting change.

The Capacity for Effectual Change

De Certeau⁴ provides a theoretical basis which accommodates critical action. He is concerned with the transgression of constraints as expressed in everyday life. He espouses, to some degree, a voluntarist conception of action, whilst at the same time recognising the strictures of establishment power relations the expression of which he calls “strategy,”⁵ (see Chapter 4, §*The “Science of Singularity”*). Thus individuals in society are at odds in some sense with the power flows which emerge in society as strategies of control.

¹Hebdige, *Subculture*, *op. cit.*, p. 81; Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture*, *op. cit.*, p. ix.

²Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, *op. cit.*

³De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 35-6.

For Giddens, constraint is expressed in social practice. Regularised and routinised action of social practice becomes internalised. Capable of action promoting social change, the individual is also subject to the social order. For those with limited control over resources there are few avenues of control, and indeed a greater chance of disenfranchisement. For marginalised people in the city (e.g., London's young homeless) who are particularly alienated from control over resources, there is correspondingly little opportunity for action (through the utilisation of resources, both cultural and material) whereby they may be able to effect change.

Certainly, as broached in Chapter 1, Giddens has been read by those whose standpoints range from voluntarist to determinist, and there is correspondingly a range of ways that Giddens has been interpreted. Although Giddens¹ goes to great lengths to refute the determinism of Marxist thought, promising to rescue self-determination for the individual, he is also keen to retain the existence of inequality within society that rests firmly on the interplay of constraining forces and power blocs.

For Giddens, the production of action is characterised by the simultaneous production of unintended consequences. These unintended consequences can even occur in "the most radical processes of social change."² It is in this way that structures are reproduced in the action of individuals. These unintended consequences reside in the recursive nature of every day life to the end that they in turn may become unacknowledged conditions of action. The actions of individuals are further conditioned by the political economy of rules and resource allocation. For Giddens then, the social reproduction of structures which reside in everyday life are conditioned both by the recursive nature of everyday life and the economy of access to resources. Giddens' schema therefore curtails the possibility of uniquely authored effectual action.

Giddens is keen to win back for individuals their own purposive action, yet he provides by means of the above mentioned elements of Structuration a sizeable

¹Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

²Thompson, J., "The Theory of Structuration," in Held, D. and Thompson, J., eds., *Social Theory of Modern Societies; Anthony Giddens and his Critics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p. 72.

impedimenta to effectual action. What Giddens affords is soon eroded by the effective constraints especially to those in marginal situations having little control over resources.

Giddens¹ offers a description of the specific ways that individuals are caught in a web of unintended consequences. Using Willis'² work Giddens indicates how his notion of social reproduction works through the operative of unintended consequences. Willis' study is based on ethnography which details working class school counter culture, and demonstrates by recourse to Marxist theory the ways that working class individuals end up in working class jobs. Central to both Willis' and Giddens' understanding of the situation is the way that working class school children who adopt a critical stance to authority in the school context pave the way for moving into generalised working class employment.

Giddens³ suggests that the unintended consequence of school critique is the preparation of individuals for working class employment. In this instance he implicitly suggests that whilst these youngsters are knowledgeable agents in the school context, having experimented with the transgression of power flows, their preparation for and trajectory to working class life is unintended. However, to deny that the boys in this study are not at all aware of the very trajectories they make for themselves is perhaps too constraining a view. Certainly with the homeless, there is an understanding of the process of marginal reproduction, but at the same time disengagement and defiant nonchalance reduce the chance of diversion.

Reviewing Gambetta's⁴ Italian government sponsored doctoral research, Giddens recognises that class consciousness plays a role in the employment/class destination of young people. Gambetta's research sought reasons why working class youth did not take up government sponsored employment opportunities offered, once they left school. If context conditions action, one needs to recognise that despite constraints, real choice is implicit in action. The differentiation of intended and

¹Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, op. cit., pp. 289-309.

²Willis, *Learning to Labour*, op. cit.

³Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, op. cit., pp. 293-297.

⁴Gambetta, D., *Were they Pushed or did they Jump?* PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1982. Cited in Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, op. cit., pp. 304-310.

unintended consequences may be subtle. Giddens¹ himself accepts that, “what is ‘unintended’ and ‘unacknowledged,’ in any context or range of contexts of action, is usually by no means a simple matter to discover.”

Yet at the same time he² is willing to accommodate Willis’ supposition that his “lads” “drift into what they do rather than deliberately confronting a range of alternatives and then opting for one of them.” One may suggest however, that whilst therein lies a degree of unintended consequence, the trajectory is also one that is anticipated by young people in this circumstance, especially as they have “picked up [attitudes and ideas about work] from parents and others in the neighbourhood and community.”³

Thus in Giddens’ Structuration schema there is tension between the degree to which individuals authorise action and the degree to which action is ~~dependent~~ upon unintended consequences.

De Certeau, however, provides a way forward that permits the retention of original and effectual social action. Although he⁴ recognises in *strategies*, the power relations at play in a social order, he also identifies a certain creativity which is not accommodated by Goffman’s micropolitics of social action which Giddens uses to bolster his theory.

Whilst Goffman’s dramaturgic taxonomy, employed by Giddens,⁵ remains a useful tool for analysis of the micropolitics of action—his analysis is used later in this thesis—it fails to accommodate the individual’s sagacious use of the surrounding world. Whilst he analyses contrivance and anticipates duplicity, Goffman does not explore the political reappropriation of urban commodities (formal and informal), nor the mechanisms by which action may be inherently subversive of the social order. De Certeau’s “Science of Singularity,” provides a means by which individuals through their singular responses to social situations are able to invent new spaces for action and to engage social constraint. Where Giddens recognises the power relations implicit in social

¹Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

²*Ibid.*, p. 301.

³*Ibid.*, p. 300.

⁴De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36. See Chapter 4, §The “Science of Singularity.”

⁵Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-75.

institutions and sees these as marshals of resources which serve as constraints to action, de Certeau permits the individual to create resources, and to play in this newly created resource field in defiance of the established social order.

Where Giddens robs subversive action of its validity by defining subversive action as pregnant with the unintended consequences which reproduce established power relations, de Certeau is able to return more of the subversive character of action to the actor. Although de Certeau does not explicitly deny the existence of unintended consequence, and would not want to, he awards the actor a higher degree of authorship over action.

Where Foucault¹ posits the surveillance society and the institutionalisation of paranoia as a means of control, de Certeau posits a way of individual empowerment even in the context of disenfranchisement. It is the singular responses of individuals and marginalised groups which spell out oppositional and inverting utterances of those whose actions are constrained. De Certeau provides a way of understanding not only the ways that actions of the disenfranchised can be duplicitous, but also how the whole of human everyday life may be characterised by ruses and scams for public acceptance, and private disparagement.

As in Scott's² study, the actions of individuals may be deeply subversive even as the recursive nature of social action appears to reproduce power relations. There is a fundamental difference between action and meaning in action, and it is in this zone that the individual 'wins' over the seeming acceptance of a given recursive lifestyle. Where Giddens sees such action as producing unintended consequences of action, de Certeau purports that even whilst seemingly accommodating the prescribed trajectory of action (prescribed by the recursive nature of everyday life) individuals are instead carving their own critical structure of meaning in committing an act of caricature.

Although de Certeau manages at least in part to win back authorship of action, the question remains as to whether or not two functionally identical actions subject to,

¹Foucault, M., *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Peregrine, London, 1979, pp. 195-228. (Part 3, Chapter 3, *Panopticism*).

²Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, *op. cit.*

and in part determined by, prevailing power relations, but *intentionally* different, represent the difference between subversive and non-subversive expression. If individuals are credited with unintended consequences of action—in part conditioned by the power relations operating in society—then individuals cannot be said to be truly or fully authors of their action. If however, individuals are authors of their own lives, even though they realise that their action is constrained, and they knowingly reproduce power relations, yet profess (perhaps privately in Goffman's back regions) a caricatured action, then these two circumstances are fundamentally different.

Critical Action, Symbolic Refusal and Subversive Capacity

Hebdige¹ suggests, having considered the “forbidden identity” of subcultural artefacts, and presumably their behaviour too, that the “refusal is worth making,” and that, “... the smiles and sneers have some subversive value, even if, in the final analysis, they are like Genet's gangster pin-ups, just the darker side of sets of regulations, just so much graffiti on a prison wall.” He² alludes to a level of symbolic warfare, symbol against symbol, both beneath the level of consciousness and also an intentional communication. He refers to the critical texts of punk and even Dada in their irreverent recombination of signs, openly defiant, critically using and abusing the language of signs but in another way not quite knowing how they work.

That the refusal is worth making and contains some subversive value begs the question, “how does such action practically serve to subvert or effectually undermine power relations?”

For Giddens,³ system integration depends on “the reciprocity between actors or collectivities across extended time-space ...,” and such integration also depends on the social coherence of a given social order. The emergence of both individual and collective disavowal of the tenets of the social order serves to weaken social coherence. Where individual action may not have direct political effect, its social value needs to be

¹ Hebdige, *Subculture, op. cit.*, p. 3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 107.

³ Giddens, *The Constitution of Society, op. cit.*, p. 377.

measured in terms of its weakening of the universality of the social order. Although the homeless may not plan for the dissolution of the social order, it is viable to suggest that shared disaffection and a knowledge of counter movement carries with it some cathartic value for those who are maligned by its larger structural forces. The value of such actions lies in their cathartic capacity as vents for frustrations emergent from those classes most at odds with social change (see §*Contemporary Cultural Studies, Youth Subculture and Homeless Youth* above).

Subcultural action, however, may also be more politically effectual, such as when the homeless, by their very presence in the city, call into question the ability of the social order to cater to all its members. By their very presence, they are able to be effectually subversive by the way that they insert themselves in the political agenda and embarrass an elected government or indeed an established social order. The political nature of youth homelessness plays an important role in homeless livelihood and is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, *The Nature of Commodities in Homeless Critical Livelihood*.

In addition to politically effectual action (with intended consequences), other actions give rise to unintended consequences, i.e., actions which rather than undermining dominant power structures serve to reproduce them. The seeming inactivity of London's young homeless, for example, may allow political groups to label the homeless as layabouts, potentially legitimising the closure of social security benefits to those regarded as wastrels. The experience of youth homelessness is, however, characterised in part by what may be called, reckless carelessness (see Chapter 6, §*Other Facets of Identity*). For Giddens,¹ constraints are both restricting and opportunity provident. If the action of the homeless precipitates consequences which reproduce prevailing power structures, then this circuit of consequences becomes systemic and establishes in social production a structure of constraint. However, if the homeless defy constraint by affording it little consequence, then the power of that constraint is subverted by individuals who refuse to 'play by the game.' If their action by intended or unintended consequences precipitates a

¹Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, op. cit., pp. 174-179.

contraction of resources, and by Giddens' definition a contraction of available means of expression and self-determination, the response is not necessarily one of greater misery, deprivation (for the homeless have no commercial resources in the first place) or inequality, but rather one where the homeless utilise different creative forces to valorise the hitherto unvalorised in the context of the city. (The valorisation of resources is discussed more fully in Chapter 4.)

Conclusion

The degree to which the homeless are agents emerges from the discussion in favour of individual agency. However, it is recognised that whilst the homeless are free agents, they are also conditioned by constraints of a structural kind. Many of the actions of the homeless are deeply critical of the constraining features of society, and this criticism is expressed symbolically and effectually. Even in the face of ineffectual action, refusal is still 'worth making,' for in every refusal and in every inversion of social practice lies an energy that is cathartic, critical and potentially subversive of the social order.

The aim of this chapter has been threefold. Firstly, to critically review the literature which has predated this study, literature which has focused on the investigation of marginal groups in the city. Secondly, this chapter has aimed to briefly review the development of a homeless subculture from a history of British youth culture. Thirdly, this chapter has previewed the work of Sandra Wallman and Michel de Certeau as important theoretical perspectives for the development of this thesis.

This trinity of tasks has shown that whilst there is a plethora of approaches to studying marginal urban youth, research has varied widely. Marginal groups in the city have been subjected to a range of representations some more competent than others.

From the reviews in this chapter emerge the need for an investigation into London's youth homelessness which is sensitive both to social structures (reviewed in Chapter 1, *Young People Homelessness, Structures and Constraints*), and to agency, which ultimately accommodates a relationship between the two. This review calls for an

approach that can be sensitive to individuated experience (ethnography, participant observation and a resource approach) whilst also reuniting critical actions (refusals, ruses and scams) with the macroscale constraints which in part condition action. This approach is expounded in Chapter 4 *Resource Based Ethnography, the Science of Singularity and Critical Livelihood: An Approach and Framework*, after the size and shape of the homeless population is considered in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

THE PARAMETERS OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN LONDON

Who the homeless are and how many they may be are questions related to the definition of homelessness. This research is concerned with young people living on the streets in London. Many members of this population are transient in the sense that individuals will change their mode of accommodation frequently over a short period of time. Furthermore, although many agencies are keen to promote ^{the idea} that homelessness is more than living on the streets, namely living under the threat of homelessness or in inadequate or temporary accommodation,¹ this research project focuses on the subpopulation of the homeless whose lives are characterised, by at least from time to time sleeping rough on London's streets. Whilst this thesis focuses on social process and ethnography, it is necessary to provide a numeric base in order that the size and shape of youth homelessness may be posited.

Aside from the definitional problems of homelessness itself, there are many semantic differences which confound the comparison of statistics from different sources. Even official governmental statements of homelessness are laden with ambiguity (see Chapter 2, *Local Authorities, Housing Associations and National Housing Policy*). Definitions used by different organisations and agencies vary widely, some being highly specific and others being ambiguously general. Such disparities make the comparison of data arbitrary and limited, and it is necessary to keep this in mind when comparing data from a range of sources.

It is evident that some calculations err on the side of generosity (by number or category), whilst others are conservatively measured. Unsurprisingly, counts by homeless pressure groups are comparatively high, whilst those representing 'responsible' groups such as the government, are comparatively low. Although the Rough Sleepers Initiative²

¹ See Chapter 2, *Local Authorities, Housing Associations and National Housing Policy*.

² The Rough Sleepers initiative is an initiative of the Department of Environment, targeting street homelessness in London for the provision of off street accommodation both temporary and permanent. Department of the Environment, *Single Homelessness and Rough Sleepers*, *op. cit.*, p. 1. See also Randall and Brown, *The Rough Sleepers Initiative*, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

is reported to have reduced the number of people sleeping rough in London to around 400, Shelter¹ reckons there to be at least 3000 people still sleeping on the streets every night.

One of the principal difficulties in delimiting the size of youth homelessness is that there is a multitude of accurate statistics.² However, as many such statistics fail to share a typology, their value is called into question. Greve and Curry³ suggest that “reliable data on the numbers and composition of homelessness among single people are notoriously difficult to obtain.” The variation of counts is great and this is demonstrated in table 3.4 which compares a range of different counts and estimates from sources other than the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, (OPCS) data and the data from Randall and Brown⁴ (discussed separately). Watson,⁵ notes the difficulties in securing reliable official statistics for vulnerable homeless groups and he suggests that the best picture of such groups may be drawn from “discussions with a variety of statutory and voluntary agencies.” Thornton⁶ makes a similar observation. It is often those working most closely with the homeless who have the best “feel” for numbers on the streets. Whilst official counts provide some starting point, the enumeration of vulnerable and marginal groups remains a problem.



Figure 3.1 Cartoon from Thames Reach Annual Report, 1992.⁷

¹Both these figures have been provided by Shelter by direct correspondence, 26 May 1993.

²Currie and Greve, *Homelessness and Young People*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

³Greve, J. and Curry, E., *Homelessness in Britain*, Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust, 1990, p. 10.

⁴Randall and Brown, *The Rough Sleepers Initiative*, *op. cit.*

⁵Watson, E., “Vulnerable Groups and Homelessness” in Bramley, G., *et al.*, *Homelessness and the London Housing Market*, School for Advanced Urban Studies, Bristol, 1988, p. 118.

⁶Thornton, *The New Homeless*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁷Thames Reach, *Moving On*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Seasonality and transience also create problems for consistent enumeration. That homeless individuals spend some time living on the streets and other times in hostels or on friends' floors', implies that even in the face of nominally effective counting, the number of those actually in the transient world of occasional or regular street sleeping will always greatly exceed any number counted.

The determination of homeless numbers is a difficult task in itself, but other dimensions of homelessness are laden with even more inconsistency. The next two sections review counts and estimates of homeless numbers, prior to a further presentation of some of the proportions (relating to age, sex, origin, care history, incidence of family breakdown and ethnicity) provided by various sources.

There is no consensus about homeless numbers and the field is awash with inconsistency and incompatibility. Whilst it is not possible to make any absolute enumerative conclusions about homeless numbers or dimensions, this chapter aims to consolidate information where possible, whilst accommodating a range of counts and estimates.

Homeless Numbers

Two major official London rough sleeper counts have been conducted in the last two years. These serve as a starting point for numerical assessment. First, the OPCS, 1991 Census¹ provides a number of rough sleepers in London, and secondly, research commissioned by the Department of the Environment (DOE) in association with the Rough Sleepers Initiative² has conducted an audit to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative. Table 3.1 summarises the OPCS findings for Inner London. It needs to be noted that the figures relate to persons of all ages.

¹Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) *1991 Census Preliminary Report for England and Wales: Supplementary Monitor on People Sleeping Rough*, 1991, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

²Randall and Brown, *The Rough Sleepers Initiative*, *op. cit.*, p. v.

Table 3.1 Inner London rough sleepers, 1991. (OPCS)¹

Inner London	Sites in Use	People
City of London	19	77
Camden	15	467
Hackney	10	15
Hammersmith and Fulham	1	4
Islington	3	19
Kensington and Chelsea	7	14
Lambeth	3	174
Lewisham	4	17
Southwark	2	5
Tower Hamlets	4	19
Wandsworth	2	2
Westminster, City of	28	297
Total	98	1110

Randall and Brown,² conducted their audit in November 1992. This audit was a part of a double count which also counted rough sleepers in March of that year. The difference between the March and November counts was 21, showing a decrease for November. The figures for this count are summarised in table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Inner London rough sleepers, 1993. (Randall and Brown)³

Audit	Number
March 1992	440
November 1992	419

The disparities between these two counts can be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, the counts by Randall and Brown have not covered the same area as the OPCS count. For example, whilst the OPCS count includes the City of London, the Randall and Brown count excludes that part of the city. The statistics published by Randall and Brown⁴ for the DOE thus undervalue the size of the London rough sleeper population because their covered area is much smaller than the delimitation of Inner London by the OPCS. Secondly, to explain the diminution of numbers between March and November 1992, Randall and Brown⁵ turn to the success of the Rough Sleepers Initiative. However, given the difficulties and necessary arbitrariness of counting the

¹OPCS, *Supplementary Monitor*, op. cit., p. 2.

²Randall and Brown, *The Rough Sleepers Initiative*, op. cit., p. 61.

³*Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 69.

significance of this reduction is somewhat lessened. Thirdly, the number of individuals sleeping rough fluctuates according to season. Fourthly, the accuracy of counts is necessarily variable. Whilst Randall and Brown¹ note that the Rough Sleepers Initiative audit systematically covered “62 different sites ... with 19 in the West End area alone,” they also note that “some of these [rough sleepers] were discovered by chance as enumerators travelled between known sites.” Given the randomness of the audit, one can reasonably assume a degree of inaccuracy in counting. Circumstances for the OPCS were similarly compromised. The OPCS² note, “the counts in this Supplement relate to people sleeping rough at sites identified before the Census by voluntary organisations, local authorities, and churches and do not include people sleeping rough who were counted by ordinary enumerators ... These figures relate only to people sleeping in the open air on Census night and do not include people of no fixed abode who spent Census night in shelters, hostels, squats, etc.” Although Census collectors sought information from local institutions³ as to areas to search for those sleeping rough, and although in some instances these sites were numerous, the number of people found necessarily depends on a range of arbitrary factors, based on local circumstances. By the admission of the OPCS⁴ themselves, many of the sites advised as homeless sites by local institutions had ceased to be places of abode for the homeless. Presumably too, other sites not investigated had become sites for rough sleepers.

Moreover, because the homeless population is a transient one, individuals often spend only some of their nights sleeping on the streets, and thus those counted only ever represent a fraction of the population who sleep rough from time to time. When not sleeping rough many turn to sleeping in hostels, sheltered accommodation, on friends’ floors, and with punters. Randall and Brown⁵ found a range of periods spent sleeping rough in their street audit, these results are summarised in table 3.3.

¹*Ibid.*, p. 62.

²OPCS, *Supplementary Monitor*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Randall and Brown, *The Rough Sleepers Initiative*, *op. cit.*, p. 43. Note that these statistics do not specifically relate to those in the 25 and under age group. Divided statistics for this group are not published.

Table 3.3 Percentage of time spent sleeping rough in last year.¹

	Hostel
Under 1 week	15
1 week - < 1 month	9
1 month - < 6 months	13
6 months - < 9 months	7
9 months +	7
Not slept rough in last year	47
Total % (No.)	100 (99)

Although both the Randall and Brown data and that of the OPCS, have perhaps been collected according to the best practical means available, the difficulties of enumeration for this particular population, calls the integrity of these figures into question. This inaccuracy, necessarily characteristic of all the counts conducted, needs to be kept in mind when considering the numbers cited in this chapter. Because of the inaccuracies associated with the data, and taking Watson's advice as cited above the estimates and counts of other groups working with the homeless are taken into account.

Counts by Organisations Working with the Homeless

Many agencies working with the homeless collate data from their work. These data lend themselves well to an analysis of proportions. Although some agencies positively discriminate for the inclusion of particular groups, e.g., the London Connection has special evenings for lesbian women and homosexual men, and other agencies have special facilities for black young people, most have an 'open door' policy for the people with whom they deal.

Agencies with detached workers are perhaps in the best situation to measure demographic proportions, for unlike the centre based agencies, workers often go to rough sleepers rather than rough sleepers making use of the agencies. In this way workers confront the proportions as they come across them, and their statistics are less prone to error because of the prejudiced usage of facilities. Because of the nature of their data collection they cannot provide 'one-night' counts as a matter of course, but nevertheless

¹Housing Corporation, *Housing Corporation Returns*, Housing Corporation, London, 1992. Records of the Hostel Vacancy Project, an initiative of the Rough Sleepers Initiative. Cited in *ibid*.

they are valuable sources of data for the purposes of extrapolating a proportional measure. These measures are used throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Table 3.4 Homelessness counts and estimates.

Agency	Number	Nature of Data
LRC ¹	Up to 125,000	Single people in London regardless of age homeless or potentially homeless, spread through squats, hostels, short life housing.
NFHA ²	Up to 3000 74,000 >19,000 11,000 - 12,000 10,000 - 12,000 4,000 - 5,000	(Up to) Sleeping rough Overcrowded and unwillingly living in other people's households Squatting in hostels in short life housing in bed and breakfast hotels.
Salvation Army/University of Surrey ³	753	Persons found sleeping rough in London one night in April 1989, regardless of age in 17 London boroughs.
Shelter ⁴	2-3000	People sleeping rough in London.
SHIL ⁵	64,500 - 78,000	Single people in London regardless of age, homeless or potentially homeless.
Thames Reach ⁶	437 298 380 311 468 484 432 380 376	Rough sleepers counts. January 91 February 91 April 91 May 91 July 91 September 91 December 91 March 92 July 92
NB. Boldface numbers throughout, are for those identified as sleeping rough.		

Table 3.4 shows some of the counts and estimates provided by some London agencies, in addition to the OPCS and Randall and Brown data cited earlier. Naturally each source collects, and or estimates their numbers in a different way. Despite this, reviewing such data may help to provide a feel for the range of data collected by agencies working closely with the homeless. Whilst these statistics may not be based on extensive audits (which are highly prone to error), they do represent alternative measures of homelessness collated by those who work on a regular basis with many different facets of homelessness.

¹The London Research Centre, *1988/89 Review of Housing Needs in London*, 1989. Cited in Randall and Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 43; Currie and Greve, *Homelessness and Young People*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
²National Federation of Housing Associations, 1989. Cited in Currie and Greve, *Homelessness and Young People*, p. 5.
³Canter, *The Faces of Homelessness in London*, *op. cit.*, p.1.
⁴Shelter, *Homelessness in England*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.
⁵Single Homeless in London Working Party (SHIL), *Working Party Policy Statement*, 1989, *op. cit.*, p. 1.
⁶Randall and Brown, *The Rough Sleepers Initiative*, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

In showing a range of counts and estimates of rough sleepers in London, table 3.4 also demonstrates disparities. Although there is little formal numerical information available specifically about young people sleeping rough, it is clear that there is no consensus even about the *total* number on London's streets.

Other sources of information are similarly flawed. Counts from the Department of Social Security (DSS) files underestimate street homelessness because many of those living on the streets fail to claim social security, either because of impenetrable bureaucracy or for fear of location by the authorities. The occurrence of individuals making multiple claims also compromises the integrity of DSS numerical data. Juveniles under the age of seventeen also create numerical problems for they have an interest avoiding social security registration in order to avoid being returned home by the authorities. False information may also be used (such as age) to avoid detection by the authorities or as a means to illicitly secure funds from the DSS.¹

- ... if they're looking for you the first place they'll go is the dole office and they can trace you through the national insurance number.²

Young Homelessness and the Larger Homeless Population

Figure 3.2 presents an age distribution of the rough sleeping population, found and recorded in Inner London on Census night, 1991. Unfortunately however, the data is presented in age bands that are incompatible with the bands chosen by Randall and Brown.

¹O'Mahony, B., *A Capital Offence: The Plight of the Young Single Homeless in London*, Rutledge, Barking, 1988, p. 15.

²Interview 10

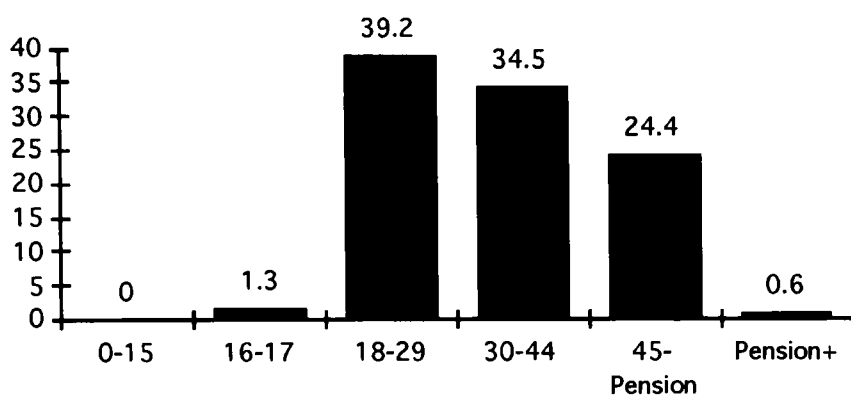


Figure 3.2 Rough sleepers in Inner London, percentage by age, 1991. (OPCS)¹

According to 1991 Census data,² young people represented some 40.5% of the total population of people on the streets on Census night, 1991 (see figure 3.2). The youngest grouping, 0-15 has no incidence, largely because homeless young people in this age group (who are illegally homeless) are fearful of detection and of being forced to return home. Indeed, often if they are questioned they may be unlikely to provide accurate details of their age. Agency workers, however, suspect that the incidence of ‘under-age’ homelessness is small, rarely coming across people they suspect of being under 16. The Juvenile Protection Unit (JPU) based in Vine Street Police Station is quick to act on homeless individuals who are in this age range.³ The JPU has recently become responsible for policing and monitoring young people in the entire Westminster area. Their policy is one in which minors once removed from the streets are returned to their parents or to Social Services according to need.⁴

Both audits conducted by Randall and Brown,⁵ show that the proportion of persons under 26 to be significant. However, the collection procedure for these audits included the estimation of age for those asleep, incapable or unwilling to respond to

¹ Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS), *1991 Census County Report: Inner London, (Part 1)*, Vol. 1 of 2, Government Statistical Service, London, pp. 90-97.

² Here it is necessary to choose to use either the statistics for those 29 and under, or 17 and under. Whilst the age focus for this research is up to the age of 25, it is necessary to include this population. Thus the inclusion of the 26-29 year bracket will serve to increase the numbers and proportions being considered. OPCS, *1991 Census County Report: Inner London, (Part 1)*, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-97.

³ Central Westminster Police/Community Consultative Group, *Report on the Young Homeless in Central London*, Central Westminster Police/Community Consultative Group, London, 1991, pp. 4-5.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Randall and Brown, *The Rough Sleepers Initiative*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

questions. Those for whom identification was impossible (such as for individuals asleep in cardboard boxes) have been excluded from the age count. For the November count, only 357 of 419 individuals were attributed an age. These estimates are summarised in table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Rough sleepers in Inner London, by age,1993.¹

Age	March 1992	November 1992
Up to 18	7	4
19-25	32	13
26-49	23	47
50-59	24	18
60+	14	18
Total % (No.)	100 (105)	100 (357)

Counts of other Organisations

Data from Thames Reach² and Canter *et al.*,³ provide age range information, and data from the London Connection⁴ and the Alone in London Service (AILS)⁵ provide an age division within the younger under 25 population.

Thames Reach

Thames Reach is a housing association based in central London and dealing with homeless people of all ages. Thames Reach does not target any particular age group and as such they cater to the full age range of homeless people. Because Thames Reach deal with individuals of any age needing assistance with housing, their statistics provide a useful perspective on the proportions of people falling into particular age groups. The data generated by Thames Reach⁶ demonstrate that the young homeless represent 27.5% of their contact with the larger homeless population (see figure 3.3). This compares with the 40.5% statistic generated from the OPCS⁷ data. It is notable that the places in which

¹*Ibid.*, p. 64.
²Thames Reach, *Moving On*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
³Canter, *The Faces of Homelessness*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
⁴London Connection, *Unpublished statistics*, London Connection, 1992.
⁵Because the Alone in London Service does not cater for people older than 21, the 21+ figure should not be considered. Alone in London Service (AILS), *Annual Report 1991-1992*, p. 4.
⁶With the Thames Reach data, the definition of young relates to 29 and under. It should be noted that the focus of this research, however, is with those aged to 25.
⁷With OPCS data it is only possible to use the data for the ages up to and including 30. It should be noted that the focus of this research, however, is with those aged to 25.

the detached workers patrol¹ allow a catchment which may not privilege the younger homeless, perhaps accounting for the differences between the statistics.

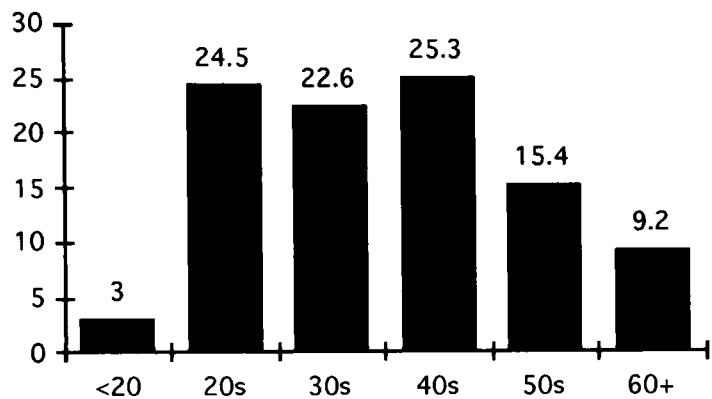


Figure 3.3 Ages of new contacts, by age range and year, 1991/2. (Thames Reach)²

Canter et al.

Canter *et al.*³ provide statistics based on research rather than on an operational agency (see figure 3.4). Their report suggests that young people (in this case defined as being 29 or younger) represent 16.4% of the total homeless population. Whilst the Canter *et al.*, data show a low incidence of the youngest age group, their longitudinal data⁴ have revealed a marked proportional increase in younger members of the homeless population.

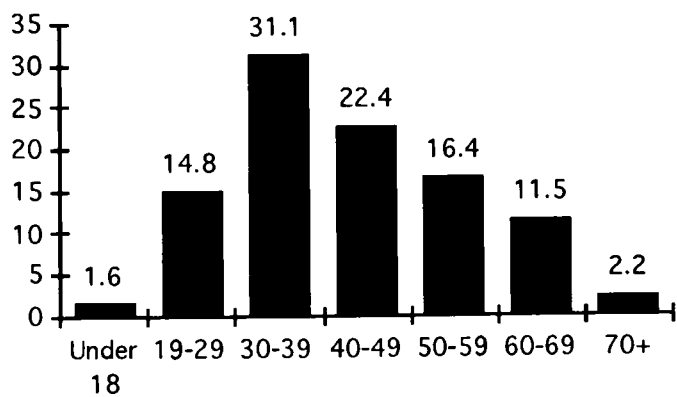


Figure 3.4 Rough sleepers by percentage age, 1989. (Canter *et al.*)⁵

¹Embankment, Bullring, Strand, Temple, West End, Waterloo, Victoria, South Bank, Lincoln's Inn Fields, Brunswick Square car park.

²Thames Reach, *Moving On*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

³Canter *et al.*, *The Faces of Homelessness*, *passim*, *op. cit.*

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵*Ibid.*, p.17.

These statistics provide a profile of the degree to which the young homeless are represented in the wider homeless population.

The London Connection

The data provided by the London Connection is generated from their advice and streetwork teams and provides a valuable profile of those under 25 (see figure 3.5).

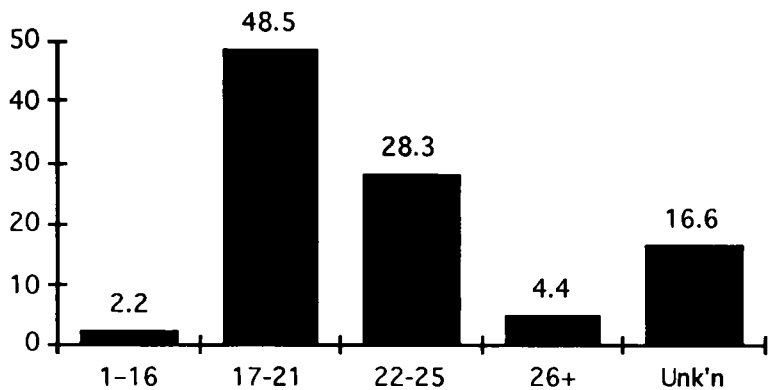


Figure 3.5 Homeless contacts by percentage age, 1992. (London Connection)¹

This information is calculated from those who have come to the London Connection for advice and from those with whom detached street workers have had dealings. Although these individuals are not necessarily homeless, the mainstay of the London Connection’s clientele is made up of homeless young people, most of whom are sleeping rough or are on the transient hostel circuit. The statistics reveal that the 17-21 age range represents a much greater proportion than the 22-25 band even though the 17-21 age band includes one more year.

Alone In London Service (AILS)

Data from AILS (see figure 3.6), whose work is with advising and resettling persons below the age of 22 years shows a profile of homeless contacts for people between 16-21 years.²

¹London Connection, *Unpublished statistics, op. cit.* For the period January- December 1992. Total contacts during this period were 5182; number of new persons 1432. Percentages have been aggregated in order to make the age ranges more consistent.

²Because the AILS does not cater for people older than 21, the 21+ figure should not be considered.

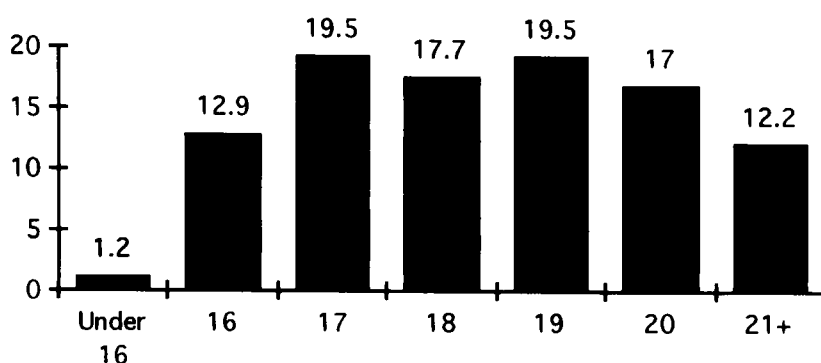


Figure 3.6 Homeless contacts by percentage age,1992.(AILS)¹

The figures presented for the AILS demonstrate an essentially consistent range of contacts. Comparison with the London Connection statistics however, is hampered because the statistics provided there, give a much less detailed age breakdown.

As a proportion of the total homeless population, the young homeless represent a significant minority. Moreover, because of the transience of the young homeless, it is likely that the numbers counted and the proportions generated significantly underestimate the number and proportions of young people living in this way.

Male:Female Proportions

Youth street homelessness in London is male dominated. Women's homelessness is as pervasive but remains hidden in inadequate and or inappropriate housing. Women's vulnerability often increases their repression by reducing options. Whereas homeless men have been able to opt for life on the streets (an often liberating if difficult life path), their female counterparts do not often regard this as an option. The difference is clear both from having spent time with the homeless and from the statistics produced here. Table 3.6 shows the range of proportions calculated from the figures of various agencies in London. For example, in the sample used by Randall² in his longitudinal study of users of the Centrepont night shelter, he (1987) found the proportion of male to female users to be 74:26. In his³ follow up survey (1989) he notes

¹ AILS, *Annual Report 1991-1992*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

² Randall, *No Way Home*, *op. cit.*, p. 14. Published, 1988, data collected in 1987.

³ Randall, *Homeless and Hungry*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

that the proportion was again three quarters male and one quarter female, a proportion remaining relatively stable over the last seventeen years of Centrepoin^t's operation. Brandon¹ in his 1980 study of three London night shelters taking men and women, demonstrates a male to female ratio of 1060:494 (68:32).

Table 3.6 Sex proportions of homeless people.

Organisation	Male:Female Proportion
Alone in London ² (1992)	47.5:52.5
Brandon ³ (1980)	68.2:31.8
Canter <i>et al.</i> ⁴ (1989)	88.0:12.0
London Connection ⁵ (1992)	72.0:28.0
London Outreach Team ⁶ (1984)	92.0:08.0
OPCS ⁷ (1991)	84.5:15.5
Passage ⁸ (1992)	95.3:04.7
Piccadilly Advice ⁹ (1988/89)	68.8:31.2
Randall ¹⁰ (1987)	74.0:26.0
Randall ¹¹ (1989)	75.0:25.0
Thames Reach ¹² (1992)	87.1:12.9
Threshold ¹³ (1987)	55.5:44.5
Average	75.7:24.3
Standard Deviation	14.6

There is a reasonable degree of consistency in the proportions in table 3.6 (SD=14.6). In virtually all cases the proportion of men exceeds that of women. The AILS is the only exception. The AILS began as a service to young women, and now accepts men and women with the overriding objective of catering to the most vulnerable.

¹Brandon's research looked at three hostels in London. This figure includes the Dean Street Centrepoin^t hostel for this period of time. Brandon, D., Wells, K., Francis, C. and Ramsay, E., *The Survivors: A Study of Homeless Young Newcomers to London and Responses Made to Them*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1980.

²AILS, *Annual Report 1991-1992*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

³Based on three London hostels. One has been excluded due to its all male occupancy. Figures for the other two projects, may only reflect reception priorities. Brandon, *et al.*, *The Survivors*, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁴Canter *et al.*, *The Faces of Homelessness*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁵London Connection, *Unpublished statistics*, *op. cit.*

⁶Research conducted in 1983 and 1984. The survey looked at a total of 318 persons of which only 3 were under 20 and 20 were between the ages of 21-29. Central London Outreach Team *Sleeping Out in Central London*, London, 1984, p. 43.

⁷OPCS, *1991 Census County Report: Inner London*, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-97.

⁸The Passage, *The Passage Day Centre Annual Report*, The Passage, London, 1992, p. 31. Statistics generated from day centre use. The day centre policy is open access, but is primarily used by older men. These figures relate to users of the centre aged under 27, for those older for 27, the proportion of women users is higher, although in all cases male use remains clearly greater.

⁹Based on the number of housing related enquiries received by the Piccadilly Advice Centre from those under the age of 25. More recent comparable statistics have not been made available. PAC, *Unpublished statistics 1989/90*, *op. cit.*

¹⁰Randall, *No Way Home*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹¹Randall, *Homeless and Hungry*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹²For people of all age groups, based on the number of individuals met by Thames Reach. Thames Reach, *Moving On*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹³Threshold deals with homeless single people in Wandsworth, however, typical users tend to be those with acute housing problems rather than being actually on the streets. The statistics are based on under 26 year olds. Sutton, E. and Carrier, J., *No Room to Move: A Study of Young Single Homelessness in Wandsworth*, Threshold, London, 1987. More recent annual reports do not provide comparable statistics.

Because women are more vulnerable than men on London's streets, especially in the under 21 year old range of the AILS, it has a much higher intake and association with women than the other agencies. It is notable that those agencies dealing with general homelessness (as opposed to chronic rooflessness and streetsleeping) show a higher proportion of women (such as Threshold and the Piccadilly Advice Centre). For agencies using detached workers and or working with people on or from the streets, the proportion of males is normally higher (such as Canter, *et al.*, and OPCS).

Women's under-representation on the streets is not indicative of their under-representation in the homeless population. More often women prefer to remain in untenable housing conditions¹ because the perceived danger of street homelessness for women is much greater. Greve and Curry² suggest that "the numbers of women who are at serious risk or who actually become homeless, have been underestimated." Furthermore, they³ note that for women, the avenues for leaving an original home are reduced because hostels for the homeless, which are male dominated, are considered inappropriate for female use.

Nationally Originated Homelessness

The young homeless in London come from many parts of the country.⁴ Whilst some agencies report that the proportions of those in London from elsewhere in the country is falling, it is argued that this is as much a function of declining socio-economic conditions in the South East as much as it may be due to any real reduction in those immigrating to London.⁵

Figure 3.7 shows Centrepont's Shelter users by origin for the 1991/2 year. Where 497 are indicated as originating in London a large number have also originated by counties close to London in the South East.

p. 11. ¹ Hungerford Drug Project, *Annual Report 1991-2*, The Hungerford Drug Project, London, 1992,

² Greve and Curry, *Homelessness in Britain*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Currie and Greve, *Homelessness and Young People*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁵ Centrepont, *Days to Remember*, *op. cit.*, p. 1-2.

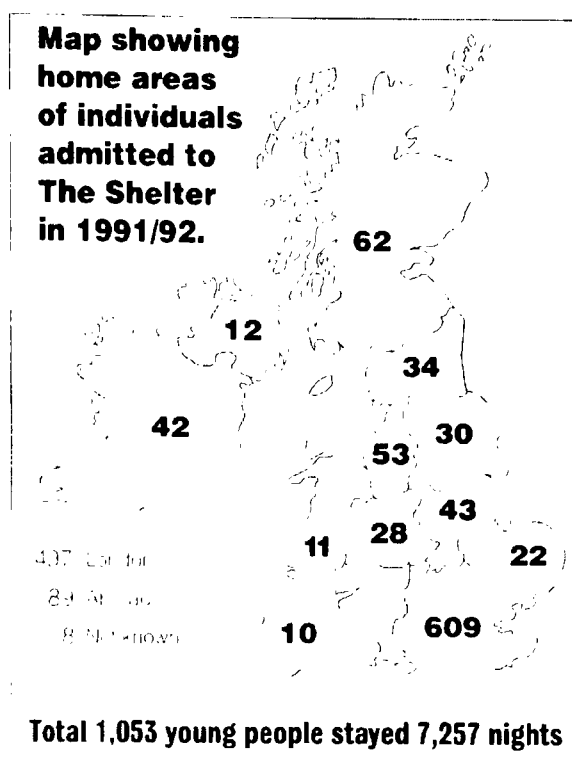


Figure 3.7 Night shelter usage, by origin, 1992. (Centrepont)¹

As with the other statistics used in this chapter, there is a large degree of variation for data generated on homeless origins. The most comprehensive figures available are those collated by Centrepont and the London Connection. Neither the Randall and Brown nor the OPCS statistics on persons sleeping rough show place of origin.

The London Connection

The data generated by the London Connection for contacts by origin (table 3.7) shows that whilst many of London's homeless have come from London and the South East, many others have come from further afield. Many of the young homeless can be seen to have come from northern parts of the UK, from areas characterised by deindustrialisation and high unemployment.

¹*Ibid.*, p. 3.

Table 3.7 Homeless contacts by origin, 1992. (London Connection)¹

Location	% 1992
London	36.4
South East	9.8
Scotland	8.7
North West	7.2
Unspecified	6.1
North	5.4
Unknown	4.3
West Midlands	3.4
Outside EC and UK	3.1
East Midlands	2.6
Republic of Ireland	2.6
Northern Ireland	2.4
Yorkshire and Humberside	2.4
South West	2.2
Wales	1.5
EC Outside UK	1.3
East Anglia	0.6
(Total=1432)	100.0

The experiences of the London Connection and of Centrepont demonstrate a similar distribution of persons from respective parts of the country. London's young homeless then can be characterised as being largely from the South East with steady numbers from elsewhere in the country, and a particular migratory pattern from the North.

Leavers of Care

Statistics on homeless young people who have been through local authority care are not as widely available as are data for the other dimensions of homelessness discussed above. Randall and Brown² in their DOE study found that for persons of all ages, in a range of accommodation for homeless people (hostels, private sector leased properties and permanent housing authority housing), 17%, 18% and 16% respectively had had experience in care. Randall's³ own work with Centrepont hostel users, in this case young people (aged 19 and under), demonstrated that 41% had spent some time in care and that 28% had spent the majority of their lives before their sixteenth birthday in care. Comparing this figure with that of his earlier⁴ study (1987), where 23% had had

¹London Connection, *Unpublished statistics, op. cit.*

²Randall and Brown, *The Rough Sleepers Initiative, op. cit.*, p. 58.

³Randall, *Homeless and Hungry, op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁴Randall, *No Way Home, op. cit.*, p. 22.

some experience of care, Randall points to a marked increase in the proportion of care leavers making up the homeless population.

Incidence of Family Breakdown

By far the greatest category chosen for circumstances precipitating homelessness in two studies relate to family disjuncture or arguments in the home, or last settled base. Randall¹ found that 44% of those staying in the Centrepunkt hostel had left because they were either told to leave or because of arguments. Stockley,² found in his study of young people (aged 16-25) that 35.6% had left home principally because they disliked it or because of arguments, 12.3% because they had been compelled to do so, and 9.9%, principally because of family breakdown.

Whilst other 'push factors' were considered in both studies, such as the incidence of abuse, violence and movement into care, family problems appear as a major contributing factor to youth homelessness.

Ethnic Status

Vagueness and definitional inconsistency also plague data relating to ethnicity. Because ethnicity has more categories than the division of gender, definitional problems confound both absolute and proportional comparison. Whilst some studies measure ethnic minority representation by enumerating blacks and whites, others calculate numbers and proportions according to more specialised categories. In some studies Irish people are included in enumerations for White/European and in other studies they are separate. Moreover, because the statistics are not often split by nature of homelessness and ethnicity, it is often impossible to draw viable conclusions. In this way proportions of those living on the streets according to ethnic status can be easily misleading.

In table 3.8 and figure 3.8 ethnic group proportions are summarised. The original nomenclature used by each organisation has been retained. Having widely ranging categories the statistics become difficult to compare. Table 3.8 introduces

¹Randall, *Homeless and Hungry*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

²Stockley, D., Canter, D., Bishopp, D., *Young People on the Move*, Psychology Department, University of Surrey, London, 1993, p. 19.

blanket terms (General Category) providing a basis for pragmatic comparison between statistics using different categories.

