

Observing Institutional Culture: An Ethnographic Study

**A Dissertation Submitted in Fulfilment of the Degree
of: Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Social Science**

By Matthew Edward Howell

School of Social Science Cardiff University

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Declaration

I declare that none of the work contained within this thesis has been submitted for any other Degree at any other university. The contents found within this thesis have been composed by the candidate: Matthew Edward Howell.

Abstract

The ethnography explores the types of cultures that emerge in institutional settings, in particular homeless youth hostels. The culture of homeless youth hostels is largely influenced by the social backgrounds of residents, which play an instrumental role in shaping norms and values. This study takes an interpretivist view, recognising the fluidity of culture and the many forms that it takes. Indeed, the thesis argues that cultural backgrounds play important roles in influencing both how an individual perceives the hostel and what they contribute to its cultural development. Therefore, shaping many of the daily exchanges that take place among the young people and staff members who interact within the hostel.

Homeless youth hostels aim to provide residents with the necessary skills needed to live independently, which includes ensuring residents subscribe to conventional culture and engage with mainstream society. However, norms and values sometimes emerge in the hostel that run in opposition to conventional culture, resulting in the hostel failing to achieve its primary objectives, leading to residents embracing behaviours that are deemed negative. This results in residents engaging in activities that can be thought of as detrimental to their progression into independent living. Although these types of behaviour are condemned by many in mainstream society, this thesis argues they are often rational responses to their situation. It, therefore, recognises that whilst being free to make decisions in their lives, young homeless people are constrained by structural forces beyond their control.

Ideas around safety play an important role in this thesis. It should be recognised as a subjective term, which has very different meanings for different people. Sometimes young people at the hostel feel safe when they are very clearly not safe. This thesis concentrates on perceptions of safety and notions of ontological security in relation to distinct understandings of institutional culture.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Introducing the Research

This thesis draws on ethnographic data to offer an in-depth insight into the lived experiences of young, single homeless people, who as an overlooked marginalised group, living on the outskirts of society. In the U.K., the term ‘youth homelessness’ is used to describe young single homeless people, aged between 16-25 (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). At a time of housing crisis, families are left with few opportunities when supporting younger family members. Many families are expected by the state to support adolescents without any financial assistance. As a result of this, some are faced with financial difficulties and a lack of opportunities. Many of these issues can trigger problems in the family home and lead to conflict and breakdown, which are major causes of youth homelessness (Quilgars *et al*, 2008). Additionally, some young people have little hope of becoming independent through conventional means. Subsequently, their need for personal independence and freedom results in young people approaching homeless services as a feasible option for pathways into independent living. Therefore, achieving independence via homeless services might be seen as a young person’s *only* viable option. However, it is important to note, that the transition from the family home into a youth hostel is fraught with issues, as young people’s experiences broadly differ and are situationally specific to each person. The data presented within this thesis, therefore, draws specific attention to the subjective experiences of youth hostel residents. This thesis recognises that young people experience life at the hostel very differently, depending on their social background. Some recognise the hostel as being a safe place where they identify with the other young people that reside there. Whilst others recognise the

hostel as being a dangerous environment and they are unable to gain a sense of identity from the other residents. Ideas surrounding *safety* play an important role, and this thesis aims to explore the complexity of *safety* as a subjective term which has very different meanings for different people. Sometimes young people at the hostel feel safe when they are very clearly not safe. And there are other times when young people are safe, but they do not feel it. Some instantly identify with other residents, whereas others may view life in the hostel as a dangerous environment and are unable to gain a sense of individual identity. Within this context, it is therefore important to recognise that homeless services, specifically youth hostels, are understood and experienced very differently by the young residents, with some viewing it as a place of care, whilst others viewed it as a place of fear (Johnsen *et al*, 2005; Cloke *et al*, 2010).

When a young person becomes homeless, they are often confronted with multiple realities and lived experiences. These realities are partly shaped by their existing worldviews and the cultures that they are part of. Homelessness has long been viewed negatively in Western capitalist societies and is seen as an individual failure within mainstream society (Bahr, 1973; Bahr and Caplow, 1973; Spradley, 1970; Belcher and DeForge, 2012). However, more recently within academia, homelessness is recognised as a structural problem; one that has occurred due to the failings of governmental policies (Balchin, 1998; Pleace *et al*, 1997; Jacobs *et al* 1999). Pleace *et al* (1997: 2) point out how, in the 1970s, homeless people were criticised by Conservative MPs as being “drunkards ... queue jumpers, rent dodgers, scroungers, and scrimshankers”. Belcher and DeForge (2012) point out that much of the stigma around homelessness is associated with the failure to meet the expectations of a neoliberal capitalist society. It is sometimes connected to problematic characteristics, such as poverty, laziness, and crime (Buchanan *et al*, 2010; Carlen, 1996; Fooks and Patanzis, 1999; Markowitz and Syverson, 2017; Meanwell, 2012). In the past, these negative

connotations have been intentionally applied to deter people from becoming homeless and encourage them to assume a functional role in society (Fraser, 2009). This introductory chapter will therefore critically assess the role that homelessness has played in society from a historical standpoint, before discussing the various ways that homelessness has been perceived in contemporary society. It is an important aspect of the research, as such negative representations underpin and maintain misconceptions regarding our mainstream understanding of homelessness today. Additionally, it contributes to unfair portrayals, impacting how homeless people are represented in everyday life, how they interact within society, and how they view themselves. This thesis, therefore, strives to represent people who become homeless, equally, and fairly. The following chapter demonstrates how negative representations have occurred since the deliberate stigmatization of the homeless poor in the nineteenth century, up until modern times. It shall move on to consider the emergence of the homeless youth hostel, arguing that its foundations were largely influenced nineteenth-century institutional responses to poverty.

This chapter highlights some key contemporary developments in homeless services in the U.K., some of which have progressed alongside the expansion of the post-war welfare state. Although there have been many improvements to youth homeless services over the past 30 years, the process has been a gradual one (Carlen, 1996), with some critics arguing that services could be compared to Victorian institutions or reception centres.¹ Although services have been adapted throughout the 1970s and 1980s (enabling authorities to cater for a growing population of homeless young people in the major cities of the U.K.) this chapter will acknowledge that youth hostels are a relatively

¹ Renowned for a punitive approach to homelessness, aiming to stigmatise and blame individuals for their misfortune.

new institution (Carlen, 1996); a patchwork of previously existing services, replacing a variety of formal/informal services that existed beforehand.