Table 3.8 Consolidated ethnic proportions.

General Category	Project Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Av.
White	White			97.0		93.5					
	UK White						28.0	83.0	65.3	35.2	
	British	69.7									
	White/UK/European		52.0				6.0				
	White Scottish						11.0				
	White European				5.0						
	European				59.4					2.6	
	Irish (Rep. & North)				5.0						
	Irish	4.0	2.0				17.0	12.0	16.3	2.5	
	White Other									1.9	
SD 19.3	TOTALS	73.7	54.0	97.0	69.4	93.5	62.0	95.0	81.6	42.2	74.2
Black	Black/UK		8.0		15.1	5.7	25.0	3.0		23.1	
	African	14.0			5.9		3.0			18.0	
	African/Caribbean		21.0								
	Afro Caribbean								8.2		
	Caribbean	12.2			2.7					6.9	
	Black groups			1.9							
	Black Other									2.0	
SD 16.0	TOTALS	26.2	29.0	1.9	23.7	5.7	28.0	3.0	8.2	50.0	19.5
Asian	Asian		12.0		1.6		0.8		2.0		
	Black Asian									2.5	
	Indian, Pakistani & Bangladeshi			0.5							
SD 3.8	TOTALS	0.0	12.0	0.5	1.6	0.0	0.8	0.0	2.0	2.5	2.2
SE/Asian	Chinese/SE Asian				0.1						
	Chinese & Other groups			0.6							
SD 0.2	TOTALS	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Other	Mixed Race				1.2						
	Arab				0.1						
	Other		5.0		2.4			2.0	8.2		
	Unknown				1.5	0.6				5.3	
SD 3.1	TOTALS	0.0	5.0	0.0	5.2	0.6	0.0	2.0	8.2	5.3	2.9

1. Canter *et al.* (1989)¹

4. London Connection (1992)⁴

7. Randall and Brown (1993)⁷

2. The Housing Corp. (1992)²

5. Thames Reach (1992)⁵

8. Randall (1989)⁸

3. OPCS (1991)³

6. New Horizon (1992)⁶

9. Alone in London (1992)⁹

(Standard Deviation in General Category margin)

¹Canter *et al.*, *The Faces of Homelessness*, *op. cit.*, p. 17. Percentages as printed.

²Housing Corporation, *Housing Corporation Returns*, *op. cit.* Cited in Randall and Brown, *The Rough Sleepers Initiative*, *op. cit.*, p. 10. Statistics generated from details of hostel residents. These statistics are for people aged between 16 and 24.

³OPCS, *1991 Census County Report: Inner London, (Part 1)*, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-97.

⁴London Connection, *Unpublished statistics*, *op. cit.*

⁵Only 5.2% of the people contacted in the 1988/89 period were between the ages of 16 and 20 and a further 16.5% were between the ages of 20 and 30. Thames Reach, *Moving On*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁶New Horizon Youth Centre, is an advice, resettlement and drop-in centre in central London. New Horizon Youth Centre, *Annual Report, 1990-1991*, New Horizon, London, 1992, p. 11.

⁷Randall and Brown, *The Rough Sleepers Initiative*, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁸Randall, *Homeless and Hungry*, *op. cit.*, p. 9. Figures have been rounded.

⁹AILS, *Annual Report 1991-92*, *op. cit.*, p. 5. Practically all of the total sample of 612 were in the target age group.

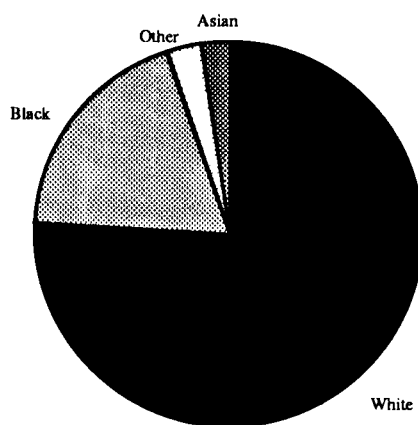


Figure 3.8 Ethnic proportions from table 3.8.

In every case the proportion of white people is marked compared with the number of persons in other groups. Although this may seem unsurprising given the ethnic mix and proportions in London and indeed in Britain, the figures become more remarkable in view of the relative socio-economic status of ethnic minorities.

Whilst not all of the represented agencies work only with the street homeless, these statistics provide some insight into one section of the homeless population which is most likely to correspond with the London's young street homeless.

Enumerations based on active street counting, demonstrate a higher proportion of whites (OPCS, Thames Reach, and Randall and Brown). It would seem that although a range of people with differing ethnic status make use of the various centres and advice projects, those who are actually sleeping rough are most often white and male.

Women share with blacks a hidden but prevalent homelessness. In both cases homelessness (in a sense wider than referring to rough sleeping) is particularly high, whilst clear evidence of their homelessness is low. In fact black people are much more likely to be homeless (defined in a wider sense) when compared proportionately with the population as a whole.¹ Ferguson and O'Mahony² note that much black homelessness is hidden, and that for the six and a half thousand people on the Ujima Housing Association's waiting list, "99.8% are homeless staying in temporary arrangements."

¹Ferguson and O'Mahony, *Young, Black and Homeless*, op. cit., p. 2.

²*Ibid.*, p. 5.

The averaging of averages collected from projects listed is statistically flawed in that it does not necessarily imply a true proportion. Yet at the same time this presented average is roughly indicative of the proportions of the ethnic proportions of the young homeless. Whilst weightings and project biases strongly affect these figures, they nevertheless provide some proportional indication of ethnicity.

Socio-Economic Divides and the Prosperity of Ethnic Minorities

Ethnic minorities find themselves in the lower earning echelons of British society but they are significantly underrepresented amongst the young homeless street population in London. Figure 3.9 demonstrates the earnings of young black people on the Ujima Housing Association waiting list for housing. Ferguson and O’Mahony¹ noting the earning conditions of young black people, suggest that disparities in income make it difficult for individuals living in crowded parental accommodation to become independent. Further, for those on social security it is “difficult for them to obtain housing from the majority of private landlords who refuse to accept applicants on income support.”²

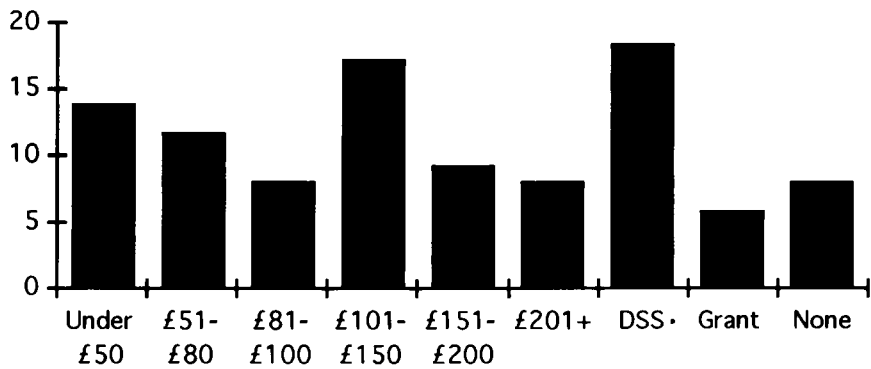


Figure 3.9 Percentage earning income/income types per week for blacks, 1991. (Ferguson and O’Mahony)³

The availability of affordable housing is a major obstacle facing young black people, and it is this housing shortage that is responsible for the high degree of

¹*Ibid.*, p. 4.
²*Ibid.*
³*Ibid.*

homelessness amongst blacks.¹ However, despite the degree of homelessness, they suggest that black homelessness is hidden largely because of cultural reasons saying:

Black people do not become homeless on the streets. They are not visible in central London hostels or day centres or shelters. There is a saying within black communities that 'We should look after our own,' an ethos that has been inherited by young black people from their Caribbean, African and Asian born parents. Black people will therefore seek support from friends, relatives and the community.²

Thus young black people with a need to leave home because of family dispute or overcrowding, turn to temporary and often unsatisfactory accommodation, and become homeless. Being unable to find suitable employment, and thus to compete in the private housing sector, their future is significantly impeded. Despite their need for independence, young blacks often refrain from becoming street homeless and instead live under unsatisfactory conditions in temporary and informal accommodation.

Summary and Conclusion

Whilst there is a wealth of data relating to London's homeless youth, it is not easy to develop a grounded profile. The incompatibility and inconsistency of data alluded to throughout this chapter has served to highlight the lack of co-ordination in the collation of homeless statistics. Any suggestion or attempt at generalisation needs to parenthesise its conclusions with such disclaimers. However, despite these shortcomings it is possible, with a reasonable degree of accuracy to consider London's young homeless in the following way.

Youth rooflessness in London is largely male orientated, with a ethnic bias towards white UK persons. Although many come from London and the South East, a sizeable proportion also come from other areas in the country, particularly from places in the North.

¹*Ibid.*, p. 3. and Currie and Greve, *Homelessness and Young People*, *op. cit.*, p. 7; SHIL, *Working Party Policy Statement*, *op. cit.*

²Ferguson, D. and O'Mahony, B., *Young, Black and Homeless in London: The Reality behind the Myth*, Ujima Housing Association and Barnardos, London, 1991, p. 5.

It is likely that about 18% of rough sleepers in Inner London are under the age of 26, and there is evidence of a decreasing average age in the wider rough sleeping population. Women are outnumbered by men in the order of 1:3, largely due to the dangers of streetlife for women. Instead, many women remain in untenable situations rather than risking life on the streets. Many of the young homeless have had experiences in care, and have experienced the breakdown of family relations, either parental or individual.

Massive confusion characterises the understanding of the number and scale of youth homelessness in London. Whilst this chapter has reviewed a large range of sources it is only possible at the end to provide a 'rough guide.'

Whilst in many instances data collation has confounded the comparative value of the data ^{themselves} ~~^~~, the homeless too, by the nature of their lives, often thwart enumeration. Whilst their actions may not directly aim to confound audits and counts such as those reviewed here, their very lives are characterised, in part, by a diversion of surveillance. The complexity and richness of meaning that lies within the homeless experience is one that far transcends any numerical analysis, and it is to the construction of a viable approach to homelessness that we now turn, in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

RESOURCE BASED ETHNOGRAPHY, THE SCIENCE OF SINGULARITY AND CRITICAL LIVELIHOOD: AN APPROACH AND FRAMEWORK

The investigation of the survival tactics of London's young homeless is a task fraught with complexity. Understanding the meanings associated with homeless action and the constraints conferred by society requires an approach that can deal with both the everyday life of homelessness and the social structures that constrain and condition action.

Chapters 1 and 2, posited two different foci needing to be reconciled in the investigation of the livelihood of youth homelessness. Chapter 1 reviewed the structural constraints to action for the homeless, and Chapter 2 developed a critique of much of the work that has gone before and has suggested a way forward based on the most illuminating studies of marginal urban groups. What is called for is an ethnographic account that both accommodates the relationship between agency and structure, and manages to at all times be rooted in experience.

In order to manufacture such an approach it is necessary to combine two bodies of theory. This combination firstly depends on the work of Sandra Wallman¹ whose anthropological perspective utilises a resource approach to systematise the study of urban livelihood. Secondly, the work of Michel de Certeau² is used as a means of linking everyday livelihood with the social *strategies* implicit in urban society. De Certeau offers a theoretical perspective which accommodates individual agency in the face of structural constraint.

This dual approach is intended not to undermine the value of either perspective. The ethnographic work herein compiled is capable of standing on its own. The insights of de Certeau however, rely on the ethnographic findings as a basis for interpretation. This additional body of theory, referred to by de Certeau³ as the "Science of Singularity,"

¹Wallman, *Eight London Households*, *op. cit.*

²See the discussion of strategies as used by Michel de Certeau in Chapter 2.

³De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*, p. ix.

provides a means of generalisation from the particularities of the ethnographic investigation into social process. Although this study is based on a limited number of interviews and observations, it is possible using the depth of the interviews conducted to make conclusions about how such typical agents manage to employ various tactics to make livelihood in the city, and to address the constraints conferred upon them by the social order.

Whilst Wallman's approach addresses the processes of livelihood, de Certeau permits another level of insight as he provides a mechanism by which the behaviour of the homeless may be read in terms of the operation of larger socio-structural forces.

This chapter looks at both approaches and then explains the operation of this dual approach and how it is to be developed as a means of understanding youth homelessness. Where Chapter 5 discusses the pragmatic mechanics of practice implicit in the research, this chapter deals with the mechanics of theory.

Sandra Wallman: A Resource Based Ethnography

Sandra Wallman's¹ work, *Eight London Households*, was briefly introduced in Chapter 2. Her work adopts an anthropological perspective on inner city residents. In the Preface to her work she notes that whilst her approach is not statistical, the households that she has investigated are in some sense typical. Her work is less informed by positivist 'scientific method,' and more by an interest in the examination of social processes. Instead of appealing to representativeness she notes that it is "the very ordinariness" of her respondents which allows her to draw qualitative rather than quantitative conclusions.²

Wallman, however, is not alone in using the resource approach. Snow and Anderson³ in their recent study on homelessness in Austin, aim to, "examine how the homeless fashion and refashion survival routines out of the limited opportunities and resources available to them as they try to make do materially, interpersonally, and

¹Wallman, *Eight London Households*, *op. cit.*

²*Ibid.*, p. vii.

³Snow and Anderson, *Down on their Luck*, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

cognitively.” Ley¹ too in his work on ghettos in the USA, takes an interactionist view which privileges communication and exchange as the basis for social formation. Becker² too adopts an approach to human behaviour that considers it in the light of cultural exchanges, as he posits a cultural economy to understand human behaviour.

Mitchell³ makes a similar case for case study research in *Sociological Review*. In this article he notes that the case study has gradually fallen from grace, with the development of interest in quantitative method. He suggests that the neglect of the case study has in part been due to the confusion between two types of analysis. He suggests that there has been a “confusion of procedures of statistical inference with those appropriate to case studies,” and that the endless quest for representativeness which underlies socio-statistical enquiry is quite different to that which permits the analysis of social processes. The “typicality,” of a case he⁴ suggests “implies that the particular set of events selected for report is similar in *relevant* characteristics to other cases of the same type.” Furthermore, the value of research of this kind is measured by the “validity of the analysis rather than the representativeness of the events.”⁵

Wallman’s work concentrates initially on the style of life for Battersea residents. She notes that a specific style of life, has emerged in Battersea in the context of particular larger changes. She⁶ notes that the academic interest in these areas reflect the impact that political and economic failure have had on the residents of these parts of the city. Her approach is implicitly aware of the surrounding context of residency in Battersea.

Wallman⁷ approaches the analysis of households in terms of “households as resource systems.” Her⁸ interest in resources is based on her interest to track the ways that households “manage.” This interest in household processes “conceives households as being differently bounded in respect of different resources; and as differing from each

¹Ley, *The Black Inner City*, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

²Becker, G. “The Economic Approach to Human Behaviour,” in Elster, J. ed., *Rational Choice*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1986, pp. 108-109.

³Mitchell, J. C., “Case and Situation Analysis,” in *Sociological Review*, 1983, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 187-211.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 189.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁶Wallman, *Eight London Households*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 20.

other in respect of the resources available to them, the resources they choose to deploy, and the kinds of value they vest or invest in them for particular purposes in local or cultural contexts of various kinds.”¹

Her analysis moves on to the consideration of “household livelihood” where she employs the notion of resources as being not only material but also cultural. She also suggests that her livelihood concept depends on “spheres, domains, or sub-systems—whether of activity, exchange or meaning.”²

Whilst livelihood is essentially “how people get by,” Wallman suggests that there is greater complexity involved. She³ defines livelihood initially as “finding or making shelter, transacting money, and preparing food to put on the table ...,” but goes on to suggest that livelihood is in addition: “the ownership and circulation of information, the management of relationships, the affirmation of personal significance and group identity, and the interrelation of each of those tasks to the other.”⁴ Wallman⁵ also suggests that the shared action involved in the procurement of such livelihood makes for a sense of “identity and belonging.”

Implicit in Wallman’s analysis is a certain fluidity that characterises social relations and social situations. She notes that the capability boundaries of individuals change over a given domestic cycle, and depend on specific needs of the time.

A Set of Resources

Having set up a system of resource analysis for her eight London households, Wallman provides a range of resources as a means for monitoring social processes at work. In addition to three conventional Marxist resources of land, labour and capital, she adds three others: time, information and identity. This approach allows Wallman to view the total economy of both material and cultural commodities for the households she is examining. Wallman recognises that the resource regime of a given social situation is necessarily dependent on context. Time, information and identity are added to the formal

¹*Ibid.*, p. 21.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

³*Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 23.

resources posited in Marxist accounts because for her Battersea residents they represent additional resources used in the creation of livelihood.

The Utility of a Resource Based Ethnography

The utility of a resource based ethnography for the investigation of homelessness is closely paralleled with that of Wallman's own study. Wallman's utilisation of a resource based approach has permitted a focus on the processes of social relations occurring within the context of Battersea households.

Wallman's attribution of an appropriate resource regime is an especially valuable approach for the consideration of homelessness. Because the homeless have access to few conventional commercial commodities, and because their counter cultural stance undermines the value of such commodities, the homeless resource world is one that is substantially different from even Wallman's revised resource regime for her Battersea households. Although Wallman agrees that resources used by the individuals in the context of her study are by no means all economic—in the conventional sense—there is some sense in which this system forms an economy of exchange.

As discussed in Chapter 2, and as will be discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6, there is another way that the resources and commodities used by the homeless are distinctly different from more conventional resource regimes. The homeless resource regime is, at least in part, underpinned by a different logic, a logic of homelessness often antithetical to the values of the establishment. Later in this chapter, a specific regime of commodities, skills and (re)sources will be posited as being the principal elements of homeless livelihood. This set provides not only a set of commodities, but also a set of skills and sources by which and from where the homeless seek the commodities of livelihood.

Limits to the Resource Concept

Wallman¹ suggests that “as soon as the resource notion moves out of narrowly economic bounds it is hard to know when to stop it.” However, as Wallman rightly suggests, the concept of resources is necessary to the understanding of livelihood, and the fact that resources have been historically defined as economic is unnecessarily constraining. For the homeless, as with Wallman’s London households, resources and the exchange of material as well as cultural commodities, are an important part of understanding social process. Where Wallman introduces three additional resources for her Battersea residents, for London’s young homeless, a special resource regime needs to be constructed.

Cultural and Material Commodities

The experience of any individual is characterised by the way that he or she builds a life from available commodities. In addition to the material needs required for biological survival is a range of cultural commodities consumed in the construction of livelihood. Where material commodities assure biological survival, cultural commodities assure psychological survival.

Material commodities however, may also be cultural commodities. Commodities for biological survival may also contain cultural value. Money procured from begging for example may on one hand provide sustenance, but it may also be a defining feature of homelessness. In learning to exploit the city, the very process of exploitation becomes internalised and used as an identity feature. In this way many aspects of homeless life, whilst they may be functional to biological survival, play an important role in psychological survival as they contribute to a sense of identity.

For the homeless who have little access to commercial material commodities, cultural commodities are very important. In the same way that the homeless often have to depend on symbolic critique—being commercially marginalised—they also depend heavily on their attachment to a symbolic world in order to afford them identity.

¹*Ibid.*, p. 28.

Everyday life becomes a source of identity for the homeless; their routines and rituals become part of their defining selfhood.

Although conventional readings of commodities and resources have, in the past, been economic in nature, it is important to recognise the important place cultural commodities play in individual and collective life, especially for those largely marginalised from conventional commercial consumption.

The Limits to Ethnography

The dual structure of this thesis depends not only on ethnography but also another body of theory. Chapter 1 demonstrated the importance of structural forces in the understanding of marginal urban people. Ethnography however, as a methodology is not well suited to this. Mitchell¹ suggests that the ethnographic investigation of social processes is capable of demonstrating, as a minutiae, the operation of social process. He suggests, however, that the historical preoccupation with statistical method has served to undermine a reputable and viable means of investigation, in the case study. Proposing a method of careful and systematic case investigation, he² suggests that case study work is viable for interpolation, “not because the case is representative, but because our analysis is unassailable.” Yet whilst, Mitchell argues for a situational, case based analysis, the methods of ethnography provide few handles on social practice for this interpolation to proceed. The linking of the microscale and macroscale again causes theoretical difficulties.

Because of its fine grained analysis, ethnography is sympathetic to the lives and livelihoods of the individuals it studies, and is an important vehicle for the unearthing of small scale social processes. It demonstrates at close quarters the rationale for action, and may provide some insight into the mindset of those who it studies. Often however, it fails to properly accommodate the contextual power relations omnipresent in society. As discussed in Chapter 2, ethnography can very easily—as demonstrated by the criticisms

¹Mitchell, “Case and Situation Analysis,” *op. cit.*, p. 189.

²*Ibid.*, p. 200.

of the Manchester School—be accused of tacitly supporting inequalities because of its inability or reluctance to deal with larger social forces.

Whilst Structuration theory, introduced in Chapters 1 and 2, calls for analysis that can accommodate both scales of analysis, it is the approach pioneered by de Certeau which empowers collective and singular action. These actions need to be considered in the light of larger social and symbolic battles which are fought on a battleground of the everyday.¹

The “Science of Singularity”

Michel de Certeau² in his work *The Practice of Everyday Life*, discusses in some detail the ways in which individuals are able to confront deeply constraining social structures. By investigating the ways that individuals seek to confound the order of daily life and expected practice, he addresses the everyday relationship between the individual and larger constraining structures.

By positing a politics of the everyday, de Certeau provides a means for reuniting individuals with their struggle for survival against larger constraints. Furthermore, he permits individuals to retain authorship over their actions, movements and utterances. Rather than considering the homeless as shepherded by social constraints, their critical actions have real meaning. De Certeau³ notes, “we are concerned with battles or games between the strong and the weak, and with the ‘actions’ which remain possible for the latter.”

For de Certeau,⁴ “consumers,” “trace ‘indeterminate trajectories’ that are apparently meaningless, since they do not cohere with the constructed, written, and prefabricated space through which they move. ... Although they use as their *material*, the *vocabularies* of established languages (those of television, newspapers, the supermarket or city planning), although they remain within the framework of prescribed *syntaxes* (the temporal modes of schedules, paradigmatic organisations of places, etc.), these

¹ Hebdige, *Subculture*, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

² De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴ *Ibid.*

'traverses' remain heterogeneous to the systems they infiltrate and in which they sketch out the guileful ruses of *different* interests and desires." By this de Certeau suggests that in consumption, individuals utilise commodities in ways that allow them to imbue their use with critical or non-designated meanings. There is a play between the values of the establishment world and their utilisation by their consumers. In the utilisation of socially provided imagery and cultural and material commodities, individuals are able to spell out meanings not contained in their prescribed ideological meaning.

In addition to the use of commercially defined commodities to articulate *non*-commercially defined expression, the homeless make use of commodities that are not even commercially provided. Beyond de Certeau's notion of utilising commercial commodities to non-commercial ends, the homeless valorise that which is non-commodity, converting such non-commodities into a sort of 'folk' commodity which participates in the structure of livelihood employed by the homeless. The utilisation of marginal space, the use of cardboard to build shelters, the finding of food in skips, the use of establishment space in non-establishment ways all demonstrate the tactics of commodity creation.

As briefly introduced in Chapter 2, de Certeau introduces the notion of *strategy*, which is instrumental in the joining of everyday action with larger social critique. De Certeau¹ defines his notion of strategy as follows:

A distinction between *strategies* and *tactics* appears to provide a more adequate initial schema. I call a *strategy* the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its *own* and serve as the base from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of targets or threats (customers, competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research, etc.) can be managed. As in management, every "strategic" rationalization (sic) seeks first of all to distinguish its own place, that is a place of its own power and will, from an "environment." ... it is an effort to delimit one's own place in a world bewitched by the invisible powers of the Other.

De Certeau's notion of *strategy* posits the existence of an empowered space. Strategic space for de Certeau is a space mastered by sight, the surveyed space of panoptic practice, conditioned and maintained by its own autonomy. Such a space is the

¹*Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

space of the establishment, of the larger social forces that together make up a propriety. This is the space of the empowered conscience collective, the space of the juggernaut of progress, the space of money and the space of consensus. This is also the space from which the disenfranchised denizens of the city are excluded from participation, where they appear to have no footing. This is the space which has to be defended from the “invisible powers of the Other.”¹

In contrast to strategic space, de Certeau² posits the *tactic* saying, “a tactic is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus ... the space of the tactic is the space of the other.” He³ proposes that the tactic is “a maneuver (sic) ‘within the enemy’s field of vision’ ... and within enemy territory.” For de Certeau, tactics are a corpus of ruses and tricks used in response to constraints afforded by strategy and strategic space.

For de Certeau,⁴ “tactics are procedures that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time—to the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favorable situation, to the rapidity of the movements that change the organisation of a space, to the relations among successive moments in action, to the possible intersections of durations and heterogeneous rhythms etc.”

Where strategy is defined according to an ability to exercise space over time—producing a permanence and propriety to space, tactics are empowered by “a clever *utilization of time*, of the opportunities it presents and also of the play that it introduces into the foundations of power.”⁵

A Dual Approach

Social action occurs in the context of larger social structures. In Chapters 1 and 2, Giddens’ notion of Structuration was reviewed as a means of contextualising homeless action in a larger field of social structures. In Giddens’ notion of Structuration is the

¹*Ibid.*, p. 36.

²*Ibid.*, p. 37.

³Von Bülow, uncited reference in *ibid.*

⁴De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

operative of power implicit in social relations. The purpose of linking the approaches of Wallman and de Certeau is to produce an approach that retains the insight of ethnography whilst relating everyday action to the larger social forces that make up social life.

The ethnography in this thesis is in itself a careful account of the way that homeless young people “make do” in London. The resource approach discussed here provides a machinery for the systematic consideration of exchange implicit in social relations.

The use of de Certeau’s, “Science of Singularity,” allows one to move beyond the descriptive bounds of ethnography, and leads into a domain in which the actions of the homeless may be characterised as being purposive and effectual. This approach provides for homeless action that has a poetic energy, and an ability to twist social relations to their advantage.

De Certeau provides an approach that can accommodate this poetic energy. Using de Certeau as a base, it is possible to discuss notions of interstitial spaces, and of panoptic strategy, for these are concepts and domains that de Certeau uses in understanding the transgressive behaviour of individuals in contemporary life. What de Certeau enables is a course back to the social structures from everyday actions. The homeless act critically, their actions may be read not only as symbolic gestures but as intended and at least partially effective means for the embarrassment and frustration of the establishment. The city is no longer unblemished, it is littered with the remains of those who have been maligned. This blotch on the unblemished city, is a consequence of the homeless.

Whilst a resource based ethnography provides profound insight into immediate social relations, the “Science of Singularity,” reunites action with the larger social constraints. The symbolic and effectual battles engaged in by the homeless address and attack the icons of the establishment, and in this way there is a continued dialogue between the homeless and the forces perceived as constraining.

Ethnography is deeply suspicious of metatheory and wild abstraction from scarce observation, and terminology unuttered by the respondents themselves. This

approach retains the words and livelihood of the homeless, in a coherent ethnography, but looks to the greater explanatory capabilities developed by de Certeau to understand the processes and dynamics of homelessness.

Grounded Theory

Ethnographic method has in the past relied essentially on description. Anselm Strauss,¹ keen to make rigorous the practices of ethnographic research has propounded an approach which he calls “Grounded theory.” Grounded theory offers researchers a set of tools to interpret the richness of ethnographic data collection. The project of ethnography is complicated by the need to create theory as one experiences phenomena. Because the issues for research develop as they are encountered, it is important to use a systematic approach in order to avoid the possibility of wallowing in an over supply of information.

Grounded theory relies on coding and confirmation. Strauss provides a range of coding types to be applied to experienced and or observed phenomena. In addition to the typologising afforded by coding, he is keen for researchers to identify processes. He also provides a set of operations which he suggests may be useful in the assimilation of phenomena. Strauss and Corbin² suggest the process of dimensionalising, where one determines properties of categories which may be useful for the subsequent task of identifying sub-categories. Strauss³ prescribes the writing of memos to track changes in perception, and the asking of critical questions as central interests of Grounded theory.

For Strauss, social theory hangs on experiential data. With this in mind this thesis rests both on ethnographic records and generous quotations from them, in order that conclusions drawn may be illustrated by recourse to experience and oral history.

Burawoy⁴ suggests however, that one of the dangers of Grounded theory is that power relations may become transparent to the Grounded theorist’s eye. Focusing on

¹ Strauss, A. and Corbin, J., *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, Sage Publications, California, 1990.

² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

⁴ Burawoy, M., “The Extended Case Method,” in Burawoy, M., Burton, A., Arnett Ferguson, A., Fox, K., Gamson, J., Gartrell, N., Hurst, L., Hurzman, C., Salzinger, L., Schiffman J., and Ui, S., *Ethnography Unbound: Power and Resistance in the Modern Metropolis*, California University Press, California, pp. 280-281.

processes, he suggests that Grounded theory produces an anaemic product. In the context of this research into homeless youth, Grounded theory is used as a means of ordering data, and not a means of interpretation. Strauss' 'rules of thumb,' have been just that, used as useful tools for the handling of data, and not the principal means of investigation. Whilst the encyclopaedic data produced has been pored over with the methods of Grounded theory in mind, this project looks beyond the limits of Grounded theory for its explanatory and investigative powers, to the insights of de Certeau as already discussed.

Proceeding with Research and Creating Codes

Strauss¹ calls for the microscopic investigation of data. He suggests that minute detail proffers insight which may not otherwise be afforded. By reviewing material carefully, and being attentive to the points at which interesting things are happening it is possible to find the emergence of patterns.

In initial stages of research it became clear that much of the energy expended by the homeless was directed at the acquisition of things. Reading through the transcripts it was clear that the homeless who had little access to conventional commodities because of their poverty, spent much time seeking things such as money, drugs/substances, spaces in which to live, biological sustenance, and identity. Homeless action was contingent on the procurement of these commodities.

The reading of the transcripts provided clues about that which the homeless sought. Various indicators were found in the transcripts which could be searched for using the advanced searching operations of the word processor. For example searching for words such as 'get,' 'want,' 'steal,' provided a short cut means for finding those things that the homeless sought. Using the capabilities of computerised magnetic storage, it was possible to build up packages of data on specific topics. For example a file was created that contained fragments of dialogue which contained the word, 'drug.' Such files provided further inspiration allowing other avenues to be followed. Having in excess of 250 000 words on file searches often proved fruitful.

¹Strauss, A. *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, p. 31.

After a careful investigation of the interview transcripts and a review of the circumstances witnessed (and recorded), it was possible to build up a set of commodities that the homeless sought.

Whilst searching for the various commodities that the homeless sought, it became clear that the homeless utilised a set of specific tactics to procure commodities. Because commodities for the homeless are scarce and because the world in which they dwell is substantially different from that of more conventional consumption, the homeless emerged as employing some degree of creativity in their pursuit of commodities. The identification of a set of skills used by the homeless provided another insight. In the pursuit of a set of skills that the homeless used in the construction of livelihood, it became clear that there was a certain pleasure obtained by individuals as they managed to 'out wit' the system. "'Politics' and 'pleasure,' crime and resistance, transgression and carnival ... meshed and confounded."¹

This discovery, also borne out by direct observation, led to the pursuit of circumstances where the homeless experienced triumph in the ploys and scams that they used to make and acquire commodities in the urban context. Strauss proposes the use of "in vivo" codes which he suggests are articulated indicators of prescient behaviour. Strauss suggests that "in vivo codes tend to be the behaviors (sic) or processes which will explain to the analyst how the basic problem of the actors is resolved or processed."²

Various "in vivo" codes were found in the transcript material. Whilst these codes were not always consistent, they were nevertheless indicators of the dual meaning of action, in that they demonstrated the hiatus between action that was both necessitous and possibly unpleasant, and the joy of inversion implicit in action. Such observations provided further insight into the meaning of homeless life. For example in order to localise the sites where the homeless felt constraint, it was illuminating to find instances of the word, 'they', in order to ask the question, "who is this 'they?'" Further, finding sites of satisfaction was enabled by searching for indicators such as, 'feels good,' 'it's good when,' 'fun,' and 'like.' Processural indicators often highlighted instances of

¹Hebdige, D., *Hiding in the Light*, Routledge, London, 1988, p. 34.

²Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis*, op. cit., p. 33.

agency, such as with 'I can,' 'sometimes I' and 'if I.' In this way the transcripts were used to their maximum potential.

Following on from the determination of commodities and skills, it became clear that the homeless, in addition to the skills they used, made use of particular spaces in particular ways. With further investigation of the spaces used, it became clear that geographical spaces were just a subset of a range of zones of opportunity. Yet at the same time there were in some sense other kinds of spaces and terrains that the homeless used to draw commodities. Various institutions such as the state and the social welfare net, provided alternative topographies of opportunity. The sources of commodities then for the homeless became more than just bounded by geographical space, but also by various other dimensions such as time.

Triangulation

In addition to the accommodation of Strauss' "rules of thumb," where appropriate and possible, conducted research has been triangulated. Using a dual approach to their study of the homeless, Snow and Anderson¹ validate conclusions by comparing them to two different parts of their research. By comparing their conclusions from their general ethnographic records with their documented tracking of individual homeless people they were able to validate their conclusions.

In the context of this research the young homeless were met in a range of different contexts and two types of data were generated. Conceptual validation has been opportuned by cross referencing data and experience in both the context of formal interview and informal participation.

The Resource Regime

In evaluating the experience of participant observation and from reviewing the detailed transcripts produced from thirty-seven detailed interviews, three elements of an

¹ Snow and Anderson, *Down on their Luck*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

articulated system of homelessness became clear. The lives of the homeless were characterised by operations involved in three domains.

Firstly, the homeless were engaged in procuring commodities. Those things sought by the homeless for consumption ranged from the biological necessities of life such as food, warmth, washing facilities to commodities of a cultural ^{nature} primarily used for emotional support and the creation of identity. In short the homeless sought a range of things with which to build their lives ^{and} these things were considered to be commodities.

Secondly, the homeless were seen to use a range of skills to procure these commodities. These skills were generally learnt on the streets and represented a way of 'getting by' in the city. These skills were characterised by opportunism, often having little access to conventional resources, their ingenuity to secure what they could from an improvident city emerged as a vital and necessary characteristic of homeless life.

Thirdly, the homeless were seen to use various sources from which to procure the commodities for their livelihood. These spaces were identified as being temporally, spatially and institutionally determined. Using a skilful creativity the homeless were seen to make ingenious use of the spaces available to them.

Reviewing experiences and reading, re-reading and searching¹ through the transcripts led to the emergence of these three elements.

The Resource Regime as a Grounded Processural Typology

In accordance with Strauss' call for research sympathetic to process, the principal theoretical aim of this research has been to investigate the processes by which individual homeless people make livelihood for themselves.

The concentration on processes led the formulation, albeit of an informal nature, of a research question, 'how do the homeless make livelihood?' By reference to the material being collected and the experience gained, it became clear that the process of livelihood creation had three principal dimensions, which characterised the homeless as using the city by employing a set of tactics and procedures to acquire commodities.

¹ Searching the transcripts was conducted by use of a computer which permitted the finding and isolation of various indicators and topics.

Homeless livelihood emerged as the learning of lifeskills and the pursuit of a lifestyle that had specific characteristics. It was found that the processes and the peculiar qualities of homeless lives as occasioned by these three dimensions articulate the social processes of homelessness.

Critical Livelihood and the Urban Antilogic

From the emergent processural typology which emerged, came another concept. In addition to the procurement of commodities undertaken by the homeless, it became clear that the actions of the homeless were characterised by a certain critical edge. Homeless livelihood is intrinsically critical. Not only do the homeless forge a viable livelihood, but they forge a critical livelihood that both sustains them and is critical of the establishment at the same time.

Homeless critical livelihood is supported by the values of homeless subculture. The use of the city by the homeless is one that is as far as possible exploitative of all opportunity. This exploitation however, is one that inverts the establishment logic of the city. From reading the transcripts and from experience it was clear that the homeless take every opportunity to invert the constraints that they find in the capital. For example, they challenge the constraints of exclusion by placing themselves in the public places of the city, they make use of public provision for their private ends, they play up to the stereotypes of the homeless in order to effect charity and so on.

Their opportunity-seeking is defiant and critical because their actions conflict with establishment expectations of behaviour. This critical stance influences the everyday actions with which they build their lives, and therefore their livelihood is inherently critical. As discussed in Chapter 2, strategic space does not preclude critical action and indeed critical action is implicit in homeless subcultural values.

De Certeau, somewhat poetically, refers to tactical and critical actions saying, “they circulate, come and go, overflow and drift over an imposed terrain like the snowy waves of the sea slipping in among the rocks and defiles of an established order.”¹ Attuned

¹De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

to opportunity, and omnipresent, the homeless intrude into all possible spaces. Moreover, by creative appropriation and revalorisation of space, they are even able to transgress establishment codes of behaviour and enter into and employ those spaces of the city which are conventionally off limits, the liminal and interstitial and impossible spaces of the city, the spaces of the Other.

Individuals are always at work undermining the system and forcing change through the annexation of power through illegitimate means. Although changes may be small and annexed power weak, there are circumstances where the impoverished (in terms of power) are able to call to order a substantial force by means of the antilogic which they have at their disposal. De Certeau¹ suggests that “these procedures and ruses ... compose the network of an antidiscipline,” and it is this antidiscipline which informs the homeless antilogic articulated by tactical manoeuvre. The antilogic is an opportunistic lifestyle whose concern is both to afford sustenance and a sense of identity through critical meaning as a response to collective social constraints and conditions.

A System of Exchange

As discussed in Chapter 2, the homeless world is composed of cultural and material commodities. Whilst transferable and exchangeable they differ markedly from the commodities of commercial establishment exchange. The system of exchange, because it exists in the context of deprivation and because it is deeply critical in nature, is an alternative system. Because homeless commodities are procured in different ways and in dissimilar contexts, their meanings are fundamentally different, although to some degree they serve the same basic ends in providing sustenance and identity. The very character of exchange—in the sense that it expresses a subcultural urban antilogic—is in itself a form of production that the homeless use as a basis for cultural identity.

Critical consumption with its own regime becomes a central feature of the production of homeless identity. This critical consumption expresses itself through the

¹*Ibid.*, p. xv.

way the homeless present themselves to the city, and insert themselves into the urban political agenda.

The three dimensions of the resource regime may be summarised in tabular form. Although these dimensions are based on the typology arrived at through Grounded theory, they are not in themselves unassailable social truths. They remain as tools for the examination of social processes amongst the homeless, and are subject to, like all social concepts, a certain fuzziness. Some social behaviour for example may fit into more than one category, and others may seem to be somewhat out of place, but this system remains as a framework grounded in experience for the further investigation of social processes implicit in homeless critical livelihood.

Table 4.1 The Resource Regime

Commodities	Skills	Sources
(What)	(How)	(Where)
identity	adaptability	the public
drugs/substances	endurance	the state
money	mobility	social welfare net
living/sleeping space	sagacity	the body
sustenance	trickery	space and time

Processes of Exchange, Processes of Critical Livelihood

The resource regime and critical livelihood emerged from a grounded theoretical approach. In investigating the transcript material and reflecting on experience, further dimensions of the regime emerged, under the respective headings of the former three dimensions, Commodities, Skills and Sources. Although chapters 6 to 8 provide insight into the processes of livelihood creation, the following outlines act as prefatory remarks. Because what unfolds in subsequent chapters is the exposition of a heavily interrelated process of material and cultural exchange, this overview provides a pre-emptory opportunity to perceive the whole before digesting the parts.

Commodities

The cultural and material commodities whose procurement preoccupies the homeless, are scarce in the city. Many of these commodities are imbued with values critical of the establishment. In addition to providing sustenance, these commodities also afford identity. These commodities which differ from conventional commercial commodities, are utilised according to the homeless antilogic alluded to above. By reviewing the ethnographic data and by reviewing experience, the commodities sought by the homeless can be broken into the following dimensions.

Identity

Homeless identity provides a sense of mental well-being. For many of the homeless whose atomised histories are characterised by neglect and anomie, subcultural solidarity is important. Identity is won through association and by the regularised consumption of homeless critical commodities.

- ... we're united and it's a bit like a brotherhood in that sense, that people stick up for one another ... everyone sort of looks after one another.¹

- It's all down to your mind, it's still as hard, but it's not as hard as it first was. You sort of get used to it.²

Money

By virtue of its liquidity, money is both commodity and a means to further commodities. It may be effectively consumed by exchange for immediate consumables such as food, or it may be held with a view to an indeterminate purpose. For the purposes of classification, money is considered here as a commodity because it is often sought in its own right. For the homeless however, money is an ephemerality. It is often won by beneficence or from unexpected situations. Their frequent generosity with money is a means for avoiding theft and consolidating identity as well as being a subversive gesture mocking the social veneration of the illusive pound.

¹Interview 4

²Interview 12

Drugs

Drugs like money are commonly used for exchange. Amongst their own, the homeless are often happy to share what they have. Asked for drugs on the street, many of the homeless are happy to oblige by either selling direct or by acting as a 'broker' between customer and supplier.

In addition to the commodity and consumption value of drugs, drug use is a critical act. Implicit in drug use is a denial of establishment values. Drug use has both material and cultural meaning. Although drugs are consumed as a material commodity, the cultural value of drug use lies in its critical meaning. Most homeless drug use is related to the smoking of cannabis and there is little evidence of drug use being a problem¹ in excess of the larger population.²

Living/Sleeping Space

Accommodation for the homeless is a variable commodity. During the winter, the finding of accommodation becomes more important, although even then some young people choose to remain on the streets rather than seeking sheltered accommodation. Often the homeless are somewhat nonchalant about where they sleep, though normally opting for places offering safety and warmth. The nonchalance characterising choice of sleeping space is a part of a syntagm³ of critical consumption. Their disdain for established codes of conduct and their immediate juxtaposition with the city places the homeless on the political agenda, their use of the city again demonstrating the critical values implicit in homeless everyday life.

¹ Many homeless young people resist the temptation of hard drugs. Whilst the smoking of cannabis and resin is very common, the incidence of addiction to drugs such as heroin is substantially less than the incidence of regular partaking of marijuana and derivative drugs. See Central London Outreach Team, *Sleeping Out*, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

² Central London Outreach Team, *Sleeping Out*, *op. cit.*, p. 78. Drug use is seen to be more prevalent amongst the younger homeless than the older homeless. Even though drug use has not been identified as a particular problem for the homeless. Randall, *Homeless and Hungry*, *op. cit.*, p. 21; Westminster City Council Youth Service, *Facts on Homeless Young People* (16-21), Westminster City Council, London, 1990. Cited in Central Westminster Police/Community Consultative Group, *Report on the Young Homeless*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

³ See Barthes, R., *Elements of Semiology*, Hill and Wang, USA, 1968. Chapter III, pp. 58-70.

Sustenance

Like sleeping/living space, sustenance is a commodity regarded with some indifference. This indifference is evidenced by a lack of concern about health and a general insouciance relating to physical and biological needs. Drug abuse, alcoholism, self-mutilation and seeming deliberate emaciation¹ whilst they may be the consequences of emotional strain are also rejections of establishment values.

Sustenance is often sought haphazardly, and with a seeming inverted set of priorities. For example, the immediate gratification of smoking (tobacco or otherwise) may be regarded more important than the procurement of food. For the homeless, even the purveyance of commodities for biological sustenance is challenged as the homeless proclaim a certain nonchalant defiance.

Skills

Individuals becoming homeless in London need to quickly learn a range of tactical skills. Not only do they need to learn 'where,' and 'what' to find, but they need to know 'how.' It has been reported that the key words in the experience of young people are likely to include: " ... 'anxiety,' 'defensiveness,' 'pragmatism' and even 'subsistence' and 'survival' itself."²

Skills afford the procurement of commodities. For the homeless, both the commodities used and the means used to procure them, are imbued with critical meanings. In the utilisation of critical skills the homeless undermine the icons of society. If the regime of skills are adaptability, endurance, mobility, sagacity, and trickery, then the homeless can outmanoeuvre, outlast, outrun, outsmart, and outwit the city using a logic that itself undermines the legitimacy of the city.

¹ Many of the homeless have particularly poor diets. Some are deteriorated due to their association with drugs and especially heroin. Keyes, S. and Kennedy, M., *Sick to Death of Homelessness: An Investigation into the links between Homelessness, Health and Mortality*, Crisis, London, 1992, pp. 11 and 20.

² UNESCO, 1981, Cited in Burton, *et al.*, *Accommodation and Social Cohesion*, p. 14, from Ronayne, T., *The Social and Economic Position of Young People in Ireland*, Report for the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 1987. p.14.

Adaptability

Those new to street-homelessness are explorers in a foreign space. Those taking this path often find that their experiences do not correspond to the expectations they may have had before becoming homeless. Often they find the situation more difficult to deal with than they had anticipated. Survival in the homeless city calls for adaptability. Those without contacts in London, often quickly end up with nowhere to go. Individuals may need to become accustomed to either hostel living or living on the streets. They need to learn to live with little privacy, and to be careful of who they trust. Where the city may proffer few commodities, adaptability to some degree provides access.

For the newly homeless, new circumstances call for personal re-evaluation. Past certainties, if indeed there have been any, become uncertain and all scenarios become potentially dangerous. The skills of the street, of which adaptability is but one, need to be quickly learnt in order to avoid vulnerability and exploitation.

Endurance

Homelessness in London calls for endurance. Conditions on the street may be very harsh with individuals having to *bear* the elements and a series of indignities. For those sleeping rough, exposure is not uncommon.¹ Whilst some take shelter in hostels and emergency accommodation, others prefer the familiarity of their own 'patch.'²

- How do you keep warm?
- Just like cuddle up to James³ and that. Just loads and loads of blankets, we try and get as many as we can, and a sleeping bag, because the Sally Army give them out with a ticket.
- And what about *Crisis at Christmas*. Did you go to that? .
- No never never go to that.⁴

•It's fuckin' horrible. It's like I was here one year and it was snowin.' It was like the snow was actually the level of the doorway, you know, it was coming in. I hated it. It was really sloshy and cold ...⁵

¹ Keyes and Kennedy, *Sick to Death*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

² See *Glossary*.

³ James is a much older person who lives in the doorway as Julie. She has been living there for many months.

⁴ Interview 7

⁵ Interview 2

Mobility and Selective Attachment

Having few if any ties, the homeless are free to drift through the city. Quickly they become adept at riding the London Underground without paying, thus becoming mobile throughout the city. This mobility allows them to exploit opportunities as they may arise. It also allows them to disappear into the city should they wish to avoid confrontation or any other potential danger.

Homeless mobility is also characterised by a certain indifference to place. With many of the homeless being indifferent to where they may be, or where they may sleep.

•Oh God. I used to go on the Circle Line and fall asleep, as stupid as it sounds. But I used to do that. ¹

Yet at the same time the homeless adopt certain placemaking strategies in order to offset the loneliness and alienation of living on the streets.

Sagacity

The homeless need to be constantly alert to opportunity-laden situations, being ever ready to exploit opportunities, as they arise. Such opportunities have included: the installation of new telephone card dispensing machines which are easily opened and plundered, the 'special offer' of the Deep Pan Pizza Company² offering unlimited food and a place to sit for as long as desired for £2.80, the ticket seller working at one of the West End cinemas who occasionally lets homeless people in without paying. Denied conventional access, the homeless always seek out and make opportunity by being alert, aware and clever.

Using skills and commodities of this kind is a subversive expression, because unlike the majority, the homeless can consume without working, providing them with commodities outside of the normal 'rules.'

•Do you find it difficult living in London?

•No, because London's a very big place and there's something to do everyday if you want

¹ Interview 30

² The homeless would often make use of this service by spending long hours in the restaurant, eating slowly, exploiting the provision of the restaurant.

it, if you get bored or ... the Tate gallery, churches, you know, there are places you avoid, but all the free places you can go in and wander round.¹

Having time at their disposal the homeless are able to think about the ways and means for making use of the city, both in legitimate and illegitimate ways.

Trickery

Being pragmatic survivors, the homeless are not averse to trickery. These tricks may include the telling of embellished stories to effect charitable ends, the deliberate dirtying of fingernails or the disheveling of hair before begging, conniving, petty theft and fraud. Whilst the homeless are by no means all tricksters, in the improvident city, even slight disingenuousness can reap welcome rewards.

• Oh, yeah, yeah. I, uh, leave my hair scruffy, don't have a shave so often. Dirty fingernails, bit down fingernails. I like, just, like, 'Spare the price of a cup of tea?' or if I've got a cup of tea in my hand, 'Spare the price of a bag of chips?' You know, it works, it works. Have a quilt wrapped around me and whatever.²

Whilst few tricks are dangerously malicious, such criminality is evident but rare. However those needing to support a drug habit may be more prone to such ends.

• ... Oh, whatever, begging, parking meters, mugging, clipping, fighting, beating people up for people, makes good money.³

Even the police are not immune to the tricky and mendacious acts of the homeless.

• I've got a clear record in London. .
• You haven't been charged?
• Yeah I've been charged, but under different names, not in my own name.⁴

Whilst being pragmatic, trickery like sagacity is implicitly critical. Whilst individuals may need to use their skills to effect access, their tricky use of the city

¹Interview 10

²Interview 29

³Interview 17 See *Glossary*.

⁴Interview 15

expresses a sense of dissatisfaction, their tricks and mendacity contain anger^{and} their utility
in part lies in their cathartic energy.

Sources

In order to make livelihood, the homeless turn to specific places for the procurement of commodities. These temporal, spatial and institutional loci form a topography of commodity sources. This space is temporal because space differs with time; Leicester Square has different values at different times of the day. It is institutional because many of the sources of commodities lie in institutions, such as the DSS or of other welfare provision.

The Public

The heterogeneity of the public affords the homeless a heterogeneous source of opportunity. The city has a range of publics including, the passing public, the sympathetic public, the scrupulous and the unscrupulous public. There is the public of the church, of the other homeless, the caring and the careless, and many more besides. Having time in the city, the homeless can learn its rhythms and moods. Using this knowledge, the homeless are able to 'ply their trade,' to tell their verbal and visual stories to passers-by and indeed to become expert charlatans and players of the crowd. Yet despite their ruses, their guileful tactical manoeuvres and critical actions disguise persistent alienation and deprivation.

The State

The principal interface between the state and the homeless is through the DSS. Yet despite its aims the DSS is hardly used by the homeless because of the bureaucracy involved in its operation. The welfare state to some degree politically empowers the homeless, as the welfare of the populace is deemed the responsibility of government. The homeless' very position on the streets therefore is an embarrassment to the government, and a means by which the homeless are able to enter the political agenda.

Although not universally subscribed to by the homeless, the state proffers social security funds, the funding of housing trusts and agencies whose brief is to assist the homeless. Pressure groups such as Shelter and CHAR act to confront the state with images of deprivation and destitution, a means by which the homeless are able to focus their dissatisfaction, not only with the levels and nature of provision, but also with their disaffection with society. Although deriving little direct benefit from the state because of the inadequacy of provision, the homeless are able to effect a political voice by means of collectively despoiling the city which inevitably^{is} read as a barometer of the success of the state.

The Social Welfare Net

In addition to state provision is a range of private charitable trusts making up a larger social welfare net. Such institutions are often partially funded by the state, but are increasingly being put under pressure to become self-funding. The power of these organisations to engender commercial sponsorship and other financial support depends on the viability of the imagery of homelessness, a circumstance, perhaps ironically that can do little to improve the prestige of a welfare-retarding elected government. The commodification of homelessness as an icon inducing the charity pound, further puts the homelessness on the political agenda. In this way the homeless through their behaviour are able to effect the topicality of the issue and indeed indirectly to fashion their own future.

Space

The use and appropriation of space provides the homeless with opportunity. In annexing space the homeless participate in the urban landscape, and make claim to a share of the prosperity of the city. Their claim is clearly a critical one. The appropriation of space by the juxtaposition of their lives (their bodies), with the city provides contrast which spoils the perfection of the city. The city can no longer be unashamedly emblematic of a unblemished social order.

The homeless make good use of the cityscape, exploiting it using the skills of the homeless antilogic. In the same way that the homeless play on the public, their playfulness in the streets mocks the city that for them symbolises that which has destroyed their lives and reduced them to homelessness. Their laughter in the streets, brings ridicule on the city that prefers to pretend they are not there.

Time

The homeless' mocking play in space is replicated temporally. The homeless have no shortage of time. By exploiting their temporal ubiquity they become experts of urban rhythms and opportunity. Their mobility allows them to be anywhere anytime, and their incessant presence provides them with a key to the ruminations and dynamics of the city.

Ubiquity in time and space parallels the ubiquity of the establishment fabric of the city. Nowhere is there city not traversed by its own travesty. In the same way that the established city is monolithic, and omnipotent (being the bearer of larger structural forces), the homeless are ubiquitous and omnipresent.

The Body

The body is perhaps both commodity and source. Although it is not a commodity in the sense that it is something sought, it is commodified in that it might be sold, or used as a means of communication. As a commodity special to the self, it is not in itself transferable, but it is in some sense a source of other commodities, because of the way that it is used. The body is used by the homeless in a range of ways from prostitution to the juxtaposition of the self with the city. The untidy self in the tidy city affords political power in the way as in *Space*, above. The commodification of the body in this way represents a deliberate desanctification of the body, in opposition to the social norms whereby the body is considered in some way sacred and in need of protection from prostitution in its wider sense.

The Process of Critical Livelihood

The process of livelihood creation depends on the dimensions of the commodity, source, skills regime (resource regime) as prefaced above. The social exchange implicit in this process spells out a critical message as well as one that affords material and biological survival for the homeless. The various dimensions outlined here are those which have emerged from a careful reading and consideration of the data collated and the experience gained with spending time with the homeless over some two years.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 delve into the dimensions of critical livelihood looking at the way that the homeless articulate survival and express a critical response to circumstance. Using the resource regime as a map of homeless experience, these chapters cover the process of critical livelihood. Because the elements of critical livelihood form a cultural economy, each element of the regime is closely related to the others, and in investigating them a degree of overlap must occur in order to demonstrate their processural character.

The value of critical livelihood is greater than the sum of its parts. In addition to the articulation of elements of the livelihood process, it is possible to see the emergence of a homeless identity, one which rides on and is defined by the articulation of the resource regime. This identity is one that necessarily engages the establishment and the social constraints that the homeless endure and subvert. Yet at the same time, this identity is pregnant with the partial reproduction of power relations. Whilst the following chapter deals with the process of creating ethnography, these additional elements emergent from critical livelihood will unfold throughout Chapters 6 to 8.

CHAPTER 5

THE PROCESS OF MAKING ETHNOGRAPHY: A METHODOLOGY

*The trouble with learning by experience is
that you get the instruction book at the end.*
Anon.

The writing of ethnography begins somewhat blind. With time the picture becomes clearer and research becomes more directed. Because ethnography is necessarily a task learnt on the job, the very processes of its creation are important to the final project. With this in mind I shall remove myself from the impersonality of the third person and lapse into the first, in order to provide some insight into why it is that this project has concentrated on what it has, and in order to provide background to the circumstances of its creation.

My interest in urban youth culture developed from an early interest in city life during my undergraduate career at the Department of Geography, the University of Sydney. The University of Sydney requires a candidate to spend his or her final year in its entirety writing a thesis. Because this year is principally a research year, the theses produced are more substantial than is often required of undergraduates. My work in Sydney was entitled *Meaning, Signs and Significance in the Cityscape: The Phenomenon of New York Style Graffiti in Sydney*.¹ This research investigated the ways that young graffiti writers in Sydney personalised an imposed and often alienating urban landscape with graffiti. My interest in joining the School of Geography in Oxford was to pursue research into contemporary youth culture in Britain.

After some preliminary reading and the consideration of a number of specific projects I decided that the investigation of youth homelessness in London, a circumstance of significant media interest and little academic interest would be the most useful, enlightening and valuable.

Research began in July of 1990 when I moved to London for some six months to be closer to the population I was studying. I had arranged to reside in North London in a

¹Lee, A., *Meaning, Signs and Significance in the Cityscape: The Phenomenon of New York Style Graffiti in Sydney*. Unpublished BA Hons. thesis. The University of Sydney, 1987.

hostel run by the Macedon Trust. This house was located in Ladysmith Road N17, not far from White Hart Lane and the Tottenham Hotspurs Football ground. I would be responsible for the day to day running of that house which accommodated six homeless people, for the following six months. Whilst the house did not accommodate people of the age group I wished to study, the opportunity for free accommodation in London and an opportunity to witness homeless life at close quarters was an attractive option. The house accommodated two black schizophrenics (both African), a white man with a drinking problem, a man with a significant personality disorder, and another man who was very quiet. During my time there the population changed, and after a time I was also looking after a divorced man, a man with a personality disorder and an intensive smoking habit (70 a day), and a Pakistani schizophrenic epileptic who from time to time believed God was commanding him to jump from tall buildings. Although I had had some experience with people with disorders in the past it was a daunting task to organise this household.

Brief Timetable of Events		
1989	September	Initial research formulation
1990	September	Moved to London
		Resident at Macedon Trust
		Visited a large number of different agencies and projects, and met with various people involved in homeless issues (see below).
		Initiated the keeping of a journal.
1990	December	Initiated arrangements with the London Connection
		Began spending time informally at the London Connection
1991	March	Arrangements with the London Connection finalised
1991	July	Began interviewing at the London Connection
1992	March	Completed interviewing at the London Connection
1992	April	Presented Report no.1 to the London Connection
1992	May	Presented Report no. 2 to the London Connection

Figure 5.1 Brief timetable of research events.

Whilst my position at the Macedon Trust was principally useful as a London base, my work there and association with the people in the house gave me great insight into the larger parameters of homelessness. Getting to know the people in the house also provided me with background for the population I was to study in the end, for some of these people had been homeless in Central London when they were younger.

As is commonly the case with ethnographic work the research was at this stage not well formulated. My interest at this time was to write an ethnography of youth homelessness. The way that this was to be done was at this stage unclear.

My initial interest was to familiarise myself with the lives of the homeless and to discuss and meet those people who worked with the homeless in order that I might gain a clearer picture of the wider circumstances. During that six months I engaged in a range of activities and met with a number of individuals working in the field, I also participated in the running of various organisations. These activities are outlined in figure 5.2

- Met the Anglican Chaplain for the Homeless, Father Derek White.
- Met on a regular basis with Colin Barry and his colleagues at the Society of St Mark in Central London to walk the streets and meet homeless young people.
- Visited and met with the directors of the Lighthouse project. Christian hostel for homeless young people, based in London.
- Attended hospital meetings for schizophrenic homeless people in my care (Macedon Housing Trust).
- Met with the Simon Community to discuss the issues facing youth homelessness.
- Met with members of CHAR
- Met with the Co-ordinating Sergeant and viewed the security operations at Victoria British Rail Concourse.
- Met with Sergeant Dorrington of the Juvenile Protection Unit, West End Central Police Station, Vine Street, London.
- Manned a soup van on two occasions. Bondway Centre, SW8.
- Visited the Streetwise Project: Support and Referral Centre for male prostitutes, Earl's Court.
- Visited and participated in a breakfast session, the Passage Day Centre, Victoria.
- Visited the London Connection, Day and Resource Centre for the Young Homeless, Charing Cross. Also participated in user and staff meetings.
- Became a regular volunteer at the Centrepont Night Shelter for the chronically homeless (young people), Dean Street, Soho.
- Became an occasional volunteer at Centrepont Night Shelter for young people new to London and identified as vulnerable, Soho.
- Met with Ms Shaks Ghosh, then a director of Centrepont.
- Met with the Director of Centrepont Berwick Street.
- Visited the DSS hostel, West End House, Dean Street, London.
- Attended regular meetings for the Macedon Trust Housing Association, Tottenham.
- Visited and spoke to members of the Piccadilly Advice Centre.
- Visited and spoke to members of Shelter.
- Visited and spoke to members of SHAC.
- Visited and spoke to members of the Salvation Army.
- Accompanied night patrol with Mr and Mrs Christian in Kings Cross Late-night Mission to the Homeless in the Kings Cross Area (Salvation Army) .
- Visited Brendan O'Mahony, project director of Barnardo's.
- Visited New Horizon Day and Resource Centre, Macklin Street, WC2.
- Visited and spoke to Lucy White of the Leaving Home Project: a division of Information Services Charity Limited, Shaftesbury Avenue, London.
- Visited and attended a HIV/AIDs training day at the Hungerford Drug Project, Wardour Street, Soho.
- Met with the Project Co-ordinator of the Hungerford Drug Project, Wardour Street, Soho.

Figure 5.2 List of place/persons visited, and projects participated in/attended.

Living in London provided an opportunity to visit the agencies listed. In addition to the formal meetings at these places I often had an opportunity to participate or observe a respective agency/programme in progress.

Throughout the research period I also kept a Research Journal in which I kept records of who I met, both homeless people and those working with the homeless. This journal contained subjective comment as well as details of my movements and activities. It is cited from time to time throughout this thesis.

During the period of time that I was living in London I became a regular volunteer worker at the Centrepont, Dean Street, *Off the Street* programme for the chronically homeless. Centrepont¹ describe themselves as “a charity dedicated to tackling the problem of homelessness among young people.” The organisation provides accommodation, referrals and advice for young homeless people and also have a progressive research policy. Their two principal emergency shelters operating at the time were in Dean Street and in Berwick Street. During my time in London, and some time after I was a regular volunteer at the service.

In becoming familiar with the circumstances of the young homeless it became clear that in addition to witnessing the everyday experiences of the homeless it would be necessary for me to build up associations in order that I might gain further insights into their daily experiences. I also decided that it would be necessary to conduct interviews away from the streets in a place affording privacy. Given that the shelters run by Centrepont were widely respected by the homeless, I decided to approach Centrepont with my research requirements. At the same time I had decided to also approach the London Connection, a day and resource centre for the young homeless located in Adelaide Street, Charing Cross (adjacent to Trafalgar Square). During the process of visiting projects for the homeless and speaking with various project directors I began to formulate a series of questions, which had arisen from experience and discussion. This was a time of memo writing, to use Strauss’² terminology, when various perspectives were investigated, when questions to ask were jotted down for future reference, and when the recordings of experience were closely read over for signs of order, or for levels of significance that had been missed (Memo writing is discussed in §*Research Methods*, below).

¹Centrepont, *Days to Remember*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

²Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis*, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-129.

As Centrepont appeared well organised and responsive to research, having published research papers in the past,¹ it was an initial place to seek more regularised contact with the homeless and an opportunity to conduct interviews. Whilst they were supportive it was the London Connection that afforded me the greatest opportunity.

The London Connection had recently been awarded moneys from Telethon,² to commission research into Leavers of Care amongst the homeless, and to evaluate the viability of producing a street guide booklet for the London's young homeless care leavers. The London Connection at this stage was looking for someone to conduct this research. The Director offered me the position agreeing that if I undertook the research for the London Connection I could at the same time conduct my own research, both projects benefiting from each other.

The brief of the research from the London Connection was to find the trajectories of care leavers onto the streets, and to determine how those trajectories could be averted. The research where possible was to identify principal channels of communication to those vulnerable to becoming homeless, in order that an advice strategy could be developed. I was given funding for up to fifty interviews and expenses for typing. This research was completed and my findings made available to the London Connection for internal use. In addition to a limited amount of funding, it was invaluable having a base in which to conduct interviews, and where I could be assured of a room to speak to young people privately.

This offer was most timely because I was beginning to realise that there would be a problem gaining access to the homeless. Whilst it was possible to meet the homeless whilst informally wandering about in London, it was difficult to be able to claim any special relationship over any other passer-by. Every encounter would require 'breaking the ice,' explaining who I was and trying to secure trust. With a transient population in changing locations, I realised that this would be very difficult. Being associated with the London Connection, an institution with a degree of 'street credit,' afforded me a degree

¹Randall, *No Way Home.*, *op. cit.*; Randall, *Homeless and Hungry*, *op. cit.*

²Telethon is a regularly run charitable event televised across the country. Individuals make donations to Telethon and Telethon in response to requests for funding, disseminate collected moneys.

of legitimacy, and provided me with access which otherwise would have been most difficult to gain.

At the same time I was keen to meet the homeless on the streets, and in this case I worked in addition, on a weekly basis with Colin Barry from the Community of St Mark. This religious community established by the Archbishop's Chaplain to the Homeless, Father Derek White, provided a mission to the homeless. Father White had hoped to gain permission from the Church of England to operate a hostel for the young homeless, but regrettably late in 1991, it was declined due to funding constraints.

Colin and I made regular journeys around London, visiting Lincoln's Inn Fields, Aldwych, the Strand, Piccadilly Circus, Leicester Square, Shaftesbury Avenue and various places in-between. Whilst principally interested in the young homeless, Colin and I stopped by on people of all ages, for informal conversation. Colin's intention in visiting them, which he did wearing the robe of the Community, was to offer them a willing ear, to give advice about various projects, and just to check that they were all right.

Meeting the homeless in this way was also beneficial because Colin, and his colleagues, affectionately known as the "acid house monks," were sufficiently well known amongst the homeless to afford immediate access upon reception. Dealing with the homeless in various venues, at the London Connection and on the streets with Colin, allowed me to meet the homeless in a range of contexts.

The London Connection and Research

The London Connection, often referred to by the homeless as "the Connection," was established in 1988 to "respond to the growing crisis of homelessness amongst young people in the centre of London. ..."¹ Their brochure notes that the " ... organisation provides a multi-purpose resource for homeless young people."² It also advertises the following services:

¹The London Connection, *The London Connection A Multi Purpose Resource for Homeless and Unemployed Young People*. Unpublished pamphlet, printed by Youth Workspace, The London Connection, London. Undated, c1992, p. 1.

²*Ibid.*

- a café, providing good quality food at affordable prices.
- a laundrette, showers and left luggage store.
- weekly G.P's surgery.
- Careers Service sessions.
- individual counselling and advice on housing, employment, welfare benefits, legal and medical matters.
- referrals to short- and long-term accommodation.
- in-house skills training in computers and printing.
- a programme of educational and recreational activities.¹

The building comprises: a café, recreation rooms for watching television and playing snooker, a table tennis table and area, a job training area, a printing room, a computer training area, a darkroom, an art area, lockers, showers, a laundry, consultation rooms, and an administrative area. Late in 1992, the London Connection was able to take over more space in the building and expansion has given more space to each of these uses.

Although I ensured that I spent time in each of the public spaces available for informal conversation, playing snooker and generally 'hanging about,' of principal use to me was the café and the consultation rooms upstairs.

Gaining Access

'Getting in' is perhaps one of the most difficult tasks of ethnography. The London Connection afforded me access to a sub-population of London's young homeless. As it is only one of two 'fashionable' centres for the homeless to 'hang out,' it was a good place to be in that it afforded access to a wide range of young people.

Whilst the staff of the London Connection are well regarded by the homeless, there are times when the homeless need to distance themselves from the staff, in much the same way that the staff need to 'professionally' distance themselves from those with whom they work. I was therefore very keen to not be identified as a member of the London Connection staff. Although I knew most of the staff by name I mainly stayed in

¹*Ibid.*, p. 2.

the area of the café where young people sat, conversed, drank coffee, had lunch and 'mucked about.'

I decided that it was important for me to get to know the place and its personalities before I began interviewing. I spent many hours of many days sitting and informally participating in conversations in the café and in the television room. Initially I was regarded with some suspicion. Regulars did not know whether I was or was not a member of the staff. However, after some time my status 'improved' and it became clear that I had been awarded a level of privilege not afforded the staff.

Sitting in the television room, I was again asked whether I was staff. ... the fellow in the television room was concerned that they would be in strife if they smoked¹ there when I was present. I told them that I was not staff, and they then started to smoke The lad said, 'You won't grass me up² though will you?' I said 'no.' He then asked me whether I wanted some ... ³

I ran a stage of pilot interviews with young people provided by the advice workers. These interviews provided me with insights into the logistics of interviewing here, and allowed me to test the questions that I had planned to ask.

Over a period of some months I had been compiling a set of questions which I wanted to ask. I decided that the interview would include forms to be filled out, followed by a mapping exercise, and then a recorded interview based on the questions I had prepared. The recorded interview section was set up in such a way that it allowed for digression whilst still covering a prescribed set of questions.

During the pilot period it became clear that whilst some questions needed to be removed, others needed to be modified or added. At this stage I was interested in compiling social network data, using the methods outlined and used by Wallman.⁴ However, it became clear that this exercise was conceptually difficult for those I was interviewing. Further, it was not possible to derive meaningful information about social networks in this formal way, without disrupting the conversational flow of the interview.

¹ Drug taking is not permitted in the London Connection.

² See *Glossary*.

³ Research Journal, 15 April 1991.

⁴ Wallman, *Eight London Households, op. cit.*, pp. 59-69.

Following on from this, questions relating to social networks were included in the interview question sets for recorded interviews.

Whilst the question set continued to undergo modification throughout the interview process, a central core of questions has been asked of all respondents. The question set may be found in Appendix 2.

The interview had five parts:

1. **Introduction**, in which I discussed who I was, the nature of my research, what would happen to the information that they gave, the nature of the questions and of the interview, the duration of the interview and the amount of money they were to be given for their help.
2. **Personal**, in which I filled in a form which sought basic details regarding age, sex, relations with parents, experience with care, and experience of homelessness.
3. **Mapping**, in which I asked respondents to mark on a map their various trajectories over various periods of time. I also asked them to note areas where they felt safe and where they felt vulnerable. This section also reviewed over a period of a week the movements and times spent in various places in London.
4. **Recorded Interview Question Set**. The set of questions was quite long, as were interviews with those who gave lengthy answers. The questions covered the following subjects:

Expectations	Ethnic Peoples
Living in London	Police
Hostels	Mobility
Day to Day conditions	Experiences and Feelings
The City	Problems/Restrictions
Health/Diet	Personality
Streetlife	Future
Begging	Relations with other people
Prostitution	Groupings and Friends
Substances	Relationships
Other People on the Street	Family

5. **Care**. Questions specifically relating to care leavers were asked in this section.

Interviews were conducted in consultation rooms in the advisory arm of the London Connection. It was decided that from my funding I could pay each homeless

person £10 for their participation which could be for as long as three hours. The London Connection felt it appropriate that the young people be paid for their time, and the funding provided a means for doing so. Although respondents were remunerated, much of the information gained for this project was learnt, often over lunch, in informal interview and common conversation in the café.

The interviews once conducted were transcribed as soon as possible. In the end thirty seven interviews were conducted and transcribed yielding in excess of two hundred thousand words of data. In addition to this I kept a journal during my time in London and this material also on disc, numbers some fifty-thousand words. The value of this material has been greatly enhanced by being able to search through large amounts of information using the word processor on a Macintosh computer.

The Mapping Questions

The mapping questions were designed to provide information about places slept rough, and about the relationship that individuals had with specific places. Although questions were asked relating to places in the city where individuals felt safe or threatened, responses to this question were variable. Some for example noted that they didn't think about the places they went to or through, whilst others were principally cautious in some places because they knew someone there who was looking for them.

The most useful information to emerge from this data was the collation of rings drawn on the maps which showed the spaces in the city that the respondents used in the past week. The collation of this data has been presented in Chapter 8, in figures 8.2 and 8.3. Additionally, information collated from the descriptions of places by time has allowed for the creation of an example of an individual's day-path, in figure 8.1.

Prior to piloting the map work I was uncertain how well it would be answered because advice suggested that the homeless may be sufficiently 'disorientated,' that map reading may be difficult. However, the young people responded well to this series of questions demonstrating a good grasp of their locale.

Research Procedures

Strauss¹ Grounded theory provides “rules of thumb” for social research (see Chapter 4, §*Grounded Theory*). Grounded theory also calls for certain qualitative methods to be carried out in order to deal with generated data, and indeed the process of data generation. Although he explains that circumstance determines appropriate research strategies, he proposes that certain procedures are mandatory for the creation of good social research. Strauss² recommends early coding of data and the writing of analytic memos. Such procedures are central to the development of research that is to some degree sensitive to the emergence from the data a set of issues or concepts.

Such practices have been used in the production of this work as “rules of thumb.” From very early on much time was spent going over the material and coding categories of action and categories of meaning. Whilst the steps leading to the emergence of a resource framework as a viable schema have been discussed in Chapter 4, suffice it to say here that the categories arrived at emerged from a careful reading of the data with a view to finding regularities and patterns.

The gradual development of the interview data set acted as a focus for developing concepts. The process of interviewing where young people were encouraged to speak tangentially on any matter they chose allowed the emphasis of various parts of the interview to change over time. Although this improved the effectiveness of following interviews, it has also acted as a means of concentrating on various issues important to homeless subculture.

The Ethics of Ethnography

Researching the outcast, whilst it may be couched in terms of dialogue and understanding, always retains a degree of voyeurism. Implicit in the voyeuristic gaze is a power relation that may be perceived of as being exploitative of those studied. To gaze at the uncertain from a position of certainty is for the homeless to be somewhat

¹ Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-9; *op. cit.*, Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research*. Part II.

² Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis*, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-32.

commodified—their stories sold to a bidder—only for their lives and my own to continue afterwards much as they had done before. Aside from other criticisms of ethnography, it is always possible for the ethnographic to become pornographic.

What is the point of research then *if* it produces a pornography of the outcast? Writings on the city often fail to adopt a critical stance—blind to the assumptions that ground their reasoning, their ‘truths’ are often built on unfounded preconceptions. One of the strengths of postmodern social writing is that it acknowledges the heterogeneity of space. The city or urban experience is characterised by a range of peoples and a range of cultures and values. Writing about the city in a way sympathetic to this heterogeneity provides a new geography of urban space. Academic writing, whilst it may always be distant from the groups it represents, takes a step closer to those it professes to represent in the practice of ethnography. A geography of homelessness forms one piece in a larger puzzle of a geography of the dispossessed. The establishment which is inculcated in the production of the representations of the marginal, cannot be relied upon to furnish a perspective accommodating those whom it effectively marginalises. Even language is pregnant with the terminology of the establishment. The production of a wider geography makes for a clearer understanding of the city, one which can focus on the processes of marginalisation and contestation.

Whilst the investigation of the outcast in itself may be legitimated, it is necessary to protect those who are the subject of research. Social theory is most often criticised for employing terminology which is so distant to those from whom experience is drawn that the actions of the subject are patronised by abstraction. Actions and rationales are attributed with gratuitous diversity, and with little attention to their grounding in experience. Social research therefore, needs to be strongly grounded in actual experience. Participant observation and ethnographic records need to be scrupulously read and accommodated in emergent theory. Where possible the research agenda should even be one that emerges from data and experience, rather than being imposed at the outset. It is only through direct experience in a particular culture that one may be able to discern its important issues.

Participant observation has other ethical constraints. The intimate knowing of respondent's lives is a knowledge occasioned by trust. Because this trust is pragmatic to access, it is in some sense inauthentic. Further, the information which this trust facilitates is not unbounded. This trust is commodified for it is being used for purposes elsewhere, the information produced from this trust is being exported and possibly made public. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the private is not transformed into objects of voyeuristic pleasure.

This trust must be honoured in the name of academic professionalism. Firstly, such information especially in the form of transcripts, sound or video recordings should not without the express permission of the respondent be made available to other parties. It is doubtful whether information provided under these circumstances should be divulged at all, especially not in such a way that individuals may be identified.

Additionally, this information should not be used to the detriment of those people from whom it originated. The misuse of information in this way is a clear personal betrayal of individual trust, being highly exploitative of the power relations implicit in ethnography, as discussed above. Although this may cause vexing problems for researchers, especially where respondents are subject to widespread social criticism—for example the ethnography of the Ku Klux Klan or other fascist organisations—the ethnographic method is based on human trust and professionalism calls for the respect of that trust.

For marginalised groups it is also important that conducted research is useful. Elevated academic writing drawn on experiential observation of marginal groups having little potential impact on those involved, is esoteric self-indulgence, patronising everyday life with abstraction. Abstraction based on ethnographic findings should be a means to an end. Emergent categories and ultimate conclusion should proffer insight and understanding rather than being localised to academic debate.

Ethics and this Research Project

I was very pleased that in the course of my research I was given the opportunity by the London Connection to make a contribution to their programme. My research brief related to leavers of care and I was happy the conclusions made and which I presented to the London Connection were well received. My suggestions and recommendations were taken into consideration for future policy and the feedback that I received from the Director and the various workers there was generous.

I was pleased that the research conducted was found to be useful and of benefit to the population with which I have been working. The wider research, comprised of this thesis has even greater appeal and relevance in that it challenges representations of the homeless. Attributing agency to the homeless for example restores self-determination to the homeless and challenges stereotypes that may still be widespread even amongst policy makers still clinging to outdated understandings of homelessness.

The notion of agency promoted in this work provides a record of homelessness which demonstrates the capabilities of the homeless, rescuing them from the stigmatisation of fecklessness that they find so degrading. Yet at the same time it makes no excuses for the structural changes that have so impinged on the lives of such young people effectively conspiring against their future.

As noted in the opening paragraph of this chapter, the process of ethnography begins blindly. Only through my familiarisation with the circumstances and individuals in the homeless world was it possible for me to come to any conclusions about the focus of my research. Only once the interviewing process had begun was I able to start drawing conclusions that would serve to further direct my research. The importance of resources and indeed the importance of livelihood to the homeless became clear only with time. The dimensions of the resource system became clear only after identifying some of its own elements. The identification of commodities and skills begged the question 'from where are these commodities acquired?' leading to the next discerned dimension, *sources*. Once settled on these categories, arrived at through the codification of process, it was necessary to set out to test these categories by finding further examples and types.

The resource system and its emergence as a tool for understanding homeless life has been discussed in Chapter 4. The resource regime itself is summarised in table 4.1.

In proceeding in this way it was possible to allow the data and experience of the homeless to set its own agenda by developing theory using grounded research methods.

Preceding each interview¹ it was made it quite clear what the research involved, and what would happen with the information that I generated. As the interviews were often conducted after a series of informal conversations at the lunch table or elsewhere in the centre and after an individual had become accustomed to my being in the London Connection, the respondents were often quite happy to speak with me candidly. It was clear that my frequent presence in the place had given me a degree of legitimacy, whilst I had at the same time managed to satisfactorily distance myself from the staff. It was made clear to the young people that even though I was conducting my research at the London Connection, that I was working independently, in that I was neither bound to specific conclusions nor to a responsibility to furnish the London Connection with my sources, tapes or transcripts.

Whilst some asked a few questions all agreed to these conditions before the interview began. Corresponding to the stated use of the interviews, quotations are made in a way that individuals cannot be recognised, and names have been changed in order to ensure confidentiality.

In order to investigate homelessness, this research project has had to make the private, public. In so doing every possible means has been taken to protect the identities of the homeless, to guard their interests and to ensure that their representation is an accurate one, indeed one that the homeless share. By a careful reading of the interviews and by recourse to other records, it has been possible to triangulate conclusions, and to verify amongst the replies of the respondents, the validity of my conclusions. Quotations from the transcripts are made in such a way that no individual could be reasonably identified from the data presented. Whilst a table of general attributes is presented in

¹See Appendix 2. *Question Sets*.

Appendix 1, the quotations made are sufficiently disaggregated with changed names, to ensure confidentiality.

Of course one of the dangers with such a disaggregation is that the wholeness of an individual's experience is lost, but this is a loss borne of the need to ensure privacy and indeed to protect from scrutiny the intimate knowledge of an individual life. However, much of what is learnt in participant observation is not written, and the lives and predilections of those with whom I have worked have undoubtedly been important in my own formulation of theory, and have acted as an important means of triangulation. Although not everything can be recorded or related in this thesis, the experience of spending time with the homeless has afforded, in itself, a wealth of experiential information, drawn upon rather than cited or read.

Whilst this work remains sympathetic to the homeless, it challenges assumptions and stereotypes that are commonly held. This work addresses the paucity of information that has led to the creation of these stereotypes, in that it provides a well-founded investigation based on close association with the group studied over a protracted period of time.

The Conduct of Homeless Research

The power relations implicit in social research, and the frequent intolerance of the homeless to the establishment, make for a potentially difficult reconciliation. For my own part I found that being an Australian gave me a distinct advantage as my social status was not easily classifiable. Being from a country with links (albeit dwindling) with Britain, gave me a sense of legitimacy that I may not have had, had I been for example a North American. Indeed my very otherness in British society afforded me a certain closeness to those who also suffered from otherness even within their own country. Being an Australian provided a certain playful social facilitation, they often making some amusing scoff about *Neighbours*¹ or some such, and I retorting with a comment on the cricket or the delights of the British weather.

¹*Neighbours*, is an Australian television soap opera regularly screened on television in Britain. It has a wide audience throughout the country.

The majority of the homeless being white and male gave me other advantages. At times it was evident that I was being involved in a certain 'boy's talk' from which I would most likely have been excluded had I been female.

Stu and Stan talked about who on the staff they would like to sleep with. Stu said to Diane (of course out of earshot), 'Come and sit on my,' Stu said, 'bulge,' and Stan said, 'face.' They then talked about Diane who is gay, and how they fancied her. Stan said, 'She has a soft bum.'¹

Similarly however, in my interviews and conversations with women in the centre one can only assume that such, 'girl's talk' was excluded to me even at those times when I was sitting with women in the café.

Spending large amounts of time in the café gave me not only access to conversations and a chance to get to know regular users, but also provided me with an opportunity to observe the operation and use of the building and facilities. Informal conversation also allowed me to gauge the degree to which the place and the staff were respected.

Although I ensured that I spent time at the London Connection at all times of the day and on different days of the week, to observe differences, my day in the London Connection would normally involve occasional participation in activities such as snooker, television watching, or art, spending some time sitting and talking in the café or having lunch, and conducting interviews. Interviews were conducted on occasional days as respondents became available, consequently the interviews were conducted over an extended period of time.

Respondents were asked whether they minded if I used a tape recorder. Although none objected, on a couple of occasions individuals did ask me to switch it off when speaking of matters of particular intimacy or on matters relating to illegal activities. Using an unobtrusive tape recorder allowed most respondents to speak as if it were not there. Regrettably, however, in some of the interviews due to poor sound recording and unanticipated background noise, not all words could be discerned and this produced some

¹Research Journal, 7 February 1992. Diane (name changed) is a staff member of the London Connection.

gaps in the transcripts. In this case words were omitted and marked in the text either by myself or the typist. In some cases where respondents spoke quietly, larger parts of the interviews have not been transcribed again due to poor sound quality. Whilst this caused a few unfortunate gaps in some of the interviews, the number of interviews, and the amount of the recordings compromised in this way was relatively small.

Where there are omissions due to poor sound quality quotations have been marked [garbled]. This may be due either to quiet speaking, obtrusive background noise, or general poor recording.

Respondents

Those formally interviewed were exclusively contacted at the London Connection. The London Connection is one of two widely used centres for homeless youth in central London. Whilst there are some on West End streets who do not make use of the facility, these are relatively few. Some of those interviewed and met at the London Connection were also met and talked to in other centres, on the streets and in other locations in the city.

Whilst this study is not based on representativeness, as discussed in Chapter 4, the people who were interviewed came from this group which is made up of a wide cross section of homeless young people.

Furthermore, although not intending to build a representative sample, the interviewed population covered a range of men and women of diverse ethnicity and sexuality, in rough proportion to their representativeness on the streets. Although as discussed earlier, the principal concern of this thesis has been on resources, and social processes, it was regarded necessary to become familiar with individuals with different difficulties, and correspondingly for their responses to be considered in my research.

Limitations and Conclusions

Every mode of research has limitations and ethnography is no exception. This chapter has served not only to discuss the procedures of this ethnography, but also to

anticipate some of its own potential pitfalls. Knowing and being aware of the pitfalls of research are important milestones in addressing such shortcomings. In order to create an appropriately sensitive ethnography, sympathetic to its subjects, this approach has utilised similarly appropriate practices of social research. In this way it has been possible to produce a work that not only protects those who have participated, but also provides support for their own challenge to the stigmatising stereotypes afforded them by larger social forces.

CHAPTER 6

THE NATURE OF COMMODITIES IN HOMELESS CRITICAL LIVELIHOOD

In order to understand homeless critical livelihood it is first necessary to investigate the nature of the cultural and material commodities of which it is partially comprised. This chapter investigates these commodities as they are used by London's homeless youth. Identity is perhaps one of the most important sought commodities for the homeless, however, as a commodity it is also closely related to a wide range of circumstances, behaviours and indeed almost every other facet of the resource regime. Being so important it is discussed first in some detail. It is followed by the investigation of the remaining four commodities namely, drugs/substances, money, living/sleeping space and sustenance.

The relations between commodities, skills and sources are mutually dependent. To write on one requires, at least in part a knowledge of the other. Thus in this chapter and the next two dealing with skills and sources, in some instances similar ground will need to be covered.

The Nature of Commodities

Commodities used by the homeless have been described in Chapter 4 as being either *material* or *cultural* and as being capable of exchange. Additionally, the homeless having little access to commercial commodities, creatively commodify the uncommercial by valorising the discards of the city. Unsurprisingly then, there are significant differences between conventional commercial commodities and the commodities used by London's homeless youth.

Sivanandan¹ criticises vehemently the notions proposed by Stuart Hall² in his "trivial" accounts of "social signs" in "poor societies." Hall's account refers to "cultural

¹ Sivanandan, A., "All that Melts into Air is Solid: the Hokum of New Times," *Race and Class*, Vol. 31, No. 3, 1989, p. 21.

² Hall, S., "Brave New World," *Marxism Today*, Special issue, October, 1988.

commodities,” a notion that Sivanandan sees as being deeply inappropriate for those who through inequality are incapable of consumption. He notes:

But what ‘social signs’ do ‘today’s goods’ have for the poor in ‘poor societies’ except that they have not got them, the goods ... Who are these people who, in our own societies, ‘with however little money play the game of using things to signify who they are’ unless it is those who use cardboard boxes under Waterloo Bridge to signify that they are homeless?¹

Barred from consumption, the homeless are according to Sivanandan barred from expression, and thus from his point of view Hall’s suggestion of a critical, political expression from the disenfranchised is nonsense. What Sivanandan fails to recognise however, is that critical consumption, the use of cultural commodities by the homeless, is not a text of commercial consumption (a consumption within the bounds of the social order) but rather a consumption built largely of different material.

The way that London’s young homeless use the city is in accordance not with the logic of the city, but in accordance to an antilogic. Instead of the homeless being struck silent by their disenfranchisement from a vocabulary of commodities, the homeless construct their own language of critique, one that not only confounds the establishment order but also inverts it. To suggest that the homeless and other disenfranchised groups within the social order are silenced, may well serve Sivanandan’s interest in criticising the errors of the New Times, but it does only disservice to those whose lives whilst marginal are critical and purposive. That the homeless may or may not live in a cardboard box—in addition to its denotative meaning—is part of a syntagm of meaning deeply critical of the social order. Although the condition of the homeless may be partially determined by structural constraints, the homeless retain and indeed expand their locus of control by annexing power in a range of ways.

The nature of cultural commodities is an important issue for homeless self-respect. To rob them even of the meanings of their own making because they fail to communicate on a level sanctioned by society, is to serve them with even greater injustice. Instead, it is important to recognise the special character of the cultural

¹ Sivanandan, “All that Melts into Air is Solid,” *op. cit.*, p. 21.

commodities used by the homeless and to give them proper weight in understanding the nature of their lives.

Every person constructs a life from the commodities they command. With the commodification of cultural expression has come the commercial availability of a wide range of cultural icons affording expression to the consumer. However, the homeless, having limited access to commercial commodities turn to not the commercial city, but to the interstitial city, as a source for material and cultural commodities. The homeless city is different from the city of other urban residents, for in it resides the manifestation of social constraints, constraints which have particular obstructive power for the homeless and marginal members of the city.

This chapter deals with the mettle of these commodities and looks at their constitution and meaning in the context of life amongst the young homeless in inner city London. Furthermore, because the homeless city is idiosyncratic and alien to the non-homeless, participant observation is the preferred method for grappling with the parameters of homeless commodities.

Whilst there are many similarities between the needs of the homeless and the needs of others in the city, such as the need for accommodation, food, warmth and identity, the very commodities used to meet these needs vary widely from more conventional practice.

Identity as Commodity

Identity is a principal requirement for psychological well-being. In contemporary society the promulgation of images and lifestyle options, as a part of the productive system, encourage commodified consumption. Commodities become our relationship with the corporeal, and it is from this corporeal experience that individuals draw identity. Although not all identity is drawn from pre-packaged lifestyle 'kits,' as commercial identity options increase so does social dependence on commodified consumption.¹ For want of building our corporeal lives with refuse or natural sources

¹Hebdige, *Subculture, op. cit.*, p. 85. Hebdige discusses the increasing commodification of subcultural expression.

there is little alternative in contemporary capitalist society to a commodified cultural identity. Individuals construct for themselves from an innumerable range of combinations a syntagm of meaning from which to draw identity. Such cultural identity-commodities may not be merely corporeal but may also include experiences (holidays and travel) and information/politics (such as books and rallies).

As the homeless have little access to commercial commodities, extraordinary measures must be taken by the homeless to source commodities for the purpose of building identity. The homeless turn to alternative sources of identity—sources not otherwise socially regarded as identity commodities—creating commodities in the city's forgotten spaces and from its refuse. By redefining and reappropriating, the homeless claim for themselves from the city a range of available options. The homeless play in the meanings of urban things, daringly and provocatively recombining and associating them to create new meanings in defiance of the establishment. This is not a sentimental act, but an act of survival and an expression of opposition and defiance. In this sense identity is an important feature of homeless critical livelihood. The construction of an identity for the homeless is an act of necessity for psychological well-being and a necessary part of *livelihood*, but at the same time it embodies defiance and opposition and is a *critical* response to circumstance.

Whilst young homeless people turn to alternative sources for identity, they are subject to certain constraints based on their inaccessibility to commercial consumption. Although their susceptibility to commercial consumption is not wholly alienated (many still aspire to ownership of commercially commodified consumer items), their access to such items is governed by their exploitation of beneficence or theft.

Although the homeless may be largely incapable of choosing commercial commodities as an identity option, they often adopt less income-based expressions (such as vegetarianism). Commodities for the homeless need to be *available* in order that they may be *readily utilised*. Indeed homeless livelihood must be made from local and available resources, for these are all that are available to them.

Whilst particular homeless conditions, circumstances or behaviour may at times seem to serve no effectual purpose, their value may lie in their contribution to a sense of identity, a sense of continuity and comfort in a transient and uncertain experience. Such identity-carriers may be dimensions of the resource regime lying outside of the sphere of commodities themselves. Once a skill, source or circumstance becomes principally an identity-carrier, it acquires value as a cultural commodity in addition to its original pragmatic value. The *skill* of sagacity for example, employed for want of other alternatives, and often with a sense of desperation, may become in itself an attribute of identity, as ingenuity is drawn into an individual's identity.¹

The Identity Structure of London's Homeless Youth

Critical livelihood is both a pragmatic reaction to structural constraints affording viable sustenance, and a subcultural response affording collective identity. Michael Brake² suggests " ... subcultures arise as attempts to resolve collectively experienced problems resulting from contradictions in the social structure, and that they generate a collective identity from which an individual identity can be achieved outside that ascribed^{by} class, education and occupation." For Hebdige,³ "each subcultural 'instance' represents a 'solution' to a specific set of circumstances, to particular problems and contradictions."

For Hebdige,⁴ whose views on subcultural expression were briefly reviewed in Chapter 2, the character of a subculture can be expressed in terms of "style." Although it may seem patronising⁵ to apply the notion of style, to a marginalised and subjugated urban social group, the applicability of this term refers to the unifying subcultural traits of homelessness which provide collective identity. For de Certeau,⁶ style is bound up with use, to produce a "style of use, a way of being and a way of operating." It is in this

¹ Harvey, D., "Class Relations, Social Justice and the Politics of Difference," in Keith, M. and Pile, S., eds., *Place and the Politics of Identity*, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 64.

² Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture*, *op. cit.*, p. ix.

³ Hebdige, *Subculture*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Sivanandan, "All that Melts into Air is Solid," *op. cit.*, p. 19-24.

⁶ De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

sense that one can speak of the style of homeless young people in London, a style on which the homeless depend for identity.

However, as briefly mentioned in Chapter 2, there is a danger in characterising the experience of homelessness too closely in terms of conventional subculture. Firstly, in contrast to many other subcultures, homelessness is rarely if ever a deliberately opted-for life choice, although those who become homeless sometimes express a desire to remain on the streets, uninterested in changing their current life style. Such circumstances are implicitly related to the notion of deskilling, and the adoption of a set of values implicit in critical livelihood. Such characteristics relate to a reckless carelessness that the homeless adopt as a means for isolating themselves from the difficulties of social constraint. Secondly, where many other youth subcultures exhibit competitiveness, or the expression of machismo, homeless subculture is essentially free of such things. Thirdly, homeless subculture is not commodified in the same way that other youth subcultures may be. In this way subcultural nomenclature which assumes a degree of commercial commodification,¹ is somewhat less important for London's young homeless who are largely incapable of such consumption.

Largely unable to change the bounds of structural constraints the homeless become accustomed to them and reappropriate the nature of their social alienation. In so doing they build for themselves a positive image, and construct a livelihood that allows them to save face and feel at least to some degree comfortable with who they are and with the nature of their condition.

As a part of this embracing of their situation the homeless rely on structures of identity that are pasted onto the experiences, values and attitudes that they share. These become central defining forces in their lives affording them identity.