Historical Developments

Before the 1977 Housing (Homeless Person) Act, homelessness was largely managed by the Poor Law authorities (Pleace *et al*, 1997). The Poor Laws were based on an individualistic notion, which viewed those who were fit to work as responsible for themselves and their family (Thompson, 1963/1991). When working families fell into poverty as a result of wider economic or political failings, they could claim poor relief by entering the workhouse. However, the individualist perspective lacked understanding regarding the wider political or economic impacts on a person, and the poor were often blamed for their misgivings. Poverty was largely viewed as an individual failing which could be rectified by hard work. This lack of understanding surrounding poverty, in the nineteenth century, resulted in the upper classes fearing the poor and treating them like criminals. It was common for poor families to be broken up after entering the workhouse. The children of the poor could either enter private institutions, such as a poor law school or end up living on the streets (Murdoch, 2006). In 1876, it was estimated that there were around 30,000 young homeless people on the streets of London (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, there was an increased recognition of the prevalence of youth homelessness and poverty in England, which was highlighted by the works of social reformers (e.g., Mayhew, 1861; Booth, 1889; Rowntree, 1901). This growing recognition resulted in a shift in attitudes toward poverty, which instigated a rise in Victorian philanthropy towards the end of the nineteenth century (Fraser, 2003). The shift marked an important change which reduced stigma and blame placed upon those who lived in poverty and resulted in charities/voluntary groups being established

to support those in need of financial support, preventing many from entering the workhouse. At the turn of the century, basic accommodation was offered to the homeless such as Salvation Army Hostels, night shelters, commercial hostels, and common lodge houses (Neale, 1997). However, throughout the twentieth century, poor families still face stigma, driven by the Victorian notions of the deserving and undeserving poor, legitimising punitive government policy.

After the Poor Law

After the abolition of the Poor Law in 1948, *substandard* hostels were increasingly used as the main form of temporary accommodation (Neale, 1997). However, under the National Assistance Act (1948), a post-war Labour government assembled a system of reception centres for the ‘single homeless’ (Foord *et al*, 1998). The reception centres were commonly known as ‘spikes’ and reverted to the previous punitive approach to homelessness, which aimed to stigmatise and blame individuals for their misfortune (Neale, 1997; Seale, 2013). At this time, those under the age of 18 had little need for homeless services, as they were still expected to remain at home with their families. Much later, in 1977, the central government created the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act which made it the responsibility of local authorities to house anyone who became homeless ‘unintentionally’. However, it is recognised that this rhetoric once again suggests a distinction between those who are ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ (Pickvance, 2003; Seale, 2013). Additionally, the act failed to recognise young people as a ‘priority group’ (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994) which meant that they still had to compete with adults when looking to access services. Following the creation of the welfare state the National Insurance Act of 1946, people were entitled to claim benefits if they were unfortunate enough to become unemployed. However, after the global oil crisis of 1973, Britain fell into recession and unemployment grew. Once again, questions

were raised about the numbers of dependent “able-bodied” poor in the country. High unemployment levels resulted in the revival of media-driven, countrywide mass hysteria. Towards the end of the seventies, Campbell (1984: 21) said that there was a growth in popular opinion towards poor people that viewed them as being a ‘rowing army of unemployed ... paupers – smoking cigarettes, having holidays, playing bingo [and] having children’. Murray (1996) identified the group as being a by-product of welfarism; or the emergence of an “underclass”. Those who warned of a newly emerging “underclass” associated its members with crime and disorder (Jencks, 1989; Wilson, 1990). Robinson (2008: 40) argues that this New Right Conservative worry of a growing “underclass” encouraged “the decision to remove state benefit entitlements from 16- and 17-year-olds, a decision which structuralists have considered one of the main causes of youth homelessness”.

A Rise in Youth Homelessness

The late 1970s saw a significant rise in the number of young people becoming homeless. Between 1977 and 1981, the number of homeless people under the age of 25 in London rose from 6,500 to 13,500 (Rose, 1988). During the mid-1980s there was also an increase in people migrating to London in search of employment (Randall, 1988). Kennet (1992) recognises the Social Security Act (1981) as a fundamental catalyst for young people to head to towns and cities in search of work. Benefit cuts for 16 and 17-year-olds meant that young people either had to join the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) or find employment. Additionally, Hutson and Liddiard (1994: 3) argue that the decline of traditional industries resulted in young people moving “between government training schemes, low-paid casual work, and unemployment”. This resulted in young people becoming itinerate and looking further afield to find employment. Liddiard (1992) also points out

that, during this time, 16 and 17-year-olds earned a third of the adult wage which dramatically impacted their chances of securing accommodation. A similar situation for young people can be recognised today with young people earning less than half of the adult Living Wage. In 1979, employment had already hit a high of 1,300,000 in Britain (Rose, 1988). Carlen (1996) highlights that Margaret Thatcher adopted a monetary strategy that looked to reduce inflation by allowing employment to rise, therefore squeezing young people out of the employment market. By the 1990s, governmental strategy, coupled with the media-driven *scroungerphobia*, powered a migration of young people towards towns and cities in search of employment (Carlen, 1996; Garthwaite, 2011; Golding and Middleton, 1982). Much like the able-bodied poor of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they left their hometowns because of the lack of opportunity. Unfortunately, the high unemployment rate, combined with a lack of state assistance arguably led to an increase in young people falling into homelessness and destitution.

Structural Causes of Youth Homelessness

In the 1980s housing shortages in the U.K. were exacerbated by the newly introduced Conservative ‘Right to Buy’ scheme, which enabled council house tenants to purchase their homes (Pleace *et al*, 1997). Carlen (1996) argues that ‘Right to Buy’ created a division within the population, encouraging new homeowners to look down on those who were unable to achieve self-reliance. These ideas were motivated by the right-wing neoliberal Conservative ideology of the 1970s and 80s. However, it was during the 1980s that it became clear that homelessness was a result of wider structural problems e.g., housing shortages etc, rather than individual failings (Drake, 1985). This increased awareness of the social phenomenon of youth homelessness, led to a recognition of the need for quality temporary hostels, and support for those who needed it (Foord *et al*, 1998). A lack

of provision of hostel accommodation for single people meant that those who failed to secure employment, would have somewhere to live other than on the street, or in squats. Hostels were in high demand and were quickly filled, resulting in large amounts of young single people having to reside in Bed & Breakfasts (Randall, 1988). Areas such as London and the Southeast had also experienced an influx of youth homeless and runaways who went to the city in search of a new life (Rose, 1988). In 1985, an estimated 300,000 children were said to have run away from home (Rose, 1988). However, hostels were unable to house people under the age of eighteen. The Children and Young Persons Act (1969) made it illegal for 16 and 17-year-olds to leave home unless they had parental consent. Young people who left home, illegally, without their parent's consent were classed as 'runaways' (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). If a runaway was picked up by the police, they'd be taken home to their parents/carer. Additionally, voluntary organisations that looked to help runaways could be accused of abduction, under the Abduction Act (1984) if they provided accommodation to runaways. However, this was an unwise way of dealing with runaways, as it could make them more inclined to avoid services and sleep on the streets. Newman (1989) points out that young people with no housing support often turned to squats, illegal jobs, petty theft, or prostitution as a means of survival.

Statutory Provision for Young Homeless People

In 1983, the Children's Society launched a pilot study to measure the number of teenage runaways who needed emergency accommodation in London (Newman, 1989). Out of a sample of 737 young people, 65% had come from the family home and 29%, from care. Roughly half of the teenagers had come from London or the Southeast of England, with the other half from all around the U.K. There were 60% who were male and 40% female, and around 40% of the teenagers were 16 years old. This pilot study demonstrated how there was a significant amount of young homeless

people in British cities, and that there were not adequate services in place to assist them. In 1985, the Children's Society set up the Central London Teenage Project (CLTP), which was the first housing project which catered specifically for the needs of runaway children (Newman, 1989). The CLTP is an example of how there was a gradual recognition in the 1980s for statutory services that catered specifically for the needs of young homeless people. Gradually, it was acknowledged that young people were not leaving home on a whim; many were leaving home because of family breakdown and/or abuse (Rose, 1988; Newman, 1989; Hutson and Liddiard, 1994).