Although Brake's² subcultural nomenclature works best with subculture which is to some degree mediated by commercial commodities, it provides a useful division of

¹Brake's work introduced in Chapter 2, utilises notions of image, demeanour and argot to categorise modes of style. Essentially, however, these categories refer to the commodified images of more commonplace and commodified subcultures. Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture*, *op. cit.*, p. 12; Hebdige, *Subculture*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

²Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture*, p. 12.

subcultural practice. He suggests that subcultural style is expressed through three elements: image, demeanour, and argot. Image refers to an individual's appearance, including accessories. Demeanour relates to an individual's expression, gait and posture, and argot relates to a specific vocabulary and the way that it is used.¹

Youth homelessness because of its effective disassociation with commercial consumption and corresponding expression, does not lend itself well to this means of dimensionalising. However, this approach does highlight some of the characteristics of homeless style that are important for homeless identity. These are discussed here under the headings, *dress and cleanliness, mythology and shared experience, mateship, and attitude.*

Dress and Cleanliness

Dress is an important part of the expressive regime of subcultures. Surfies,² Ragamuffins,³ Punks,⁴ Skinheads⁵ and other youth movements and subcultures all have dress codes. However, being somewhat distanced from commercial consumption the homeless are also somewhat distanced from expression of this sort. The homeless will buy clothes from time to time, but generally clothes are those 'owned in the first place,' or obtained from beneficence or 'borrowing'/theft. The stylistic importance of clothing for the homeless is lessened, because they are generally unable to purchase those items which for other subcultures are important for self-definition.

Whilst the homeless may have little spending power, there are times when it is possible for individuals to purchase or acquire clothing which they consider to be suitable. The homeless may acquire by legitimate or illegitimate means, clothing that they may like to wear, but to suggest that clothing is an important defining feature for the homeless is misleading. In some cases the very fact that clothing has been acquired by unconventional means, rather than purchased, provides them with a sense of satisfaction

¹*Ibid.*

²Pearson, K., *Surfing Subcultures of Australia and New Zealand*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1979.

³Owusu, K., "Ragamuffin," *Marxism Today*, September, 1989, p. 43.

⁴Hebdige, *Subculture*, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 54-59.

that they have once again managed to find means of sustenance that are viable yet anti-establishment.

For the graffiti writer,¹ in a world where youngsters try to 'out cool' one another, clothing is all important. The homeless, however, have little if any particular interest in conveying a competitive style. Darren suggested that to "look decent" was important, even though it was not important to be wearing a particular style of clothing.

• Well, I had some clothes, like clothes ... I saved up my money and ... What you see is the clothes I've got on. But like I wash them every two days, so at least I can walk down the street looking decent.²

Making comments on getting free clothes from charities, Jamie suggested that for him the only important thing about clothes was that they should be comfortable.

• ... you don't know if they're going to be clean, and that. Not that I'm into designer clothes and all that, I'm just comfortable in what I wear.³

For the homeless, clothing is not used by the homeless *en masse* as a defining symbolic gesture, although there are some attributes of demeanour that are important. Where Crusties⁴ celebrate their dirtiness as social critique, and as an identity feature, London's young homeless often look to being clean as a means to differentiate themselves from tramps and to consolidate their identity. The majority of the young homeless express with some satisfaction that, "though they may be homeless, they are perfectly clean." Though they may get grubby during the course of the day, they regularly wash, keeping themselves clean. If the homeless are happy to define themselves as "the homeless," they also want to separate themselves from the stereotyped image of the tramp.

Many expressed their regularity with washing.

¹Lee, *Meaning, Signs and Significance*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

²Interview 20

³Interview 10

⁴Crusties are a subcultural group who, amongst other things espouse a disregard for cleanliness, a defiant statement against the celebrated norms of cleanliness and tidiness.

•I wash every day, at least twice a day. I have a bath every other night.

•And your clothes?

•I wash my clothes every couple days.¹

•I wash my clothes every night at the moment, in Centrepont. Or usually, I do my washing here, or I go to the laundrette.²

•And did you shower regularly?

•Yeah, I shower most mornings, depending on how I feel. This morning I didn't, because I was in a right foul mood.³

•What about staying clean? Do you manage to wash?

•Yeah, I manage to wash all right, I mightn't wash a couple of days, but as soon as I get in here well ... I'll wash. ⁴

• ... Every day without fail.⁵

•Yeah, I have a bath every day.

•And your clothes?

•Yeah, they're clean also. Clean clothes on every day.⁶

•What opportunities do you get to wash?

•Shower in here. Wash me clothes every day, most days, but basically on a Friday.⁷

Most of those interviewed explained unequivocally that they and their clothes were clean.

•What sorts of things are important to you when you are on the streets?

•Um, staying like clean and that you know, and having your friends around you I think. ⁸

¹Interview 32

²Interview 23

³Interview 2 Sally was actually not homeless at the time of interview, but has had a long history of homelessness. At the time of the interview she still spent time on the streets regularly even though she had been given a flat in an outer London suburb.

⁴Interview 36

⁵Interview 7

⁶Interview 36

⁷Interview 10

⁸Interview 7

- Oh yeah, because it's like a mad rush to get in here to get your clothes washed.
- What time is that?
- About ten to eight, people waiting outside for people to get in here and get downstairs to be first for the wash. ¹

- ... I just want to keep myself washed and clean when I'm on the streets. I come in here every morning for a wash and that and like weekends when it's not open I find somewhere to wash, in McDonald's toilets or whatever, so long as I keep clean and eating. ²

In some of the respondents' words and indeed in most of the respondents' replies it was clear that to be clean was an important defining feature and an important identifying feature of their selfhood.

- ... Just 'cause I'm on the street doesn't mean I can't keep clean. ³
- I don't care what I look like, so long as I'm warm and I know I'm clean. ⁴
- I've been told that I'm too clean to be a beggar, but just because you're on the streets, you don't have to let yourself down, let yourself go. There's no need for that. ⁵
- ... there's no excuse of leaving yourself ... you come here and have showers, go to Waterloo have showers, there's loads of places. ⁶
- ... You get opportunities like there's a McDonald's ... At the end of the day I don't give a fuck who's in McDonald's watching me in the toilet washing. I don't care, because I thought I'd rather be watched by someone washing myself than be dirty, [and] feel sweaty and that. ⁷
-
- ... I don't want to go around as the classic homeless person, you know, with like smelly armpits and greasy hair. No, never. In a way I wish I do, sometimes, because it's a lot

¹ Interview 10

² Interview 11

³ Interview 23

⁴ Interview 9

⁵ Interview 36

⁶ Interview 13

⁷ Interview 11

harder when you're begging, you see. Because you can't go begging like me, with gel on my hair, clean clothes. It's hard.¹

Joe's statement implies a solid identification with a group other than tramps or those on the streets who don't care about their cleanliness. In explaining who he was not, he was also expressing identity with other young people who shared this attitude. In addition, these statements reveal the currency of a stereotype of the 'dosser,' as one from whom the young homeless wish to disassociate.

For London's young homeless, being clean is an important identity feature. Aside from the general grime accumulated in the course of a day, the young homeless go to great lengths to wash regularly. Although cleanliness is not universally endorsed by the young homeless, for the majority, keeping clean is an important part of maintaining self-esteem and as such forms a basic part of selfhood and identity.

Mythology and Shared Experience

As Brake² suggests, subculture develops as a response to *collectively experienced problems*, and therefore, it is not surprising that these problems themselves become part of a shared mythology. The homeless having few resources band together and share what they have in common. Whilst the homeless may often share a similar background of neglect and or abuse, it is the collectively experienced hardship characterising street life that becomes mythologised and drawn upon for a sense of selfhood. Berger and Luckmann³ suggest that conversation is perhaps the most important activity for reality maintenance, as it celebrates and reproduces the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life. Correspondingly, the daily experience of homelessness, talked about and lived consolidates their coherent identity.

In the same way that style cements elective and commercial subculture, attitude is an important common element of homelessness which is reproduced through conversation, and experience. Whilst each homeless young person contributes to this

¹Interview 28 The suggestion that he can't go begging relates to the fact that it becomes difficult to beg if one looks too neat and tidy, for clean and tidy beggars attract less charity.

²Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture*, op. cit., p. ix.

³Berger, P. and Luckmann, T., *The Social Construction of Reality*, Pelican, London, 1984. First published in 1966, p. 172.

attitude they are also bound by it, through social consensus of their peers. Attitude is expressed in language and behaviour, and through the choice of events and circumstances which are chosen to be worthy of reporting: such as instances of police brutality; the behaviour of social workers; the actions and activities of detached workers, and of those who patrol the streets to talk to and counsel the homeless.

Alex relates one story of the police:

- ... My friend Chris, he's black, he's on the street. We're walking up to get into the [garbled] shop. Chris gets to the front of the queue and this policeman comes up in front of him. 'Let me in!' 'Excuse me man, there's a queue, why don't you wait?' 'Fuck off!' and he starts trying to push him out of the way, and all that time he's going, 'No, get off!' In the end, two policemen took Chris off, put him in the back of a police van, and the van was shaking and shaking, and Chris must have got a really bad beating in the back.
- Have you seen him since?
- No. That shows what the attitude the police have got for the homeless people.¹

The characters in the lives of the homeless are important in the everyday lives of the homeless. These actors play a role in homeless identity, because they contribute to the urban context of homelessness. The pervasive relations between the police and the homeless for example, help to solidify the homeless' perspective on the city.

Although such a world view will not be espoused by all of the homeless, just as not all members of a party will toe the party line, there is sufficient commonality to talk of a homeless *attitude* that includes the values and perspective of those on the streets.

Mateship

In addition to the togetherness of the homeless as demonstrated by their usage and collectivisation as 'the family,' the homeless also recognise a common mateship or loyalty to one another. Although the homeless are sometimes sceptical of such loyalties they are often keen to discuss its merits and expectation. Many anticipate solidarity in common misery, and expect—perhaps more often than they either give or receive—others to respect that commonality.

¹Interview 32

•Never steal off your own kind. Never ditch on anybody, that means never take any of them to the law ...¹

•You don't shit on your own.²

• ... The reason we call it the family is because it we all help each other out yeah, we look after our own kind yeah, if there's any trouble comes onto one of us everyone comes in and helps out like, it's the way it is.³

In addition to the utility of such a commonality, it acts as a centre for identity. Whilst considering themselves upholders of this 'common law,' most are sceptical of ever depending on it. The individual learns to publicly expound this sense of mateship, whilst never practically expecting it to be upheld by others.

Attitude

The homeless draw upon their collective experiences as a means of selfhood. This attitude expresses the experience of the critical livelihood in which the homeless participate. Thus the elements of this livelihood as outlined in Chapter 2 loom large in terms of the meanings that the urban experience has for them. Skills of endurance, sagacity and trickery characterise the necessary skills of homelessness, and also become defining characteristics for the homeless. That the homeless may be tricksters for example becomes an attribute of their lives. Their satisfaction at being able to subvert the system by getting free meals or free trips on the London Underground become important events almost as *rites de passage* for those on the streets. Their knowledge of the city and the means by which it may be exploited become defining characteristics of their identity.

The pragmatic use of homeless skills and sources, discussed in Chapters 7 and 8 are additionally used as identity-carriers. Livelihood becomes lifestyle, as the homeless draw on their very activities of commodity acquisition for meaning and identity. The discussion of identity here therefore touches on some of the issues raised in Chapters 7 and 8 where the pragmatics of action and space are discussed in much greater detail.

¹Interview 15

²Interview 25

³Interview 6

In the context of their circumstances, the homeless express a deep dissatisfaction with the established order and enjoy their attempts to disempower its grasp on them.

- ... The four dots stands for ACAB which is 'All Coppers Are Bastards,' and the police find it offending, but I find it amusing.¹

The attitude of the homeless is one of detachment and denial of the establishment. Its expression indicates an insouciance towards those things that *should* be important. Disempowered from conventional modes of expression, they appear nonchalant and uninterested when in fact their own apparent carelessness represents a deliberate denial of establishment expectations. This carelessness however, is implied only by their free transgression of the bounds of establishment conduct. Their subversion of the city demonstrates an oppositional culture whose necessitous survival—on their own terms—confirms their devotion to a cause and whose playful disrespect for established convention illustrates the energy of their convictions.

- I ain't got a care in the world. Well, I have got a care, but, sometimes, I don't care, do you know what I mean. And I'd describe myself as a person that can look after myself in the street.²

The attitude espoused by the homeless in its oppositional stance is also strongly defiant and cathartic.

- ... Easy, go and buy a paper. Go and buy a paper and a cup of coffee and sit there and read it. Chat the girls up, chat the blokes up. Get all sorts in McDonald's. Skin up in front of them. Don't care.³

and later:

- ... I'm getting really good at going into restaurants as well.
- What do you mean?
- Not needing to pay for a meal.
- How do you do that?

¹ Four dots are often tattooed on the hands of boys when they are in borstal or in jail. This is done by fellow inmates as a record of their experience. It signifies, "All coppers are bastards." Interview 28.

² Interview 19

³ Interview 25

- Easy, you go in and complain. Go in, order a meal, and complain. Brilliant, because you can twist them in circles when you're a chef yourself.¹

In addition to the cathartic value of hoodwinking the system, the experience of playing the city is a matter of survival. Whilst this survival may demonstrate *endurance*, survival itself becomes an important defining characteristic of the experience of homelessness. To survive is not only a means of living, it is a means of defying the system that professes that they cannot live under such circumstances. The homeless do not see this as an easy or preferable road, but their ability to withstand the 'knocks of life' gives them substance for selfhood.

- ... I've got pride in a way.
- [What] do you mean by that?
- ... That I can survive well.²

For Mike, survival is an important part of his character. The fact that he is a 'survivor' is meaningful for him as indeed it is to others who consider themselves in this way.

- I thought it's a doddle right, but, it's really survival of the fittest. You either do survive or you don't survive. What I mean by that is if you don't survive you get on drugs and alcohol, and become an alcoholic, that means you're not a survivor, a survivor is a person that keeps a clear mind; he might be on the streets for a few months or a few years, but he never turns to alcohol, he gets a place ...

- Is that how you see yourself?

- A survivor, I do.

- There was a time when I thought oh, fuck it, and I tried the drugs ...³

- Me I'm a survivor, I mean ar, I'll only ask people to help me out if I need someone to help me out otherwise I don't.⁴

- ... basically it's like, you're out in the big world now, you've got to learn how to survive ...⁵

¹Interview 25

²Interview 31

³Interview 3

⁴Interview 6

⁵Interview 10

- ... London is probably one of the worst places. Not a lot of people survive here.¹

- Do you find begging humiliating?

- ... you've got to survive some way.²

Collective Identity

In addition to and in association with these modes of cathartic expression, homelessness is also characterised by a range of particular circumstances which afford identity. Very often these circumstances are characterised by a perceived division between the homeless themselves and the establishment, the Other, from their perspective. Being widely disenfranchised and alienated, the homeless strengthen their self-worth by appealing to a collectivity.

The 'Family'

From the transcripts and experience with the homeless it became clear that the homeless share a feeling of solidarity.

- There's the public's point of view and there's the homeless point of view, there are those two sides.³

Camaraderie borne out of shared experience joins the homeless to each other and serves as a basis for identity. Although some of the homeless reject the collective notion of the 'family,' a term commonly used as term of solidarity by young people on the streets, it is a commonly used metaphor, especially referring to those spending most of their time in the vicinity of the Strand.

- It's just like a big family. Everyone talks to everyone else, and like and if you've got something, you give it to 'em and if they've got something, they give it to you.⁴

¹Interview 12

²Interview 26

³Interview 11

⁴Interview 1

- We are all like one family.
 - Is it really like that do you think ... ?
 - You're more independent on the streets, but if you need help you will get it.¹
- Yeah. I found the people that were living on the streets, it's not bad, you know because like it's basically just one big happy family.²
- Would you say that on the streets at the moment you feel like you're part of a specific group of friends?
 - We are a community. We're a big family. We try to stick together and help each other as much as we can.³
- Um, do you think people hang around together in groups on the street?
- Yeah. It's not groups, it's families. That's it.
- What a 'family' ... ?
- [London] Connection. It makes everyone that comes to the London Connection, it's one family.⁴
- ... It's really good in London.
 - What makes it so good ... ?
 - Because all, I mean, a lot of homeless people stick together. It's like one big happy family.⁵
- ... There's plenty of times that someone's beaten me up and someone that I don't even know, from the London Connection's gone and beaten them up for me. It's very like a big family. I mean there's always scuffles and arguments, that always happens. But we're very close-knit if you know what I mean. There's always someone to look out for you. That's what I like about the place.⁶
-
- 'Cause when I first came down, I didn't know anybody at all, and now, I know virtually everybody now. It's more at home because it's more like a family then what it was.⁷

¹Interview 3

²Interview 10

³Interview 12

⁴Interview 16

⁵Interview 23

⁶Interview 28

⁷Interview 37

Jimmy described his knowledge of other homeless “communities,” and then made mention of his principal reason for being involved in such a “family.”

•Well it’s not [a] gang, like it’s just the family. The Strand’s got a family, Waterloo’s got a family. Everywhere, like the Bullring, they got a family. Up ur, Lincoln’s Inn Field, they got a family, they got their own family. Everywhere you go ... Trafalgar Square, they got their own family. Everywhere you go they’ve got they’re own little patch, their own little family and if you go there and they don’t like you, they don’t like you, they don’t like your face or whatever, they’ll not accept you at all; and you’ll be on your own. That’s the worst thing you can do in London is be on your own.¹

However London’s homeless youth do not generally consider themselves homogeneous with other older homeless people on the streets. Certainly they sometimes share conversations with them and sometimes consider them friends, but the young homeless as a whole do not want to be considered as being homogeneous with the wider homeless population.

•I think the first rule people should keep about living on the streets, keep themselves clean. Because, like, there’s enough places for people to do it. ... I don’t see the point in being dirty and smelly and looking like a tramp. If you look like a tramp, people think you’re a tramp. ... ²

The use of the family concept amongst users of the London Connection suggests that it is a term in common usage by the homeless. Whilst for Jimmy the principal reason for being in a “family” is to avert loneliness, forging identity in groups such as these affords a sense of belonging and a sense of selfhood through the identification with a particular group.

In the context of young people whose histories normally include circumstances of family disjuncture, it is noteworthy that the chosen metaphor for community is “family.” Interestingly in other subcultures where solidarity is based on machismo or ability in some capacity (surfing, graffiti writing, skateboarding) metaphorical collective nouns are more subversive (gang, crew, band). The homeless whose livelihoods also express elements of defiance and subversion, are happy to celebrate closeness and

¹Interview 6

²Interview 32

friendship as a binding principle as expressed in their choice of words. It is perhaps that the shared experience of the homeless, which is not systematically the case with other subcultures, is their abandonment, and thus in celebrating their solidarity the choice of a familiar and indeed comforting term is preferred. The family which they have left, or which has long since evaporated, appears to be symbolically recreated in another form on the streets in London.¹

It is the sense of devotion and dependability that the homeless find or perceive in the “family” that provides them with a sense of unity, and it is this unity that is central to the creation of identity for London’s young homeless.

Unity Against a Common Foe

One example of the way that the homeless are able to turn situations which constrain them into one which is ennobling is the way that the conditions of their own marginality are turned into strength. The victimisation that the homeless feel from the public, the state and the police translates into a unified feeling of ‘us’ and ‘them,’ one that serves to forge a strong bond between them against a ‘common foe.’

The homeless often feel strongly aggrieved by the reactions of the public who scoff as they pass by.

- They sneer at us as they walk past in the street, they don’t think we’re human, like ... we just want someone to put their hands out and say ‘right,’ but no one will give us a chance.²

- And what do you dislike about living on the streets?

- Getting really dirty and no one talking to you, and they just look at you and think you’re a lump of shit in the corner basically.³

- What about things you dislike about living on the street?

- The cold and the stereotyped opinion that people have of you if you live on the streets, and lack of respect and all that.

- How do the stereotypes affect you?

¹Rowe and Wolch, “Social Networks,” *op. cit.*, p. 191.

²Interview 3

³Interview 31

•Yeah it's just like if you're begging or if you're kind of just sitting down smokin' or you know, they just sort of look at you as if to say, 'look at that piece of dirt.' Like half the time you feel like saying, 'I have much more of an education than you have, I know a lot more about life,' you know. 'How can you walk past me with your nose stuck up in the air?' you know?¹

•What do you dislike about being on the streets?

•Some of the people they go by and they give you funny looks.²

•What is it you dislike about living on the street?

•Um, I dislike the cold, people staring at you, not being able to go anywhere really ...³

•Well, people just looking at you, staring at you, because you're sitting on the street.

Looking at you like you're some sort of freak or side show, and their attitude towards us, you know? In some cases it is by chance for a lot of people. But, I'm not here by chance. I don't want to be here. That's the way they think about it.⁴

Given that many of the homeless opt to keep themselves in view of the public for the purposes of begging, politics or safety, it is surprising that so many express strong disfavour with being scoffed at on the streets. Many of those interviewed expressed that this was one of the worst things with which they had to deal. As is the case with the police, it is not surprising that in the face of disapproval the homeless turn to each other for acceptance, once again in terms of the aforementioned "family" institution.

Similarly, the homeless feel somewhat victimised by the police. Although not all respondents were prepared to discount all police, most had critical comments to make.

•And what about things you dislike about living on the streets?

•Well, there's the police, they give you, you know, hassle.⁵

•And what about the police? How do they treat you when you're on the streets?

•Some of them are all right, I suppose. Some coppers are all right. It's just like the ... ones that are out to make a name for themselves. Like [] he just loves to nick

¹Interview 13

²Interview 15

³Interview 19

⁴Interview 33

⁵Interview 29

beggars. That's all he does is get some beggars. He's an idiot basically. Some of them are all right, some are bastards. Some just want to nick you.¹

The homeless having to deal with the DSS bureaucracy feel aggrieved by the difficulties they encounter. Ian found that due to DSS confusion he had to leave an appointed place of residence.

•And the DSS was like fucking up every two weeks and never having my Giro there, I'd keep phoning and saying 'Is my Giro there?' 'Ur, dunno, if an order's been sent,' and I had no money for two weeks and because you have to pay like ten pounds service charge, I got kicked out, for not paying, because they thought I'd lied,²

Additionally, the homeless learn to be wary of each other. Ian comments:

•Another thing is, when you meet people, be careful with them, be careful what you're saying and that, try and work out what to say and what not to say to them sort of things and just try to make sure that you know where you stand with each person, because that way, you get through life on the streets a lot easier, like if you don't know where you stand with someone, you can end up with a broken neck or whatever.³

Thus, despite the camaraderie of the young homeless, there is also a degree of reserve which needs to be exercised. Although many learn this rule elsewhere, for others it is a lesson learnt on the streets. In addition to a general suspicion for all people met on the streets, the homeless have a certain wariness of each other.

• ... I had a fifty pound drop and I said like, 'You mind all the money like, I know you wont rip me off,' but you get some people who get two pound and they say they got one, and they'll keep on putting money into different pockets, at the end of the night you make about fifty quid and you only got like twenty-seven there or something.⁴

Wariness is a trait logistically important to the homeless, who are so often open to exploitation, especially for those new to London's streets and who are correspondingly vulnerable. Through the common experience of frustration, intolerance and victimisation, the homeless forge a sense of community and camaraderie that affords identity.

¹Interview 23

²Interview 11

³Interview 11

⁴Interview 9

Identity and Bitterness

Despite the frequent good humour of the homeless—though by no means universal—there is often a deep bitterness. This bitterness is in part avenged by recourse to the subversion of the city as a symbol of the establishment.

•Yeah, my first foster parents were just for a few years, three-four years. I got on with them great, really, really excellently, I mean there were no problems at all. And then, one day they said, they were taking me to a new family, and that was it. There was nothing I could do. That's when I started to become Skipper. Just seeing their smiling faces, waving, you know, that was really bad.

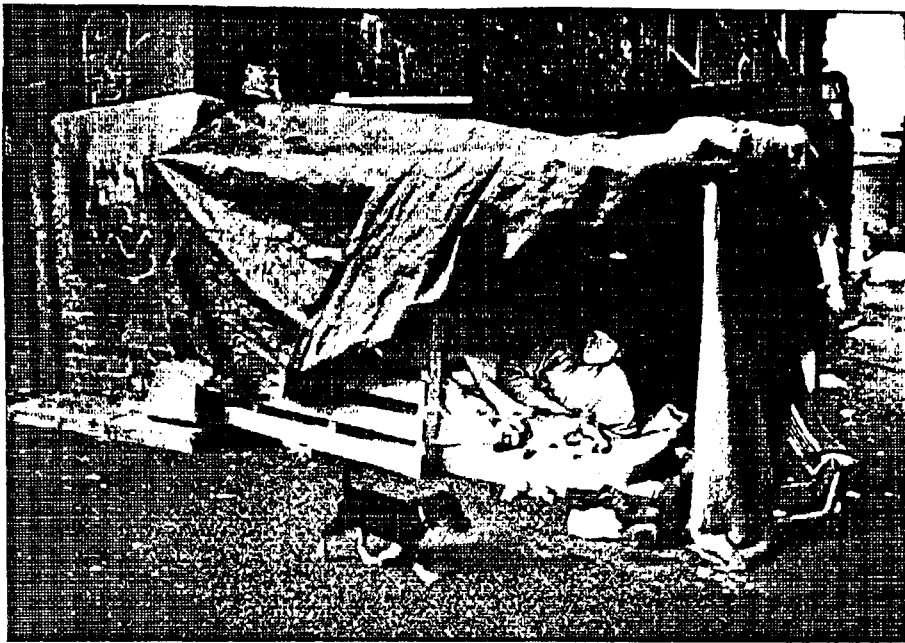
•What do you mean that's when you became Skipper?

•I'm always giving Skipper since like I was a [nipper?], you know, and Skipper was like very vicious. I really was like pretty mental, and that was all brought on through a kid, you know.¹

Many of the homeless feel, not without, reason, uncared for. Many have been let down by everyone, by their families, Local Authority care, the government; even the police² whose advertising promises them protection are perceived as having abandoned them (see figure 6.1).

¹Interview 16

²See Chapter 8, §*The Police*.



MATTHEW'S 21 and has been living in a 'bush' for six months. His parents don't know where he is. His girlfriend, Nicky, is younger and three months pregnant.

The 'bush' is built from planks and crates, covered with old rugs and plastic sheeting and raised off the ground on wooden pallets so air can circulate underneath.

The nearest running water is in a nearby church hall, where Matthew and Nicky can go to shower. There's no electricity. At night, the 'bush' is lit by

in, parade nearby outside the door.

They don't go hungry. A mobile hot chicken brings soup and rolls every night. Students from King's College, across the river, regularly bring food.

Every second Sunday, an Indian family drives to 'Cardboard City' and distributes plates of curry and rice to the bush dwellers.

On the face of it, a brave face. Matthew and Nicky wouldn't give up this life for anything. "There's complete freedom," Matthew says. "No one to tell you what to do, how to live your life."

The men he so obliquely praises are Paul and Charlie, both officers at nearby Kennington Rd. Police Station.

"Paul's caught me language once, he gave me a warning," Matthew says. "But if he catches me again he'll do me."

Paul puts the other point of view: "Beggings's been an offence since just after the Napoleonic Wars. Some people think the Vagrancy Act is obsolete and should be scrapped. But while it's there, we have to enforce it. And we have to think of the nuisance to other people."

Sometimes a well-dressed business

Man thinks the police should evict the vagrants and clear away the 'bushes'.

But the fact is that we owe a duty to these citizens too. Our real work with the bush dwellers is not the cat and mouse game of trying to catch them with their palms out.

It's work the public never see helping to get someone a hospital bed. Encouraging those who need to visit drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres.

Directing, slowly homeless people to hostels and free lunchers. Putting our heads together with social workers housing officers, welfare and benefits officers, and voluntary organisations.

It's standing hours talking to homeless people finding out about their lives, and their problems. Where they've come from. If their families know where they are. And persuading the young ones to return home.

"We'll try to give them the respect that every Londoner is entitled to," Paul says. "Put like that I know it sounds posh, but when you sit with them and get to know them, there's damn all posh about it."

Partly as a result of his help, Nicky and Matthew have reached the end of their life on the road. They're moving to a flat before their baby is born.

Realising this you may be in local government, a social worker, architect, counsellor, teacher, or anyone with an interest in the plight of the homeless.

If you would like to know more about how we can work together to ease the problems of homelessness, please call **0800 66 22 44**.



THE POLICE HAVE A DUTY TO EVERY HOUSEHOLDER.

flickering lamps, like a medieval hotel.

Matthew and Nicky think it quite romantic.

Bravely they tell you that they have a double mattress and a shower. Inside are little touches like a jar of wild flowers, picked from waste ground. Matthew's shoes, with socks tucked

They don't bother with the dole. Matthew candidly says that it's a waste of time when they can make do by begging in the West End.

It's this that brings them into conflict with us. "Of course, all coppers are bastards," Matthew says, "but some are far bastards." He's curiously smiling

man, passing a bagged meat moved on by police, will press a £5 note into his or her hand, giving the officer a look that says "Why don't you do something really useful?"

However mild coppers are, arriving at Waterloo every morning, and the beggars and their dogs, frightening

Figure 6.1 Advertisement by the Metropolitan Police.¹

It is not surprising that in return many have given up on society altogether and are no longer interested in anything much at all, especially about things considered important by the establishment. They become interested only in self-preservation and their temporal view is on only the day at hand. Some become even uninterested in their

¹ Metropolitan Police, *The Police Have a Duty to Every Householder*, Advertisement, Metropolitan Police, Undated. Provided by Scotland Yard.

own welfare. One young man with whom I spoke related to me how he had attempted suicide.

Nick: ... Has been depressed. Wants to know what happened in his childhood between the ages of 2 and 5. Feels that there is something ominous there and cannot rest until he finds it out. Has found his parents rather cagey. Has taken to drinking large amounts of cider. ... He explained to me that he had tried to cut his wrists and had made cigarette holes in his forearm which he duly showed to me.¹

Whilst the homeless often turn to 'blanking out' experiences and circumstances from their memories as a tactic of survival (see Chapter 7, §*Endurance*), their indifference to the past, in part characterises their general attitude. Their common experience with drugs, both stimulants and hallucinogenics is also an indicator of their desire to numb themselves and to deny difficult memories of the past and indeed their current circumstances.

Attempts to filter out difficult memories are however, only ever partially successful. One interview resulted in one young person saying that in recounting her past she had brought to mind a lot of things that she was trying to forget.

•It's not worth myself thinking on it, all the time, know what I mean, it just doesn't make sense you get nowhere if you do that all day.²

Although many try to forget uncomfortable histories, they nevertheless go through periods when recollection brings further discomfort.

Having reviewed the processes of identity creation, it needs to be remembered that identity rests not only on commodities that are sought specifically as identity-carriers. Instead, the process of identity formation rests heavily on all other dimensions of the resource regime. Consequently, it is only once these other dimensions of the resource regime are considered in the remainder of this chapter and in chapters 7 and 8, that it will be possible to fully review the emergent identity of the homeless and its relationship with social reproduction and urban livelihood.

¹Research Journal, 2 November 1990.

²Interview 11

Substances

Alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs are frequently consumed by many of the homeless, but in some cases usage is far less than may be anticipated.¹ Whilst individuals may be able to beg for cigarettes, alcohol and illegal drugs are more difficult to come by for those without funds. Whilst some of those interviewed and associated with, drank occasionally, few, partially for want of money, were regularly inebriated. Moreover, for many of those interviewed, excessive inebriation was not highly regarded, instead affording stigmatisation on those who were regularly drunk. Rather than inebriation, drug taking emerged as the most common form of intoxication.

Drugs are commercial commodities even if they belong to the informal economy, for they necessarily need to be purchased with cash. Moreover, it is of course impossible for individuals to gain handouts for drug dependency, although a drug habit may often precipitate theft or more coercive forms of begging. Where individuals may be able to collect food from various sources, drugs, unless stolen, must always be purchased. Despite this cash basis, the consumption of soft drugs is commonplace amongst the homeless.

Substances are considered here in more detail under their respective headings. Further information is available in the *Glossary*.

Drugs

Substances are an everyday part of the homeless experience. The homeless make use of substances as a means of offsetting the cold, for ameliorating insomnia, anaesthetising the body, clearing the mind and forgetting. There is a wide variation of drug use amongst the homeless. Drug use is common amongst the homeless with cannabis smoking being virtually universal. Whilst some use hard drugs such as heroin, many others will only smoke cannabis or take drugs such as Serapax, Valium and Mogodon (see *Glossary* for other drug types). Although many have experimented with a wide range of drugs, many staunchly refuse to take anything heavier than cannabis. Some

¹Central London Outreach Team, *Sleeping Out, op. cit.*, p. 78; Randall, *Homeless and Hungry, op. cit.*, p. 21.

elect to try non-addictive drugs, including (LSD), yet are adamant about not taking debilitating or life threatening drugs such as heroin. The ubiquity of drug use amongst the homeless provides them with a sound knowledge of each drug and, regardless of their substance use, they become highly conversant and experienced with drug use and users.

For those who had taken or were taking hard drugs such as “smack” (heroin), it was seen as a release being a “heavy buzz.”

•I’ve had smack, yeah, it’s a heavy buzz. I like to remember what I’ve done. With smack you just, it’s a nice buzz, but you don’t remember what you’ve done afterwards. The next morning you haven’t got a clue.¹

However, for most even if they had taken heroin they were keen not to do so again. Most seemed happy to use less dangerous drugs clearly drawing the line at heroin. Some in fact equated hard drug use with failure, being associated with failing to survive. For many it is seen as the first step on the path to ruin.

•What sorts of drugs did you take then?

•Heroin.

•How often were you taking drugs then?

•I was taking drugs, but I don’t like it, I had to make sure I get a good, normally, I had to make sure that I’d get £500 a day to last me all day, to last me all day and the next morning.

•How were you getting £500?

•Robbing people.²

Initially Lawrence sold drugs for income, however, before long he had experimented with them for himself, and had become addicted to heroin. Once hooked on an addictive drug the maintenance of a habit becomes difficult, inevitably pushing addicts into criminal activity.

Most of those interviewed however, staunchly avoided highly addictive drugs such as heroin, happily preferring to remain on less addictive and debilitating drugs.

¹Interview 23

²Interview 14

•No. I've taken half an acid tablet and had a bad trip and never again. But you know what I mean, I've been offered smack and rocks and the lot, and I've turned it all down, because it doesn't interest me.¹

•I used to be on speed a lot, sulphate, but I finished that now.

•But no heroin or anything like that?

•No, I never touch the haitch [heroin].²

•And drugs, what drugs are you on?

•Hash, E's, trips, things like that. Nothing serious, nothing addictive.³

Geoffrey Randall⁴ in his longitudinal study on a small sample of homeless young people indicated that compared to other aspects of concern for the young homeless, drug use was relatively low on the list (see table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Percentage problems getting or would like help with amongst young homeless people.⁵

	1988 Survey	1989 Survey
Health	12	10
Stress	22	6
Drugs	6	0
Drink	8	6
Gambling	6	16
Work	59	52
Money	84	44
Total (100%)	49	50

Being both tradable and consumable drugs are a useful commodity for the homeless. For most, however, drugs serve pragmatic purpose, facilitating sleeping, relaxation or excitement.

• ... I've had about three spliffs today, no in the past two hours and before I came in for the interview.

•Do you find that it's good, does it help?

•Yeah, it's relaxed me a lot, right.⁶

¹Interview 2

²Interview 7

³Interview 17

⁴Randall, *Homeless and Hungry*, op. cit., p. 20.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Interview 5

•I'm taking spliff ... and pills.

•What sort of pills?

•Just things to keep me awake. Nothing like acid or anything like that or Ecstasy or anything like that.¹

• ... Yeah I do smoke the odd spliff now and again. That, I do that like just to clear my head, like sometimes, like sometimes my head's all jumbled up, and I just have a quiet smoke with some friends, and just relax and sit, and sit with relax'n company and it's sorted. I love it.²

• ... Over the last two years, say I've dropped about ten acid tabs ... like at first they were great because, 'how the hell does this work?' really amazing how you see things, you know, I've seen dummies in windows in like, Birmingham, looking at me like this ... you know. I've seen that happen, you know what I mean. You see things like that and acid messes time up, you know what I mean. A car will be zooming along, or going about two miles an hour, screeching around the corners at two miles an hour. And all that was really interesting at first and now, trips just make me para'.³

•Do you find yourself being lonely a lot?

•That's where drugs come in. In the beginning, yeah, awful lonely ...

•And what about depression?

•Drugs come into that as well.⁴

•And why do you take these drugs. Do they help?

•They help a lot, they help you think straight. A lot people say they muck up your brains.

They don't. I've been on drugs for ten years, and I've got GCSEs ...⁵

• ... I smoke hash ... they say you can't get addicted to that, but I need that to get me to sleep anyway. It passes time and all. I enjoy smoking.⁶

•Yeah, I got very very stoned and went walking around the Science Museum. ... People say the Science Museum is very boring. But I say, 'Well, it isn't. Go in stoned, and you'll know something new.'⁷

¹Interview 5

²Interview 6

³Interview 11

⁴Interview 16

⁵Interview 17

⁶Interview 19

⁷Interview 25

•What I think about is money and getting drugs, and getting stoned. Because it passes the time away. It's not such a downer then.¹

•I smoke a lot of hash, I'm not addicted but you need artificial stimulant.²

Selling drugs can be a lucrative trade either as a regular substantial income or for incidental funds. Sometimes selling drugs is done in earnest and at other times bogus substances are sold. As the first and third following quotations mention the sale of liquorice as hashish (hashish and liquorice resemble each other, the sale of the latter for the former is an old trick), or ordinary tablets as Ecstasy tablets.

•Have you ever been involved with any drug selling or anything like that?

•Yeah.

•What were you selling?

•Hash ... I sold tricks as well.³

•Um, and what have you been convicted for?

•Selling drugs.

• ... How long ago was that?

•When I was 16.

•What were you selling then?

•Speed, acid and puff.⁴

• ... we've sold a bit of liquorice a bit of ... tablets as E's, that sort of thing.⁵

Few of the homeless make an active business out of drug selling although most are aware of the identity of drug dealers in the West End. Whilst individuals may from time to time sell drugs, in most cases individuals buy for their own use or the use of their immediate friends.

¹Interview 36

²Interview 16

³Interview 24

⁴Interview 32

⁵Interview 11

Alcohol and Cigarettes

Like drugs, alcohol and cigarettes are also commodities. Whilst generally not traded, being commercially and freely available, they are nevertheless as common a part of the homeless experience as drugs. The sharing of both alcohol and particularly cigarettes is an expression of friendship and is an attribute of sharing that is very frequently used. Individuals will often share a cigarette saying “twos me up,” as a request for a shared cigarette. Whilst such requests are normally granted, sometimes they will be declined, “I’m already twos with her,” or “this is my first cigarette of the day.” Sharing a cigarette in this way is regarded informally as an hospitable gesture.

For the homeless whose day to day difficulties are already very great, the problems of smoking and moderate alcohol intake are relatively minor. Whilst there may be health risks for regular inebriates, few have the money to be regularly or constantly inebriated. Risks are greater from physical harm whilst under the influence of alcohol or from the combination of various drugs with alcohol.¹

Alcohol however, is commonly used as a means of assisting sleep and for keeping warm.

- ... It [money] went on drink, just to keep me warm. Bottles of scotch.²
- ... I’ll drink because it’ll help me sleep, when I get into the hostel, or the Cold Weather.³
- ... Dope basically, to help me to sleep with the drink, because you can just drink and take dope and you just crash out and it doesn’t matter what the weather’s like, you just crash out, fall asleep.⁴

But for many alcohol was not important. Many of the young homeless do not drink much at all. One young person noted:

¹ Keyes and Kennedy, *Sick to Death, op. cit.*, pp. 20-25.

² Interview 2

³ Interview 28

⁴ Interview 10

•Hardly drink. Drink doesn't interest me. ... And these people who sit and gulp back whisky like that ... it makes me throw up. I've done it enough times. I don't drink now. I smoke hash and that's it.¹

Furthermore, where smoking cannabis seemed to elicit little disapproval, alcohol consumption was regularly associated with undesirable people or undesirable circumstances.

•Yeah, like it's the old homeless are the ones that drink. They're the ones with the drinking problems and it's like, so are some of the younger ones, but it's not as bad, you know, it makes you feel ill yourself.²

•Are there kinds of people on the streets that you try and avoid?

•Yeah there is actually, there's a handful of them, maybe more I don't know, guys who go mad with the drink.³

•What about the old homeless people. Do you get on with them OK?

•Some of them, yeah. Some of them. I'm not too keen on the ones like, alcoholic ones. Things like they say one thing, and they mean something else, or you know, they just mess you about really.⁴

• ... if I was an alcoholic I'd be worse dressed than this. ... I'm not really that good dressed, know what I mean, people just spend like every penny they get on beer.⁵

Amongst those interviewed alcohol abuse was not common. Although most drank from time to time, most commonly respondents said that they rarely drank. Smoking cannabis or taking other drugs was a much more common activity than drinking alcohol. Although sometimes drinking and sometimes to excess, alcoholism, is not pandemic to the homeless. Indeed, the smoking of cannabis is a much more commonplace activity and one that is less stigmatised.

¹Interview 11

²Interview 2

³Interview 8

⁴Interview 26

⁵Interview 9

Urban Space as Commodity

The city is both commodity and source. As a *commodity* (consumable as opposed to tradable) it is used as a place in which to *live* and *sleep* and as space to *appropriate* (the symbolic appropriation of space affords selfhood and identity, see §*Identity* above). As a *source* (see Chapter 8, *Spaces and Opportunity: Sources in the City*) it purveys a range of other commodities such as substances, money, sustenance and identity.

The City as Space to Live and Sleep

There are few spaces set aside for the homeless in the city. Provided spaces, namely night shelters and day centres, have limited resources and such space (especially evening accommodation) is highly rationed. The homeless need to actively seek other urban space for themselves, either by organising space in hostels or by demarking space on the streets. The scarcity of suitable spaces requires the homeless to contest urban space, whether in a hostel or on the pavement.

In the context of hostel accommodation individuals may need to book accommodation, or have a detailed knowledge of entry requirements. Other information relating to opportunity may also be important such as knowing which hostel workers are likely to bend the rules.

On the streets individuals may need to vie for a shop doorway or for acceptance on a given street. They may need to be resistant to provocateurs who may wish for their removal. The city becomes a topography of opportunity and constraint. Space as a sought commodity becomes defined by context and circumstance.

The City as Space to Appropriate

The use of the cityscape is an important part of the experience of critical consumption. Whilst acquiring living space is an act of necessity, the use of this marginal space also acts as social critique. Appropriating unused and interstitial space, a graffiti

on the railing of a building reads, “this is Jane and Rob’s patch.”¹ As one young person says, their place on the streets is to communicate to the inhabitants of the city, “to get the message that we’re here.”² Other than being a place for existence, the living space of the homeless is a zone of constant contestation, a space of impertinence, a space where the homeless audaciously confront the city with their lives.

Sustenance

Sustenance for the homeless includes not only the range of material commodities required for everyday life, but also a range of cultural commodities for emotional survival. In addition to the range of commodities discussed, sustenance therefore includes, a dependence on the hermeneutics of such commodities and experience.

One important way in which the homeless express their critical livelihood is by making use of facilities in ways that they were not intended. Given that the city does not provide facilities for the homeless, individuals need to learn where facilities are available (such as toilet and washing facilities), even though none are dedicated for homeless use. Their needs afford a perspective on the city which utilises the skills of *endurance* and *sagacity*, the knowledge and flexibility to redefine and employ non-dedicated facilities to their own ends.

Food

Part of the character of homelessness is that individuals take their lives, one day at a time, and in so doing food becomes one of the difficulties dealt with when and where it becomes a problem. The acquisition of food is problematic for the homeless largely because they are poor. Food is a commodity of procurement and consumption rather than one with tradable value. Whilst many of the homeless have unsatisfactory diets, in London there is no need for anyone to go hungry. Facilities provided by private charitable organisations permit even the penniless to eat, whether by means of the

¹ Seen on the walls of the London Connection Day and Resource Centre, Adelaide Street, Charing Cross, London.

² Interview 8

cavalcade of vans that serve the homeless, soup kitchens, or other welfare agencies. Food is also available as a last resort by rummaging through rubbish bins and supermarket skips.

- Food like never never bothers me 'cause I like know that everyone here can get food, know what I mean. Whether it's from the bins or, everyone can get food without fail. You know.¹

- ... you were never scrounging through bins?
- I never got to that stage thank God, because my food came before my drink and then my fags came after my drink, you know because I can beg fags easily, it was pretty bad.²

Even if these options fail, food supplies are never far away as food may be readily stolen or purchased with funds from earnings, social security or begging.

- I just go into Tesco's and nick my food, from the supermarket or something.³

- What do you spend money on when you have it?
- Drugs, to be honest. Hash, I use it to buy that. Buy food, buy tea, the arcades or something.⁴

The homeless express a certain insouciance about food. Whilst some espouse vegetarianism and others say that they try to eat a balanced diet, for most, food is not a major concern. Many have erratic diets, undoubtedly contributing to their often run-down condition, especially where combined with the effects of continued drug use and exposure to the elements.⁵ Even for those who suggest their diets are satisfactory, their food intake is often erratic and somewhat unbalanced.

- I'd beg, until I got enough to get at least a portion of chips or a bag of crisps, or an apple, some days, that's all I was eating, was a bag of crisps or an apple, until the soup vans came along.⁶

¹Interview 7

²Interview 2

³Interview 5

⁴Interview 19

⁵Keyes and Kennedy, *Sick to Death*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁶Interview 2

- ... I eat a lot of strawberry milkshakes, I eat a lot of McDonald's, well I used to I don't so much now. I have, I eat a lot of junk food in the sense that, like I eat bags of crisps a lot and a Kit Kat and stuff like that. I eat a lot of Chinese, because there's a cheap Chinese, just up Charing Cross Road, really cheap.¹

- ... mainly McDonald's hamburgers, chips, um, pizza, pies, stuff like that. ... ²

- What about in the last 24 hours?

- 24 hours, one hamburger.³

- ... I'm not always up in time for breakfast, I'm not always back for my evening meal, and what I eat is maybe just a couple of bags of crisps or a Mars bar or a roll, sandwich or something like that during the day. So, I can't really say that I always eat well.⁴

- ... 'Cause sometimes puts you in the position, well yeah you can have something to eat, or you can have a cigarette today. So you've got to decide well what do you want the most. Do you want something to eat, or do you want a pack of cigarettes?

- Which normally wins?

- Normally for me it's cigarettes. It's just like I've been smoking for too long.⁵

Although food is obviously a necessity for the homeless, they do not necessarily seek it as a first priority. Although food is readily available, the homeless often find that the sources of available food are not nearby. Many will go without eating rather than traipse through the city at times and in places which may be inconvenient. Though there may be an ample supply of free food in London, this does not necessarily imply that the homeless are well fed.

Money as Commodity

Money is a peculiar commodity because, as is discussed in Chapter 4, it may be both a commodity and a source. Because of its liquidity it is easily transformed into other commodities, much more so than any other tradable commodities. Whilst it is sought,

¹Interview 11

²Interview 14

³Interview 20

⁴Interview 34

⁵Interview 37

exchanged and consumed (by its expenditure on food and immediately consumable commodities), it is also a source of other commodities (the purchase of other tradable items such as drugs). As a commodity, however, it is sought as a means of satisfying needs of sustenance and drugs, occasionally being used to purchase clothing, toiletries and services, such as haircutting. The city affords various circumstances and opportunities for getting money, which will be considered in Chapter 8, *Spaces and Opportunity: Sources in the City*.