In 1989, the Children Act was implemented and made it the duty of local authorities to provide accommodation to young people who were deemed a 'child in need' (Section 20). The Children Act (1989) aimed "to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need...by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs" (Section 17). The act made it the duty of Local Authorities to ensure services for "children in need" should be "provided with a view to safeguarding or promoting the child's welfare" (Children Act, 1989: Section 17). The act also recognised that children who are in danger at home should be provided with "emergency protection" (Children Act, 1989, Section 47). This piece of legislation meant that those aged 16 and 17, who become homeless in England and Wales, should be provided with suitable accommodation. Lowe (1997) points out that the Children Act (1989), along with the NHS and Community Care Act (1990), also required the social services departments to provide 18-year-old care leavers with suitable accommodation when needed. This meant that hostels could provide accommodation to those under 18-years of age when needed. However, this also meant that young people were often placed in accommodations designed for adults. Hutson and Liddiard (1994) point out that towards the end of the 1980s, it was only charitable organisations that dealt with youth homelessness specifically. They suggest that the 1990s was a turning point, where homeless

hostels moved away from a traditional, institutional provision that emphasized stereotypes, and moved in a progressive direction, towards new projects that were run by voluntary organisations, and became known as “resettlement units”. These *units* were initially reluctant to take in younger people due to their institutional nature, however, due to a lack of tailored accommodation, many young people used the services because they had nowhere else to go (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). Thirty years on, this situation remains unchanged, with many hostels providing accommodation for both adults and children. However, this situation is not fit for purpose, because within the hostel management systems, this creates conflicts in relation to how things should, or should not, be done when providing services to adults or children.

In 1996, there was a dramatic increase in the amounts of homeless young people under the age of 18 (Evans, 1996). Anderson (1999) suggests that many young people struggled financially after the recent housing recession. She argues that 30,000 young people said they were struggling to make housing payments (Anderson, 1999). Additionally, Anderson and Morgan (1998) found that young people were the most disadvantaged group in the system which awarded social housing. In some UK cities, there was an increase of 54% of homeless young people under the age of 18 (Evans, 1996). In 1993, research shows that only one-third of local authorities were meeting their requirement to provide 16 and 17-year-olds with suitable accommodation (McCluskey, 1994), which was also found to be the case in Wales (Hoffman, 1995). However, charity/voluntary organisations such as the Children’s Society, Centrepoin, and Barnardos, provided specific youth services throughout the 1990s, with some offering tailored guidance regarding operational management (see. Breakell and Lee, 1995). Quilgars and Pleace (1999) identify six main types of youth hostels that had emerged by the mid-1990s. These include Direct Access; Low Support; Medium support; Supportive; Foyers; and Housing Schemes. These ranged from low support

Direct Access hostels, that were larger with a smaller staff, to those that meet higher support needs. These tend to have a higher resident/staff member ratio, and they're "usually [operated] on a 24-hour basis, providing a wide range of emotional and practical support, which may well include specialist counselling" (Robinson, 2008: 47). Sahlin (2005: 1) describes hostel life as being a "staircase to Transition". Within this model, she recognises that the "progression" towards independent living in the hostel results in more autonomy for the service user. However, it should be pointed out that, this form of *progress* is also founded on the neoliberal ideology of conventional or mainstream culture.

Throughout the 1990s it is evident that homelessness services have evolved to cope with the increasing number of young people accessing services. However, it is important to highlight that, homeless services, such as youth hostels, were built on the back of previous institutional forms of service provision, and therefore include numerous insidious mechanisms which still stigmatise service users. Quilgars and Pleace (1999) argue that although there is political consensus regarding the function of youth hostels, in terms of delivery, such as a focus on areas including housing need, daily living skills, and employment/training skills, there is a lack of consistency amongst services. They point out that regardless of the recognition of consistency in service delivery, some "projects with the same focus have often adopted different models of service delivery" (Quilgars and Pleace, 1999: 112). Bannister *et al* (1993) criticised the system, suggesting a need for a multi-agency approach to service delivery. More recently, local authorities have taken on more responsibilities when providing accommodation to young homeless people (Robinson, 2008). In 2003, the Labour government rolled out the Supporting People Programme in England. This was a ringfenced fund which financed the third sector in providing housing services and long-term support needs (Ashton *et al*, 2009). Later in 2009, the ringfence was removed and the funding was to be allocated to meet

the individual needs of local authorities. In Wales, the fund continues to be ringfenced, meaning that local authorities have a specific amount of money that needs to be spent on homeless services every year. The Supporting People Programme gives guidance to local authorities when delivering services. The guidance is regularly updated to ensure that it is in accordance with new policies. For example, in 2019, guidance was updated to complement Well-being of Future Generations [Wales] Act (2015), Housing [Wales] Act (2014), Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence [Wales] Act (2015), and other U.K. Government welfare policy reforms.

Responses to the Increase of Youth Homelessness in Wales

In the U.K., those who are aged 16 and 17 are legally classed as ‘children’ under the Children Act (1989), but when they become homeless, they are given ‘child in need’ status, and should legally be provided with safe and suitable accommodation (Children Act, 1989: S.47). Youth services in Wales have a further obligation to meet the needs of young people and children. This is because the Welsh Government have pledged that they will underpin child policy and create child services in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC] in line with the Rights of Children and Young Persons [Wales] Measure 2011. In Wales, the convention underpins Seven Core Values which inform all child services in Wales. Within the Seven Core Values, it is recognised that all young people should be protected from all forms of violence, exploitation, and illegal drugs. Child services also have a legal duty to meet the requirements of the Children Act (1989). This includes providing services for children that safeguard/promote a child’s welfare and provide a “range and level of services appropriate to those children’s needs” (Children Act, 1989: S17). In addition, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales (2019) recognises that children “should not be harmed and should be looked after and kept safe”. It is therefore important for service

providers to acknowledge that, if children and young people are afraid, or if they feel that the accommodation provided to them is unsuitable, they do not meet the requirements of Welsh government guidance. It is therefore important for youth services to recognise when young people are in danger, especially whilst living in emergency accommodation such as youth hostels. Additionally, they should be able to take adequate measures to manage and minimise any risk or harm to children and young people. However, from reviewing the literature around youth homelessness in the following chapter, there are some irregularities amongst service providers. The word “*safety*” is a subjective term and means different things to different people. Thus, the notion of providing *safe* accommodation to young people is a complex requirement that should be given careful consideration. This thesis attempts to analyse the notion of safety, particularly when thinking about the types of cultures that exist within a youth hostel environment, and the various perceptions of such cultures. By reviewing the literature in the following chapter, this thesis aims to identify some irregularities amongst service providers; with the word *safety* understood as a subjective term, having various meanings and implications for one person to the next.

Ethnographic Study: Rock House Youth Hostel

The location chosen for the following ethnographic research is a hostel named, Rock House, which could apply to Sahlin’s (2005) Staircase to Transition model, as Rock House’s fundamental goal is to teach young people the necessary living skills they need to live independently. It provides emergency accommodation to nine young people, aged between 16-21, however, sometimes Rock House residents chose to reject formal hostel requirements to learn how to live independently. Such residents can then become vulnerable, especially when joining groups which have instilled values that contrast those of conventional society which in most cases, can increase the probability of them prolonging homelessness (Johnsen and Chamberlain, 2008). For example, they can join

groups which operate in line with street culture (Anderson, 1999). Then rather than learning the necessary independent living and life skills that the hostel is meant to provide; some learn how to manoeuvre the complex terrain of the street. Instead of becoming competent in how to budget money or keep their flat clean, they become qualified in other illicit behaviours. This thesis demonstrates that, for many, life in the youth hostel is tough; the residents are already at a disadvantage with limited opportunities in employment/training/education/housing. It also acknowledges that young homeless people are *very* capable of attaining and maintaining legitimate and successful lifestyles. However, embedded within the structures of the hostel system and mainstream society, there are many obstructive mechanisms which exist to prevent or hinder the pursuit of positive lifestyles. Within the context of socio-economic background, many young people enter a situation whereby the social contracts with conventional society are defunct, as they already feel failed by a system which promised to treat them equally and reward their efforts. Their disenfranchised social positioning has alienated them from mainstream society, with labels such as ‘young people’, ‘homeless people’, ‘criminals’, ‘drug users’ or ‘unemployed’, often associated with negative connotations, presenting them to society as *undesirables*, thereby reducing their status. Such identities carry negative attachments and have little or no positive connotations within mainstream, conventional society.

As with all social groups, respect and status are important forms of social capital (Cohen, 2010; Thornton, 1995; Willis, 1977). Failure to attain status or gain respect can result in young people becoming frustrated with their lives, (Cohen, 2010) and when they enter the hostel, they are faced with an array of alternative groups, which differ greatly from mainstream society. Many of the groups found in Rock House operate on value systems and principles found in “street culture”, which is the antithesis of mainstream society, celebrating rather than denigrating the position of

young homeless people. It is also important to add, that due to the high turnaround of residents at Rock House, the culture is in a perpetual state of motion and is therefore interchangeable, and fluid in nature. It is sometimes the case, that most of the residents will originate from a particular community, a different hostel, or geographical location. This directly influences the shared norms and values adopted by the residents, having a profound impact on the culture e.g., such influences could determine the use of substances, what type/grade of substances are used, staff engagement or commitment to responsibilities such as attending college. Most of the time cultures that reject, or challenge mainstream culture, become the dominant culture at Rock House. Taking an interpretivist understanding of culture, Bauman (1999) describes the paradoxical nature of culture and argues that it can be both oppressive and liberating. He recognises that when one culture is allowed to flourish, other cultures can become oppressed e.g., in some “street cultures,” breaking the law or being violent, is viewed in a positive light (Baron *et al*, 2015). For the majority of mainstream society, such criminal behaviour is viewed as negative and sometimes dangerous, but Yates (2006) points out that some young people coming from “street cultures” are intimidated by mainstream culture, and therefore feel safer within the street culture that they are accustomed to.

This thesis will argue that young people living in a hostel will sometimes replicate the culture that they are most familiar with to foster a sense of belonging and security. However, when these types of cultures can emerge, it can result in those who are unaccustomed to these *street cultures* feeling insecure and afraid. Exploring the lived experiences of young people who become homeless, the research highlights how the residents of Rock House view the hostel and the level of perceived safety within its walls. Acknowledging that people within society view homelessness in often negative ways, this thesis demonstrates how such views fundamentally impact how young homeless people are interacted with, and how this is ultimately internalised to shape their identity

within conventional society. It will also reveal the paradoxical nature of life in a homeless hostel, and how its historical development has led to how it is viewed today. Arguably, homelessness itself is often viewed in opposition to mainstream society, and by examining the historical responses to homelessness, services are in two distinct ways: some people see homelessness services as a safety net, designed to help those who fall into hardship, whereas others view them as institutions designed to contain a social problem, whilst deterring others from falling into hardship. Therefore, the research aims to demonstrate how these opposing understandings of homelessness can directly influence individual perceptions of self while living in a hostel. From an interpretivist perspective of culture, the thesis not only aims to present a better understanding of young people's lived experiences, exposing the realities of where/how they live, and the impact that has on their lives, but also offers an insight into the development and reproduction of culture within an institutional setting.

Research Questions

The following thesis aims to better understand the formation of culture within a homeless youth hostel. Using ethnographic data, it will discuss the fluidity of culture within the hostel and how this impacts those who reside there. The thesis shall answer the following questions:

1. How are young people expected to behave when they live in a homeless youth hostel?
2. What form of institution do young people recognise the hostel to be?
3. What do the residents contribute towards the development of culture in the hostel?

Signposting: Thesis Structure

The succeeding chapters will be structured as follows: Chapter 2 will provide an overview of some of the current literature around youth homelessness and homeless youth hostels. It shall draw attention to the lack of research that has been carried out on the cultural development within homeless youth hostels; Chapter 3 will discuss the concept of culture and its formation within an institutional setting. It shall consider how the hostel culture impacts how young people perceive themselves and their positions within the hostel. Understanding the researcher's interpretivist view of culture, it will provide more clarity and new insights, using data collection and analysis. This chapter also introduces theoretical ideas such as Ontological Security and Structuration theory to explain the reproduction of culture within institutional settings; Chapter 4, outlines the methodology implemented to carry out the research. It describes an inductive approach, which places the participant at the very centre of the research. In this chapter, the methodology shall be outlined and considerations leading to data collection will be described, highlighting the position of the researcher within the hostel. Additionally, it explains some of the practical processes, such as negotiation of access, ethical considerations, and gaining formal consent. The following three 'findings' chapters attempt to describe the lives of the young people involved in the study. Chapter 5 takes a broad view of the hostel and its geographical location, aiming to provide the reader with vital geographic information, regarding surrounding areas and cultures that exist there. The second part of the chapter highlights some of the administrative procedures that take place in the hostel. Chapter 6 zooms into the lives of the residents/participants, entering the hostel and describing the unique environment, including some of the daily processes. This chapter draws attention to the institutional nature of the hostel and its paradoxical characteristics. Chapter 7 discusses the daily lives of the young people whilst residing at Rock House, it highlights how a lack of incentive and

structural barriers can dissuade young people from engaging in education, employment, or training. This chapter focuses on how this can result in young people choosing to achieve security, feelings of belonging, and identity, through the culture that exists within the homeless youth hostel.

Conclusion

This introductory chapter has sought to offer a historical overview of the key responses to homelessness, illustrating how homeless services have traditionally been used as a punitive instrument of deterrence which seeks to punish people for falling into poverty. Due to a more progressive understanding of structural failings, this chapter has highlighted how attitudes towards homelessness have evolved, leading to the improvement of homeless services. However, it is important to remember that irrespective of the change in attitudes towards poverty, and homeless people, notions of blame and stigmatisation still penetrate both the institutional practices of homeless services and mainstream society. Such neoliberal Individualist interpretations of homelessness continue to place emphasis upon the individual to deter people from homelessness and are surreptitiously and/or directly used to explain the social phenomenon of youth homelessness. Although many people view homeless youth hostels as a way of providing practical support, enabling young people to gain independence, others may view the hostel as a place of dishonour. Some might see its presence as a comforting safety net, offering assurance within the community. Whilst others look upon the institution as a negative deterrent that is designed to punish the failures of young homeless people. This chapter describes how homeless youth hostels are very similar to adult services, which have evolved from institutional forms of assistance.