Many of the homeless use little money, except when purchasing drugs. Whereas sustenance is generally not expensive for the homeless, many choosing to ascribe to it a low level of importance, substances such as alcohol and drugs (as noted above) generally need to be purchased.

- ... I can beg fags easily ... ¹

- ... you can beg for food ... ²

The homeless are often indifferent to money. Whilst many are careful with their money, others speak of being generous, being ready to help others out if they can. Although this probably happens less often than it is alleged, generosity is still highly mythologised in the homeless world.

- Where did you get that from?

- I borrowed twenty five quid off a friend, this morning and he told me to pay him back when I've got any money to pay him back.³

- You're more independent on the streets, but if you need help you will get it.⁴

- If I got money, I'll help people out and that, cause of some alcoholics they'll either drink the money, I know I shouldn't and it's not good, but I might help them out and that, 'cause they help me out with food and that.⁵

¹Interview 2

²Interview 11

³Interview 10

⁴Interview 3

⁵Interview 8

There is a certain critical value in the individual's insouciance and generosity with money. In part this nonchalance parodies the establishment's preoccupation with accumulation. De Certeau¹ discusses the "politics of the 'gift.'" He suggests that "the loss that was voluntary in a gift economy is transformed into a transgression in a profit economy: it appears as an excess (a waste), a challenge (a rejection of profit), or a crime (an attack on property)." The insouciance of the homeless with money, can in some way and in some instances serve to ascribe to this critical logic.

- ... if you don't make any money, you don't get fed. It's as simple as that, because nobody will lend you money ever. ²

Although some of the homeless suggest that they may use forty pounds a day, others note that they use little money.

- What do you do for money at the moment?
- I don't, I get a travel card if I need it, if I'm going somewhere. I don't really need money. If I do need it I can't do anything about it.³
- ... sometimes I get £20 a day. Selling the papers.
- What do you do with £20?
- Food, food for that night or McDonald's I don't drink alcohol, but Coke or whatever. I tend to get cans a Coke and buy food during the day so I'm all right for food during the day while I'm selling the papers, and cigarettes, I smoke cigarettes—about twenty a day.⁴
- Do you use money at all? What do you use it for?
- Nothing really. Drugs some of the time and that. ... Or eatin' you know, like scoffing my face. That's about it.⁵

The utilisation of money by the homeless varies widely. For some of the homeless, especially those engaging in illegal activities money can be acquired quickly, and is often similarly quickly spent. Gary who is on the rent scene notes that he can have large amounts of money in his hands, money which he generally budgets over a period of

¹De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, op. cit., p. 27.

²Interview 11

³Interview 1

⁴Interview 6

⁵Interview 7

time. Prostitution is a lucrative business and as such, prostitutes can have a large amount of money at their disposal, however, as Gary notes, he does not care to be 'on the game' all the time and so he budgets his money, prostituting himself when necessary.

- ... I mean, I don't do it all the time. If I haven't got money, going off to pick up a [punter] ... is not the first sort of thing I'm going to do. There can be days when I go without money, for like two or three days ... ¹

For London's young homeless money is often little used, but at the same time its scarcity means that there is tremendous competition for the funds available from various sources. Aware of diminishing returns from the public, the homeless become angry at those beggars who compromise the 'good name' of the homeless, blaming them for the growing curtailment of people's generosity.

- ... and she'll sit there and say, 'Spare any change?' then, 'Fuck you then you nigger, fuck off, O you fucking horrible ... ,' like blatant and out of order about it. But you get people who don't care now.²

Conclusion

The commodities used by the homeless are not only those of logistical and practical importance, but also include cultural commodities necessary for emotional survival. Emotional survival depends on cultural commodities that afford identity such as those which effect selfhood and those offering cathartic relief from imposed constraints. The way that the homeless use available commodities in the city represents a consumptive bricolage spelling out self-determination and providing them with room to manoeuvre even amidst social, cultural, political and economic constraints. These commodities of critical livelihood depend on the skills of the homeless and the sources available to them from which they forge their lives.

¹Interview 25

²Interview 11

CHAPTER 7

MEANS AND ENDS: HOMELESS SKILLS AS FACILITATORS AND IDENTITY-CARRIERS

*By an art of being in between, he draws
unexpected results from his situation.*¹

The skills utilised by the homeless in the creation of livelihood play two important roles. Firstly, by using specific skills, they are able define, create and acquire commodities by exploiting various sources throughout the city. Secondly, their adoption and utilisation of a range of skills and tactics provides them with a focus for identity.

The homeless are both survivors and renegades. Whilst their homelessness has often been precipitated by forces largely beyond their control, their command of everyday circumstance is much more dextrous.

•They might sound bad but know what I mean, on the streets you've got to make money. You can beg money, you can tax money off other people, people do that all the time, get taxed, robbing people, shops, parking meters, there's just hundreds of little scams that are just like fool proof, things you can do and not get caught doing them. Or you do get caught occasionally when you do it for so long, like the old Bill now, they are on top of the parking meters, so they're coming in and they're stopping it now. I don't know what the next scam will be ... ²

Although biological survival depends on the adoption and use of tactical manoeuvre to provide at the very least, the biological commodities needed for sustenance, the adoption of such skills also become part of the lifeworld of homelessness.

Although in many cases the homeless express a desire to return to mainstream society, they are quickly caught up in a world where they are dependent on their street skills. Whilst the dependence on such skills is initially a means of survival, the homeless soon depend on these skills for identity. Ironically the necessitous response to homelessness—becoming streetwise—becomes a commodity depended on, as it provides identity, meaning and selfhood for those young people on London's streets. Reluctantly

¹De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, op. cit., p. 30.

²Interview 11

caught in the context of homelessness, young people soon become dependent on their participation and utilisation of the skills and specific street knowledge of London.

This chapter looks at the ways in which the homeless become streetwise. The process of enculturation into the subculture of homelessness is an important part of the processes of homeless reproduction. The homeless become inculcated in homelessness at the same time that they are being deskilled for conventional life, in so doing they convert the constraints of an immediate circumstance into the structured action which by means of its recursivity reproduces exclusion.

Yet whilst the homeless often end up in this dangerously exclusionary path, their trajectories remain purposive. Though they may become homeless for the want of any other alternative, their experiences on the streets become important for self-definition, their experiences become the substance of their identity.

Learning the City

For the uninitiated, the homeless city is forbidding terrain. Yet the homeless are able to know its spaces and routines intimately. Familiarity with terrain needs to be acquired, and young people as they become homeless, need to learn a range of skills in order to 'make do' in the city. The homeless need to become adept at exploiting opportunity and they need to acquire a familiarity with the tactics, ruses and scams that permit individuals to live on the underbelly of the metropolis. The inversion and exploitation of an urban logic permits the homeless to live in the city's marginal spaces using tactics borne of a certain antilogic. In suggesting that, "the subcultural *milieu*, has been constructed underneath the authorised discourses," Hebdige,¹ like de Certeau,² sees the duplicity of action that can carry oppositional messages. The skills regime employed by the homeless is a regime that permits a dextrous use of the interstitial, and of the gaps in the establishment fabric of the city. This regime challenges the efficacy of the city, as it embraces a creative usage of conventional urban spaces.

¹Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

²De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

Although the homeless do not uniformly embrace regimented lifestyles or even necessarily use consistent tactics, there is nevertheless in the responses of these typical people reviewed here, evidence of a certain tactical flavour, a perspective at all times vigilant to opportunity and which characterises, in part, a shared response to the city.

Action and Ambiguity

In the opening paragraphs of this chapter it was suggested that homelessness is both a means of material livelihood and a focus for identity. The way that the homeless employ skills demonstrates this duality. The utilisation of certain skills is both a means of survival and a means of creating selfhood. This duality is clearly evidenced in the transcript material. Their dependence on the scams and ruses of homelessness, may be sometimes depressing and sometimes exhilarating. Homeless skills need to be considered according to this duality.

The use of homeless skills in this way is itself a skilful means of self-preservation. Whilst the necessity of using sagacious skills may be debilitating, the homeless may also reappropriate the conditions of their constraint. The use of skills antithetical to an established urban logic—instead of being read as a mark of failure, as they may easily be—may be read as a means of subversion, and as a critical undermining of the establishment. Instead of feeling culpable, the homeless are vindicated by their perceived ability to undermine an illegitimate establishment.

Skills therefore may have an ambiguous meaning for the homeless. The hiatus between these definitions may at times cause some uneasiness, as the homeless vacillate between different perspectives on their own situation. Yet amidst this uneasiness, the homeless are able to disempower the anguish of confused experience, by ‘blanking out’ their thoughts, and by thinking about the present, rather than dwelling in the past or in the future.

What the Homeless Can Do

In Chapter 4, Anselm Strauss' methodology for the systematisation of ethnographic research was considered. Strauss¹ suggests that a principal indicator for the investigation of transcript and other ethnographic material is the "in vivo code." The in vivo code is an indicator which points to the existence of notable phenomena. He suggests, for example, that passages which include words such as 'because' and 'and so I,' reveal conditional information. Similarly, other words or strings indicate other important types of information. Strauss uses this method as one element of his Grounded theory, which aims at making social research rigorous and capable of systematising seemingly encyclopaedic ethnographic data (see Chapter 4, *Resource Based Ethnography, the Science of Singularity and Critical Livelihood: An Approach and Framework*).

Finding the string 'I can,' in the transcripts is revealing in that it provides a series of positive affirmative statements made by the homeless. Below is a list of examples:

I can be a pain
I can live independently
I can cope with the cold
I can get you any drug you want
I can be warm without spending any money
I can get anything
I can walk down the street looking decent
I can go and get food at night
I can talk my way out of it
I can beg fags easily
I can remember
I can watch TV
I can stay up reading late at night
I can handle myself
I can kick off badly
I can make money
I can drink

¹ Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis, op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.

The transcripts and indeed experience with the homeless, verify that they see themselves as purposive and effectual. In contrast, statements of those things of which they regard themselves incapable, are rarely made. The use of in vivo codes to find and indicate purposive, conditional and other forms of action have been used throughout this and subsequent chapters to identify certain responses in the compiled transcript material.

The Skills Regime

The skills regime relates closely to the availability of sources for the ploys of the homeless and the availability of appropriate commodities for livelihood. In reviewing the material collated from interviews and participant observation, it became clear that the homeless used certain skills to make livelihood in the city. As with commodities and sources, these skills were found to be not only effectual to material survival, but also effectual as a critique of establishment values symbolised by the city.

These skills may be abbreviated as follows:

- adaptability
- endurance
- mobility
- sagacity
- trickery

Although these categories cover the range of skills used by the homeless, it must be stressed that typology, even though it may be rooted in experience, is likely to be somewhat abstract. The skills regime as outlined is not a defined set whose categories are in common usage by the homeless, instead the regime is a classificatory mechanism, a “conceptual tool.”¹ From an analysis of the ethnographic data, transcripts and experiences, these categories emerged as a viable classification, based on experience. Whilst there may be skills which defy clear typification in this schema, these categories provide an overview of the dimensions of skills utilised by London’s young homeless. Although no conceptual framework can ever hope to deal with every contingency, this typology provides a framework for making such an analysis more lucid and fruitful.

¹ Snow and Anderson, *Down on their Luck*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

The following sections discuss the above dimensions of homeless skills. Whilst some of the homeless skills were touched upon in terms of their relationship to homeless identity, in this chapter, skills are primarily discussed as pragmatic means for the acquisition of the full range of commodities. However, where additional insights into skills-as-identity may be given, these will also be discussed.

Adaptability

In order for young people living on the streets to manage effectively in London, it is necessary that they learn about the homeless city. Firstly, they must learn to deal with new circumstances, and the values implicit in them, and secondly, they must adopt a flexible and adaptable mindset allowing them to creatively exploit opportunity.

•No I've never ever enjoyed being homeless, it's just all I've done is adapted to it, 'cause that's the only thing you can. ¹

This ability to exploit opportunity relies on the individual's familiarity with the skills outlined in this chapter.

Perhaps, the first thing that any new immigrant to London has to learn is that conditions in London are never quite that which have been anticipated.

- When you first came to London, what did you expect?
- Oh the usual, people say the streets are paved with gold and like, you get a job straight away, and there will be loads of money.
- So you honestly felt that when you were in London, you'd strike riches? Have your feelings changed about that?
- Yeah. (laughs) You can say that again. Yeah, definitely ... ²

Becoming adaptable is a skill which is learnt partially by necessity of trial and error, and partially by association with others who are already streetwise.

•When I first hit the streets it was ar, I came down and I found things really hard, I couldn't get on with people, it was really cold, ar, uncomfortable, that security wasn't there. But now, things are different because you've always got friends with ya. It's all

¹Interview 11

²Interview 13

down to your mind, it's still as hard, but it's not as hard as it first was. You sort of get used to it.¹

• ... I used to think that my situation was bad but when you hear about others and that, shows you that you ain't been through nothin'.²

•What do you do for food if you have no money?

•Ar, well now I'm like selling the *Big Issue*, that's the new paper, it comes out monthly like, ar, it's better because we can actually sell the paper and we get money, and we get 40 pence and it costs 50 pence.³

Like many of the skills associated with homelessness, adaptability becomes a means of survival and a feature of identity. It is not surprising that adaptability is necessary for homeless survival in London. The homeless city is a new space to assimilate. This may be especially the case for those who have come from local authority care (see Chapter 3, *The Parameters of Youth Homelessness in London*). Young ex-care homeless young people have often become accustomed to wide provision where allowances for clothes and other such needs have been paid and where food has been prepared, and life organised.

•The staff were good. Everything was good. It was the nicest place you could be. It was like being in a 4-star hotel. Very very much not self-catered. I mean everything was done for you.⁴

The care system has been criticised for its failure to prepare young people for responsibilities once they leave.⁵ Whist this has to some degree been addressed, it is still common for young people to encounter difficulties in the early days of release.

•Are there any times in your past when you feel you really ought to have been given some sound advice and you weren't?

•Yeah, on just how to survive when you leave care.⁶

¹Interview 12

²Interview 1

³Interview 6 The interviewee explained that the cost to the public was 50p, and that the amount he earned after his 10p purchase of one issue, was 40p.

⁴Interview 28

⁵Currie and Greve, *Homelessness and Young People*, op. cit., p. 7; Young Homelessness Group, *Carefree and Homeless: Why so many Care Leavers are Homeless and Will the Children Act Make a Difference?* Young Homelessness Group (YHG), London, 1991, p. 9.

⁶Interview 10

The homeless are implicitly aware that they have had to adapt to life on the streets. They are aware that they have come a long way in becoming streetwise. Adopting the antilogic of homelessness and learning how to use the streets is a important feature of homeless adaptability.

- Have your feelings about living on the streets changed since you've been living on the streets?

- Yes, I love it, it's brilliant. But you know it takes everyone a bit long to become a street person. Because I know everyone knows me, I know the gangs, I can get anything, anything on this planet anyone wants, I can get a hold of.¹

- If I wanted to come onto the streets like having come out of care, like I wouldn't know what to do, know what I mean. I'd probably be dead in two weeks for lack of food or something. You know what I mean. If I was starving now, I'd just go out and it'd take me twenty minutes to get some food.²

However, in addition to the adaptability of the homeless, adopted as a means of survival, the antilogic implicit in streetlife is also a central feature in the character and identity of the homeless. Being streetwise is a mark of achievement, 'unlike those others who would be unable to have done so.' Marcia suggests that had she been brought up "posh," living on the streets might be an impossible task. Her tribulations have made her robust, and this is a robustness of which she is proud. Such traits afford selfhood, and identity for Marcia, as indeed is the case for many other homeless young people.

- Streetwise, like, if you know what to do. My friends think I'm streetwise. My mum and dad think I'm streetwise. Probably the way you act. Like if you were brought up to be posh right, and you went on the street, you wouldn't be able to handle it. ³

- ... I've thought of suicide before like I was under a lot less pressure, so I feel that I've got really tough and immune to the streets, because like I felt like it before, because I lost a girlfriend and everything seemed to be going downhill ... ⁴

¹Interview 17

²Interview 9

³Interview 1

⁴Interview 11

Ian had become tough with his experience on the streets, where once he would have considered suicide, he is now a different man. Many of the homeless see themselves as having become hardened to the troubles of life, the day to day difficulties of life being much greater on the streets than those to which they have been previously accustomed.¹

For many, becoming adaptable means adopting the values of homelessness. These values are deeply critical, and are used as a means for deflecting powers of constraint in that they espouse a certain slipperiness to containment. The dependence on critical action for identity—implicit in skills such as adaptability—serves to dampen individual movement from the streets often leading to the institutionalisation of homelessness.

In part, the adaptability of the homeless refers to the speed with which the homeless are able to take on board the other characteristics to be covered in this chapter. Perhaps the most important of these given the harshness of streetlife is *endurance* considered below.

Endurance

The antilogic which the homeless adopt is one which both utilises and subverts the establishment. Their actions are both necessitous and deliberate, for their ambiguous lives contain elements of survival and defiance. At different times and in different contexts their actions demonstrate resignation and anger. Their resignation is a refusal to be concerned with socially defined norms of self-care, and their anger and defiance manifest in their determination, expresses their desire and ability, in an immediate sense, to do exactly as they please.

Endurance is important to the homeless, for as they continue to live in the city they often need to go without the commodities important for conventional livelihood. In addition to material deprivation, the homeless also need to contend with its subsequent emotional impact. Other problems including the circumstances of their youth, their

¹ However, certainly some homeless people have moved to London as a release from untenable domestic situations. Nevertheless the physical hardship and insecurity of a different level constitutes a new world with which to become familiar.

homes, their families or indeed their lack of such things serve to further complicate their emotional lives. For the homeless, multiple material and cultural deprivations and other social problems cause significant emotional stress.

Anger is sometimes sublimated, and ignored by ‘blanking’ it out. Such ‘blanking out’ is both an act of defiance and pragmatic survival. The homeless intent on surviving, avoid obstacles inventing means of hardening and indifference.

•It takes so long for me to lose my temper, if I really lose it I can kick off badly and that, but most of the time I blank things out of my mind.¹

•Yeah, it's kind of like it's like you're on a total buzz all day, just to try and forget about things, and you know, try and look at the good side of it, and have a laugh.²

Whilst the homeless often choose to ‘blank out’ the memory of difficult circumstances, their anger remains, finding its expression in various actions. Their interest in being noticed is one way that they hope to communicate the injustice of their situation.

•I like to be where people can see us, know what I mean. To get the message that we're here.³

Closely related to the ‘blanking out’ of unsavoury thoughts, the homeless are also adept at shortening their view of the future. Moreover, for the homeless, time and space are ruptured in other ways. Rowe and Wolch⁴ suggest that the homeless, here referring to homeless women in Los Angeles, suffer from “time-space discontinuity,” where there is a lack of “locationally fixed stations in their daily path.” They suggest that individuals attempt to build an alternative space-time continuity, which is somewhat analogous to the ‘family’ concept noted above. However, there is also a sense in which this rupturing of conventional networks, a former identity, is a means to an end, a coping strategy in itself. In addition to ‘blanking’ out difficult thoughts and memories, the homeless adopt a shallow conceptualisation of the future.

¹Interview 11

²Interview 13

³Interview 8

⁴Rowe and Wolch, “Social Networks,” *op. cit.*, p. 185.

Although London's homeless youth are not subject to the same placelessness that Rowe and Wolch suggest, in that their daily paths revolve around the Strand and Soho, they often actively contract their view of the future. This contraction is in part a means of 'blanking out,' and in part a consequence of the parameters of survival in London. In order to 'get by,' on a daily basis the homeless must be alert to the moment, willing to capture and utilise opportunity whilst it is present, for moments later that opportunity may pass.

•No I've never ever enjoyed being homeless, it's just all I've done is adapted to it, 'cause that's the only thing you can. You can't go on the streets and start feeling sorry for yourself, and feeling bad about what's happened. You do get, know what I mean. Degraded. But you try and ignore that, because if you let it get to you every day, you're going to end up jacking up, drinking, just wasting yourself. You just try and keep your mind occupied on other things.¹

•Do you think of the future much?

•No.

•You live day to day?

•Yeah.²

•I just don't think of it. [the future] when I'm [garbled] well things happen, I get by . But whenever I think of it I don't get by, that's why I don't think of it.³

•Do you think about the future much?

•Um, yes in the sense of thinking right what I'm doing now, what I'm doing at this precise moment in time, is important, um the decision I make at this moment in time is going to affect my future, that's how a lot of people think. Will think about what they're going to do next rather than what they're doing at the moment. Which means they may not lead such a good life.⁴

• ... if you start looking into the future, things always start going wrong.⁵

¹Interview 11

²Interview 3

³Interview 6 Jimmy suggested that when he started to plan for the future things went wrong.

⁴Interview 4

⁵Interview 10

Although this response by no means characterises the replies of all the respondents, it was evident that this contraction of temporal perspective affected each individual in some way. Some young people said that they did not intend to be homeless for ever, and yet they had made no solid plans for their transition from the streets.

- ... you can't look at one bit of time you have to look ahead. But saying it and doing it are two different things.¹

Despite the often short-lived attraction of homelessness, most are decisive about wanting to move on. Their defiant wont is to survive at all cost, a desire served by making their plight public. Their public plight is one not immune to the opportunities of license and embellishment. The placards that the homeless place at their feet when they are begging read 'I am homeless and hungry,' 'I am sleeping on the streets,' they beg the question, 'what are you going to do about it?'

In addition to the 'blanking out' of past experiences the homeless are also adept at 'killing time.' Having no shortage of time, they have much time to kill.

- ... I just go around just seeing some of the sites, again and again.²

- The only time I go to McDonald's is to buy things and if I want to come in here say on a Friday night say, I might go to McDonald's to kill time.³

- ... at the weekend, you have to kill a lot of time, because the Crypt's only open until one o'clock, and you've got until half past eight that night. And you've bought cigarettes with your luncheon vouchers and you're starving. Um, so you just beg. You just wander about, see who's about at the moment, see what's going on.⁴

- ... we just sit around. Like, there's loads of us, and we have a laugh, so time goes quick.⁵

¹Interview 10

²Interview 28

³Interview 10

⁴Interview 30

⁵Interview 36

For Julie, in the final quotation, 'killing time,' involves having a laugh. Paul Corrigan¹ alludes to the development of a shared mythology of the streets emergent from times in which youth consider themselves to be "doing nothing." For the young homeless, this 'hanging around' as much as it may contribute to a sense of identity, provides a chance to find and make opportunity. Paul Willis² in his study of working class schoolboys, discusses the experience of "having a laff," saying that it is the "privileged instrument of the informal." Willis suggests that the "laff," is a means of defeating boredom, "a part of an irreverent marauding misbehaviour."³ Like Corrigan's "doing nothing," the experience of "having a laff," is an experience of seeking chances for opportunity. Where for Corrigan these chances may be an opportunity for vandalism, and for Willis they may be an opportunity for identifying someone or something to lampoon, for the homeless they are an opportunity for advantage and for finding means of critical livelihood.

The camaraderie implicit in this joint laughing also plays a role in the reproduction of homelessness. Ian noted that he often left his flat, which was in the London suburbs, to come to the West End to have a laugh.

•The flat's like just running down daily, and you don't want to be there. You want to get away from your flat, so you come back down and have a good laugh again.⁴

Bleak winters, rain, insecurity, danger of bodily harm, abuse, combined with alcohol and drugs and all too often the indifference of the public mean that the homeless are at great risk of harm and even peril.⁵ Sometimes the homeless choose to endure adverse conditions, and at other times due to intoxication, or indifference they will remain exposed to the elements or other circumstances of risk. Endurance demonstrates again the ambiguity of homeless experience being both a response to necessitous

¹Corrigan, P. "Doing Nothing," in Hall, S. and Jefferson, T., *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain*, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Hutchinson, London, 1976, p. 103.

²Willis, P. *Learning to Labour*, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

³*Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴Interview 11

⁵Keyes and Kennedy, *Sick to Death*, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

discomfort (survival) and a deliberate discomfort (defiance) effective to critical expression.

Necessitous Endurance

Although the homeless have a degree of choice in making real decisions in their lives, in some circumstances there may be few if any alternatives to sleeping rough. Despite the general availability of sheltered accommodation, in some cases alternatives evaporate and the homeless find themselves unavoidably roofless for the night. Those returning to the city late at night, having arrived from elsewhere or perhaps being released from incarceration may find it impossible to find shelter.

Cantankerous young people may find themselves banned from particular agencies even if their cantankerous behaviour was under the influence of intoxicants. Those with a history of being uncontrollable, dangerously volatile or chronically inebriated may be particularly vulnerable to having nowhere to go.¹

In some cases the only accommodation available may be at the worst of London's hostels, those renowned for being dehumanising, insanitary, violent, and malodorous.

•DSS hostels are just dumps, it is a hundred percent safe in the streets than in a DS hostel.²

Lynne Keane³ writing on Nick Danzinger's sojourn in West End House, relates this description, "The bed he was allocated had 'Piss Head' daubed above it, in memory of its last occupant, a man who didn't bother rising to go to the toilet. Hypodermic needles were stuffed down the side of the bath." My own observation there was much the same:

... the smell is overpowering and the whole place is based on locked doors, buzzers and surveillance. Everything is filthy, the doors, the glass, the counters, the walls. Residents are let into a reception area that has a pool of liquid sitting in the middle of it. It looks like the area is regularly hosed down. In the corner is a coffee vending machine ...

One dormitory was painted in lime green and had been freshly coated. I was told that the place was regularly covered in graffiti and as such needed constant redecoration. The

¹Randall and Brown, *The Rough Sleepers Initiative*, *op. cit.*, p. 71. Randall makes a call for the institution of wet centres for people on the streets who may be inebriated.

²Interview 11

³Keane, L., "Back to the Brink," *New Statesman and Society*, Gimme Shelter special supplement. 2 April, 1993, p. 11.

linoleum on the floor as marked with cigarette end burns and the mattresses - exposed - were filthy and also covered with graffiti. The window frames were dirty and there were plastic cups and orange peelings about the place and there was a general air of dinginess. The place smelt of disinfectant, alcohol and bodies. Whilst the walls had been painted, the doors were particularly dirty.

There is a system in use whereby people with jobs are given a red card, those unemployed are given a blue card, those sick, a yellow card and those yet to be processed, a white card.¹

Others however, who are perhaps accustomed or indifferent to these conditions are glad to receive protection from the cold.

Short term informal respite from the elements is available at places such as Euston British Rail Station concourse, amusement arcades, family restaurants (such as McDonald's),² Heathrow Airport, the London Underground and British Rail railway carriages parked in sidings at Victoria Station.

In the summer, however, there is much less need for the homeless to find shelter as the evenings are sufficiently mild to allow people to sleep rough reasonably comfortably.

Deliberate Endurance

Whilst the homeless are sometimes given no alternative to being on the streets, at times their street livelihood is one that is chosen. Even in the bitterness of winter there is a functional rationale to living on the streets.

- ... after a couple of days on the streets, you don't want to be asked to leave [to go to a hostel] can't be bothered really.
- So, is it fairly important to have a place say on the Strand as a consistent place?
- Yeah, that's it, because the jeweller's doorstep that I was sleeping in, that was my home. That was it.
- Was that a good place to stay, more than any other?
- It was nice, you know, the people were nice, who I was sleeping with.³

and later:

¹Research Journal, 18 December 1990.

²Some McDonald's stores have banned individuals from entering, or have instituted other means of exclusion for the homeless. One such establishment has erected a sign saying that minimum purchase is £1.50. Such moves make it possible for such institutions to eject those who would otherwise abuse the facilities by sitting in the restaurant for extended periods (and potentially discouraging other customers) having only purchased a cup of tea or coffee.

³Interview 2

- Did it ever get so cold outside that you decided that you had to go and find somewhere inside to sleep?
- Well if it was really really bad, we used to make little boxes in the market out of the stalls. We gathered boxes and slept in them.¹
- And so you prefer being on the streets?
- I do yeah.
- Even though a hostel may be warm and clean?
- I do yeah.
- You still prefer the freedom?
- I do yeah.²

Firstly, locating themselves on the streets and being subject to the elements the homeless evoke sympathy which in turn evokes charity. Secondly, the homeless sometimes choose to avoid the often oppressive regimes of the hostels, it being much easier to drink and smoke cannabis on the streets than in the supervised spaces of institutionalised provision. Thirdly, remaining outside facilitates the meeting of friends on the streets,³ and allows them to be in the centre of activity, where they may remain attuned to opportunity.

Like *adaptability*, endurance affords individuals a sense of selfhood. Thus being on the street allows participation in local homeless culture. Participation consolidates identity, and maintains an active flow of information in order that the latest news on the street may be immediately communicated.

- ... If something's going on, I'm the first one to know about it, and I decide whether I want to join in or not.⁴
- ... we're united and it's a bit like a brotherhood in that sense, that people stick up for one another because everyone sort of looks after one another.⁵

¹Interview 2

²Interview 6

³In order to keep track of residents many hostels prohibit visitors.

⁴Interview 17

⁵Interview 4

The solidarity engendered by co-suffering is an important part of identity. The idea that ‘we’re all in this together,’ is a strong bond amongst the homeless, even if transgressions of such bonding frequently occur.

As with mobility, endurance affords omnipresence and the omnipresence of the homeless is a key feature in their ability to know and utilise the city. Working in league with *sagacity*, the homeless are able to know and exploit the movements and rhythms of the city. For example they will know the times of police patrols, when there are least people about, when the soup vans circulate, when the useful refuse of the city becomes available and at what time it may be best to enter the car park to sleep.

Opportunities rarely present themselves in a hostel, but on the streets, anything might happen. Their resistance to the elements and persistence on the streets keeps them in contact with the activity of the city, sharpens their knowledge of the urban space and affords them potentially greater access to desired commodities.

Defiance and Nonchalance

Implicit in deliberate endurance are both defiance and nonchalance. The homeless are defiant in that they choose to define as unimportant those things socially defined as important. For many, security, safety, well-being and health are regarded with insouciance. In this case their livelihoods may be characterised by defiant survival.

- ... I’ve been beaten up once, if they beat me up again, then I don’t care ... ¹

- Do you ever have any fears that people from home will recognise you?

- Yeah, but I don’t care you know. Seeing people from home, it doesn’t bother me.²

Deflecting the power of constraints by adopting a nonchalant attitude requires the use of deliberate avoidance of many of the emotional problems confronting the young homeless. Frequently they choose to ignore pressing troubles that would otherwise preoccupy them.

¹Interview 2

²Interview 13

- ... I have an automatic in-built system in me, if I feel depressed or pissed off, I just blank it out, and I just concentrate on something else.¹

- How much time do you spend thinking about what you're going to do in the future?

- Never really now, because every time I think about that and that, I always cry and that, and I like get really really depressed, you know. I find it really hard to come up again and so I never really think about it. Zilch near enough. Nothing for the future, I always take it day by day and that.²

Aside from being nonchalant about their condition, they may also be offensively defiant in maintaining their privacy, or in defending their situation.

- How do you find the people who come around like the preachers from the Jesus Army?

- Mostly, I tell them to piss off ...³

- How do you feel about sleeping on the streets?

- I don't give a toss, if any of them say anything, then that's it, they just get a smack in the mouth.⁴

- ... At the end of the day I don't give a fuck whose in McDonald's watching me in the toilet washing. I don't care, because I thought I'd rather be watched by someone washing myself than be dirty.⁵

Nonchalance is evidenced in the quotation above. Ian shows both nonchalance and defiance. The *implication* of what he says is: '*I don't care* if they look at me' (nonchalance), '*I don't care* what they think, or whether they like it or not, *I'm doing it*' (defiance).

Chris for example, who dresses aggressively as a punk, isn't prepared to be patronised by people in the street. One detects a certain satisfaction in making this point clear to people who wish to test him.

- Suit and ties, yeah. You beg them, and they get really mad, really saucy. I mean you can sit there and ignore them, but sometimes that just makes it worse. I don't bother, I just get

¹Interview 11

²Interview 7

³Interview 5

⁴Interview 2

⁵Interview 11

up and clomp them, or tell them to go away, or just get up. Because when you've sat down, you don't look like you're very big. If I stand up, I'm six foot tall, big set, they look at me and they think, 'Oops.' They think, 'Oops, I started on the wrong man there.' Especially if I pull out ... this chain and ... stand up like this and say, 'Well, come on then, let's do it,' you're going to think twice about what you're doing. So, they just don't hassle me anymore. Especially if they see the big boots, as well, ... they think twice about it. Usually they give me some money. 'Here's a pound, I was only joking.'¹

Chris' attitude, punk outfit and demeanour contribute to a projection of hostility, one that is for him a defining characteristic. This action is one of the "innumerable ways of playing and foiling the other's game." De Certeau² goes on to suggest that "people have to make do with what they have. In these combatants' stratagems, there is a certain art of placing one's blows, a pleasure in getting around the rules of a constraining space."

Both nonchalance and defiance are a part of the duality of homelessness. Nonchalance is also defiance, in that it expresses that, that which is normally considered important is something not to be worried about. The homeless invert the norm as social critique.

The homeless defiantly survive in the city using all the means available to them to create a viable livelihood. This may involve the blanking of experience by busying themselves in the city, it may also involve finding a vent for pent up emotion by finding cathartic release in the city. Having to endure the city, the homeless make it and its inhabitants the symbolic focus for cathartic release. The unidentified 'they' of the establishment is epitomised by the city and its inhabitants, and the homeless see any mode of the city as fair game.

• ... if you're going to take something, take something from a shop where the insurance will cover it.³

The way that space is used by the homeless is dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 8, *Spaces and Opportunity: Sources in the City*.

¹Interview 23

²De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, op. cit., p. 18.

³Interview 14

Defiance and Nonchalance: Weapons of the Weak

Both defiance and nonchalance as means of endurance, constitute 'weapons' used by the homeless as means of deflecting control. By denying the legitimacy of the established order they denounce that order and secure a strength that lies in their unconventionality. Endurance, manifest in the omnipresent in-the-wayness of the homeless becomes an important part of critical livelihood. The omnipresence of the homeless occasioned by adaptability and endurance, makes way for the remaining skills used by those on the streets.

Mobility and Selective Attachment

Perhaps one of the most evident characteristics of the homeless is their mobility. The homeless move quickly not only across the city but indeed across the country. As many of the homeless in central London are from areas outside of London, many being from Scotland, the North and Ireland,¹ it is not surprising that they sometimes travel back to their homes and previous social structures. Sometimes their moves are precipitated by local trouble with the police, at other times they will return home to see parents or to catch up with old acquaintances. It is not uncommon for the homeless to have spent time in various places throughout the country. As many have experienced enforced mobility in their encounters with care, it is not uncommon for individuals to revisit those to whom they were fostered in the past.

Mobility, like the other skills utilised by the homeless is also a means of deflecting authority and power. When and where circumstances become unsustainable, for many it is a viable option to disappear into another part of the country. For those in the capital it is possible to disappear into the endless suburbia of Greater London. Though the scale of homelessness may be greatest in London, there are many others living both on the streets and in temporary accommodation throughout Greater London and indeed throughout the country.

¹See table 3.7.

Like the other skills, however, there are both advantages and disadvantages to the mobility that is sometimes used indiscriminately and at other times imposed. One of the features of homelessness that aids its reproduction is the unavailability of support networks. Encountering new spaces, the homeless are necessarily without the assistance of known spaces or individuals.¹ With their ability to adapt and to acquire a set of enabling skills, they manage to find opportunity and sources of sustenance. Their acquired skills provide them with a grip on unknown and unsympathetic urban space.

Although the homeless at times express a certain indifference to place and hence a certain placelessness, at other times places are quickly personalised, even if strong and reliable support networks have not in reality been forthcoming. Shirley related the importance of one place to her, namely, the London Connection.

- How important is this place to you?
- The London Connection?
- Yeah.
- Ooh, It keeps you sane this place, honest. It gives you a bit of respect.²

Dependence on such spaces becomes involved in the way that individuals perceive and use the city. In this case one of the facilities for the homeless has become an important part of identity.

The homeless are quick to ascribe permanence to a place even if they have been there for a relatively short time.³ Despite the often shallow dealings they have with other homeless people, they are quick to refer to their associates as friends⁴ and to feel welcome in a place.

Jimmy for example has been on the streets in London for about two months and already refers to the group as the “family.”

¹Rowe and Wolch, “Social Networks,” *op. cit.*, p. 185.

²Interview 15

³Ruddick, “Heterotopias of the Homeless,” *op. cit.*, p. 191.

⁴*Ibid.*

- ... it's like enjoying the people you mix with, it's like the family, it's like one big family. It's a good buzz being around here, but it's not the way of life I want, like I just want to get back and be happy.¹

Jack referred to having been 'hanging around' with someone for two months, as being a long time.

- I mean, so you've been together with these people for a long time?
- Yeah, a couple of months.²

Amidst a constantly changing population it is possible to quickly become the old hand at a place and to be much more in the know than others.

- ... you don't know how to get blankets, sleeping bags, people tell you how to do it. They tell you places to get cheap food, like the London Connection, a wash and things like that.³

The placelessness of homelessness however, like the ambiguous character of endurance being both defiant and nonchalant, is evident in mobility, and attachment to place. Where the conventional urbanite's concern is specifically with time and place, the homeless defy this logic. Time and space are to some degree of little consequence. For many, one space is like any other.

- ... 'Cause I prefer being how I am because I can go anywhere any time.⁴

The insouciance of the homeless to where they are is indicative of their lack of attachment to particular places and to the transitoriness of their lives. Their movement, especially around the country represents a constant rupturing of social networks, even though many of the homeless boast that they can find 'old friends' whenever they return to London.

¹Interview 6

²Interview 22

³Interview 14

⁴Interview 6

Mobility as Resistance

Tim Cresswell¹ in his article on Jack Kerouac's irreverent celebration of mobility and youthful rebellion in *On the Road*, discusses the relationship between mobility and critical action. He² proposes that Kerouac's critique, at the same time that it is an, "exuberant resistance to hegemonic ideals of home and family," is also a celebration of American folklore, conjuring up images of the taming of the great frontier. After Gramsci,³ he⁴ recognises not only that "domination is always contested" but that, "neither ... domination, nor ... resistance is 'complete,'" a point elucidated by recourse to Ross⁵ in Chapter 9.

Whilst British folkloric culture does not have the same favoured heroic male image, there are ways that homeless mobility celebrates the same irreverence that so enchanted Kerouac. As the imposed places of the city are icons of the establishment, defying their importance by expressing indifference to them is a symbolic means of constraint disempowerment, one of the symbolic battles discussed in Chapter 2, §*Contemporary Cultural Studies, Youth Subculture and Homeless Youth*.

Public Mobility

The mobility of the homeless, the fact that they need not be tied to a particular place, makes the homeless ubiquitous and conspicuous in the city. This ubiquity places the homeless themselves on the urban agenda. In the following chapter, the use of space by the homeless will be discussedⁱⁿ more detail, more in terms of its specific utility, rather than the skills that are used to 'make place.'

The omnipresence of the homeless affords them access to a knowledge of the city and a knowledge of local personalities such as the police, dangerous local people and roving evangelists. This intimate knowledge of the city, being easily capitalised upon, affords advantage. Residential familiarity provides a platform for the homeless' use of

¹Cresswell, "Mobility as Resistance," *op. cit.*, p. 254.

²*Ibid.*

³Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks. op. cit.* Cited in Cresswell, "Mobility as Resistance," *op. cit.*, p. 251.

⁴Cresswell, "Mobility as Resistance," *op. cit.*, p. 251. My emphasis.

⁵Ross, A., "Hacking away at the Counterculture," in Penley, C. and Ross, A., eds., *Technoculture*, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota, 1991, p. 122.

the city, a knowledge which is not shared by day time or occasional users of the same spaces. Their omnipresence allows them to play with the city, as they deploy their games and ruses. Their omnipresence and ubiquity in time affords them the time and space to sharpen their tactics and skills of the skills regime.

Sagacity

Aside from being adaptable, durable and mobile, the homeless need to be clever. Opportunities are few in the city, and commodities are even fewer. In order to ‘make do,’ the homeless need to use clever means to create access, and to afford advantage. Although homelessness is not a competitive subculture in the same way as other subcultures celebrate a competitive coolness (see Chapter 6, *§Dress and Cleanliness*), there is nevertheless a scarcity of resources for which the homeless have to compete.

Sagacity for the homeless is more than being able to cleverly find commodities, but it is a cleverness and alertness to seek out and to find alternatives, to redefine situations (adaptability) and to exploit them according to an alternative logic. The transcripts demonstrate that the homeless are adept at redefining situations and utilising alternative approaches to problems that may be regarded by the establishment as unorthodox. For de Certeau,¹ individual use in this way makes action “function in another register.”

The series of ‘I can’ statements listed at the beginning of this chapter demonstrate that the homeless perceive themselves as being capable. This capability often relates to abilities that may not be more widely regarded as socially acceptable skills.

- ... I can beg fags easily.²

- ... I can sit there and show you about thirteen plain clothes coppers. And like the Juvenile Protection Team, I could point them all out.³

¹De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, op. cit., p. 32.

²Interview 2

³Interview 2

• ... In some ways I'm probably better off doing what I do because I get my clothes washed for nothing, I get a shower for nothing, I can watch the television just like everybody else can watch the television, it has a lot of advantages and disadvantages. Um, but um, you know plus that, if I want to read late at night then I've got the street light, and I can stay up reading late at night anyway, because I got the street lights, it's a lot, that's free electricity, and all those people that live in posh houses look down on you, and look down their nose at you, and you can look up to them and say I'm saving my money, I'm not paying any electricity, I probably live more cheaply than you and a more free lifestyle than what you do.¹

•I can get money easily.

•How?

•I mean I don't beg or anything. Like I meet someone, any person, I might pose as a prostitute, and when I get to their house and they've taken their jewellery off and they've taken their trousers off or what ever, and they're in the bathroom doing whatever, I'll just rip all their jewellery and money and sell it, and then just get the money.²

• ... but over the two week Christmas period, I'm going out to beg, because I can make, you can easily make without a word of lie, ask any homeless person here today, in the two week Christmas period you can make one or two grand easily.³

•I mean, I'll just go someplace where I can be warm without spending a penny. But, if I've got money, it'll be the amusement centres, the money I've just begged up, you know, I'll spend it in the amusement centres.⁴

• ... I can go up the Hare Krishna restaurant and you can just go in and say, 'I'm homeless,' and they'll feed you there and then.⁵

• ... I'm not saying I'm headstrong or anything, but in a way, I can take care of myself on the street.⁶

•I can go around to my mum's and I can get money. Or I can borrow money off my family. I can do criminal things to get money ...⁷

¹Interview 4

²Interview 5

³Interview 11

⁴Interview 16

⁵Interview 25

⁶Interview 33

⁷Interview 36

- And what about things you dislike about living on the street?
- The police. That's about it. Well, they don't hassle me, and I can talk my way out of it, but a lot of people get arrested.¹

The knowledge of the streets needed by the homeless is not an establishment knowledge, but a knowledge antithetical to the establishment, a knowledge of the streets, its problems and its resources.

Sagacity is required by the homeless to complete the most mundane of tasks. On the streets even simple things like washing and finding a lavatory can be a major difficulty. Ian makes the following comment:

- What information do you think it is critical to know when you're living on the streets?
- Jesus ... things that are critical are things like job centre, you need to know where the DSSs are. You know how much time the homeless person wastes in the DSS place. ... There's a few that you're all right in, you need to know where all the medical places are and stuff like that. It's good to know all the places that can help you out with food, like the Crypt here and the Strand, and 'cause you can't say you're never going to be in a situation at eleven o'clock at night when you are literally starving and freezing. And if you know when that Strand van is going to be there, you know what I mean. Things like that are critical. Another thing that's critical is just to know your way about, to know where to go and where not to go, that is critical as well, because that will save your backside so many times, if you know them things. You can avoid trouble that otherwise, if you didn't know, you'd a run into, and you get a bad experience from it. They are critical to save bad experiences.²

Ian's account illustrates some of the needs of the homeless. He goes on to suggest:

- You get to meet a lot of people and it makes you wise. You know exactly what's going on right, like you're walking down a road and you know not to turn down that road but to go the long way round if you have to, because you know what's going on.³

This knowledge constitutes a practical knowledge of the rhythms and contingencies of street life. This is a knowledge of experience acquired on the streets.

¹Interview 36

²Interview 11

³Interview 11

Maximising Access and Knowledge

One means of accruing and utilising clever knowledge lies in the constant evaluation of provision. Given new facilities, the homeless evaluate what is and what is not possible, what services are and are not available, the alertness of the staff, the possibilities of exploitation, making inventory of requests that may be fulfilled. Individual staff may be evaluated and information informally circulated about the possibility of getting an item (a razor for example), from one staff member, where another staff member may not normally oblige. Knowing who to ask becomes important.

One of the hostels has a general policy of not accepting additional residents once the beds are full. However, at least one of the workers, who may be rostered on, is prepared to accept additional young people to sleep on one of the sofas in the recreational area. Knowing and exploiting members of staff who are likely to bend the rules in this way, affords the homeless a certain illegitimate access, access borne of intimately knowing the system.

Users of the Centrepoin Dean Street night shelter invariably ask for items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste or razors, not necessarily because they are needed, but because such provisions are available. Whilst many such requests are legitimate, others are made merely because the opportunity is there. Moreover, individuals are also keen to determine what other provisions, or facilities may be available.

Information regarding the availability of particular items spreads quickly around those resident, as indeed do stories which may constitute reasonable grounds for provision. Such responses are widely used by the homeless. Dr Phillip Joseph, Consultant Psychiatrist to the Great Chapel Street Medical Centre, a provision for the homeless, commented in the following way.

He said that most of his time is spent seeing young people who ask for drugs such as Valium. He suggested that if he prescribed such a drug, it would soon be sold at a hostel such as Centrepoin. He actually did not prescribe drugs in this way saying that young

people soon learn that he will not supply same to them. In this case the young people go and search for other doctors.¹

The homeless are also alert to finding ways of earning money, sometimes by illicit means. Snow and Anderson² refer to this kind of employment and illicit activity as “shadow work.” Their study based on the homeless in Austin, Texas, cites cases of selling and trading junk, selling illegal goods and services, prostitution, selling plasma, scavenging, begging, and theft. Young homeless persons in London engage in many of these activities, though scavenging is uncommon, and there is no opportunity to sell plasma in Britain.

Joe relates one experience of being paid to affix stickers/cards to telephone boxes:

- What happens, somebody comes along and gives you some money to stick those around?
- Yeah, they just stick them in the telephone boxes. What they say is like, ‘Tease me’ and ‘Spank me’ and this guy will come round and give you a hundred of them and say like, ‘Go round Marylebone, Edgware Rd., Clacton, and stick them in the telephone boxes, and here’s twenty quid.’ He gives you the twenty quid as well, and you go around and stick them in the boxes. Like, what they are, they’re not really them ‘phone lines where you have an answering machine and somebody on the other side, what it is, is actual contact numbers for prostitutes.³

Sagacity for the homeless also implies a knowledge about that which may be easily stolen. Whilst theft is sometimes effected by trickery, it is often effected by a knowledge of the city, its rhythms and its vulnerabilities. Theft is often occasioned by opportunity such as people’s late night wanderings through parks.