The following chapter is a comprehensive review of past and present literature surrounding youth homelessness. It shall discuss, that although there is much literature related to the causes of youth

homelessness and youth people's experiences of hostels, there is little written about cultures found in youth hostels. It is important to add that the following arguments are not morally driven; some of the examples are dated, drawing on negative perceptions of the working classes. From an interpretivist view of culture, the aim is not to make a statement of what is 'good' or 'bad', or what is 'right' or 'wrong', instead the examples raised are used as discussion points, drawing on existing links between working-class cultures, deprivation, and crime. The key aim, therefore, is to explore how such experiences, evidenced via the current available literature and the ethnographic research, could be implemented to influence the future culture of homeless youth hostels.

Chapter 2 – Social Influences and Culture

Introduction

Currently, in England and Wales, there is much concern that young homeless people are being provided with unsafe and unsuitable accommodation (Crellin and Pona, 2015; CJJI, 2016). It is sometimes the case that young people aged 16 and 17 are placed in unregulated children's accommodation (Stone, 2010). Housing provided for homeless young people is usually in the form of supported lodgings, foyers, hostels, bed and breakfast hotels, floating tenancy support, crash pads, or night stops. Whilst residing in temporary accommodation, young homeless people are sometimes expected to live alongside unknown, and sometimes dangerous adults (CJJI, 2016). Additionally, 16 and 17-year-olds, who are legally classed as children, are often housed with adults up to the age of twenty-five. It can therefore be questioned whether young and vulnerable people should be provided with more suitable accommodation, which is exclusively designed to meet the needs of their age group. Due to the mix of adults and children, it is hard to apply one single set of rules that is suitable for all the residents in the hostel. This can result in more autonomy for the younger residents, who are already at risk of being peer pressured by the older residents that reside at the hostel. Additionally, when the hostel staff members play a lesser role in managing the norms and values of the hostel, this can result in the norms and values being guided by the residents. Consequently, this can result in the hostel residents embracing norms and values that run in contrast to conventional culture, therefore contradicting what homeless youth hostels aim to achieve.

The following chapter considers the cultures which form within homeless youth hostels. Although the literature on hostel culture is limited, the formation of hostel cultures will be better understood by focusing on the backgrounds of those who live there. This includes recognising the prominence of young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, who are living in hostels. Additional attention is given to the norms and values of unconventional cultures, such as street cultures, estate cultures, and drug cultures. Through analysing the literature, a better understanding of the types of cultures that exist in homeless youth hostels will be achieved. Like many homeless youth hostels, the hostel where this research took place, aimed to provide homeless young people with the

opportunities to take control of their lives and live independently. However, the literature reveals that young people are often placed in social environments that promote behaviours which can prevent them from taking control of their lives or living independently.

Although there is much literature discussing the causes of youth homelessness, the dialogue lacks an understanding of the perceptions of young people and the unique cultures that exist within homeless youth hostels. The focus of the following literature review focuses is young people's lived experiences of temporary accommodation, such as homeless hostels. It shall evaluate the understanding of how young people experience life in hostels, and the cultures they become a part of. It is recognised that young people have different perceptions of institutional settings such as hostels. Some may view hostels as friendly and inviting, whilst others view them as places filled with danger and risk (Stone, 2010). Many view hostels as social establishments, like hotels; others view them more like a total institution such as a prison (Mahoney, 2019). The chapter, therefore, begins by briefly describing the hostel environment and the people who go there. Using this as a foundation, it then goes on to offer some examples of the experiences that young people have when they live in hostels. The second part of the chapter argues that young homeless people's social exclusion can sometimes result in them engaging with cultures operating outside of mainstream culture to achieve feelings of belonging, identity, and security.

Hostel Environments

Homeless hostels are a form of emergency accommodation which provides services for a brief period (Busch-Geertsema, 1998; Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin, 2007). However, due to a lack of suitable housing, many young people reside in hostel accommodation for prolonged periods (Robinson, 2008). Quilgars, Johnsen, and Pleace (2008) identify three different types of hostel/supported accommodation: emergency, direct-access provision; referral-based hostel. The research took place in a referral-based hostel, which means the residents sometimes had to wait for a flat/house to become available before they could move out of the hostel. Unfortunately, this meant that young people sometimes spent a long time in the hostel that they needed. Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin (2007) argue that hostels are an institutional setting and should therefore only be used as a short solution to a person's homelessness. Sahlin (2005: 115) recognises hostels to be at the bottom of a "staircase of transition", within homeless services. Littlewoods, Watts, and

Blenkinsopp (2018) found that people are likely to spend a prolonged period in hostels, due to a lack of suitable and affordable accommodation. Watts and Belnkinsopp (2021) warn that living in temporary accommodation for longer periods can corrode an individual's capabilities of independent living. Geertsema and Sahlin (2007: 78) argue that hostels "...should not be too comfortable or nice, as people should be motivated to work for other solutions". This idea is reminiscent of the notion that views homeless accommodation as a form of deterrent to discourage people from falling into poverty. Fitzpatrick (2000) describes how some hostels have such bad reputations that young people refuse to stay there. She argues that when a hostel is in an unfamiliar geographical location, young people become less likely to leave the hostel due to the fear of being "battered" or "stabbed" (Fitzpatrick, 2000: 54).

It can be seen that the negative reputations of hostels, can make them unappealing to young people. Especially those who are unfamiliar with some of the unconventional norms and values that exist there. This idea feeds into Sahlin's (2007) suggestion that hostels could be made less appealing so that people are motivated to move out of them. However, this idea creates a somewhat challenging situation where a deterrent is created only for those who view the hostel culture as unappealing. For example, if a resident comes from a middle-class background which is more aligned with the norms and values of conventional society, they might find the hostel intimidating. However, a resident who is more familiar with the cultural norms and values of the hostel might feel more comfortable. This can work both ways; if the hostel culture is more aligned to middle-class conventional culture, it may be seen as intimidating to a young person (Yates, 2006).

Although there is much literature discussing the different risks that young people face whilst accessing homeless youth hostels (Buchanan *et al*, 2010; Crowley, 2012; CJI, 2016; Crelin and Pona, 2015; Fitzpatrick, 2000; Hagan and McCarthy, 1998; Heerde and Hemphill, 2016a; Heerde *et al*, 2014; May *et al*, 2003; Quilgars, Johnsen, and Pleace, 2008; Schmitz and Tyler, 2016; Stone, 2010; Thompson *et al*, 2006), there is little written about hostel culture and its influences. A distinct drug culture often exists in many hostels, which can prevent young people from wanting to stay there (Crowley, 2012; Hagan and McCarthy, 1998; Fitzpatrick, 2000) and some evidence suggests that residing in hostels can put young people at risk of sexual assaults and violence (Crellin and Pona, 2015; Heerde *et al*, 2013). Much of the literature recognises the problems that occur when young people become victim of exploitation and theft when they stay in hostels (Hagan

and McCarthy, 1998). Stone (2010) found that young people are often faced with many of these risks, but they are too afraid to go to staff members because they do not want to be seen as a “grass”. It should be noted that norms and values within a hostel culture, do not develop in isolation from the outside world. As discussed in the following section, each resident arrives at hostels with their cultural backgrounds, experiences, values, and norms; understanding these can help to better grasp what happens behind hostel doors.

The chapter begins by discussing current literature and assessing what is already known about youth hostel culture. It considers the social backgrounds of the residents and what they may bring to the hostel. Additionally, the chapter reflects upon how their cultural backgrounds might differ from that of mainstream society. Using the example of ‘street culture’, the chapter points out some of the contrasting norms and values that can exist in the hostel. Introducing the idea of negative social capital, it argues that, when socially excluded, young people can turn away from mainstream society and turn to one another. Sometimes they embrace norms and values that run in direct opposition to mainstream society, which is detrimental to the hostel’s objectives.

Young People’s Experiences and How they Influence a Hostel’s Culture

As pointed out by Ellis and Laughlin (2021: 5), “Little is known about the populations in hostel accommodation and even less is known about the everyday experiences of young people living in them”. Within the literature, very little attention is given to the specific cultures of those accessing services, and the influence that they have upon the hostel whilst they live there. Hostel culture is an important factor, that will determine whether its residents feel safe while they reside there. If it is a culture that embraces norms and values that are accepting of drug use, violence, and/or offending (Hagan and McCarthy, 1998; Lakenau *et al*, 2005; Hall, 2003; Stone, 2010), the hostel is not achieving its own fundamental goals. This might prevent residents from being able to live independently. Additionally, their stay at the hostel could have a negative impact upon their physical or mental health, impede their chances of engaging in education or training, or result in them getting into trouble with the police. Robinson (2008: 130) points out that hostels should embrace a “positive culture”, one where “purposeful activity is the norm rather than the exception”.

Although there is a suggestion that dangerous cultures do exist within hostels (Crellin and Pona, 2015; Stone, 2010), this is often an assumption made from the perspective of mainstream society.

Hall (2003) carried out an ethnographic study of a homeless youth hostel called Lime Street. He recognised a general predisposition that blames poor people for their misfortune. In his work, he attempts to distance himself from such unfair descriptions of poorer groups in society. In this thesis, it should be made very clear that the version of culture that is described at Rock House is just as considered just legitimate and significant as any other. The norms and values that are adopted within the ever-changing culture of the hostel *are* fit for purpose. The choices that the young people make within the hostel are rational and logical decisions. These decisions are largely influenced by their limited options which are further restricted by structural and societal failures. The residents at the hostel, are socially excluded on various levels, leaving many feeling alienated from mainstream society. As it is discussed later in this thesis, multiple barriers to education, employment, and training, ostracise the residents at Rock House driving them further away from mainstream engagement. However, regardless of their social exclusion, they find solace in the confines of the hostel. Their common interests, youthful energy, and shared humour, remind them that they do belong. Regardless of the way a vast majority might view them, they are compassionate, empathetic, caring, and generous people. The rules that they live their lives by might be alien to a middle-class bystander – but they work. Metaphorically, the residents pick up the pieces that mainstream society has left them, and they fashion their own culture. One that sidesteps the positivistic conventional cultural notions of right and wrong. Within the hostel, they create a culture which meets some of the fundamental human needs that are simply not being met by mainstream society – belonging, identity, and security. Regardless of what some people may wrongly think, together, they recognise that it is not them to blame for the failing benefit system that forces them into unemployment. They appreciate that the street is a dangerous place where you must be on guard and take measures to protect yourself. As a group, they understand how hard it is to get through the day, consequently, they have empathy for those who need to take drugs to escape the torturous humdrum of hostel life. These are just some examples, but there are many more aspects of their lives that may not be understood from the ethnocentric disposition someone fully engrained within mainstream culture. This thesis therefore looks to critique the individualistic and long-running narrative that suggests that people are responsible for their shortcomings. It aims to draw attention to the structural failures of society that leave certain groups to fend for themselves. The young people living in the hostel are a victim of these structural failures and they should not be blamed for them.

The causes of youth homelessness are interconnected, highly complex and plentiful. Family conflict is one such factor closely tied to youth homelessness in England and Wales (Randall and Brown, 2001; Matijn and Sharpe, 2006; Hutson and Liddiard, 2007; Quilgars *et al*, 2008; Crellin and Pona, 2015). A recent systematic literature review found that 47 out of 49 studies, from 24 countries recognised family conflict as a significant cause of youth homelessness (Embleton *et al*, 2016). Young homeless people who have experienced family conflict often suffer some form of violence or abuse in the family home (Quilgars *et al*, 2008; Watts *et al*, 2015). Randall and Brown (2001) argue that around 90% of young homeless people experience family problems before becoming homeless. Some of the family problems include physical and sexual abuse, criminal activity, and drug use (Randall and Brown, 2001).

When social services become aware that young people aged 16 or 17 are exposed to violence in the home, they have a responsibility to safeguard them. This sometimes results in the young person being taken out of the family home and placed into “emergency protection” in line with Section 47 of the Children Act (1989). If the young person is 16 or 17, this will normally result in them being provided with some form of supported accommodation, often provided through homeless youth hostels (Robinson, 2008). Many of the young people who reside at homeless youth hostels have been through the care system (Crellin and Pona, 2015). Crellin and Pona, (2015) tell us that 60% of children coming from care have had experience with abuse or neglect.

As well as being a victim of crime, it is recognised by Thomas (2013) that criminal activity is a significant factor which contributes to youth homelessness. This might be the case for numerous reasons, but there are several more common circumstances where, due to the young person engaging in crime, they are prevented from being able to return home. Depending on the criminal activity, young people who commit crime can often pose a risk to younger family members in the household. At this point, relevant agencies can ask the young person to leave the home to promote the welfare of other children in the household (Children Act, 1989, Sections 17 and 47). Also, if a young person is violent to another family member it might be the case that their parents are not happy for them to return (Thomas, 2013). It may be the case that the young person is issued with a youth rehabilitation order (YRO) that forbids them from returning home (Thomas, 2013). Furthermore, parents can refuse to let young people reside at the family home as a result of young people failing to maintain good behaviour in the household, displaying aggressive behaviour

towards parents, engaging in criminal activity, or engaging in drug use (Randall and Brown, 2001; Nacro Cymru, 2004; Crowley, 2012).

Many young people who become homeless come from disadvantaged families and lower socio-economic communities (Buchanan *et al*, 2010; Quilgars *et al*, 2008). It has also been revealed that around 19% of young homeless people in England and Wales are care leavers (HomelessWatch, 2014). When thinking about young people's experiences of crime before they become homeless it is interesting to consider their backgrounds. In Wales, it is reported that those living in areas of 'high disorder' are more likely to have experienced 'multiple crimes' (Aitchison and Kynch, 2004). In 2008 it was revealed that out of the 11,672 under 21-year-olds who had formal contact with the Youth Justice Board, 49% of the 11,672 had been in care (Robinson, 2008). More recently, in England, it has been found that young people who have been in care are six times more likely to be cautioned or convicted for criminal behaviour (Department for Education, 2015). These factors further increase the likelihood that a young homeless person will have experienced crime before becoming homeless. It is also acknowledged that coming from a disadvantaged background is also a strong predictor of an individual's chances of becoming involved with crime (see Wikström and Treiber, 2016). This again indicates that young people who become homeless will have probably been exposed to some form of crime before becoming homeless. This could be an experience within their home, but it is also the case that they may have had an experience outside of the home. When young people become homeless as a result of offending it can result in them being placed in substandard and unsuitable accommodation. In 2016, HM Inspectorate of Probation found that one in three homeless 16 and 17-year-olds who had contact with Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) had been placed in unsuitable or unsafe accommodation (CJJI, 2016). Arguably this could stand to increase their likelihood of further offending, being a victim of crime, or being psychologically affected by crime when they are in temporary accommodation.