- Who do you mug?
- Anyone. Never old people, never families.
- Women?
- Never do women. Just middle-aged men, and sort of 25 to 39 or 40.
- And do you just wait in the park?

¹Research Journal, 6 December 1990. Details of conversation with Dr Phillip Joseph, Consultant Psychiatrist to the Great Chapel Street Medical Centre (a provision for the homeless). According to the Hungerford Drug Project, Wardour Street, London, the street price for Valium for 1990-91, is estimated at £1 for five tablets.

²Snow and Anderson, *Down on their Luck*, op. cit., pp. 145-170.

³Interview 28

- Yeah, we wait in the park, or we take them in the [garbled] things like that.
- Do you assault them?
- No you just frighten them because unless they [garbled], they just stand there ... ¹

The sale of stolen articles is also not uncommon amongst those on the streets, Joe recounts his experience:

- ... if I was up North, I wouldn't dare go up to somebody in a suit and say, 'Oh do you want to buy this?' but in London, you don't give a [garbled] because you'll most likely never see them again. No, I've sold cufflinks, Filofaxes, everything, tie pins, the works, even one of them dictators, dictating machines.²

Gary relates his successes with Mercury telephone card dispensing machines:

- Have you been involved in any crime since you've been on the streets?
- Loads.
- Such as?
- Well ... for a start. Um, parking meters, Mercury 'phone card dispensing machines.
- What's that, you get the cards out, or you get the money out?
- You get the money out. You just walk up to them with a crow bar and go, [slam]. There's quite a lot of them on Tottenham Court Road.³

Chris' skills with credit card fraud, provided him with a lucrative livelihood, more than capable of keeping him off the streets, until he was caught.

- Yeah, we have [garbled] two burglars [garbled] getting them for us [garbled] and I was sending them to friends and the friends were sending them to us. We was at it for about two and a half years. And when we got caught, I got two and half years.
- Really?
- Well worth it: 78,000 pounds. I worked for that, 39,000 pounds a year.
- What sort of things were you ringing up on credit cards?
- Flats, bought a flat with an American Express. Bought furniture. Just videos and tellies. Go in and buy a stereo. Keep it in the box and resell it. Just to make money. They [garbled] between the five of us. It was a good crack while it lasted.⁴

¹ Interview 17

² Interview 28

³ Interview 25

⁴ Interview 23

Jamie is on the rent scene, whilst he does not often go out to get picked up sometimes he does go back with men. He says of prostitution:

- ... it's easy money because you can make thirty, forty or fifty quid in half an hour whereas with begging you could be sat there for six seven hours for ten, fifteen quid.¹

Such means of raising money involves a certain 'know how.' Joe's knowledge of selling stolen goods has given him opportunities for raising funds. Gary's knowledge of telephone card machines and their whereabouts shows a knowledge of the city and of means for getting-by. Chris' abilities to organise a credit card scam and to elude the police demonstrates a certain dexterity with exploiting the system. Jamie's prostitution calls for a knowledge of the streets, the rent scene and how to guard against health risks (although he is HIV positive). Sagacity is therefore dependent on the acquisition of specific street knowledge and information.

Information

Street knowledge depends on the flow of information. The communication of this information occurs through channels of associations, some information being highly restricted. Given that scams and opportunities provide advantage to only a few, and that loopholes quickly close when either detected or over subscribed, information is sometimes closely guarded. Even with personal fortune, the homeless are aware that if information gets out, soon there will be others around.

- If you get a place, a flat or something, will you tell a lot of people that you've met here where it is?
- No, because I made that mistake once before.
- So how many people would you tell, where you were?
- I wouldn't.
- You wouldn't tell anyone?
- Not again, no.
- So you'd just disappear?

¹Interview 10

•Yeah. I'd let them know about it, but I wouldn't tell them where I was living. Because they'd be determined to spoil it.¹

Patrick had a flat at one time and after living there for a while he went away for a week or so. When he returned he found that squatters had moved in, people who he had known from elsewhere. He was unable to get them out and so he abandoned his flat.

Whilst the homeless need to learn to maintain a tight hold on their own information, it is also valuable for them to seek insights into the hidden information of others. The loss of Patrick's housing is the gain of another, and information relating to vacant properties when acted on may afford accommodation or indeed a whole range of commodities desired by the homeless. The homeless need to be attuned to their environment, not only to the establishment context in which they live, but also attuned to each other.

•When you come down, you got to be careful about that, you've got, not to bow down to everything anybody says, like just try and sort of you've got to be clever in a way to work out what that person's like. If you work 'em out quick enough you can get one with 'em and that, and know who not to piss off and who you can get away with it. Like that you've just got to study a person in the time you've got, that's what I always do, now if I met someone I study 'em so I know where I can stand with them. Know what I mean. It's wise to do that.²

Although social networks are not highly organised, individuals on the streets generally know each other, by sight if not by name. Certain informal networks exist where individuals will know what happened to some other person who had been on the streets. If information isn't forthcoming individuals will often know who to ask.

•Do you know many people on the streets, can you pick out many homeless people, by seeing them?

•Yeah.

•Do you know them by name?

•No I know 'em by face.³

¹Interview 34

²Interview 11

³Interview 6

Using Sagacity

The homeless, unable to utilise the structures of the established city, turn to alternative avenues. Instead of attempting to use the logic of the city (one which is perceived as regularly denying them) the homeless use the underside of the city, by redeploying and redefining resources. This approach defies the orthodox reading of the city transforming it into an alternative landscape. The resourceful city for the non homeless, and the homeless are indeed different places.

Like the other skills, sagacity provides a sense of identity and self-aprobation.

Ian notes:

- ... It feels good knowing you're streetwise, you know what I mean.¹

The homeless see themselves, at least in part as knowing and understanding the city, and having knowledge well beyond the experience of others.

- ... Some people have been through a lot and they know more about life than other people at 50.²

Sagacity with the other skills constitute part of the antilogic implicit in the homeless' use of the city. The homeless make sense of the city according to their own urban antilogic. Confounding and exploiting the logic of the city, their familiarity with this currency gives them advantage. Constant vigilance and testing, characterises the ruse rich world of the homeless. Furthermore, it is this *sagacity* deployed in association with *trickery* which affords the homeless potential advantage at every urban contingency.

- If something's going on, I'm the first one to know about it, and I decide whether I want to join in or not.³

This constant searching for and catalysis of loopholes and opportunities relates to Goffman's⁴ concept of "scene creation." Such "inopportune intrusions" cause those who have been managing an impression to reform. In the context of a social encounter

¹Interview 11

²Interview 1

³Interview 17

⁴Goffman, *The Presentation of Self, op. cit.*, pp. 204-205.

this may mean disrupting circumstances to the end that a consistent impression is not maintained. By disrupting contiguous projected impressions, the homeless can induce the revealing of restricted information, or learn things about a given system or setup which will afford them advantage. As individuals reshuffle, the homeless opportune themselves of gaps which appear momentarily in social armour. Finding gaps and traversing uncharted waters, the homeless gain access by means of disrupting the social order.

Secondly, in addition to the disruption of social impression, the homeless are also masters of their own “impression management.”¹ With trickery, the homeless are able to select and deploy suitable ruses for the dupable. Their own impression management calls for a knowledge of urban systems. Ubiquitous in London, the homeless are implicitly aware of the rhythm and nature of the city both temporal and spatial. Thus they are able to deploy means by which to maximise potential, as they ply the streets. These ruses are partially attributable to sagacity and partially to trickery.

Trickery

For the homeless, an intimate knowledge of the city is a great advantage. However, sometimes even an intimate knowledge is not sufficient, and there are circumstances where disingenuousness affords greater windfalls. In this context the homeless turn to trickery in order to further their ends. Such trickery is a part of the everyday experience of the homeless, forming part of the shared culture of homelessness. Ranging from criminal activities to scams, such tricks characterise the ruses of critical livelihood, and contribute to the homeless re-creation of the city.

Tricks however can be subtle. For the powerless, trickery is often effected in zones of oppression in ways where its subtlety cannot be detected. The utilisation of tricky and subtle ruses relies on the morality of the homeless’ antilogic. This trickery is grounded in critical action. Certain forms of trickery become readily accepted as part of the everyday necessity of seeking advantage.

¹*Ibid.*, pp. 203-230.

•And so how do you manage to get money through criminal ways?

•Yeah, drugs, muggings, clippings, burglaries, things like that.¹

•And, I mean, in the context of these interviews people have told me that they have various tricks to begging, I mean do you have any tricks that you do to increase the money that you get?

•Oh, yeah, yeah. I, uh, leave my hair scruffy, don't have a shave so often. Dirty fingernails, bit down fingernails. I like, just, like, 'Spare the price of a cup of tea?' Or if I've got a cup of tea in my hand, 'Spare the price of a bag of chips?' You know, it works, it works. Have a quilt wrapped around me and whatever.²

•Are there any tricks to begging?

•Well, I don't use a London accent, I use a Liverpool accent.

•So how do you do that?

•I'm not going to show you. I use a Liverpool accent, and I'm always begging with somebody else, because it's better. If there's, I know this sounds funny, but if a lady sees a man begging, and a lady sees a woman begging, she's more likely to give the girl money than she is the boy. So, if like, a boy goes begging, it's better if he's got a girl with him, because he's got more chance of getting more money.³

•The best thing to do, I can't beg like this, I can't beg like this because nobody would drop me, because I look too tidy ... I've got new trousers on, trainers, nice trainers, nice socks, nice, know what I mean, so I couldn't look like that. I would have to get a blanket and wrap it around me, where they can't see what I've got underneath, and then you beg.⁴

•And when you beg, is there anything that you do to increase the amount of money you get from people?

•Yeah, just make myself look more dirty.

•How do you do that?

•Maybe [garbled] put on my face, put a blanket around me. A low voice as well.

•A low voice?

•No, just make my voice sound a bit more like, I don't know, like a bit more—needy.⁵

¹Interview 17

²Interview 29

³Interview 36

⁴Interview 11

⁵Interview 34

Trickery is an important part of the resource regime because it provides the homeless with advantage. Even the embellishment of circumstance affords the homeless a means of evoking greater sympathy and indeed greater charity. Where there is no advantage, trickery can provide it, and where there is little advantage, trickery can make circumstances profitable. In the world in which the homeless dwell, opportunities quickly close once they are opened. Like loopholes they are quickly closed. The homeless gain advantage by utilising both sagacity and trickery; being aware of the situation and ‘trying it on.’ Such an approach provides a gateway into the procurement of commodities. Further, because of their shortage, commodities are widely defined (adaptability). Like the credit card fraud indicated above (see §*Sagacity*), opportunity is turned into cash, and cash is readily turned into other commodities.

Trickery and the Maintenance of Front

At length, Erving Goffman¹ discusses the nature of artifice and the ways in which actors create and utilise front and back regions. He suggests that behaviour is characterised by how individuals choose to be perceived. Further, he considers how changing contexts and regions effect behaviour. He considers behaviour in the context of others, employing a dramaturgic perspective on the maintenance of what he calls front regions, zones in which behaviour is public and from which impressions are drawn. In such a context Goffman² suggests that the actor needs to concentrate on “impression management.” Whilst Goffman’s works have been criticised in an earlier chapter, (Chapter 2, §*Schools of Thought*) his taxonomy remains as a useful means of systematising social behaviour. The homeless world is a good example. Certainly the homeless live publicly, and want and need to present a pragmatically defined coherent “front.” Goffman’s nomenclature allows us to chart and systemise behaviour according to place and context.

Urban space is carefully monitored and utilised by the homeless. Front regions become back regions and vice versa according to context. In the face of passers-by, the

¹Goffman, *The Presentation of Self, op. cit.*, pp. 108-140.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 203-230.

appearance of the homeless is a constructed one where each in a group (where sitting together for example) substantiates stories in order to maintain a coherent front. From having spent time with the homeless on the streets it is easy to see this practice at work. When passing by, the homeless call out for change, and even engage by-passers with a tale of deprivation or want, or a 'witty' comment. During the research for this thesis, it was often found that when passing a homeless person, they would often initiate dialogue with myself or my partner.¹ As soon as it was ascertained that we were not the 'dupable' public, but rather a part of the homeless 'industry,' and that we 'knew' the situation, conversation became genuine and direct. Like other people on similar missions, we became targets, for although we may not have been able to give them change, we may have been able to purvey other resources, such as disposable shavers or perhaps bibles. Goffman suggests that it is amongst those who are not well known by the 'performers' that performances need to be tightly orchestrated. For those who know the circumstances well performances may be less precise.²

In any case it was clear that the homeless, wanting to evoke a reaction in passers-by, were maintaining a coherent impression. For Goffman, such ends constitute "dramaturgical discipline."³ This preoccupation with appearance, is evidenced by the homeless, who whilst not wanting to look like 'dossers,' are happy to effect the charity that a 'dosser' may be given.

- What would I do? Well I'd comb my hair out and make it look absolutely crap, comb it down or something. Uh, I've got a pretty nice coat, I haven't got it with me, but I'd sit on that, because that's pretty nice. I don't do me laces in me trainers, and I don't sit so you can't really see my jeans and how clean they are. That's why a lot of people just sit with their hands over their legs, so you can't see how clean they are. Things like that, you know, just basics, really ...
- You don't sort of have a watch out, or anything?
- No, 'cause, where I sit, is like, if the police come along, then I'll just stand up. Say I'm waiting for somebody.⁴

¹ At this time I was visiting people on the streets with Colin a member of the Community of St Mark, a preparatory semi-monastic order.

²*Ibid.*, p. 216.

³*Ibid.*, p. 210.

⁴Interview 28

On the one hand homeless young people may want to look neat, tidy and be clean, and yet on the other hand, and at different times, they may wish to present themselves differently in order to effect particular ends. This deliberate use of sanctioned or anticipated behaviour—in this case, the popularised representation of the ‘dosser’—as a deliberately performed drama is a form of what de Certeau¹ calls *la perruque*. Whilst this term most commonly refers to the making of private goods on company time in the workplace, de Certeau² defines *la perruque*, literally “the wig,”³ as the introduction of “‘popular’ techniques of other times and other places into the industrial space (that is, into the Present order).” In this case, the homeless utilise the prescribed social image of the ‘dosser’ in order to capitalise on it. Just as the conventional *perruque* masquerades personal work as industrial work, the homeless masquerade an act for their own ends, using one popular image or stereotype of the homeless. Into de Certeau’s “present order” of anticipated representations, the homeless insert their own play, a play intended to capitalise on representation, and yet to privately validate their own difference from that which they simulate. Ironically however, for the homeless, the division between their perception of themselves, and the selves that they deliberately portray is subtle, and therein lies the fragility of their own identity.

Trickery as Mockery: Mockery as Critique

In addition to the practical side of trickery, trickery itself quickly becomes part of homeless identity. Furthermore, it affords kudos as the homeless defy and indeed overturn the logic of the city. The homeless are at play, playing with established meaning and the inflexibility of the establishment. Though they may be weak compared to larger structural forces, their ability to outrun and outwit exists because of their capacity to play with unthought consequences and implications of urban situations. Constantly aware of changes and novelty the homeless are first to find opportunity.

•How do you get through the tube without paying?

•That’s a good one because that’s so easy, there’s like at first I used to be nervous doing it

¹De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, op. cit., p. 24.

²*Ibid.*, p. 26.

³Ruddick, *Heterotopias of the Homeless*, op. cit., p. 189.

but, it's just so easy now, even like, what you do like when you're walking through, you can do it without any card at all, simple, when somebody goes in and puts their card in, you go right behind 'em like there's a queue, there's queues, and normally they're not even looking, they're right behind them, and when they pull their card the gates open when you pull the card, not when you put it in, when you pull the card out you're right behind 'em, there's time for three or four people to go through if you want it. I've been like six people before (laughs) ... Half the time they let you through, other times they say, 'Oi,' like some of the stubborn ones, know what I mean, stuck to rules and all that sort of stuff, it's easy to get through, you can do it with a card as well, just hold a card and pretend to stick it through, so at least if they look, they see you sticking a card in, and they look away or something, or just pull your card back out.¹

Knowing that he can get away with this trick, Ian uses it often to move around the city. Yet aside from its practical purpose, there is a certain pleasure that is implicit in the recounting of his actions. In this pleasure lies the mockery of the system that would otherwise constrain him. His knowledge of the tactics of the street afford him access and some degree of cathartic release.

Although most respondents suggested that the homeless had dogs for protection and for companionship, I spoke to one young person who had actually been begging with a dog. His comment was quite different.

•Because if you've got a dog next to you, it's brilliant for begging, you don't think it is but ... they say, 'Buy him some dog food,' but the dog don't see a penny of it. I had this girl that I met in Brixton, staying in a squat, and I was going out, and she had like a Boxer dog, and I brought her down here one day, and it made me a fucking fortune I'm tellin' you. I must have made about sixty pound in two hours. I was sat at the most quietest street, Bedford Street, it's not busy, it's not a bad street for begging, but I cleaned up, I had pockets out here (laughs) ... ²

Implicit in this response is a sense of satisfaction in the simplicity of improving one's income from begging. That the dog may not see a penny of the money begged, is inflected with meaning. That the dog is used as a guileful ruse, imbues this action with a critical energy.

¹Interview 11

²Interview 9

The Tragedy of Trickery

Although the homeless may gain a sense of satisfaction from successful ploys, their actions remain rooted in necessity. Whilst most have few qualms about occasional trickery others feel distinctly uneasy.

Individuals react to circumstances differently, some being more adaptable than others. Some manage to learn and utilise streetwisdom quickly whilst others are more resistant to change. The difficulties associated with trickery, mendacity and other street skills are exacerbated by the emotional problems that individuals bring to the streets. Although critical livelihood may be cathartic, it is never able to ameliorate the emotional troubles haunting many of the homeless. Whilst there is trickery in the homeless world, the problems of the homeless are real, and in the histories of individuals who adopt a range of survival tactics, there is often a series of sad and tragic details.

Whilst according the homeless with purposive behaviour affords the homeless the dignity of self-determination, their lives remain circumscribed by larger forces, forces which have also had a real impact on their everyday lives.

- ... I mean, like, I'm coming up to 24, you know? And I can't, you know stay around on the streets forever, you know. I need somewhere to settle down permanently, and you know, make a go of things.¹

The actions of the homeless—no matter how inventive or ingenious—are always actions within a constraining framework. Eddy's comments below, for example, explain that whilst he engages in the 'scam' of begging, it is seen only as a means of survival. That his actions may be cathartic at another level, does little to alleviate the awe of deception and of denigration in front of others.

- ... At the moment I'm surviving on as little as possible, I don't like going out begging for money, to me I feel ashamed or embarrassed by it.²

- Do you feel embarrassed by being on the streets?
- Um, sometimes yes, sometimes no.
- How do you mean?

¹Interview 34

²Interview 12

•Well, it's like ... There is no possible way I could be on the street, I could be dead, I could be ... Just cause I'm on the street doesn't mean I can't keep clean. But meeting somebody and having them ask where you live ... sometimes occasionally probably having to lie, which I don't like doing. Just turn around and say, 'Well, yeah, I'm on the street.' ¹

Although trickery can be exhilarating, it can be demoralising. Whilst it can be a critique of urban orthodoxy, it can also be tragic. The lives of the homeless are fraught with this duality, and despite the maintenance of a courageous front, many of the homeless suffer from difficulty and confusion.

The Ethnography of the Skills Regime

The utilisation of skills by the homeless, affords them with a grip on their own perceived marginality. Although the homeless share a sense of marginality, their created and critical world celebrates a common rejection of the icons of establishment respectability. The dejected but determined homeless, create a livelihood that celebrates their defiance of social norms and constitutes a viable urban livelihood. Their lives remain a mix of the tragedy of circumstance and the triumph of their livelihood.

Critical livelihood, a product of marginality and determination, affords the homeless a collective identity directed against an unsympathetic establishment. Pride in their ingenuity, endurance, adaptability and manipulation provides them with a basis for self-worth, even if from the perspective of the establishment their skills are degenerate and offensive. The homeless live an ambiguous and contradictory life, which their commitment to a critical livelihood only ever manages to partially address.

Properties of Skills

The skills regime used by the homeless, is a system of deflecting control. The ways that the homeless live in the city demonstrate a certain slipperiness and drive for survival. In part the very homelessness of these young people is a rejection of society, but at the same time the subculture of homelessness is by no means freely adopted. The

¹Interview 24

structural forces provoking homelessness, discussed in Chapter 2, reveal the pervasive structural motors that precipitate and provide for the reproduction of homelessness. Their response in the guise of critical livelihood is borne of necessity and of a desire to reject the city and its modes, as a symbolic representation of the establishment and of their deprivation. Even though such actions are often subliminally motivated, their expressive lucidity is clearly borne out by careful analysis. Where, political, cultural, social and economic forces are intangible realities, power flows are placeless and decentralised, the actions of the 'anonymous they' of the establishment. Being intangibles, their rejection and criticism is directed at those who represent them, whether in the antagonisation of members of the 'establishment,' or in the general rejection of social norms and expectations. Critical livelihood is a means of disempowering these constraints. The city in all its modes, perhaps the greatest icon of the establishment, is not surprisingly vilified by the homeless who see its character and manifestations as forces to confound. In this way the city is subverted, conquered, undermined, overturned and thwarted, the homeless making do any way they can.

The opportunism of the homeless twists the city into an alternative reality, an alternative operating logic within the city. The underside of the city, its loopholes and its unthought consequences become the terrain of the homeless who use every available opportunity to their advantage using a range of clever tactical skills. This pragmatic opportunism empowers them according to the antilogic informing the homeless city. In inverting the city, the homeless become champions of the underworld, the interstitial and forgotten spaces of the city.

CHAPTER 8

SPACES AND OPPORTUNITY: SOURCES IN THE CITY

The city is a venue of places spatial, temporal and institutional, in which London's young homeless capitalising on circumstance, make use of their skills. These places are urban contingencies where time, space and the homeless meet. The terrain of the city, constantly traversed by the homeless, is comprised of these spatial contingencies.

The homeless city is a negotiated space. Like the tactical manoeuvres of the homeless (skills), the spaces of homelessness are given meaning by the inversion of the social order. This inversion apparent in the homeless commodities, space and action gives the homeless city its special character. With this in mind, this chapter examines the sources of material and cultural commodities in order to understand the perspective and subculture shared by London's young homeless.

London's young homeless make use of sources that fit into the following five categories:¹

- the public
- the state
- the social welfare net
- the body
- space and time

The Public

The urban public is heterogeneous. For the homeless, its members range from aggressive inebriates intent on molestation, (the homeless often being regarded as fair game) to those willing to help, providing time or pecuniary beneficence. For the homeless, the public ranging from dangerous to the dupable, need appropriate treatment according to the respective opportunity they may afford. Modifying behaviour at appropriate times and in appropriate spaces, the public is capable of providing the homeless with a range of commodities in a range of ways.

¹ See the discussion on categories and dimensions in Chapter 4, §A *System of Exchange*.

The Utility of the Public

First, the public is capable of providing immediate charity. Whilst passers-by decreasingly attend to the homeless, occasional beneficence, especially from the naive can be reasonably anticipated. Arresting passers-by on the streets, by their engagement in earnest conversation, the homeless are reluctant to move on without requesting help. The embellishment and fabrications used by the homeless demonstrate a pragmatic determination for survival. Regrettably however, tales of real need may become lost in a sea of contrivances.

Secondly, because public support and concern is important for the homeless, individuals are often concerned about misrepresentation, or representation leading to social disapproval. Many of the homeless criticise those beggars who are loud and offensive, suggesting that such behaviour compromises public perception. Their politeness, 'Spare some change? No? Have a nice evening, thanks anyway,'¹ is in part a tactic used to avoid confrontation. Some suggest that they are always particularly polite in order to offset the rudeness of others and to deflect any possible animosity directed at them.

- ... But like you just say, 'spare any change please, spare change.' Or if you really want to make money, you can be really polite and fair to them and that, don't give them any hassle. ²

Thirdly, there are those who seek to proselytise or accost for some other purpose. Some are concerned evangelists interested in 'missionary' work, whilst others are those genuinely concerned with the homeless. Many preachers and evangelists minister to the homeless every evening. The Salvation Army for example has a number of projects operating in London, some of these provide services, and others provide street workers whose principal interest is conversation and where appropriate, advice. Additionally, the Jesus Army, an evangelical Christian group, have regular missions to the homeless. They also take young people directly from the streets into the country (on a

¹Interview 3

²Interview 11

double decker bus), so that they may be removed from the influences of the street. This programme is highly conditioned by an interest in proselytising and conversion.

Fourthly, there are those intending to exploit the homeless, for example for the purposes of prostitution or the making of pornographic movies. The homeless are also often used as purveyors of information relating to the availability of drugs, and may be encouraged to become involved in other illicit activities such as the filling of telephone boxes with cards advertising prostitution.

Fifthly, there are those whose interest is in the victimisation and assault of those on the streets. Unprovoked attacks are not uncommon.

Tom: A bright sparky character. Had been stabbed in the leg in the previous night requiring him to be taken to hospital and stitched up. Prior to my going into the place I stopped to speak with him for a few moments, in the doorway adjacent to McDonald's on Shaftesbury Avenue. He told me about the circumstances. He was on the Strand and he was just sitting there when this bloke came and stabbed him. He was in pain, but nevertheless he and his friends went and 'beat the shit out of him.' He came into the shelter in the evening, but did not end up staying.¹

In this case the public is less a potential for beneficence than a danger and nuisance, and in such circumstances the homeless need to be able to identify dangerous places and individuals and guard themselves against misadventure.

By confronting passers-by with an unfathomed world, the homeless are able to exploit their very otherness. The young homeless challenge complacency and marginalisation by skilfully juxtaposing the reality of their lives with the comfort of the wider populace, who daily cross their paths. Their very otherness, allows them to create unexpected scenes, placing those accosted into uncomfortable and sometimes threatening situations. Their ability to create these scenarios is closely related to their utilisation of urban spaces and skills. With some ingenuity the homeless challenge what is for the establishment, a mass of detached faceless commuters, into recognising the reality of the cold nights, and indeed the awe of their situation. Audaciously they transgress the bounds of acceptable behaviour playing in the area between social convention and social reality.

¹Research Journal, 15 December 1990.

Challenging conventional social distancing, the homeless twist a contradiction implicit in urban life by using the language of familiarity in their communications with passers-by. The homeless annex power by engendering pity and guilt. Skilful orators, they play at conscience, engendering sympathy and then challenging captive audiences to demonstrate their concern by providing funds. Joe related how he was able to elicit funds from people who tried to 'pick him up.'

• I mean, if the guy's got money, then I'll actually, I will like, play him along, say, 'Oh, I haven't eaten in so many days,' and if he gives me money, say, 'Well, sorry, I'm not interested.' You know what I mean. That's how I see it. If they're that bad enough to go over to a young person, I wouldn't mind if I was 18, it's all right, you know. But, I'm 16, and I know they're like, doing it deliberately, then I'll take it for the money, take it for a [garbled] I'll just go. I mean, that's how I am.¹

The State

Like the heterogeneous public, the state has many dimensions. The homeless come into contact with the state through the departments of Housing and Social Security, through provision made to assist local projects, via the law and the police, and through local authority care. Although both national and local governments make provision for the homeless, little differentiation is made by those on the streets.

Respective branches of the state can be either constraining or enabling according to their nature and use.

The Departments of Housing and Social Security

Few of the homeless make extensive use of either the Department of Housing or the Department of Social Security. The DSS is perceived by the homeless as oversubscribed, understaffed and underfunded with many of the homeless finding departmental bureaucracy impenetrable, funding inadequate and offices intolerable.

• ... You know how much time the homeless person wastes in the DSS place. You want fifteen pound a crisis loan because you haven't been paid for four weeks. You've got to go there at nine o'clock in the morning, sit with a bunch of alcoholics who are smoking,

¹Interview 28

mouth, shouting, fighting, for like up to five o'clock in the afternoon, just to get fourteen pound fifty counter payment. Every single DSS is like that you're guaranteed, you sit and have to wait in them all.¹

• ... I find the dole office is so ridiculous, they want to know where you've been living, they want to know why you've been on the streets, um, why you don't go into the hostels, and that, personally, it's none of their business, and you shouldn't have to try to explain to a total stranger why you want what you're entitled to.²

•No there's no point, when you're on the street, there's no point getting social security, they say come back tomorrow, and they go, 'I'm afraid we can't see you at the moment, come back at three,' and you go back at three, and they say, 'I'm afraid you should have come back earlier, we're closing now, come back tomorrow,' and you go back tomorrow at nine o'clock with a flask, sleeping bag and some sandwiches ...³

Unsurprisingly, given the degree of bureaucracy, few make use of the department, many instead preferring to beg for money. The fear of police identification for those with criminal records serves to further *reduce* their use of provision.

The Department of Housing too has provided little for London's young homeless. Although there has been some effort to promote resettlement in the guise of the government's Rough Sleepers Initiative, the scale of expenditure on this project is only a fraction of that which has been earned from the sale of public rental properties.⁴ Furthermore, the initiative has failed to provide on target the degree of permanent accommodation that it has promised.⁵ The Young Homelessness Group⁶ suggest, "there are actually fewer places directly accessible to homeless young people than in 1979—6000 less in London alone."

Even in terms of 'playing' or exploiting the DSS, the homeless manage to gain little headway. Occasionally young people report being given crisis loans, but these are always deducted from future payments and must be repaid. Occasionally there are stories of young people who have managed to secure such loans, but these cases are few. For

¹Interview 11, For a fuller account of this quotation see Chapter 7, §*Sagacity*.

²Interview 10

³Interview 3

⁴Keane, "Back to the Brink," *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁵Thames Reach, *Moving On*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁶Gosling, *Young Homelessness: A National Scandal*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

most of the young people involved in this study, it is easier to beg or steal than it is be awarded funds from the Social Security office.

Whilst some young people do make regular use of the DSS for their funds, those trying to live on the social security alone find it difficult to do so, more normally supplementing their income by 'illicit work.'¹

The Police

The police, as an executive of the state, are another means by which the state and the individual engage. Every person homeless for any length of time will have had dealings with the police. Whilst most responses about the police in the interviews were critical and uncomplimentary, some individuals were unwilling to discount the police altogether, recounting instances where the police had been helpful.

- ... they used to give us so much shite! They used to come kicking us and beating us in the morning to wake us up, just to fucking check our names and stuff. But when we done the National Sleepout Week, they was with us. They were 'Yeah, we're protecting you,' like it was, 'You wankers,' they are just total wankers.²

- ... the police are just dickheads.³

- ... sometimes they're all right, like I had an asthma attack, Saturday, like and two old Bill come over and just seen whether I was all right or not, and they got an ambulance for us, and they were all right. They're sometimes all right, depends which. I normally say 'hello' or 'good-bye' to them, you know, they're not that unfriendly. I get on with anyone. If they annoy me, if they upset me I upset them, but they've got to upset me first.⁴

- The old Bill? Cunts basically, at the end of the day. They hassle the homeless too much, but again that's understandable, because probably about 90% of the crimes that happened around the shops and all that in the West End is through homeless people.⁵

¹ Illicit in the sense that their work may not be reported to the DSS. See also Snow and Anderson, *Down on their Luck*, op. cit., pp. 168-70.

² Interview 2

³ Interview 9

⁴ Interview 6

⁵ Interview 11

•Some of them are all right, I suppose. Some coppers are all right. It's just like the ones that are out to make a name for themselves.¹

• ... And if you've got more than one packet of condoms on you, they think you're a rent boy.²

•The police are very bad. I mean they'll come over and give you hassle for no reason, like you're sleeping ... 'Get out! Get out!' They empty your pockets, 'What have you got in your pockets? What's your name? What are you doing here?'³

Whilst the police suggest that there is no deliberate policy for handling the homeless, many of the homeless freely relate stories of brutality which representatives of the police force unsurprisingly deny, although they do recognise that some police are perhaps less sympathetic than others.⁴

The police afford little opportunity for exploitation, with the exception of their contribution to a street mythology and as a focus of vilification. Although some explained that they enjoyed baiting the police, most of the homeless do all they can to avoid the police altogether. The chronically homeless, however, due to their ubiquity have little need to elude the police.

Other than contributing to a street mythology, and perhaps providing by their derision a source of cathartic release, the police offer little opportunity for the homeless, being more often a source of obstruction.

Local Authorities and Local Authority Care

Although most of London's young homeless have not experienced Local Authority Care, a sizeable proportion, some 40%⁵ have. Whilst most of those migrating from care to the streets lose their ties with former workers, localities and social networks, some maintain links with past foster families. Very often young people have left foster

¹Interview 23

²Interview 28

³Interview 33

⁴Information drawn from interview with officers of the Juvenile Protection Unit, Vine Street Police Station, 23 April, 1991.

⁵Randall, *Homeless and Hungry*, *op. cit.*, p. 13; According to SHAC, "Children in residential care are 68% more likely to end up homeless than those in families." SHAC (London Housing Aid Centre), *SHAC Info*, SHAC, London, 1993, pp. 11 and 18.

situations under circumstances of disaffection, and in these cases those who have been in care are unlikely to want to be in contact with past carers.

Of those eligible for leaving care grants, only some manage to access provision through what is a labyrinth of bureaucracy. So bureaucratic, impenetrable and inconsistent are the regulations, that even advice project workers complain of misunderstandings. Centrepoin¹ note that local authorities now have duties to “publish information,” about accommodation and support services, especially for those leaving care, though Niner,² suggests that there is wide variety of ways that the government regulations have been interpreted by different local authorities. As an example she demonstrates the confusing range of ways that “vulnerability” has been interpreted, a principal determinant in the evaluation of “priority need.”

Although the Children Act 1989, has made it mandatory for local authorities to provide information relating to available assistance, a general lack of funding³ has meant that the furnishing of such information is inconsistent and in many cases absent. Under funded, Local Authorities are incapable of fulfilling these requirements, an incapacity that has ramifications for those homeless in London, often far away from their original abode from where claims must be made. In the interim, such information remains unavailable to the end that ignorance often prejudices the likelihood of making successful applications.⁴ Workers at the London Connection⁵ cite⁶ cases where misleading Local Authority information has directly led to the invalidity of claim applications. Young people with inadequate levels of information frequently become involved in bureaucratic practice, often undermining their own case because of an inadequate understanding of processes.

Because of the logistical problems of underfunding and the poor flow of information, the homeless benefit little from the state. Where the homeless through their

¹Centrepoin, *Housing our Children: The Children Act 1989*, Centrepoin, London, 1993, p. 14.

²Niner, P. *Homelessness in Nine Local Authorities: Case Studies of Policy and Practice*, Department of the Environment, London, 1989, p. 22.

³Centrepoin, *Housing our Children*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁴Niner, P. *Homelessness in Nine Local Authorities: Case Studies of Policy and Practice*, HMSO, London, 1989, p. 95.

⁵Advice and Resource Centre for London's young homeless, see Chapter 5.

⁶Timothy O'Neill, Youth Worker, the London Connection. Informal interview, July, 1992.

ingenuity are able to get crude handles on the workings of the city, the state has effectively become slippery to the end that it fails to supply adequate assistance to the homeless. Whilst some of the homeless suggest that they manage to claim social security benefits in a number of names, the actual occurrence of this amongst London's young homeless seems to be rare. The bureaucratic apparatus is enough to confound the homeless whose vocabulary is more attuned to the realities of the city than to the officialese required by the social welfare branch of the state.

The Social Welfare Net

Whilst often partially funded by the state, private charitable organisations are common in London. Being set up and patronised largely by philanthropy they are faster to react to the circumstances of homelessness and are more successful in purveying assistance to the homeless than state initiatives. Such organisations are diverse in nature, some being religiously based, others secular, some local, others national or regional, some specific to specific ethnic, gender or sexuality groups and others open to all.

Whilst such organisations offer a degree of support and help, their place is somewhat ambiguous in that they are neither an arm of the state (although there is often state involvement), nor an initiative of the homeless themselves (although there is often input from user representatives, and often staff members are themselves ex-users, or come from similar backgrounds). Instead, these groups are perhaps best conceptualised as the embodiment of community concern funded by charitable endeavour, and often ultimately the public. In turn, these organisations are often both state assisted and sanctioned by the homeless.

Despite their dedicated provision, such institutions are not universally embraced by the homeless. Whilst some refuse to make use of such organisations,¹ most have links with one or more of such centres, many depending on such provision for stability.

Despite the dedication of these institutions, the homeless as pragmatic survivors, sometimes seek to exploit such organisations, by theft, deliberate infringement of the

¹ Some homeless people will be barred from particular institutions because they have broken specific rules or have demonstrated inappropriate or offensive behaviour in them.

rules or by trying to exploit the system. Being purveyors of commodities such as food, accommodation, drugs (through doctors' visits), advice and toiletries, the homeless often, though by no means universally, attempt to procure and exploit all that is possible. Sometimes provision misuse is precipitated by extreme need or by disaffection with a particular agency. For other individuals, such agencies may still be representative of the establishment and thus their exploitation is, in the way discussed above, critical and cathartic.

Charitable organisations including those specifically for the homeless are implicitly aware of the abuse they receive, yet it is not considered viable to terminate provision in response to exploitation for the sake of those for whom provision is a necessity. Sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing, the homeless often try their hand at exploiting provisions which are new, or new to them. The directors of such facilities are implicitly, albeit privately, aware of this *double edge* of provision.¹ Unlike the poor house philosophy of Victorian times when poor houses were made as unattractive as possible, contemporary institutions provide services that—appropriately—afford self-respect. London's new hostels such as those run by Centrepont are particularly clean and appealing. Accommodation is in dormitories with two or three beds with crisp sheets and colourful freshly laundered duvets, bathrooms are new, clean and well appointed. Kitchens are modern, floors are carpeted, there are good quality sofas and modern and well-maintained furnishings.

The provision of such comfortable facilities, plays a role in reproducing homelessness, as those who make use of such services become dependent on them. Ironically, even when young people are rehoused, they often gravitate back to the various homeless centres in central London, because that is the community in which they have participated and which they themselves have created. In some cases housed young people abandon their accommodation to return to the streets where they may be guaranteed action and activity, in contrast to monotony of suburbia to which they are often 'banished.' The incidence of deskilling and homelessness institutionalisation is discussed

¹ See quotation in Chapter 9, *\$Policy*.

elsewhere, but suffice it to say here that the provision for the homeless becomes accidentally that which people are accustomed to, to the end that many find it difficult to readjust to 'normal' life.

The London advice and resource centres provide a range of services ranging from accommodation referral, to actual accommodation itself. They provide medical help, with visiting doctors and nurses, counselling, provision of small grants, provision of toiletries and other menial necessities. The homeless, aware that these things may be available develop tactics to procure such commodities. Being constantly watchful, they ascertain the conditions for purveyance and are skilled at deploying appropriate stories to gain respective services or provision. One young person related to me how he made use of one of the advice projects.

- Do you use the Soho Project upstairs, or mainly Centrepont?
- I don't use it, it's just like when I want money. When I need some money.
- They give it to you?¹
- Yeah, I had three quid off them the other week ... Oh, I told them I was going to go into detox and all the rest of the crap. They give me two pound ninety for a travel card.²

This information was related in such a way that it was evident that he had no interest in getting to a detox centre, but rather that he sought provision in order to get the money he could from the advice workers. In utilising a believable story, Chris was able to gain access to funds that are not normally given. This *perruque*, demonstrates one way that an individual may make use of a knowledge of viable actions in order to use them to his or her own ends.

Another young man related that all one needed to do was to demonstrate that one was vulnerable, at risk, of a certain age and new to London in order to qualify for meal ticket and bed for the night at one London hostel. However, as young people rarely carry identification with them it is normally just as effective to feign such attributes rather than having to genuinely belong to such a category.

¹ At this point I was surprised that Chris had been given money, because I knew it to be rare that they did so.

² Interview 23 It was evident in the context of the interview that the procurement of money in this case was not for the legitimate use he proffered.

In more general terms the homeless play interviews with staff carefully attempting to avoid alienating themselves from possible options. Prior to such interviews the homeless are often primed with information (sometimes misinformation and disinformation) by each other before they attempt to exploit a service.

In terms of securing menial toiletries such as soap, shampoo, combs, sanitary towels, condoms, the homeless are alert to the boundaries of provision at all times trying to maximise their access to potential commodities.

The Body

The homeless carry very little with them. In fact their only property very often is themselves. The body therefore becomes something to commodify. In a conventional sense the homeless are capable of selling their labour power, but in a depressed economy, and without an address or stable accommodation, employment is often not a real option.

The selling of the *Big Issue*¹ newspaper, is perhaps the only formal² occupation in which the homeless can engage. The *Big Issue* project involves the sale of a specially prepared newspaper, by the homeless. The newspaper appeals to a wide audience. It is sold by homeless and ex homeless vendors who cry out, "Help the homeless, buy the *Big Issue*." The project sells papers to the homeless vendors at 20p per copy, and these in turn sell the paper to the public at 50p.³ The sellers keep the profits. Individuals have to be trained, and they are given official sales status, with a badge and cap. Many have found this project useful.

• ... now I'm like selling the *Big Issue*, that's the new paper, it comes out monthly like, ar, it's better because we can actually sell the paper and we get money, and we get 40 pence and it costs 50 pence. People on the streets get 40 pence for it and on a good day we can get 40 quid for ourselves.⁴

¹ The *Big Issue*, is a weekly published newspaper which contains topical articles for general circulation. It is funded by a number of national corporations, most notably *The Body Shop*, a cosmetic manufacturer and retailer, with the intention of providing employment opportunities for the homeless.

² Though as discussed below there is a sense in which this activity is also informal.

³ Originally the paper was sold to the homeless at 10p per copy, and sold at 50p to the public. *Big Issue*, No. 41, August 17-23, 1993, p. 3.

⁴ Interview 6

Selling the *Big Issue* is however just one way that the homeless seek employment.¹ Some sell papers at news stands, some work occasionally in market stalls, some occasionally get building site work, but this sort of work is not common. Illegitimate work may include posterising telephone boxes with advertisements for prostitutes,² and prostitution itself. Whilst rumours abound about the pornography industry, none of the people interviewed expressed any experience with that line of work. Some of the young men were, however, involved with the sex industry.

- ... the good thing about it is that it's easy money because you can make thirty forty or fifty quid in half an hour whereas with begging you could be sat there for six seven hours for ten, fifteen quid.³

- ... So, in some ways it's a warm bed for the night, breakfast in the morning, and it's 350 pounds in the pocket. And it's like I don't have to do anything for the next two weeks.⁴

But in addition to the opportunity for selling their bodies to punters for sex, the homeless are able to capitalise on their bodies in other ways.

Because homelessness is a topical and emotive issue, the homeless are able to capitalise on that imagery. It has already been related how the homeless capitalise on the stereotyped image of the dossier, but the homeless by their very presence in the city are able to engender charity. Their defiant presence in the city places themselves on the political agenda. For Ruddick,⁵ “... the homeless simply by their presence in a particular place, change its symbolic meaning.”

Time and Space

In addition to the institutional contingencies noted in the above sections, the resources of the public, the state, and the social welfare net and the body, the homeless

¹ Although the *Big Issue*, is an initiative of the Prince's Trust and in one sense a formal activity, it is informal in the sense that it remains a possibility only for those who are homeless or who have been homeless. In some sense the success of the venture depends on the continued informality of the paper, because it is a sheltered endeavour. See also, Stockley, *Young People on the Move*, *op. cit.*, p. 11. where it is suggested that few of the homeless have no experience with informal employment.

² See Chapter 7, *§ Maximising Access and Knowledge*.

³ Interview 10

⁴ Interview 22

⁵ Ruddick, “Heterotopias of the Homeless,” *op. cit.*, p. 191.

make use of the cityscape proper as a resource. Time and space are considered here together because urban spaces are constituted differently according to time. The Strand for example is a different space for the homeless during the day, than late at night. As the people frequenting it change, and as the rhythms of the city affect it differently over twenty four hours, so too does the way that the homeless make use of space. The homeless are implicitly aware of the changes and chances of the urban landscape, as they navigate through difficult terrain.

•Well, just the West End really. Covent Garden ...

•You don't just hang around in one particular place?

•I've got patches that I go on all the time. Like I do Neal St. from about 5:30 to 7:00. Then I go down to St. Martin's place and I beg that from about 7:00 till 8:00. That's if I'm out, sleeping out. Or 7:00 to 9:00, go and have a couple of beers, and then if it's a Friday or a Saturday, I'm out begging again straight after the pubs close at 11:00, because everybody else is out, drunk. They don't know what they're giving away ... ¹

Urban space is characterised both by the uses of institutional and extended spaces (discussed above) and the emergent mythology of specific homeless haunts. The previous two chapters have outlined the actions of the homeless and the creation of critical livelihood by focusing on the routines and tactics of homeless life. The following sections review the meanings of specific places in use by London's homeless youth.

Homeless Spaces: Homeless Places in the City

Recursive experience in space, makes place. Aside from the utility that space may afford, mythologised space, the places of the homeless, become important sources of identity. These spaces have specific co-ordinates for London's homeless youth, and these sites of identity are discussed below.

One of the activities that the homeless often engage in is the act of 'killing time.' London's homeless youth have time at their disposal. Many of the following homeless haunts are places in which the homeless 'hang around' (see Chapter 7, *§Endurance*).

¹Interview 23

The Streets

The homeless appropriate the street as personal space. The homeless imbue the cityscape with variegated meanings, just as one imbues one's locality with meaning. The street however, provides a range of smaller spaces such as doorways, alleys, crannies, ledges, shadows, viaducts, and tunnels all of which are subject to personalisation. The homeless convert spaces and thoroughfares into living space by exploiting their public ownership. Once such spaces become detached from the commerce of business hours they become marginal and available, ripe for reappropriation and reclamation. Using these marginal spaces the homeless claim, commodify and personalise them, thus constructing homeless terrain.

Spaces change according to time. Snow and Anderson¹ assert in their study of homelessness in Austin, Texas, that the homeless normally make use of space that is marginal, only venturing downtown into "prime" space when they need to "secure the wherewithal to survive." London's young homeless, however, live their lives geographically in prime space. During the middle of the day they may make use of special provision, but in the evenings if they are not resident in a hostel, they are on the streets, along the Strand or in other public spaces. However, there is a sense in which this "prime" space is marginal. The homeless use shop doorways once the shops are closed. Once the shops have closed the streets become merely thoroughfares, rather than esplanades for shopping. At this time the doorways become interstitial. These spaces are no longer being used as shop entrances, but they are being passed by thousands of people. Their functionality to commerce becomes marginal, with the exception of the promotional material that may lie in the windows.

There is that moment between the shop being open when the space belongs to the establishment, and the shop being closed when the space becomes marginal. Later in the evening when passers-by are infrequent, the doorway spaces, whilst still attached to their establishment use, become the terrain of the Other. Passers-by hurry rather than saunter past, aware that this is potentially dangerous space. At this time of day the

¹Snow and Anderson, *Down on their Luck*, *op. cit.*, p. 104-5.

homeless can outnumber passers-by and in this way the homeless have managed to appropriate this space by populating it.