Although it is recognised that previous experiences of crime can impact the lives of young people to different degrees, it should be considered that crime will affect them to some extent. Research carried out by Bender *et al* (2015) found that 79% of young homeless people had experienced multiple childhood abuses before leaving the home. This increased their chances of experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a current major depressive episode, and/or substance use disorder (Bender *et al*, 2015). Mental health problems can increase the likelihood of young people

misusing substances in an effort to self-medicate when they are homeless (Crowley, 2012). This can severely further damage a young person's mental health and restrict their access to mental health services. Additionally, it will have a negative impact upon the young person's life, decreasing their long-term life chances. Arguably, providing accommodation that they view as 'safe' could reduce the chances of them becoming isolated and therefore improve their long-term life chances.

Situating the Research

Understanding the cultural geography of the residents in the hostel is another important layer for understanding what happens in the hostel and young people's experiences there. This section discusses literature that specifically relates to many of the features of Rock House. This includes characteristics such as the city's post-industrial heritage, geographical location, and the diversity of the population that resides there. Using some historical examples, it pays attention to the stock of literature which discusses the experiences from impoverished areas. These examples are important when considering the outcomes for young people who are faced with similar situations. Many of the families of the young people living at Rock House, are from post-industrial areas that surround the city. The areas are made up of communities that were once home to the families who worked in the local industries. Understanding these communities, and their history, is important when considering the different types of cultural backgrounds where the residents of the hostel come from.

Nayak (2007) points out that many post-industrial areas in the UK have experienced social disruption over the past 40 years. He argues that during the 1980s, the main transition to adulthood was marked by the passing from school to work. Consequently, the decline of industry and increase of unemployment, has left young people in post-industrial areas with limited opportunities. This has previously resulted in many young people from the areas being placed on low paid government employment schemes or ending up claiming benefits (Willis, 1977; Bates; 1984). Novak (1997) argues that during the 1990s, the futures for young people were bleak and young people were "Trapped in a vicious circle of dead end and low-paid work, inadequate Government training schemes or enforced unemployment" (Novak, 1997: 19). He concludes that the limited opportunities for young people during this time, resulted in their poverty becoming starkly

noticeable (Novak, 1997). Furlong (1997: 56) adds that:

“With the decline of manufacturing industry, the virtual collapse of the youth labour market and the subsequent restructuring of employment opportunities for young workers, employers were able to demand more educational qualification and different types of skills”.

Therefore, for many generations, the deterioration of industry has resulted in young people, in post-industrial areas, becoming more dependent on educational qualifications, to enable them to find employment. It is widely recognised that poverty and educational attainment are intrinsically linked. Robinson (2008: 29) points out that “educational failure is part of the same pattern of disadvantage amongst young people that also includes homelessness and unemployment”. Ingram (2011) suggests that an identity struggle emerges when young people from working-class backgrounds engage in education. She argues that “when people share similar life experiences by, for example, growing up in a particular working-class neighbourhood, they acquire dispositions in line with those of their families and neighbours” (Ingram, 2011: 289). Ingram (2011: 300) concludes that “potential emotional difficulties involved in the process of forging an identity that is seen to be compatible with a successful pupil and one that is different from that which is typical for someone from their background.”

Consequently, many young people from working class backgrounds choose to leave school when they are sixteen years old (Simmons and Connolly, 2020). This can cause problems within poorer families because when 16- and 17-year-olds do not engage in education or training, their parents lose out on state-funded financial support for them. Young people are not entitled to claim any benefits until they are 18 years old. They can receive some financial support in the form of Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA); however, this will stop if they do not engage in education or training (Child Poverty Action Group, 2016). This means that households can suffer a significant financial reduction if a young member discontinues their education or training. Parents can lose out on Child Benefit, Child Tax Credits, and Child Support (Child Poverty Action Group, 2016). Fitzpatrick (2000: 12) points out that “Forcing young people to rely on their families is particularly problematic in the present era of widespread social change affecting family structures and relationships”. Therefore, the continuation of a young person’s education or training, plays a significant role in the amount of youth homelessness in the UK.

Furlong (1997: 57) argued that social class is “one of the best predictors of educational attainment” and that education plays a vital role in social reproduction. The previous chapter points out that many of the areas that the hostel residents come from being recognised as being deprived areas. Croll (2008: 244) recognises that “Families in more advantaged social locations have greater resources to devote to their children’s education”. He continues by arguing that “[they] are more confident of favourable outcomes from educational participation and sees greater benefits, particularly concerning avoiding downward mobility, than families in less advantaged circumstances” (Croll, 2008: 244). These arguments indicate that living in post-industrial areas can have a negative impact on a person’s life chances and increase their chances of becoming homeless as a young person.

Social Exclusion and a Culture of Poverty

In their classic work, Shaw and McKay (1942) found direct links between post-industrial areas, economic hardship, and ‘social disorganisation’. Coming from the Chicago School of thought, they recognised crime and deviance as a response to abnormal irregular environmental conditions. Shaw and McKay (1942) suggested that within socially disorganised areas, ‘criminal traditions’ are passed down through different generations of young people; crime is ‘culturally transmitted’ throughout generations. Therefore, young people coming from neighbourhoods with high crime rates, learn negative behaviours from older ‘juveniles’. Humphries’ (1995) historical account of working-class youth comments on the impact of unemployment amongst working-class communities. He points out that unemployment in industrial cities often results in the formation of gangs or delinquent groups which sometimes come into conflict with one another. However, Humphries claims that many of the conflicts amongst young people “did not progress beyond [...] ritualistic expressions of aggression and masculinity” (Humphries, 1995: 190). Humphries (1995: 208) points out that although gangs offer a level of excitement and enjoyment for its members, “these activities originated in, and [are] developed as a solution to, the experience of inequality and subordination in all spheres of life”. This suggests that during times of economic hardship, working-class young people can form their own unique cultures to deal with everyday situations.

Miller (1952: 6) argues that deprived communities possess their own culture “which has arisen through conflict with middle-class culture and is oriented to the deliberate violation of middle-

class norms”. He contends that there are six main concerns within a lower-class culture: trouble; toughness; smartness; excitement; fate; and autonomy. Additionally, he indicates that although trouble is often avoided, it is sometimes useful in gaining prestige within a group (Miller, 1958). When describing lower class toughness, Miller (1958) argues that one of the main components consists of “physical prowess, evidenced both by and demonstrated possession of strength and endurance and athletic skill; ‘masculinity,’ symbolized by a distinctive complex of acts and avoidances [...] and bravery in the face of physical threat”. Miller (1958: 9) points out how the idea of toughness is often portrayed in films as being ‘tough guy’ characters who are “hard, fearless, undemonstrative, [and] skilled in physical combat” (Miller, 1958: 9). In their work with groups of young people at a school, Adler and Adler (1998) found that ‘toughness’ plays an important role when considering boy’s popularity status. They argue that defiance towards authorities is a common trait used in groups of young people to increase their popularity; and that acting out, and rule-breaking is useful in attaining status amongst their peers. Additionally, they found that young boys who do not embrace ‘toughness’ are singled out by others and picked on (Adler and Adler, 1998). These findings suggest that when a group of people is formed, an ‘us and them’ mentality can often occur. This idea is very useful when considering the development of culture in post-industrial, or working-class communities. Stone (2010) describes a similar situation in a study of a homeless youth hostel in the North-East of England. Describing the hostel as having “cultures of negativity and hopelessness”, Stone (2010: 5) illustrates how some young people living in the hostel place emphasis on audaciousness, toughness, and criminal behaviour.