Doorways are for the homeless a central place from which to view the world. Whilst some have little particular interest in venues of sleep because of their chosen itinerance, for others routine is an important characteristic of place.

- ... the jeweller's doorstep that I was sleeping in that was my home. That was it ... It was nice, you know, the people were nice, who I was sleeping with.¹

- So, is there one place that you always go back to ... ?

- Great Russell Street, there's a doorway up there, I get on all right with the security guards ... I get tea in the morning and sometimes toast.²

Although the doorway may provide the security of routinised experience, its location may also afford vulnerability, and insecurity.

- You can, well, say you sleep in a shop doorway, you don't know what's going to happen next. Whether someone's going to come up, beat you up, whatever, you just don't know. There's no security.³

The homeless who engender in the wider population a sense of disorder, take this into account when using the city as they learn "where to walk and hang out, and when."⁴ Although the homeless need to be careful about *where* they are and *when*, Snow and Anderson's⁵ review suggests that the homeless feel most insecure when having to enter the "prime spaces," of the city in order to gather the "wherewithal to survive." However, for London's young homeless, it is the prime sites that afford some degree of security, where for Snow and Anderson's Texan homeless, these spaces are "high risk" areas. Far from being areas of high risk, though they are by no means areas of no risk, the central spaces of London, which may become interstitial after hours, remain public, visible and comparatively safe. These areas remain much more safe than, for example,

¹Interview 2 A fuller account of this part of the transcript is provided in Chapter 7, *Skills, §Deliberate Endurance*.

²Interview 7

³Interview 12

⁴Snow and Anderson, *Down on their Luck*, op. cit., p. 106.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 105.

hidden corners at the rear of buildings. Indeed the prime spaces, which have become marginal by time, are actively sought by the homeless as places where they may beg, and places where they may be seen. These are the spaces which afford them opportunity.

Specific Streets

For many of the young people interviewed, their location in and around the Strand and the West End is illustrative of the way that the homeless congregate and employ solidarity through concepts of 'the family,' as discussed in Chapter 7, *\$The 'Family.'* For the young people interviewed, the Strand is an important defining place. Aside from its functional use it is used as a centre of activity and a source of identity.

The Strand

For those making use of the London Connection, the Strand is a place for sleeping, for acquiring food, for begging and as such it participates in providing a context for identity.

- In the park, really or like on the street.
- Just hang around here really. Adelaide Street and the Strand.¹
- ... Sometimes I sleep on the streets on the Strand, or you know actually in Soho.²

Some however, choose to stay away from the Strand, sometimes wishing to avoid particular people there.

- Do you enjoy living on the Strand at the moment?
- To be honest with you, no I don't. There's nobody about, the place is shit [garbled] a few old ones have died [garbled] I've got good friends [garbled] like.³
- And the place where you most dislike to be is?
- The Strand.
- Because?
- It's mad, 'round Christmas time people have got to get a point across, they want to run the Strand and then they start taking speed or this, you know and then you start having to

¹Interview 7

²Interview 29

³Interview 15

retaliate and fight, and you think 'nobody's going to take me money off me no matter what.'¹

Others see the Strand as a place of refuge, where their mates are and where they can be in known territory.

- Which part of the city do you mainly spend time in?
- The Strand.
- And you avoid Kings Cross?
- I avoid all the area, well Soho that's a place as well, I'm usually as paranoid as hell.²

Because of the Strand's locality it is a preferred location for London's homeless youth. As a public place, it is suitable for begging having a constant flow of by-passers (pedestrian and vehicular). The area is normally relatively busy, even in the evenings (relative to other parts of London) and there are facilities nearby in McDonald's, Charing Cross station and surrounding areas (Super Loo–24hour–in Adelaide Street). Further, the area is close to the London Connection and other centres and facilities (New Horizon, the Piccadilly Advice Centre, The Crypt, The Hungerford Drug Project, Centrepont).

- And what part of the city do you normally spend your time in?
- Soho. West End. Soho. Around here [i.e., the Strand] Charing Cross ...
- Why's that?
- Just everybody I know's over here. I don't mind ... The businesses are over here. Covent Garden.³

- Go 'round the Strand and get a hand out.⁴

- If I got no money, you can go down the Strand at night if you want to be bothered to walk all the way down the Strand, like you might be really knackered, and you can't afford to, and if you go down there you've got the food vans and they sometimes give out blankets, get a cup of tea, a cup of soup, you know doughnuts, buns, sandwiches, Chinese sometimes they give you.⁵

¹Interview 10

²Interview 15

³Interview 23

⁴Interview 9

⁵Interview 11

•Well if I'm hungry it's like [five] to twelve, I go down the Strand.¹

As the homeless congregate on the Strand, it also becomes a place where it is possible to seek out appropriate sleeping partners. It is a place where individuals congregate with people with whom they are basically familiar and a place where they may find a degree of safety and acceptance.

•Do you have lots of friends on the Strand?

•Yeah, everybody is my friends.²

Pedestrian Tunnels

Pedestrian tunnels are useful places for the homeless to stay because whilst they are away from the view of passing vehicular traffic (police vehicular patrols) they receive passing pedestrian traffic (begging) and they afford protection from the elements. For some, being quiet, tunnels are a preferred location, whilst for others they are dismissed as places to stay because they are away from the activity of the West End. As night draws on and pedestrian traffic becomes more infrequent, rough sleepers in such sheltered spaces become more vulnerable to random attack, as inebriated revellers, urban oddities, or those who are especially seeking out the homeless, may be the only people other than the occasional policeman who may pass.

Nevertheless, many of the homeless prefer such spaces because, whilst there may be the potential for misadventure, there is the possibility of sleep. In some of the underpasses in the area of Marble Arch, the homeless sleep in cardboard boxes affording, comfort, warmth, and a degree of insulation from noise.

However, such accommodation is not the mainstay of London's young homeless population even though some may indulge in such sleeping arrangements. One respondent suggested that they turned to sleeping in boxes only when conditions were particularly bad.

¹Interview 9

²Interview 15

- Well if it was really really bad, we used to make little boxes in the market out of the stalls. We gathered boxes and slept in them.¹

Whilst the *majority* of London's young homeless do not sleep out in such tunnels in this way, many have tried to make use of such places.

- Where do you beg?
- Marble Arch subways or Strand ...²

In this way the night cityscape is colonised by the homeless and is considered more as the terrain of the homeless city (antispaces) than as establishment space.

Alleyways

The preferred accommodation locations of the young homeless are quite different to those of the older homeless. Whilst homeless space is not exclusively defined in this way, these two groups essentially remain apart. The more blasé older homeless, are often less motivated by safety than younger people. Their insouciance often leads them to living in places potentially very dangerous. The younger homeless, however, are in many respects more sensitive in their evaluation of potential danger. Although some speak with some complacency about danger, few are prepared to sleep in places either where they are out of the view of the passing public or in areas where they are alone.

Railway Stations

London's young homeless make use of railway stations according to their location, and need. British Rail state that as a matter of policy they do not permit young homeless people to sleep on the station concourses, and restrict access to the station in the small hours in order to minimise access.³ The homeless too do not cite railway termini as being preferred locations for spending time. However, it is true that the kinds of opportunities that do develop around late night urban facilities do provide the homeless with facilities that may be unavailable elsewhere. For example, as termini have

¹Interview 2

²Interview 26

³British Rail, South London Lines, Victoria Station. Personal correspondence with J. Flower, Customer Services, South London Lines, 19 January 1993.

much later hours than other services in the city other businesses will serve the flow of late night commuters. In such areas late night cafés may be open (such as McDonald's), where toilet facilities will be available.

Whilst the homeless do make use of the railway facilities, they are not welcome by British Rail administrators. The following comments were made by British Rail representatives.

At the risk of sounding cold-hearted, it must be stated that we are a retail organisation, in the same way as a chemist or supermarket, and it is only because of the inborn gregarious nature of humans that our property, particularly at termini, has attracted not only the homeless youth but also the vagrant element of our society; as a result, we have to insist that sleeping on the station is not permitted and to this extent, we do leave only one entry and exit for the station in the small hours.¹

InterCity do not have a policy towards young homeless people. The British Transport police are responsible for policing the station and will deal with 'undesirables' as and when required.²

As the homeless seek passing pedestrian traffic for beneficence and indeed safety, it is not surprising that areas adjacent to railway termini (and other termini such as bus stations), become centres for homeless congregation. Although the Retail Manager of Euston suggests that, "We do not appear to be 'host' to many 'homeless' people ...,"³ Euston's principal zone for homeless congregation is outside the station concourse, in the small park immediately outside.

The Parks

The parks provide a refuge from the city, a space of freedom from relentless movement. Whilst many older homeless people reside in the parks, few of the young homeless do so, instead using the parks much like any other urban dweller might, as a place to think and as a refuge from the city. Certainly too, the parks provide the homeless

¹ British Rail, Correspondence from Victoria Station, *op. cit.*

² British Rail, Correspondence from InterCity, West Offices, Kings Cross Station. Personal correspondence with D. Wood, Retail Manager, East Coast Main Line (South), 19 January, 1993.

³ British Rail, Correspondence from British Rail, InterCity West Coast, Euston Station. Personal correspondence with E. Roberts, Retail Manager, 19 January, 1993.

with other resources and the use and meaning of the park is conditioned by such use. The park is a place free from prying eyes and it is a place to smoke.¹ For some the park is a place of active recreation, and for others it is a place for quiet and solitude.

- ... we go up there, and we go to the parks, we muck around.²

- ... to me privacy is like spending time on your own, it might be walking in the park, sitting in a squat or a flat or just sitting somewhere in the park where you won't be bothered by anyone.³

Such uses of parks, correspond largely to the ways that such spaces may be used by most other people in the city. However, for the homeless the parks are also used in necessitous and functional ways opposing their usual urban role. According to the inversion of space elsewhere defined as an homeless antilogic, they make new uses for the parks, uses conditioned by necessity and a will to survive.

The parks afford a space where the codes and conventions of behaviour in the city proper are somewhat relaxed. Where it may be inappropriate to take off one's shoes and socks during the course of the day in the middle of the city, it is possible to do this in the park. The homeless can remove their shoes and socks in the park, confident that such behaviour is not offensive, for there it is acceptable behaviour. The homeless who are often so often constrained by codes and conventions of acceptable behaviour (the awkwardness of washing one's self in a public lavatory for example), are here able to use accepted behaviour (the removal of footwear), but for 'socially unacceptable' reasons (because they have only one pair of socks and malodorous feet due to the nature of their condition) rather than perhaps as welcome respite from a day's hard work. Thus the homeless who need to be able to exercise their material needs (which for most are constrained to the backspaces of the home) utilise spaces in the city where such needs can be exercised within the bounds of acceptable behaviour.

¹To smoke here refers to the smoking of cannabis.

²Interview 1

³Interview 4

- ... sometimes you get problems with your feet and blistering, but that's probably because of the hot weather and so, whenever you sit in the park or what ever, you just have to take your shoes and socks off and let them dry off ... ¹

Whilst the homeless often choose to traverse the bounds of acceptability, as noted elsewhere, there are times when they like to fit in.

- No, 'cause, where I sit, is like, if the police come along, then I'll just stand up. Say I'm waiting for somebody. I've got pretty clean clothes, and what can they say.²

Additionally the park is seen as a place where illicit activities may occur without danger of apprehension. Drug taking, prostitution and theft being some of the other ways that park land may be used.

- ... we used to actually go out in the park and have a couple of spliffs there ... ³
- Are you involved in prostitution now?
- [At this point his responses were quiet and difficult to transcribe] Yes and no, that's why I go to Finsbury Park ... ⁴
- Never do [mug] women. Just middle-aged men, and sort of 25 to 39 or 40.
- And do you just wait in the park?
- Yeah, we wait in the park ... ⁵

The Homeless use of Public Utilities

For the homeless, London is a landscape of possibilities. The homeless who are heavily constrained attempt to make the city as large and useful as possible using *perruques*, ruses and their own urban antilogic. Places such as churches, libraries, museums, art galleries, shopping malls, arcades, squares, commons and foyers are seen in terms of their utility and opportunity. This is the perspective of survival in a context where possibilities need to be sought out, precipitated and exploited. Where public

¹ Interview 4 Mike would go to Finsbury Park from time to time, where he would be picked up by a punter, if one came by.

² Interview 28

³ Interview 6

⁴ Interview 10

⁵ Interview 17

provision is intended to widely offer services which are of use to the 'average' citizen, the homeless seek and exploit provision, possibility and opportunity. Unsurprisingly the homeless are keen users and abusers of public provision. However, whilst public provision is provided for widespread use, the divide between use and misuse is often subtle, so subtle that the homeless—adept at crossing social boundaries—are freely able to exploit such provision.

Libraries

The homeless, both young and old make use of the libraries. Where older homeless persons will sit at length to read the papers cover to cover, the younger homeless are more likely to go just to make use of the warmth, and the opportunity to make use of comfortable surroundings.

- ... Last week, 'cause that film came out, *JFK*, I was reading up a little bit about that. Simple things, you know. I like going to libraries, and just looking at things. It passes the time as well. I read a lot.¹

- I'm in the libraries a lot, sitting and reading books. Plus the libraries are warm.²

The homeless use the libraries for entertainment, for 'something to do' and to 'kill time.' Where library heating is provided to warm its readers, the homeless use the warmth as a shelter in itself, as an accessible 'warm place' firstly and as a library secondly. The homeless use the library space in a way other than which it was intended, the consumption of this commodity being distinctly different to the spirit of its provision.

Museums and Galleries

Like libraries, London's museums provide a source of entertainment where there is warmth. Museums where there is no charge for entry, or only a minimal charge become places of refuge. 'Killing time' in this way, the homeless wander and blend into the background, perhaps for a while pretending to not be homeless. Museums are places where wandering is sanctioned and appropriate. In these spaces the homeless can 'kill

¹Interview 28

²Interview 25

time', without visibly transgressing the bounds of appropriate behaviour. Where the museums may be provided for edification, they are also spaces for indeterminate wandering. Unlike the wider population, the homeless to 'kill time,' often have little else to do than to wander in this way. Thus they may use spaces where wandering is appropriate, to spend their time. Where the wider public may use such provision for edification, wandering through the museum as a matter of course, the homeless use the spaces of the museum, as a place where their indeterminate wanderings are not out of place. The homeless in part define and use the city according to its places where their lifestyle does not have to be incongruous.

- ... London's a very big place and there's something to do everyday if you want it, if you get bored or ... the Tate gallery, churches, you know, there are places you avoid, but all the free places you can go in and wander round.¹

- Yeah, on days when like a can't come in here, or we shut early here, and I can't be bothered to go to New Horizon, I go visit the museums and stuff.²

- To museums and such?

- Yeah, and the galleries and things. ... Um, I'll visit the place, sit outside, and get very very stoned, and go in and walk around, and you see everything in a very different light.³

This use of urban facilities further conditions the way that the homeless perceive the city. Such facilities provided for the edification of the populace, become used by the homeless as a source of material and necessary commodities. The 'illegal' or creative appropriation of such provision exemplifies the antilogic of homeless experience.

Shopping Malls and Shopping Arcades

Like libraries, museums and galleries, malls and shopping arcades are public places affording warmth, and activity. They are used by the homeless as being places provident with things to see and do.

¹Interview 10

²Interview 25

³Interview 25

- And how do you 'kill time'?
- Sit down, or walk around in shops.¹

•Ur, it's mainly around this area, the Centre, sometimes the Strand, the Trocadero. I mean, the Trocadero just comes in on the weekends. There's no other place, like a Christian centre, that's open. The Trocadero just comes in when the day centres are closed.²

It becomes clear from quotations such as these that the homeless use the city according to the availability of facilities. For instance, once the London Connection closes, which for many of the users is a preferred location, there is an exodus to New Horizon, another day centre. See figure 8.3 which demonstrates the path from the London Connection to New Horizon, by inclusion in the highest ring of spatial usage.

The use of the city is much determined by the availability of provision and facilities. David in the above quotation makes note that when there are no homeless centres open, he heads for the Trocadero, as a place in which to spend his time.

Shopping precincts are also used in other ways. Peter uses the Trocadero as a venue for finding girls.

- And are you also spending time in the Trocadero?
- Yeah, I mean, like that's just somewhere you know about, and like try and pick up girls. You know?³

Others use the shops, in addition to other ways as sources of stolen goods.

- ... Theft out of shops, begging.⁴

One young homeless person, as cited earlier, suggested that the shops were fair game for shoplifting because of their insurance policies.

- ... if you're going to take something, take something from a shop where the insurance will cover it.⁵

¹Interview 32

²Interview 16 The Trocadero is a large tourist based shopping arcade nestled between Leicester Square and Shaftesbury Avenue.

³Interview 29

⁴Interview 19

⁵Interview 14

In this sense then shops and shopping precincts are used as places where wandering is sanctioned, where there are interesting things to look at and sometimes as a source of goods, readily stolen.

Amusement Centres

Amusement centres afford the homeless similar facilities as those mentioned above namely a source of entertainment and warmth. Although some get hooked on the machines spending their social security money or begged money on same, most use such places merely as sources of warmth and amusement.

- ... I used to stand there, and I can put like the whole of my wages in, and like I wouldn't think about it, you know what I mean.¹

- Do you put a lot of the money you beg into amusements?

- Yeah, don't get me wrong. It's not that I have to, it's the only place you can be where it's nice and warm.

- You don't think you're addicted to the machines?

- Oh, no, when I was a kid, yeah you know ... but now it's just, to keep out of, to keep out of the cold.²

- ... I mean, I'll just go someplace where I can be warm without spending a penny. But, if I've got money, it'll be the amusement centres, the money I've just begged up, you know, I'll spend it in the amusement centres.³

Whilst the homeless make use of these centres in a way that undermines them (using the arcades as places of warmth and refuge), the homeless also often end up becoming addicted to, or at least involved in, spending money at such places. In this sense the homeless become part of the logic of the city rather than being entirely subversive and tactical in the way that they use urban space.

¹Interview 29

²Interview 16

³Interview 16

Squares: Leicester Square

Leicester Square is used as a place for entertainment. Like transit termini, Leicester Square remains active as a centre of entertainment until much later than other areas. Consequently in this area commodities are available to the homeless beyond the time that they may be available elsewhere, expanding the time frame of potentially available resources. Flows of people afford protection and the possibility of begging. Furthermore, the throng provides a source of interest, passers-by, street performers, and general activity which provide the homeless with reasons to be there. When not begging the homeless are able to blend in to the city, to wander in and out of shops.

The Square itself provides a small patch of park which allows the homeless to sit, not as 'the homeless,' but without attracting attention. It is a place where they are able to blend in, being lost in the 'normality' of their behaviour. If the homeless are begging or just in need of something to do, the Square provides them with places to sit and people to engage.

- ... Where do you spend your time?
- What, during the week? At the London Connection [garbled] or the New Horizon base [garbled]. Weekends it's either St. James Park, [garbled] Street, Covent Garden, Leicester Square. Leicester Square is a big one. If there's no centres open, you mainly find a lot of people in Leicester Square.¹

- Where do you spend most of your time?
- In the West End.
- Where specifically?
- Between the London Connection, New Horizon, and Leicester Square.²

Others use Leicester Square for other marginal and illicit activities, including theft.

- ... If we're not going to Macklin Street³ we sit outside, beg or hang around Leicester Square.⁴

¹Interview 2

²Interview 14

³*Hew Horizon* is on Macklin Street. It is a day centre similar in function to the London Connection.

⁴Interview 2

- Where were you last night?
- Leicester Square. Sleeping outside the Empire again in a doorway.¹

Further, where there are crowds there is the possibility of theft, a mark of defiant survival.

- ... I've never really mugged anybody, but I've pickpocketed in Leicester Square sometimes when money's been really tight.²

Trafalgar Square

Trafalgar Square has little specific identity for the homeless. Although it is used as a space to while away the hours, for most of those living in the West End, it is just a part of the immediate area. Unlike Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus which are immediately surrounded by evening activity, Trafalgar Square, whilst it attracts people wandering in the evenings, is not heavily coloured by use for the homeless.

Piccadilly Circus

Like Leicester Square, Piccadilly Circus is constantly alive with activity. The homeless who spend much time in such areas become implicitly aware of the movements of people in such places, and as such places like Piccadilly become known terrain, places for the homeless. Piccadilly Circus however, has the additional character of being associated with the rent scene.³ Such identifications greatly influence the way that the homeless personalise space, some choosing to avoid the area altogether.

- ... [if] you hang around at Piccadilly you automatically become a rent boy, you're a rent boy in the police eyes ...⁴

- You get a lot of that, and like, up the 'dilly, if you're wandering around, you get a lot of pimps trying to pick you up and that.⁵

¹Interview 2

²Interview 10

³See *Glossary*.

⁴Interview 10

⁵Interview 11

•No if I'm in an area like Piccadilly, Piccadilly is an area for them, and I go in there not for the rent scene, but I know a lot of the rent boys, but if someone propositions me I won't say 'no.'¹

•... That's why a lot of people hang around Piccadilly, the [rent] boys and such, that's how a lot of them go into the business. It's horrible. I don't agree with it at all.²

•Which places do you dislike in the city?

•Embankment, Strand, Covent Garden ...

•Why?

•'Cause there are so many people that are misusing their bodies, i.e., like Piccadilly, Embankment, the Strand.³

Piccadilly is a place loaded with meaning for those who live on the street, loaded with the experience of the rent scene and police surveillance. However, it is still used by many in the ways that other similar spaces are used.

•I usually beg around here, by the green door, if I'm not there it'd be out the front of this place, if it's not here, it'd be down the Strand, if it's not there, it'd be down Piccadilly Circus.⁴

•... The only reason I beg round Piccadilly Circus is that they have cheap pizza, it's a pound a slice.⁵

Chris makes use of Piccadilly's passing tourist trade by politely engaging tourists for them to be photographed with him (and his punk outfit and hair) and then asking for money.

•At the moment, I'm spending a lot of time in here. But that's only cause it's like winter time. In summer, I'm out making money. I do photographs for tours.

•Oh really?

•Yeah, they put me out and I stand with the tours ...

•How much do you get for that?

•A fiver, I make anything up to 200 pounds a day.

¹Interview 10

²Interview 12

³Interview 3

⁴Interview 2

⁵Interview 2

- That's all right.
- I stand in Piccadilly, just put my arms around the front of a tourist, make a face at the camera.¹

Covent Garden

The homeless also make use of Covent Garden in the same way that they use the museums and parks, in the sense that they participate in conventional behaviour without sanction. Aside from its role as a shopping precinct, whereupon it affords all the opportunities already discussed, the constant use of the forecourt and surrounding areas for entertainment, provide for the homeless yet another way to 'kill time.' For the homeless who often spend much time wandering aimlessly through the city (in search of interest or opportunity), Covent Garden offers respite, as it provides entertainment and a place for relaxation. Where Covent Garden largely serves the tourist industry, the homeless capitalise on the provision of street entertainment, both formal and informal as means of 'killing time.'

- ... there are places you can go and have free entertainment, like Covent Garden or whatever to watch all sorts of things like that, just to pass the time of day, to keep you entertained rather than having to pay.²

The homeless also make use of Covent Garden and its horde of tourists as a venue for begging and indeed as a source of other commodities gleaned from the streets.

- ... where do you beg?
- Well, just the West End really. Covent Garden ... ³
- Just begging, apart from borrowing from shop fronts first thing in the mornings (giggles). I've never been caught for that.⁴

¹Interview 23

²Interview 4

³Interview 23

⁴Interview 2

Family Restaurants

Family restaurants, such as McDonald's are well utilised by the homeless. They are reliably available and offer a familiar terrain. The menu is consistent and reliable. Furthermore, they afford the homeless access to warmth and toilet facilities.

- ... Get a coffee and just sit in there for a couple of hours or so. It's an excuse you know. You just get a cup of coffee and that's warm ... And you don't get ... there's no problem as long as you've got the cup there in front of you ... ¹
- ... I come in here every morning for a wash and that and like weekends when it's not open I find somewhere to wash, in McDonald's toilets or whatever, so long as I keep clean and eating.²
- ... you can buy a cup o' tea and fall asleep. (laughs)³
- Yeah it's warm, you get a cup of coffee which tastes like shit and you just sit in front of it for an hour.⁴

Whilst some homeless felt aggrieved by McDonald's, for having been barred from particular establishments, the majority noted that they made at least occasional visits to McDonald's even if only to use the washing facilities.

- No, we're like barred from there anyway.⁵
- ... the McDonald's staff have turned against, saying, 'Look, we don't want you in here.'⁶

But in addition to the warmth of McDonald's, such places become places for 'hanging out,' and places to 'kill time.'

- Did you hang out there, or did you just go there to eat?
- Both really.⁷

¹Interview 19

²Interview 11

³Interview 8

⁴Interview 9

⁵Interview 7

⁶Interview 12

⁷Interview 6

- ... I might go to McDonald's to kill time. I wouldn't say that I'm living in McDonald's.¹

- ... it takes about half an hour to beg up a fiver, in the right place and then you've got a good McDonald's meal.²

Jenny said that she used the privacy of the toilets in McDonald's to 'chase the dragon,' i.e., to take drugs.³

- Do you spend much time in McDonald's?

- No. I used to when I used drugs.

- Why?

- I used to go in the toilets and chase the dragon ...⁴

Other fast food places notably Burger King are used in a similar way, but because these are less common in London, McDonald's is most frequently used.

The Use of Homeless Space and Homeless Agency

Although it may not be correct to label the way that the homeless use the city as strategic,⁵ there are undoubtedly elements of the homeless experience that are at the very least tactical. Whilst the homeless may not be an organised or even a necessarily cohesive or homogeneous group, there are certainly experiences and means of living on the street that are held in common. For the homeless, space is characterised by its use, either in a pragmatic sense or in terms of its value as an identity feature.

- Is there anywhere in the city where it's best to get money? Soho?

- West End's best. That's why everybody's there. 'Cause that's where the money is.⁶

That the homeless may on occasion choose to remain on the streets even in the face of available accommodation, gives the experience of remaining outside an aura of defiance. Their snubbing of provision is an expression of preference for their own world

¹Interview 10

²Interview 11

³See *Glossary*.

⁴Interview 5

⁵Used in a wider sense rather than in the way used by Michel de Certeau.

⁶Interview 23

which exists outside of the spaces of homeless provision, and are engendered by the camaraderie of those on the streets.

De Certeau¹ proposes that, just as there are “‘styles’ or ways of writing, one can distinguish ‘ways of operating.’” Even though actions may correspond to regulated practice, individuals may “introduce into it a way of turning it to their advantage ... like a second level interwoven into the first.”² Homeless action in the city is characterised by these ruses. Spaces take on new meaning for the homeless, because they are used according to a different logic, the antilogic of the homeless. “Without leaving the place where he has no choice but to live and which lays down its law for him, he establishes within it a degree of *plurality* and creativity.”³ This is the experience of the homeless who not only use what they can in the city, but also make room for manoeuvre by the way that they re-evaluate spaces and circumstances. Though they may be prescribed a set of images and consumables, they make use of these images and consumables according on their own terms according to their own logic. The very act of consumption, is a productive and purposive act. In this way, de Certeau⁴ postulates the notion of the production of (or implicit in) consumption, a “way of operating ... which create[s] a certain play in the machine through a stratification of different and interfering kinds of functioning.” The critical livelihood of the homeless is built with these insinuated meanings.

Whilst de Certeau suggests that individuals carve their own interests in the codes and conventions of established procedure, the homeless also find for themselves in the city, their own commodities. The homeless commodify the hitherto uncommodified, finding and making use of refuse and discarded spaces. Their play with the interstitial constitutes their commodification of that which is unused and derelict. Whilst the spaces of the city may at various times be ‘prime,’ at different times of the day they become increasingly marginal. These temporally differentiated zones become the haunts of the homeless, as they exploit the interstitiality of urban space. The shop doorways, the

¹ De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

shopping centres, the parks and museums all become terrain that is reinterpreted and exploited by the homeless. Actively the homeless make their lives, employing all the creative tactics and skills they can.

In these spaces, the homeless not only carve out their own interests, but also, they valorise space to be of service to them. For as de Certeau¹ suggests, “by the art of being in between, he draws unexpected results from his situation.”

The Spatial Use of the City

In addition to the varied sources of commodities used by the homeless, a review of the homeless sources needs also to address the particular spatiality of homeless everyday life.

Day-Path

The homeless day-path shows a close association with some of the places referred to in the previous section. Figure 8.1, shows the day-path of one respondent, Julian on 28 November 1991. Like many of the young homeless this respondent walked to the New Horizon Day Centre after the London Connection had closed. On this day the London Connection was also open in the evening and Julian returned until it closed again before returning to the Charing Cross to beg, and to the Strand to sleep.

Julian’s day-path looks essentially the same for the entire week, spending each night but one in the doorway of Burton’s store, on the Strand. The one evening he was away he stayed with friends in London.

¹*Ibid.*

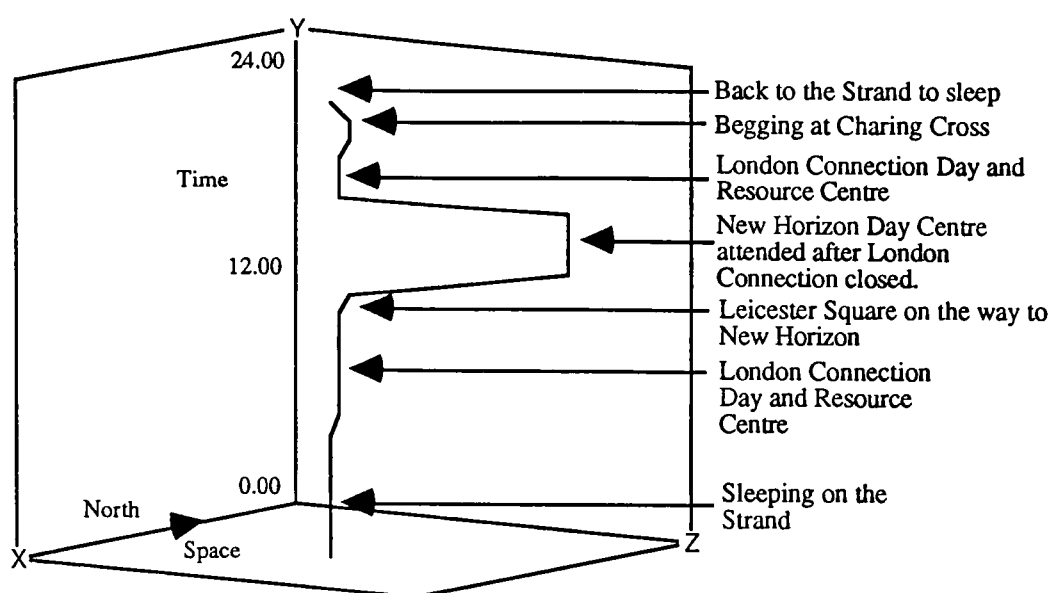


Figure 8.1 Day-path of one respondent.

The recursivity of Julian's day-path, is not dissimilar to the paths of others on the streets. Many of the day-paths demonstrate a coherent daily pattern, with occasional off-route excursions. Rowe and Wolch¹ suggest, "the longer the duration of similar daily routines, the greater the authority exerted by those routines [are] in the definition of the self." They suggest that once an individual becomes homeless, their acquisition of new routines can have a *damaging* effect on an individual's sense of self. They² argue that the rebuilding of social networks is "vital to the restoration of a positive and valued personal identity." For the young homeless, the creation of social networks in the routinisation of action and the containment of movement within a localised domain, provide the circumstances for the creation of local identity. Certainly young people, like Julian, who spend protracted amounts of time within a limited ambit, become accustomed to the routines and values implicit in the lives of those sharing such space.

- Do you spend much time thinking about where you are going to sleep, or where you are going to get food etc?
- No because if you start doing that, you start getting depressed, and when you start getting

¹Rowe and Wolch, "Social Networks," *op. cit.*, p. 190.

²*Ibid.*, p. 191.

depressed you just start getting in trouble, you start drinking or smoking, people start drinking.¹

Jamie's denial of even the most immediate future deflects any planning; this tactic of survival, is vindicated by those with whom he shares the streets. In this way recursive action plays a role in the processes of social formation and reproduction.

Week-Path

Figure 8.2 shows a wire frame topography of the interviewed homeless' movements over the week period preceding the time at which they were interviewed. This map relates to the map which was used in the interview (see figure 8.4[†]).

In the interviews, respondents² were asked to identify on a London map the areas in which they had spent the past week. Where this question was inappropriate, individuals were asked to mark the zone in which they 'normally' remain within.³ Occasional 'one-off' trips out of this area, for example to visit a friend, are not noted. These rings have been collated into a wire frame topography with the highest altitude representing the areas most commonly remained within.

Rowe and Wolch⁴ make use of similar maps to discuss the ways that individuals make use of space. They⁵ suggest that the coterminality of homeless experience becomes a surrogate for the "home-base." Whilst their maps relate to a much smaller scale, they demonstrate that homeless women in Los Angeles remain in close vicinity with the other homeless people they come to depend upon. Figure 8.2 shows the limited ambit of the homeless within a week, suggesting that the sharing of space, albeit in this instance the space of the West End, provides frequent opportunities to meet with other homeless people in the city. These rings were collated producing the topography in figure 8.2.

¹Interview 10

²Both the wire frame week-path and the contour map are based on the responses of 30 respondents. Due to the way that the research project developed, the questions for this section of analysis was not fully developed until the seventh respondent had been interviewed.

³If a respondent had been away from London in the week preceding the interview, (e.g., in jail, in Scotland, with a friend) then the respondent was asked to delimit an area of the city which they normally remain within, when they are in London. Few respondents were, however, in this category.

⁴Rowe and Wolch, "Social Networks," *op. cit.*, pp. 191-194.

⁵*Ibid.*

[†] This map may be found in the rear pocket.

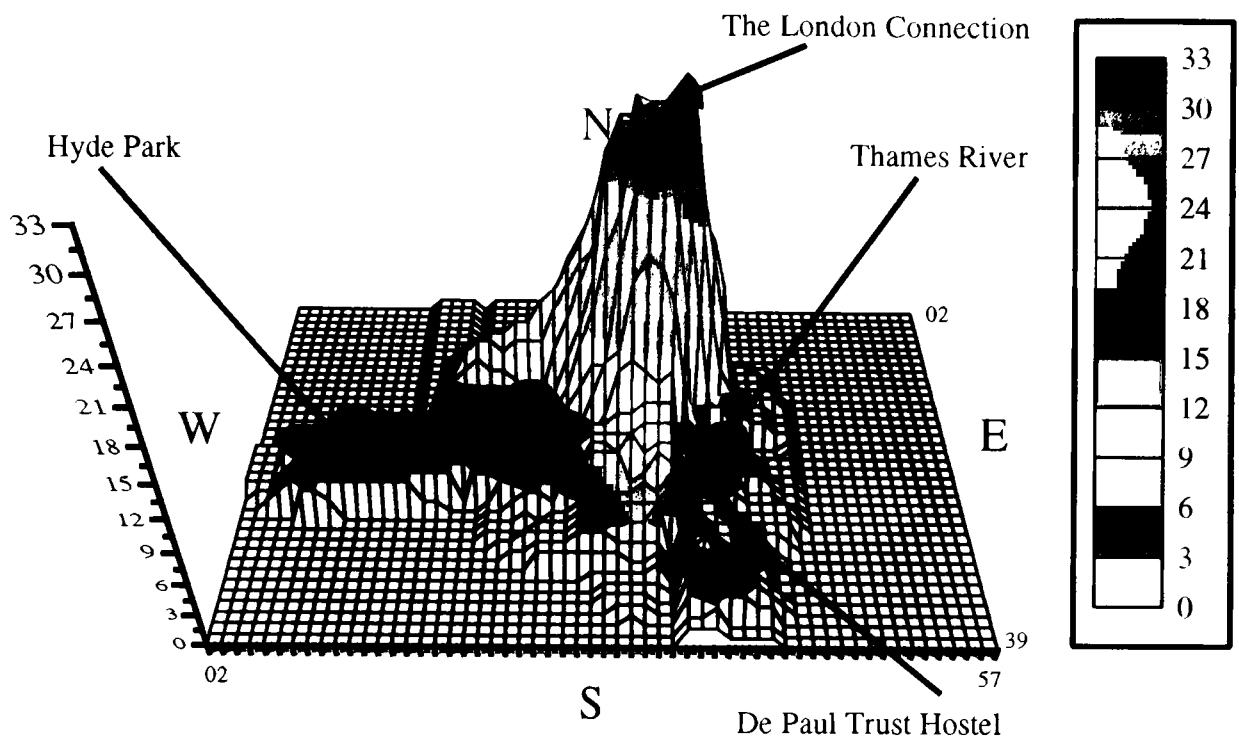


Figure 8.2 Wire frame topography of respondents' week-paths.

The area surrounding the London Connection demonstrates heavy use, because naturally those interviewed made regular trips there. The space more widely used by individuals varies markedly, some making specific use of particular parts of the city and others avoiding same and preferring others. Yet whilst there is some variation between individuals, as noted above, the day-paths of individuals often demonstrate relatively little variation over a week.

The topography demonstrates that the homeless as interviewed make use of specific areas in London. Hyde Park forms a plateau as marked on the topography. Also, the regular journey made by some to a highly used hostel on the south side of the river (the de Paul Trust) also demonstrates the life paths of the homeless. Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road are visible as sites of begging. The trails of the homeless constitute a topography of utility that mirrors the availability of resources and indeed the

way that the homeless define resources. The topography demonstrated is one of utility, according to critical livelihood of homelessness.

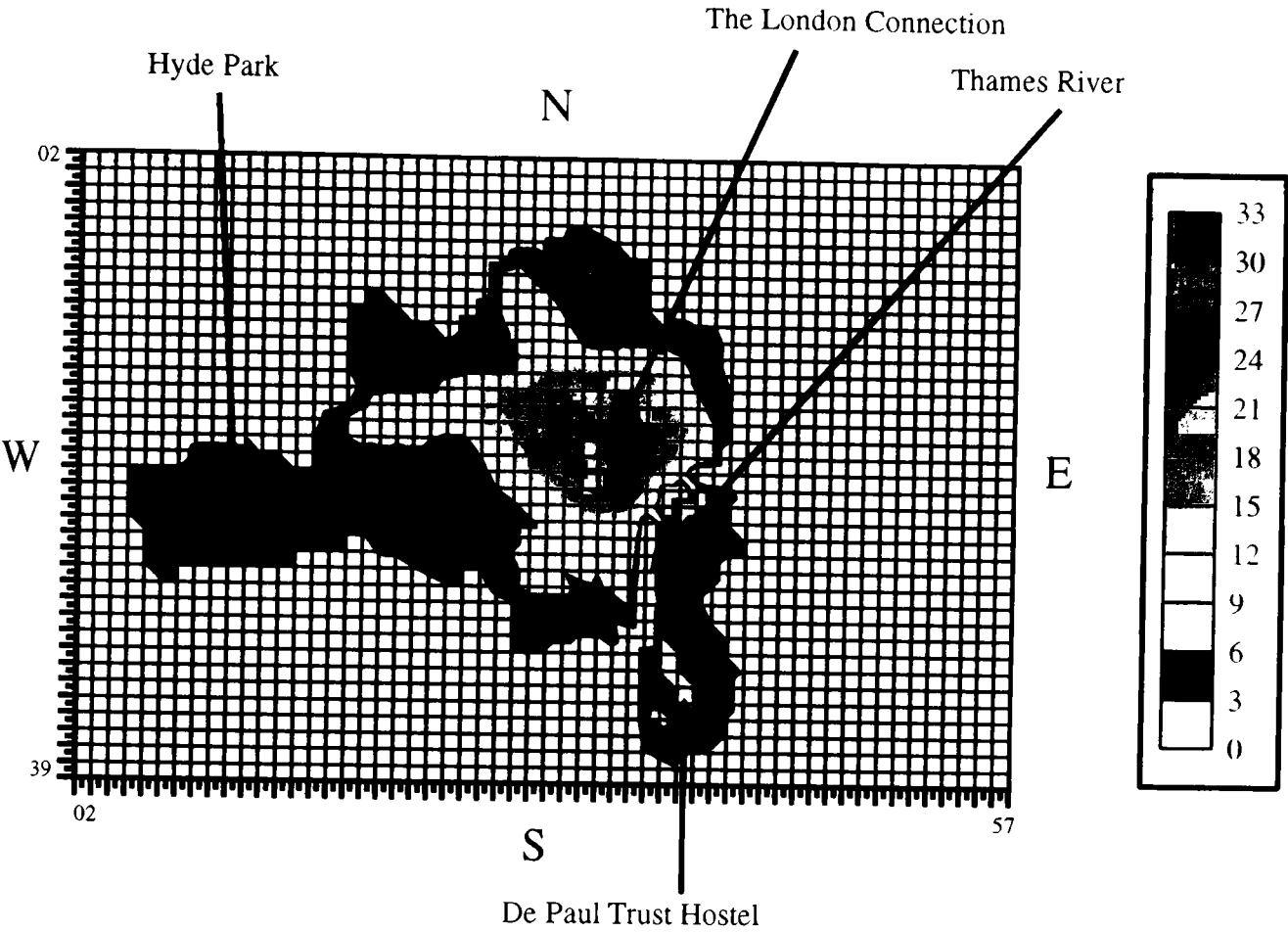


Figure 8.3 Contour map of respondents' week-paths.

The Contour map (figure 8.3), also based on the map in figure 8.4, other than clearly showing 'inactivity' along the Thames, shows the annexation of the area on the south of the river that accommodates the trek to the de Paul Trust hostel. It becomes clear how, in the utilisation of some of the streets, namely Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street, the homeless make some use of the areas surrounding these streets, although the use of such adjacent streets drops dramatically with distance. Occasionally, as is the case with the Strand, some of the smaller roads and alleys leading off the main street are used, and this is certainly also the case along Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street. It is

also possible to make out both Waterloo Bridge and Hungerford Bridge as they span across the Thames. These sites are often used for begging as they afford constant pedestrian traffic.

The 'unpopulated,' regions suggest that there is a limited number of venues regularly used by the homeless in the city, and that large areas of the city are not utilised at all by the young homeless who make their 'home' along the Strand. The spaces least utilised by the homeless are those proffering few commodities or opportunities. The use of Oxford Street and Hyde Park for example are not paralleled by similar use in other directions, at a similar distance to the pointed centre. To the North East for example other than a few who frequent Euston Station there is little use of the city in the Pentonville and Finsbury areas (see figure 8.4).

Viewing the movements of the homeless in this way brings to light the recursive nature of their lives, and the way that despite the irregularities of circumstance at each site, many of the young homeless make use of specific sites on a regular or semi-regular basis. It is in this recursivity of daily experience that identity is partially formed and indeed action emerges as being reproductive of the constraints that afford the homeless.

Conclusion

Many of London's young homeless try hard to maintain self-respect, and hope for a bright future. Certainly for many, despite the misery of being in London, their move has been a positive one. Presumably for every homeless person in London there are many more (often women) who live at home in untenable situations. The *defiance* which characterises the attitude of the young homeless in London, and which often keeps them on the street rather than in hostels, is deliberate and chosen, even though it may be couched in a wider context of structural constraints. But whilst the homeless often feel betrayed by the establishment, and frequently oppose and undermine it, at the same time the socialisation of youth looms large in their interests. Sometimes the homeless are happy to fit in to the established behaviour patterns of their locales. Their standard of cleanliness is one indicator of this - 'I may be on the streets, but I am clean,' restores

humanity to those who recognise that their lives are outside the mainstream of social acceptability. The homeless are social critics, but critics of a system most ultimately hope to rejoin. Their disaffection with society is at times partial, in a subculture which is at times contradictory.

The spatial use of the city by the homeless reflects its utility. Whilst this utility is not conventional, the homeless use the city in their own way, their use constituting a rarely seen but commonly lived experience.

The spaces used in the city by the homeless are institutional as well as spatio-temporal. The homeless use these spaces according to the antilogic of homelessness implicit in critical livelihood. The city is used as a focus of resentment and as a means of survival, their skills providing them with a new and different perspective borne of necessity and expressive of their dissatisfaction with exclusion. The homeless react to their exclusion by expressing a reckless carelessness. Reckless in that they nonchalantly transgress the bounds of social acceptability, and careless in that they express a certain insouciance for what the establishment deems important. In the face of hostility, the homeless make an ontologically secure identity, which is in many respects, liberating and enabling even though it is often thwarted. The city, the location and source of all material and cultural commodities, becomes the substance of livelihood. The city, conventionally improvident and unconventionally provident, provides the machinery and the means for the homeless to construct a critical livelihood.

Amongst the seeming chaotic world of the homeless, there are certain movements or currents that make use of the provided terrain as a means of celebrating otherness. The trajectories of the homeless through the city are indicative of these other texts of meaning. Their use of newly valorised commodities, especially those made from the spaces and times of the city, and their appropriation of urban refuse, testifies to the creative opportunism of homelessness and plays an important part in homeless identity.

CHAPTER 9

EPILOGUE: MAKING DO AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

The experience of homelessness is characterised by a myriad of processes. London's young homeless are subject to the interplay of power relations of the political economy, the changing the pattern of family structure and changes in the national and international economies. Much as these forces may have consequences for the homeless, they do not confront the homeless directly. Power flows through society in various ways and the homeless are every day faced at a mundane level with immediate constraints originating in structural power.

By means of their immediate encounters, the homeless participate in a larger politics of action. Their lives and the lives of others who use the city make the city contested terrain. The homeless find themselves participating in a politics of turf.¹ The city is made and remade, over and over again in the battles between the homeless and the establishment.

In Chapter 1 it was suggested that the journey that this thesis would take would lead us from a discussion of structures in Chapter 1, to ethnography, and back again. Chapters 2 and 3 have discussed the place of structure and agency, Chapters 4 and 5, have presented an approach and methodology, and chapters 6 to 8 using the ethnographic data have investigated the process of critical livelihood.

This journey to ethnography, contextualised in Structurationist terms, has ventured into the lives of the homeless, to demonstrate social processes and the politics of everyday life. Having delved into this zone it is necessary to draw back and see the relationships between the politics of everyday life, homeless identity and larger social structures.

The relations between the homeless and the establishment city in which they live are characterised by contestation. The city for the homeless is an alluring and impossible space. It is a landscape of seductive consumption that provides in a conventional sense

¹ Wolch, "Urban Homelessness," *op. cit.*, p. 103.

only deprivation for the homeless. The homeless want to join the establishment world, but they also want to invert and subvert it. Wanting what they are unable to have, they seek covert means to procure cultural and material commodities.

Giddens' Structuration theory provides a schema for theorising the dialectical relationship between the individual and the social order. Although everyday life is structured by constraint, these social constraints are also the products of everyday life.

Using Goffman, Giddens¹ investigates the encounters which constitute for him instances of co-presence. Goffman provides a means of witnessing and theorising these encounters and these means play a role in Giddens'² schema for "map[ping] out instances of presence and absence in social interaction." Giddens'³ interest rests in Goffman's⁴ notions of tact, trust and the repair of strains in the social fabric. Giddens suggests that Goffman's treatment of these elements of social process express a "predominant concern with the protection of social continuity, with the intimate mechanics of social reproduction." For Giddens, these elements are the basis for motivation in the social sphere. However, Giddens⁵ also proposes that Goffman could be read in another way. He proposes that individuals may be represented as "cynical agents who adapt to given social circumstances in a purely calculated and tactical way."

Giddens however, rejects this motive for action, preferring to read Goffman in a way that supports the pre-eminence of social reproduction. Giddens⁶ appreciates however, that "Goffman's work holds a mirror to many worlds," and for the homeless, whose social relations are hardly typical, it may be more appropriate to couch motivation in terms of cynical agency. Certainly in the material presented in this thesis it is evident that the homeless are critical actors. Ruddick⁷ in examining homeless action suggests that it may not be possible for their resistant and covert tactics to be theorised in this way, saying that they "cannot be conceptualized in the structure/agency dyad, for it [the

¹Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-70.

²Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, *op. cit.*, p. 68

³*Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁴These notions are implicit in Goffman's concept of "impression management," Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, *op. cit.*, pp. 203-230.

⁵Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Ruddick, "Heterotopias of the Homeless," *op. cit.*, p. 189.

process of homelessness] refers to the *concealed* practices of agents which only apparently reproduce specific structures.”

Whilst Ruddick may be going too far in suggesting that there is no degree of social reproduction (or the reproduction of marginality) in the lives of the homeless because their action is pregnant with de Certeau’s “other interests,” there is certainly some degree to which this is the case. The experience of homelessness is characterised by ambiguity, and whilst there is room for Giddens’ preference for social continuity, there is also room for the case of Ruddick’s denial of such continuity. Cultural action whilst tempered by resistance is never entirely critical. Marcus¹ makes note of the importance for understanding contemporary cultures as demonstrating both “resistance and accommodation,” a theme which is also taken up by Scott. Scott² in his study of peasant resistance suggests that, the “rejection of elite values, however, is seldom an across-the-board proposition, and only a close study of peasant values can define the major points of friction and correspondence.” This correspondence and friction relates to the subcultural processes which respectively reproduce and defy establishment value.

Whilst the homeless reproduce constraining social relations, they also invert and subvert them. They speak openly of ‘getting off the streets,’ yet as a coping strategy of everyday life, they deny the future, blanking out time, forgetting temporality.

Giddens’ constraints provide little room for political manoeuvre, for when denied access to power over resources, effective individual action is largely disabled. But what the homeless do with and within their constraints, with the aid of their tactics and skills, provides a wealth of opportunity. In proposing that inequitable power relations can effectively disenfranchise, Giddens largely alienates the homeless from “making a difference.” Whilst in Giddens’ schema, subordinates will always have a capacity for action, maintaining their “minimal capability to ‘act otherwise,’” “all systems and ^{and where} _^

¹Marcus, G., “Past, Present and Emergent Identities: Requirements for ethnographies of late twentieth-century modernity worldwide,” in Lash and Friedman, *Modernity and Identity*, *op. cit.*, pp. 313-314.

²Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

circuits exhibit some degree of political inequality.”¹ For Giddens those not having access to resources are less capable of achieving outcomes.²

De Certeau however, offers more space for manoeuvre. For de Certeau, singular action provides a domain of tactical manoeuvre, “‘a make-it-up-as-you-go-along’ world of pliable, opaque and stubborn spaces within which ruses, camouflage and tricks subvert the appearance of routine, and make the determinate indeterminate.”³

But there is nothing new in these guileful ruses depicted by de Certeau, they appear throughout history and in a range of contexts. Historically such battles and inversions have been commonplace, many being provocative and effectual. Like Malayan peasants’ foot dragging,⁴ medieval French cat slaying⁵ or the contemporary effects of *la perruque*,⁶ the ploys of the homeless attack imposers of perceived constraint by means of symbolic display. Their very location on the streets, their defiant nonchalance and their desperate survival—where they are not meant to be—all testify to the desire to attack the conditions of their constraint.

Life for the homeless is characterised by action both recursive and reproductive of the social order, but it is a reproduction infected with critical messages. Social reproduction is mutant, lame and compromised by the actions of the homeless.

Although they may be unable to markedly change their station in life,⁷ or be able to plot for the demise of the capitalist economy, the homeless are capable of making refusals, they are able to insert their action into the operation of the social order. Whilst they may be denied formal access to power over allocative and authoritative resources,

¹ Cohen, *Structuration Theory*, op. cit., p. 151.

² *Ibid.*, Cohen suggests that, “resources provide agents who have access to them with a range of facilities to achieve outcomes.”

³ Thrift, N., “The Arts of the Living, the Beauty of the Dead: Anxieties of Being in the Work of Anthony Giddens,” *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol. 17, No. 1, p. 114.

⁴ Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, op. cit., p. 34. Scott discusses the efforts of peasants in Malaya, the various means that agrarian farmers effect resistance from their constraints. Foot dragging refers to working slowly, and only when in the view of the boss. Emphasis is Scott’s.

⁵ Darnton, R., *The Great Cat Massacre*, Penguin, London, 1991, p. 100. Darnton discusses an episode of French cultural history, when in the 1730s, cats were among other things a popular commodity for the well to do. Strains between the working and ruling classes at this time were great and Darnton discusses the killing of cats as a symbolic gesture of resistance. He suggests, “Perhaps in trying, confessing, and hanging a collection of half-dead cats, the workers meant to ridicule the entire legal and social order.” p. 97.

⁶ De Certeau in discussing contemporary ruses makes mention of the practice of utilising goods/facilities at work when masquerading to be working legitimately, this he refers to as *la perruque*. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, op. cit., p. 29.

⁷ Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, op. cit., p. 30 and p. 255.

they are able to access informal means to destroy the perfect patternation of social reproduction. De Certeau in his theory of popular resistance grants them this capacity.

Ruddick¹ notes in discussing the conclusions of Mair:² “... the presence of the homeless in downtown Columbus threatened redevelopment, as a stigmatized socially deviant group who challenge the value systems of status-oriented professionals (the intended users of gentrified spaces in the downtown).” She comments further, “in Washington D.C. for instance, Hopper notes that efforts to booster (sic) the state’s economic recovery were confounded by the presence of the homeless: ‘it was difficult to strike up a fanfare for a common recovery when people were sleeping on grates a few blocks away.’” Gleeson and Dear³ also demonstrate the ways that the homeless have had an impact on the perception of retail precincts in the USA. Ines Cavell⁴ in *New Statesman and Society*, notes of Lincoln’s Inn Fields and the homeless encampment there, “the park’s café has closed and was now a prime squat. The law firms and institutions overlooking the Fields were sick of the eyesore, and having their lunchtime strolls spoilt by ranting glue sniffers and abusive alcoholics. Security alarms appeared at all reception desks”

The juxtaposition of the homeless and the city can therefore have political effect. Although action may not always produce intended consequences, their constant critique is *capable* of producing consequences that are of benefit. As said by one of the respondents, (cited in Chapter 7) “I like to be where people can see us, know what I mean. To get the message that we’re here.”⁵

One mechanism by which the homeless make identity, as discussed in Chapter 6, is by the reappropriation of constraint. Reckless carelessness is an attitude which expresses a certain resignation to circumstance. In this way, constraint is disempowered

¹Ruddick, “Heterotopias of the Homeless,” *op. cit.*, pp. 191-192.

²Mair, A., “The Homeless and the Post-Industrial City,” *Political Geography*, Vol. 5, 1986, p. 364. Cited in Ruddick, “Heterotopias of the Homeless,” *op. cit.*, p. 192.

³Gleeson, B. and Dear, M., “Community Attitudes Toward the Homeless,” *Urban Geography*, (Special Issue: In the City) No. 3, 1990, pp. 155-176.

⁴Cavell, I., “Plots, Counter Plots and Pecking Orders,” *New Statesman and Society*, Gimme Shelter special supplement, 2 April 1993, pp. 12-13.

⁵Interview 8

by being disregarded. However, whilst this resignation may be functional to the social reproduction of homelessness, the homeless choose to be homeless on their own terms.

On the one hand such action reproduces social power relations—in that the homeless decide to remain homeless—yet at the same time their homelessness is imbued with critical meaning. The homeless choose not to be homeless as they ‘should be,’ refusing to hide themselves in provided hostels, instead defiantly remaining on the streets, engaging passers-by and proclaiming their homelessness. This action and many others contain covert means of resistance. Finding and creating informal opportunity, the homeless invert and subvert the social order whilst at the same time using its codes and conventions. But how does Giddens’ schema address action that is duplicitous in this way?

Critical livelihood needs to be characterised in a way that accommodates both the chronic reproduction of the social system, and the critical action implanted in that *apparent* reproduction. The homeless both reconstitute and reproduce structures of domination, but they do so knowingly, and they do so on their own terms. In the proprietary powers of social reproduction, the homeless “create surprises.”¹ Where Giddens provides constraint to the homeless in that they are denied access to enabling resources, de Certeau, gives them room for manoeuvre. Whilst the constraints remain, the homeless by means of their tactics, are capable of finding ways to disempower those constraints, and to compromise the reproduction of dominating structures.

The Politics of Identity

The ambiguity of action, expressed above, as it is contained in critical livelihood is a basis for identity. Consequently, homeless identity is characterised by specific contradictions. For the homeless, identity is not necessarily a coherent political platform. Homeless identity can at times be indistinct and ambiguous. Ross² suggests that: “... the often symbolic, not wholly articulate, expressivity of a youth culture can seldom be translated directly into an articulate political philosophy. The significance of these

¹ De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

² Ross, “Hacking away at the Counterculture,” *op. cit.*, p. 122.

cultures lies in their embryonic or *protopolitical languages* and technologies of opposition to dominant or parent systems of rules.” Although the ‘political philosophy’ of homelessness is perhaps more distinct than may be the case with commodified subculture,¹ the adoption of a homeless identity may be confused and ambiguous.²

Some postmodern critics of identity have overplayed the contradiction implicit in contemporary identities. Kellner³ suggests that postmodern identities are “unstable and subject to change,” exhibiting a “level of reflexivity, an awareness that identity is chosen and constructed,” and that “in contemporary society ... it may be more ‘natural’ to change identities.” Kellner implies that the deliberate wearing of masks, or the *adopting* of an identity is the same as *assuming* another identity. In the same way that actors adopt an identity, the homeless adopt appropriate behaviours to effect certain ends. However such situations remain performances.

Goffman’s dramaturgic analysis discusses ways in which people adopt behaviour types to effect such ends, and whilst it is Goffman’s analysis that moves closer to the notion that adopted identities may in fact be routine, this does not necessarily imply that they are subliminal. That a waiter may pretend to not see a customer’s eye makes him not unobservant, but negligent. He may, however, prefer being considered unobservant rather than negligent, indeed, this may be the basis of his ruse. When questioned he may deny having seen a customer raise his brow, making excuses about his eyesight, or the lack of light. In this way the action of the waiter is different from the way his behaviour is likely to be read. His critical action lies in the social space between his understanding of the situation and the perception of others.

What characterises the waiter’s behaviour is not the subliminality of behaviour, but the guileful ruse or *perruque*, in which he envelops his own desired behaviour in the frame of other possible behaviour. He uses acceptable behaviour (honest ignorance) to mask unacceptable behaviour (deliberate avoidance). Though he may regularly play the

¹ See the discussion of Teddy Boys and Punk in Chapter 2.

² See Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, *op. cit.*, p. 40. Where he discusses the “diverse and contradictory currents,” in subculture.

³ Kellner, D., “Constructing Postmodern Identities,” in Lash, S. and Friedman, J., *Modernity and Identity*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1992, p. 153.

role of the honestly ignorant waiter, and though this may characterise his behaviour and even determine his actions present and future (structured action), because his own agenda exists in his action, his action is purposive and authored. The honest ignorance of the waiter is only alleged, when in fact it is false.

For de Certeau, this action is one of the “innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy,” adapted to one’s own interests and rules. This is also, in part, the experience of the homeless in London where a “metaphorical city thus slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city.”¹

This example reveals one of the dangers of Kellner’s reading of postmodern identity, namely, that to equate appearance with reality is potentially erroneous. That the actor assumes a range of identities does not imply that the actor subsumes these roles, for he or she may be only wearing them to achieve a specific goal.

Giddens² suggests that “all human beings, in all cultures, preserve a division between their self-identities and the ‘performances’ they put on in specific social contexts.” He goes on to suggest that in some cases an individual may come to feel that his or her flow of activities is false. This he³ suggests may occur when a husband having an affair, has to put on the performance of the “dutiful husband.” But he⁴ also suggests that, “playing the part of the dutiful husband in effect represents a false persona, but not one that seriously compromises the individual’s own self-image.”

Kellner⁵ further suggests that in the context of the postmodern fluid identity that, “when one radically shifts identity at will, one might lose control, one might become pathologically conflicted and divided, disabled from autonomous thought and action.” Whilst there is some danger for the homeless who flit at times between roles, or even facets of personality, of this forgetting of self,⁶ the leap from changing performances to the identity confusion which Kellner suggests is a quantum leap. Whilst the homeless may gain mileage from their excursions into fabrication, to suggest that their identity is

¹De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

²Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Kellner, “Constructing Postmodern Identities,” *op. cit.*, p. 153.

⁶See Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

lost in a locus of available identities is to evaporate the coterminality of homeless experience and to rob the homeless of their selfhood and the meaning of their lives. Whilst there are cited cases of thespian neuroses, as with the case of George Reeve's¹ confused leap from a window, to suggest that the homeless are similarly inflicted is to reduce their lives to meaninglessness.

The danger with Kellner's approach lies in his equation of role *playing* with role *subsuming*. Homeless livelihood is characterised by a determination to escape from living the lives of their own misrepresentation, by staunchly maintaining standards providing them with an identity they regard as respectable. Though they may at times exploit the image of the feckless and pitiful victim in order to effect charity, their utilisation of a representation they believe to be untrue undermines its labelling power. Furthermore, the simulation of false attributes reinforces the notion that they are in fact not that which they must feign to be.

Homeless Identity

That the homeless share attributes of identity does not imply that they are alike. Each individual has different responses to his or her immediate circumstances. Indeed because the loneliness of homelessness is personal and emotional, each necessarily has his or her own response to circumstance. Yet, because their very livelihood depends on the procurement of scarce commodities for which they all compete, experience is convergent. Yet, convergence built on the random contingencies of urban life is characteristically fragmented. It is this very fragmented life that the homeless share. The capitalisation on contingency and fragmentation which calls for immediate adaptability to circumstance makes for a fleeting and unstable homeless world. By sharing tactics of commodity procurement, their lives are joined to each other through shared trajectories. By traipsing along common spaces and recounting similar stories their lives become

¹George Reeve played the role of Superman in the classic black and white version in the 1950s. Some years later he threw himself from a window under the impression that he was in fact the real 'Superman.'

recursive in nature even though they may be disparate in form. Their shared antilogic and their co-project of critical livelihood affords them a basis for identity.

Although this thesis has resisted providing a nomenclature of homeless types, concentrating instead on social relations embedded in collective experience, the homeless each come to London with different stories, circumstances, personalities and expectations. Although at times individual action betrays collective values, more often the homeless draw on their collective experience for identity. The homeless have a profound sense of their “own kind.”¹

Focusing on subculture provides for an analysis of common traits, and for the homeless this is represented by the adoption of an attitude² which includes defiant survival and reckless carelessness. Together these attributes characterise a functional approach to urban life which makes use of any opportunity to gain commodities whether by the exploitation or subversion of modes of the city. This opportunistic pragmatism is characterised in the logic (antilogic) of homeless subculture that is antithetical to values sanctioned by the establishment.

The characterisation of the homeless as agents has been an important part of this work. In order to award the homeless with the authorship of their own lives it is necessary to award them at least in part with responsibility for their actions. Becoming homeless is rarely a decision made freely and is more normally a consequence of failing real options. Homelessness and critical livelihood is an understandable response to circumstances and to social disaffection. Whilst affording the homeless with purposive actions makes them responsible for what they do, they cannot be held responsible for events precipitating homelessness. Subcultural homelessness is a response made once homeless and not an aspired-to lifestyle option.

As Harvey³ suggests, the very selfhood of the homeless may depend on the circumstances which gave rise to homelessness in the first place. Additionally however, the very means individuals use to deal with their circumstances become

¹ Interview 6

² See Chapter 6, *The Nature of Commodities in Homeless Critical Livelihood*, especially the section, *Identity the Character of an Attitude*.

³ Harvey, “Class Relations, Social Justice and the Politics of Difference,” *op. cit.*, p. 64.

confused with social formation and become defining features of everyday life and central tenets of identity.

Interstitial Spaces and *la Perruque*

It has been demonstrated that the homeless use interstitial space. These are the spaces poorly regulated and supervised by society. These not only include unused spaces (both temporal and spatial), but also loophole zones and zones existing between social order and social practice.

The temporal-geographical space of the interstitial city is the city of the Other. It is the space hidden from panoptic view. This is the room for manoeuvre existing between the intended impression, and hard reality. These spaces are abandoned, invisible and derelict. This is the space in which the homeless find and make opportunity: the shadows of the park provide darkness for the mugger, the shop doorway provides an illegitimate publicity, the car park provides a place to sleep. Yet, once infiltration is detected, procedure endeavours to restore order and to reinstate surveillance. Lights and cameras are installed in the parks, shops install barrier grates, car park attendants do regular rounds, loopholes close and niches are boarded up.

Interstitial social space, lying between Goffman's front and back regions, is also the space of mendacity and of the guileful ruse. It is the space in which impression management pastes over the differences between that impression and actuality. In this space individuals and dramaturgic teams maintain convincing fronts, deliberately projecting impressions.¹ Hebdige² sees this space as fertile ground for subculture, saying "subculture forms up in the space between surveillance and the evasion of surveillance, it translates the fact of being under scrutiny into the pleasure of being watched. It is a hiding in the light." The space between the front and reality is a zone of difference, where reality is offset from appearance. This 'social space' like abandoned geographical space is unsupervised and opportunity laden.

¹Goffman, *The Presentation of Self, op. cit.* For individual fronts see Chapter 1. Performances, pp. 28-82. For team fronts see Chapter 2. Teams, pp. 83-108.

²Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light, op. cit.*, p. 35.

This space colonised by the homeless is the antispaces of the antilogic, the space of critical livelihood, and the space of homeless opportunity. The homeless make creative use of the discards of the city. Their marginality is turned in on itself as the homeless make weakness their strength. De Certeau,¹ drawing from Aristotelian war tactics, says of the tactical approach that it is “persistent as it is subtle, tireless, ready for every opportunity, scattered over the terrain of the dominant order and foreign to the rules laid down and imposed by a rationality founded on established rights and property.” In this way, the use of tactics “mak[es] the worse argument seem the better.”²

Other Dimensions of Marginality

Homelessness may be dimensionalised according to various social cleavages (see Chapter 3). The homeless who are often multiply deprived may also suffer from other modes of social peripheralisation conditioned by race, gender or sexual orientation. Whilst persons in each of these categories have been interviewed, London’s homeless youth subculture is predominantly white, heterosexual and male. A surprising fact given that in Britain, socio-economic marginality is more commonly found amongst minority groups (see Chapter 3).

Processes of marginality continue to filter into homeless experience. Young homeless homosexual men at times feel oppressed by homophobia, minority ethnic groups feeling vulnerable largely refrain from living on the streets. Women too, whose fear of molestation on the streets, is indicative of their perceived vulnerability in the city, reduces their options further with many remaining in unworkable domestic situations where they may be subjected to verbal, physical and or sexual abuse.

In concentrating on social relations of street homelessness it has been necessary to omit discussions of other modes of homelessness. This omission is of course not to discount the circumstances of those whose homelessness and deprivation takes other forms. Reviewing the experience of life on the streets serves to demonstrate the processes which reproduce a white, heterosexual, male biased homelessness. Indeed, it

¹De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

²*Ibid.*

demonstrates important cultural parameters of this subculture. Whilst the agencies working with the homeless normally have strong policies to offset discrimination, and these policies have some effect, discrimination has been partially resistant to the affirmative work of these homeless agencies.

Policy

This thesis has not been concerned with general homeless policy or the initiatives of homeless action groups. Yet at the same time this research, which is quite unlike any other that exists on the young homeless in London, has specific policy implications.

Very often policy makers are distanced from the exigencies of homeless everyday life. Their understanding of homelessness where it is not mediated by statistics comes from the media and from images of the homeless in reports and other sources of imagery. By their own admission¹ their direct experience with the homeless is minimal. Ethnographic research into hard-to-get-at populations is therefore necessary to mediate between policy makers and the quotidian circumstances of the focused population.

Perhaps the leading question remains, 'what is to be done?' This question has been addressed by a plethora of different groups, institutions and agencies, including the Police, Shelter, CHAR, the Salvation Army and Centrepont.

Prevention is better than cure. The best way to ameliorate the misery and conditions of homelessness is to divert the trajectories of those heading for homelessness, for it takes little time to become dependent on the livelihood homelessness affords. Keyes and Kennedy² note:

... when an individual becomes homeless their behaviour and status changes rapidly over the first few weeks of homelessness. Illustrated by people sleeping rough in Central London for example, this means that in the first few days a person who is comparatively unprepared for sleeping rough can probably be seen just with a blanket in a shop-door. The next stage may be to join up with other homeless people and be huddled in a small group. ... eventually they will tend to gravitate towards one of the soup run venues or more organised sites. Alternatively, they may use such facilities but hide themselves away in a remote location such as an empty building or car park. This idea is pragmatic but it does point to two important aspects of how people cope with homelessness. Firstly, the

¹In discussions with Shaks Ghosh (Centrepont), and Paul Burton (Institute of Advanced Urban Studies/The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions).

²Keyes and Kennedy, *Sick to Death*, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

longer it proceeds the more damaged an individual is likely to become and, in particular, the more a person retreats into an alternative social structure.

Preventative measures are taken by various organisations. The Leaving Home Project, a division of Information Services Charity Limited, Centrepoin Soho, and the Leaving Care Project are just some of the agencies involved in working around the country to communicate the realities of life in London, to young people vulnerable to homelessness. In addition to those leaving home for London, special attention needs to be given to young people leaving care who make up some 40% of the young homeless population (see Chapter 3).

Although prevention may be regarded as a preferable option, it does little for those who slip through or indeed for those who are already homeless. Those who arrive in London are often directed to agencies such as Centrepoin, the Alone in London Service, the Piccadilly Advice Centre or the London Connection where they are given advice, and where possible, found accommodation. Aware of the rapid entrapment into homelessness, the Alone in London Service and Centrepoin's Berwick Street hostel target those new to the streets, trying to find them accommodation before they are given an opportunity to become accustomed to life on London's streets.

Whilst such initiatives are valuable, they are constantly incapable of dealing with the numbers that need their assistance. The hostels and resource centres are however vexed with an inherent contradiction in homeless provision, one which perhaps affects their ability to deal with the size of the problem. The director of one of London's homeless day centres, when interviewed expressed a certain ambivalence:

It struck me that there was some conflict in his mind because he wondered whether what was being done was to institutionalise homelessness and to make it a viable alternative to staying at home. He wondered how much the project contributed to making homelessness and indeed sleeping rough palatable enough to encourage more people to the streets. He wondered how many less people would be on the streets if the agencies such as theirs and [] were not available to give help.¹

The agencies serving the homeless are aware that they are sometimes abused, and that whilst their work makes conditions for the homeless much better, in some ways it makes the situation far worse. But for the sake of those who are in need, they continue their work. Agencies recognising the dangers of such provision, also endeavour to stem

¹Research Journal, 18 December 1990.

the tide of migration to London's streets by participating in preventative projects throughout the country.

But what of those who are already on the streets, or those who have slipped through the fingers of these preventative measures?

What to do about the chronically homeless is perhaps the most the most vexing of questions relating to homelessness. Attempts by Westminster Council to 'wash away' the problems by frequent street cleaning (making the street and pavement surfaces unsuitable for sleeping) engendered such public disapproval that it had to be disbanded much to the annoyance of disgruntled shopkeepers. Any humane response comes face to face with a seemingly unsolvable conundrum. Compelling the homeless to make use of facilities which may remove them from the streets is a violation of civil liberties. The homeless are disenfranchised citizens who are entitled to public space. Yet to not address the problem is to accept their marginality—originally a function of the failure of the social order—and to victimise further those who have been socially peripheralised. Of course neither of these responses is acceptable, though contemporary views on homelessness range between these two extremes.¹

Whilst the government's Rough Sleepers Initiative has targeted those who sleep on London's streets, it has also been criticised for failing to address the homeless population across the country, and for failing to address the needs of people with specific problems such as substance dependency.² Thus whilst money has been effectively spent to 'clean up the streets,' other problems associated with this population remain unchanged.

Perhaps one of the best alternatives now growing in popularity in Britain is a programme based on French practice. In France a widespread system of *foyers* has been an effective way of dealing with 16-25 year olds with housing difficulties. Jan Burney³ of the *New Statesman and Society*, writes, "Foyers are residential complexes—not hostels—

¹ See Gleeson and Dear "Community Attitudes Toward the Homeless," *op. cit.*, for a range of responses to homelessness.

² Thames Reach, *Moving On*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

³ Burney, J., "Halfway There," *New Statesman and Society*, Gimme Shelter special supplement, 2 April 1993, p. 19.

for 16-25 year olds who have left home but have not found long-term solutions to their housing needs. These provide secure accommodation for young people between dependence and independence, family life and adult self-sufficiency—very like university halls of residence, but intended for the vast majority of young people not in higher education.” There are 450 such *foyers* in France offering accommodation and in-house training. Following Department of Employment pilots it is anticipated that these *foyers*, will be local authority initiatives. Whilst there are at present plans for 16 more *foyers* to be built by the end of 1994,¹ it will be interesting to see whether their cost intensive infrastructure can be maintained in Britain.

Whilst this programme perhaps smacks of social engineering, if implemented well such a programme has the capacity to enable and empower the homeless, in such a way that they may participate more fully in contemporary society. Whilst there are undoubtedly problems with such a system, there is also great potential gain for the homeless who often suffer from multiple forms of deprivation.

In addition to housing and basic provisions, the young homeless nationally as well as in London need support, understanding and tolerance. Products of contemporary society, they have often been ill-equipped to deal with the contingencies of conventional life. These people are the newly disabled, disabled by the very society from which they have come. Their multiple deprivations and their difficult and contradictory backgrounds call for understanding rather than imposed compliance, and a package of support including training, counselling and accommodation needs to be made available to them.

The Geography of Homelessness

A work of ethnography is subject to a double hermeneutic, it is only ever a representation of a representation, a story about a story, an interpretation of an interpretation. This work is based on thirty seven interviews and many hundreds of hours of participation in the lives and spaces of the homeless. I am not homeless, nor have I ever been so, yet I have been afforded the privilege of insight into the homeless world.

¹*Ibid.*

Although based on careful triangulation, this interpretation remains my own. Although others have come to similar conclusions in similar environments,¹ this thesis has developed as a result of specific circumstances with specific people at specific times. Others facing the same material may have chosen to interpret these findings differently, with a range of different objectives and suppositions.

Yet at the same time, I believe this reading to be a convincing one. The interviews conducted were candid and young people often happy to discuss even intimate details of their lives. The gathered material, written and experiential has provided sound reasons for proceeding with a resource framework and for the examining of the processes of homelessness.

The trends reviewed in Chapter 2 demonstrate the ways that social, political and economic changes in the structure of British society have produced growing exclusion and marginality. In the face of growing marginality the spaces of cities especially need reappraisal. Wolch² suggests that “exploring homelessness forces us to examine and redefine our understanding of the contemporary sociospatial dialectic, particularly the mediating role of urban space, as we try to see the city through the eyes of the disadvantaged.” The city, a dense text of multiple meanings, can no longer, if ever it could, be read as a flat surface. The city is a multidimensional entity of “... paroxysmal places in monumental reliefs.”³ The hegemonic reading of the city will no longer do. Instead the need for a sensitivity to the Other, calls for a geography of the dispossessed.

The homeless are but one of many groups whose lives constitute the city but whose actions, livelihoods and contributions to the urban landscape have long been ignored. Along with the lives of other outcast denizens, the topographies of the homeless city have been shrouded in darkness.

Peter Jackson⁴ in a chapter entitled *An Agenda for Cultural Geography*, in his book, *Maps of Meaning*, calls for a geography which addresses “... the relations between

¹Ruddick, “Heterotopias of the Homeless,” *op. cit.*; Snow and Anderson, *Down on their Luck.*, *op. cit.*; Brandon, *et al.*, *The Survivors*, *op. cit.*

²Wolch, “Urban Homelessness,” *op. cit.*, p. 99.

³De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

⁴Jackson, *Maps of Meaning*, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-181.

dominant and subordinate groups.” His concern with process replaces studies on women with studies on gender, and studies on minority groups with studies on racism. Furthermore, he calls for research on, “the extent to which cultural strategies are consciously premeditated,” the “degree to which individual spontaneity and creativity are constrained by structure and circumstance” and “the scope for active resistance in the process of consumption.”

This thesis has been concerned with more than accounting for the homeless, but has looked at homelessness as process, in terms of its creation and reproduction. The notion of skills and tactics, and an alertness to opportunity has offset some of the criticisms levied at the representations of marginal action as ‘premeditated strategic manoeuvres.’¹ The relationship between agency and structure has been discussed at length in Chapters 2 and 4, demonstrating the capacity for creative and purposive action in a field of constraints, and the politics of consumption has been discussed in relation to de Certeau’s concept of the production of consumption.

Just as there are many geographies, there are many cities. Geographers thus are able to provide a multitude of handles on the multiplicitous city. An increasing awareness of the relationships between social and spatial processes and the place of marginal texts in the city leads us towards a more comprehensive and pluralistic understanding of urban life.

The city is a many layered phenomenon. In these postmodern times it is refreshing that the city be understood as a mosaic of competing spaces. The city is increasingly composed of denizens rather than citizens, their place in the city one of marginality and alterity. The city is a fragmentary space, its logic constituted over time by a range of competing meanings and values. The homeless in their ‘making do,’ play but one role in a larger dialogue and process of meaning.

¹Crow, G., “The Use of the Social Concept of ‘Strategy’ in recent Sociological Literature,” *Sociology*, 1989, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp 1-24.

GLOSSARY

Acid	LSD†
Chasing the dragon	Smoking heroin†
Cold Weather	The Cold Weather shelter is set up during the winter months by Centrepont. It is commonly referred to as the 'Cold Weather.'
Crusties	Homeless people known for not washing. Few of these are in London, most frequently they are found in Bristol and Bath.
Detox	Detoxification, gradual withdrawal from drugs with medical supervision.†
Dosser	Generally referring to older homeless people, although sometimes colloquially used to refer to younger people.
Drop	Money given as charity to a beggar, as in 'I got a ten pound drop.'
Ecstasy	MDMA†; Drug taken in tablet form producing a euphoric effect.
Flashback	Hallucination occurring days, weeks, or even years after the use of hallucinogens (usually LSD)†
Game	See 'On the game'
Gas	Solvents†
Grass (me) up	To inform authorities about an illegal act.
H/Haitch	Heroin†
Hash/Hashish	Cannabis†
Heavy buzz	(Not of precise definition) Condition of severe hallucination or sense of substance intoxication. May be characterised by light-headedness and or a sense of well-being. When relating to heroin use may refer to a euphoric state, which cannot be properly remembered at a later date.
Junkie	Drug user, drug addict†
Mugging	Intimidatory means of theft, victims are threatened with assault if they refuse to hand over their belongings.
Old Bill	The Police
On the game	Young people who prostitute themselves are said to be 'on the game.'
Parking meters	Parking meters are often regarded as good sources of cash for they are easily plundered.
Patch	Term usually referring to a regular place for begging, but may refer to a place for sleeping.
Pop/popping	Taking of pills†
Puff	Cannabis†
Punter	One who 'picks up' a prostitute, either male or female.
Rent boy	A young man who prostitutes himself. Generally rent boys are smartly dressed. They will often go to particular places in the city to be picked up. Gay pubs, Piccadilly Circus and Victoria Rail station are such places.
Rent scene	Young people who are involved in prostitution are said to be 'on the scene.' This normally refers to young men who prostitute themselves to other men, but it may also refer to women's prostitution. See also 'on the game.'
Rock/s	Crack†
Sally/Sally Ann	Salvation Army
Smack	Heroin†
Smoke	Cannabis†
Sniffing	Inhaling, especially cocaine†
Speed	Amphetamines†
Spliff	Cannabis†

† The Hungerford Drug Project, *Glossary of Terms*. unpublished document for the use of drug rehabilitation officers, 1991.

Stoned	To be under the influence of intoxicants, mainly drugs
Straight	Unintoxicated by drugs or alcohol. Also refers to someone who is heterosexual
Sulphate	Amphetamines†
Tricks	A bogus drug. An example is the sale of liquorice as hashish (cannabis)
Trips	LSD†

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APPENDIX 1: DETAILS OF RESPONDENTS

Interview No.	Sex	Age	Time on Streets (Months)	Ethnic Status	From Country/ City	Experience of Care
1.	F	16	1	African	City	Y
2.	F	20	60	White British	City	Y
3.	M	19		White British		
4.	M	19	36	White British	Country	N
5.	F	18	84 ¹	White British	City	Y
6.	M	22	22	White British	Country	N
7.	F	20	42	White British	City	N
8.	M	19	60	White British	City	N
9.	M	18	6	White British	City	Y
10.	M	21	60	Irish	City	Y
11.	M	19	18	White British	City/Country	Y
12.	M	21	54	White British	City	N
13.	F	19	24	Irish	Country	Y
14.	M	19	43	White British	City	N
15.	F	17	84 ⁴	White British	City	N
16.	M	22	48	White British	City/Country	Y
17.	M	17	60	White British	Country	Y
18.	M	22	48	White British	City/Country	Y
19.	M	19	60	White British	City	Y (3 weeks)
20.	M	19	36	Mixed Race	City	Y
21.	M	23	36	White British	City	N
22.	M	19	24	White British	City	N
23.	M	25	96	White British	City	Y
24.	M	16	3	Irish	City	N
25.	M	22	48	Spanish	Country	N
26.	F	16	7	White British	Country	N
27.	M	22	96	Afro Caribbean	City	N
28.	M	16	12	White British	City/Country	Y
29.	M	25	36	Irish	City	Y
30.	F	16	8	White British	City	N
31.	M	24	36	White British	City ⁵	Y
32.	M	20	30	White British	Country	N
33.	M	20		White British	City	N
34.	M	23		White British	Country	Y
35.	M	24	72	White British	City	Y
36.	F	18	36	White British	City	Y
37.	M	20	36	White British	City	Y

The time spent on the streets has generally been counted from the individual's first brush with sleeping rough. The question asked was, "How long have you been on and off the streets?"

Blanks imply that there is a gap in the information at this point.

¹Spent much time in care running away, and living by herself.

²Two months in London, prior to that he had been homeless elsewhere.

³Four months in London, prior to that he had been homeless elsewhere.

⁴Spent much time in care running away, and living by herself.

⁵The time spent in care was in the country.

APPENDIX 2: QUESTION SETS

A

0.11 INTERVIEW STRUCTURE 15/2/92

The interview sections will be conducted in the order listed below.

Sections 3 and 4 will be recorded. Recording will only be done with the consent of the interviewee.

Interviewees are advised that this information is confidential. In no circumstance will names be disclosed to anyone other than myself. False names will be added to the transcripts.

Identifying circumstances too will be obscured in order to ensure confidentiality.

There are two parts to the research one on leavers of care and the other on general experiences of homelessness focusing on how young people get by.

The information as a total document is only seen by myself, my typist and my supervisors at the University.

This research although it may be conducted at various hostels, projects, etc. is not connected with them. These institutions have merely allowed me access to their projects. However, my research may ultimately be useful to those projects.

The research I am conducting is with the University of Oxford, The School of Geography in the Faculty of Social Anthropology and Geography.

Confirmation of my status may be made by contacting Dr Ceri Peach, the School of Geography Oxford, on [0865] 2-71932.

STRUCTURE

1. **SHEET 1**
 PERSONAL
2. **SHEET 2**
 MAPPING EXERCISE
3. **SHEET 3**
 QUESTIONNAIRE
4. **SHEET 4**
 QUESTIONNAIRE - CARE
5. **SHEET 5**
 MOVEMENT

1 PERSONAL V1.02

This part of the interview will help me understand the other questions in the interview by knowing some basic details about you.

Remember, the answers to these questions are confidential. If you don't want to answer a particular question, please leave it out, but the more questions you answer the more valuable is your reply.

1. Are you male or female?
M F
2. How old are you?
3. Where are you from?
4. How would you describe your ethnic status?
-African
-Caribbean
-Asian
-White British
-Irish
-White other
-Other
5. Would you regard yours as a country or a city background?

6. Have you been actually sleeping rough?
Yes No
7. How long have you been on and off the streets?

8. Have you been in Care?
Yes No
9. Have you ever lived in any sort of institution?
Yes No
10. Have you ever been shuffled between living at home and being in an institution or homeless?
Yes No
11. Have you had any contact with the police?
Once A couple of times
Sometimes Often
12. What are the occupations of your parents? Do you get on with them?
Father _____/_____
Mother _____/_____
Step Father _____/_____
Step Mother _____/_____
Foster Father _____/_____
Foster Mother _____/_____
13. What is your sexual orientation?

2

V2.1 MAPPING EXERCISE 18/9/91

Interview no Date / /92 Venue

This part of the interview will help me understand the way in which you use the city.

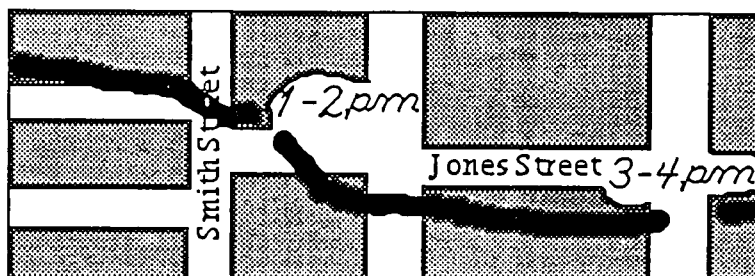
- 1a. Mark map no. 1 with blue in areas in the city that you spend a lot of time in.
Does this vary throughout the year?

Yes No

- 1b. Make a note of why you spend time in these places.

- 1c. Mark map no. 1 with red in areas in the city where you specifically avoid.
1d. Make a note of why you avoid these places.

- 2a. On map no. 2 mark down in green your path in the last twenty four hours.
Draw on the map as listed below.



If you have gone out of the map area for any time during the period, make a list in the space provided.

- 2b. Also on map 2, in blue, draw a line around all the places you have been at or through during the last week.

3. What determines whether you spend time in a place?

4. On map 4. mark the places in the city that you have slept in the last month?

Blue cross very often

Green cross sometimes

Note places visited, times spent, and purpose.

Time	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Frid	Sat
1.00am							
2.00am							
3.00am							
4.00am							
5.00am							
6.00am							
7.00am							
8.00am							
9.00am							
10.00am							
11.00am							
Noon							
1.00pm							
2.00pm							
3.00pm							
4.00pm							
5.00pm							
6.00pm							
7.00pm							
8.00pm							
9.00pm							
10.00pm							
11.00pm							
Midn't							

3

V3.4 QUESTIONNAIRE 15/2/92

Expectations:

1. What did you expect when you moved to London?
2. Why are you homeless?
3. Have your feelings about living on the streets changed?

Living in London:

4. How long have you been living in on the streets in London?
5. Why did you come to London?
6. Is there anything you like about living on the streets?
7. Is there anything you dislike about living on the streets? What is there one needs to know if one is living on the streets? Do you consider yourself streetwise?
8. Where do you spend your time?
9. Do you find yourself having to 'kill time'? Where? When?
10. Is it harder for a woman than a man being on the streets?
11. How do you get money, and for what do you need it?
12. How much money do you go through in a week?
13. How much money do you have on you at the moment and where did it come from?
14. What do you have with you at the moment?
15. Where did you get your clothes?
16. What do you do for food if you have no money and are hungry?
17. Are you on social security?
18. Do you enjoy being homeless?
19. If you have a flat, why don't you live in it? How many people know where it is/would you tell where it is?

Hostels:

20. What are hostels like?
21. Which hostels are the best and which are the worst and why?
22. Do you spend much of your week or month in a hostel? Why? Which?
23. What do you think about the way that the hostels are run?

Day to Day conditions:

24. What do you do during the day?
25. Do you have many belongings, a walkman?
26. When living on the streets is there anything that is in the forefront of your mind all the time?
27. Do you plan your days, where you will sleep etc.?

The City:

28. Which part of the city are you happy to spend time in?
29. Which part of the city do you prefer not to spend time in?
30. Do you feel at home on the streets? Is there a common place like home for you here?
31. How important is the London Connection to you? Why?

Health/Diet:

32. How has your health been since you have been living on and off the streets?
33. Have you ever suffered from: loneliness, depression, alcoholism, suicidal thoughts/attempts, voices, any other medical problems?
34. Do you spend much time alone? If so, why? When?
35. What things worry you?
36. Is there anyone that you feel that you can talk to?
37. What and where do you eat?
38. Do you feel fully aware of the risks of becoming HIV positive?

Streetlife:

39. Would you say that there are any rules about living on the street?
40. What advice would you give to someone that was thinking about coming to live in London?
41. Do you get an opportunity to wash when you're on the streets?
42. Will you sleep in the city through winter?
43. Have you been involved in any crime since you've been on the street?
44. Have you gone through any major crisis since you've been on the streets?

Begging:

45. Have you ever been begging in London?
46. If you have, where do you beg?
47. Are there any tricks to begging?
48. How much money can you expect to get?
49. Why do you beg rather than depend on social security?
50. How do you feel about people who beg who are not homeless?
51. Do you beg alone?
52. If you have been begging, have you ever been propositioned?
53. Do you find begging humiliating?—or did you at first?

Prostitution:

54. Has anyone ever made sexual advances to you on the street with the intention of paying for sex?
55. Have you accepted?
56. If you have been involved in prostitution, how did you first become involved?

57. What is good about prostitution?
 58. What is bad about prostitution?
 59. Where do you go to be picked up?
 60. Where do you go to with a punter?
- Substances:**
 61. How often do you drink and how much do you drink?
 62. Is it a problem for you?
 63. Do you take drugs?
 64. If so, what sort?
 65. How often do you take them?
 66. Is it a problem for you?
 67. Why do you take drugs?
 >>Are they a help or a hindrance?
 Do they alleviate problems?
- Other People on the Street:**
 68. Are there any kinds of people on the streets that you try to avoid?
 69. Have you ever been attacked whilst sleeping on the streets?
 70. What are the preachers and the Jesus Army like?
- Ethnic Peoples:**
 71. Are there more coloured people on the streets than whites?
 72. Do many non-whites sleep on the streets and live in the hostel circuit? Why do you think this is the case?
 73. Is there racial tension on the streets?
 74. How do you get on with people of other races?
 75. Do you think specific racial groups should be given preferential treatment on the streets?
- Police:**
 76. What are the police like to young homeless people?
 77. What dealings have you had with the police?
 78. If you have ever been convicted (since you were sixteen)? What is the most serious sentence you have been given? Custodial, supervision, minor.
- Mobility:**
 79. Would you consider going back home and why or why not?
 80. Given a typical month how many days would you spend on the street, how many in an hostel, how many in a bed and breakfast, squat etc.?
- Experiences and Feelings:**
 81. Does not knowing where you will be next worry you?
 82. Do you have any fear that someone will recognise you begging or sitting in the street or pavement?
 83. How do you feel about living on the streets; are you embarrassed by it?
 84. Do you see living on the streets as a thing you will do for a while or is it just a place you find yourself in at the moment?
85. How much time have you been able to spend on sorting your future out?
 86. How important is 'settling down' to you; do you think you ever will?
 87. Do you ever go into/use McDonald's'? Why?
- Problems/Restrictions:**
 88. Do you have any disabilities?
 89. Do you mind being asked these questions?
 90. What is your standard of education, are you literate? Can you read a paper?
- Personality:**
 91. What interests do you have? >>Music.
 92. Tell me what sort of person you are?
 93. How do you feel about yourself, living on the streets?
 94. Do you see yourself as a part of a movement? >>Punk etc.
- Future:**
 95. Do you have any long term intentions for the future?
 96. How long do you intend to live on the streets?
 97. Would you like to have a job?
- Relations with other people:**
 98. When you spend time with your friends what do you do?
 99. What do you have to do with the old homeless?
 100. What support do you get from other homeless people?
- Groupings and Friends:**
 101. Do you feel a part of a long standing group of friends?
 102. How quick are the homeless to accept a newcomer?
 103. How much can you trust your friends from the streets?
 104. Who do you depend on?
 105. Who are your closest friends?
 106. How long have you known your closest friend?
 107. Has your moving onto the streets meant that you have lost any friends?
- Relationships:**
 108. Have you had any relationships since you have been on the streets?
- Family:**
 109. Are you in contact with any of your family?
 110. Were you ever abused physically or sexually as a child, or very recently?
- IF mentioned the "family." What gives the family its character?

4

V 4.02 CARE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. When you were in care, were you admitted through voluntary care, or were you subject to a care order (via a court of law)?
2. Why were you in care?
3. Do you think that your childhood, or the parts of it in care, was a happy time?
4. Do you think you were easy to look after in Care?
5. Was there anything good about Care?
6. How long were you in care?
7. Tell me briefly about your time in care?
>>Places sent, people dealt with, time away.
8. Do you think that you are streetwise? How did you become streetwise?
9. Who has had the most impact on you whilst you were growing up?
>>Family members, individuals, organisations
10. Who do you admire and respect personally the most and why?
11. Who do you despise the most?
12. What has been the most effective form of advice for you?
>>Individual interview by officials, groups, friends, social workers etc.
13. Who has been the best source of constant advice for you? And with which issues?
14. Where do you turn to now for advice?
15. Have you ever consulted a written guide for young homeless people?
16. Have there been times when you had not been given advice and you feel it would have been better had you been spoken to?
17. Where do you get information about health care; do you feel well informed about the health situation?
18. Where do you get information about employment; do you feel well informed about employment?
19. Where do you get information about accommodation, do you feel well informed about employment?
20. Do you understand banking and making use of bank accounts?
21. Do you manage to save any money?
22. Are there people who you met when in Care that you meet on the streets
>>Do you share any closeness as a result?
23. How have your thoughts for the future changed as you grew up?
>>Ages 12, 14, 16, 18, etc. and now.
24. When you were in care did you stay in one place, or did you move from place to place?
>>What intervals did you move?
25. Do you think that the experience of care had anything to do with becoming homeless?
>>Why/Why not?
26. What is there about being homeless that you like?
27. What would encourage you to live off the streets?
28. Would you return to live with your parents? Why?
29. What sorts of information is it critical to know when living on the streets?
30. Do you think you will ever be off the streets?
31. What is your preferred lifestyle?
32. Have you ever been involved in vice: prostitution, drug selling, pornography etc.?
33. How did it come about that you are living in London?
34. How do you think the Care system could be better?

5

V6.0 MOVEMENT 10/11/91

The point of this part of the interview is to allow me to research where people come from and move to when homeless.

[illegible]

Is there anyone else you think might like to answer these questions?

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