Many studies suggest that the culture of a geographical area can be directly influenced by the local authority’s unofficial allocation, or ‘dumping’, of tenants in specific areas (Gill, 1977; Bottoms and Wiles, 1986; Neild and Paylor, 1996; Murie, 1997). Gill (1977) carried out research that looked at the formation of delinquent groups in society. He commented on how some housing policy strategies have negatively impacted the communal dynamics of social housing areas in the UK, since the Second World War. He points out that in the sixties and seventies, local housing associations housed families in different areas, depending on whether they were deemed ‘good’ or ‘bad’. This resulted in those who were deemed as ‘problem families’ being housed in older and more run-down areas. Ultimately, he contends that allocating housing to people in this way, resulted in the ‘creation of the delinquent areas’ and social divisions in wider society (Gill, 1977).

His findings suggest that grouping a specific category of people together, contributes towards the creation of a culture that is representative of the group of people. Gill (1977) found that that residents in the 'delinquent areas' began to recognise that they had become stigmatized by people in the media and those in surrounding areas, resulting in a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' process occurring. He said that "Outsiders had produced a definition of the social nature of the area and the residents were powerless in putting their effective definition onto the position in which they found themselves. Luke Street was seen to consist of a homogenous group of people" (Gill, 1977: 55). Here, Gill (1977) describes an 'us and them' mentality, where residents felt that those from other areas looked down on them. He points out how the stigma related to coming from areas with a negative reputation can further stunt an individual's ability to gain employment, preventing them from moving out of the area. His explanation is useful when thinking about how young people are placed together in a homeless youth hostel.

Gill (1977) offers a valuable and credible explanation of how some areas can develop a unique culture that is viewed as deviant by mainstream expectations. His description is supported by later arguments such as that of Campbell (1993), who recognised the formation of 'estate cultures' in England. Campbell describes a highly organised culture that runs in contrast to mainstream society, one that is self-policing through symbolic power (Campbell, 1993). When discussing the Neighbourhood Watch, Campbell (1993: 170) argues that "Diligent detection depended on the cooperation of communities who felt abandoned by the police, and who reciprocated by giving little or no information about the criminals of whom they were afraid". Barker (2015) describes the relationship between young homeless people and Bourdieu's theory of habitus. He points out that "habitus generates perceptions, reactions and actions, by structuring them in accordance with its own structure [...], mediates between the past and present, addressing new situations in familiar ways [and] produces individual and collective practices" (Barker, 2015: 667). Barker (2015) argues that when a group of young homeless people come together, a "group habitus" occurs. He (2015: 680) points out that "human action is the culmination of personal histories, external environment and living conditions" and that young homeless peoples' lives are "not only shaped by a lack of stable and safe accommodation, but by a wide range of destabilising factors that have been incorporated and shaped by the habitus" of the residents. Barker acknowledges that the culture of the youth hostel is often heavily influenced by the geographies and personal histories of

the residents that live there.

Roberts (1997) recognises that areas with high levels of unemployment, social exclusion, and material deprivation become at risk of forming a “culture of poverty” (Roberts, 1997). Through challenging arguments which warn of an “underclass”, he argues that lack of employment opportunities in an area result in the formation of a “disposed working class” (Roberts, 1997: 52). He claims that between employment, members of such a class may “struggle to maintain standards of respectability” (Roberts, 1997: 53), and sometimes engage in illegal activities. Roberts (1997) believes that families who are viewed as “unconventional” tend to reproduce themselves intergenerationally. Additionally, he argues that young people coming from unemployed and single parent families, have more chance of becoming long-term unemployed, unemployable, or engaging in illicit activities (Roberts, 1999: 50). Here, Roberts (2008) recognises that, there is much emphasis on the importance of meeting the demands of mainstream capitalist society. However, using mainstream culture as a benchmark to measure lower class culture is ethnocentric. This understanding of culture fails to recognise that, the rejection of mainstream norms and values, is sometimes a rational response to complex situation.

As previously mentioned, many young people who become homeless are from impoverished backgrounds. Some are from some of the local housing estates that surround the hostel. Adamson (1999: 46) points out that “Welsh housing estates are often on hilltop locations, remote from wider Valleys and communities, and [some] lacked basic amenities and transport connections”. Because of this they are “difficult to let and unpopular with prospective tenants. Consequently, they ... [are] allocated to those with the most urgent housing need, which often correlated with states of extreme poverty” (Adamson, 1999: 46). He concludes that “Such locations became associated with benefit dependent families and a growing population of poorly qualified, long-term unemployed people” (Adamson, 1999: 46). Many of the young people who live in the hostel come from areas like those described above. Additionally, when they are deemed capable of living independently, some of the young people will move back to these areas. It has been recognised by Campbell (1993) that the marginalization of working-class communities can result in the emergence of estates, that may be described as “dangerous places” which are burdened by crime. She contends that, in such areas, crime is often a response to poverty, and is sometimes interwoven into an area’s informal economy. A recognition of the distinct culture that exists in the areas that the young people come from,

reveals why groups might form in the hostel and how they are influenced. However, Slater (2018: 881) recognises the “sink estate” as being a concept “invented by journalists, subsequently amplified by think tanks and converted into doxa by politicians”. Drawing upon the idea of “territorial stigma” (Wacquant *et al*, 2014), he points out that mainstream narratives blame poverty on the individual behaviour/actions, rather than structural causes and overpopulation (Slater, 2018). Campbell (1993) discusses estate culture and describes how graffiti is sometimes used as a medium of policing the culture of some estates. She tells how the ‘criminal fraternity’ in her study used graffiti on a local wall, to expose sex offenders and grasses, whilst praising the actions of violent involvement in riots. The point that Campbell (1993) makes here is that if individuals lose faith in the authorities, essentially, they are alone. It can therefore be argued that a loss in faith in the authorities within communities, can also be seen as a loss of faith in mainstream society. Anderson (1999) touches upon this idea when he describes how ‘decent’ families embrace the ‘code of the street’ as a measure of survival in a US city. He recognises that, when a person lives within a “street culture”, they are sometimes in a position where rejecting the culture can leave them vulnerable. This is a theme that will be discussed in greater detail in relation to hostel life, the identity of the hostel residents, and the safety of young people living in homeless youth hostels.

These descriptions of impoverished areas recognise “sink estates” or delinquent areas, as being a by-product of poor governmental planning and an absence of opportunity for the residents. However, another explanation for social disorganisation in post-industrial areas could be explained through the withdrawal of the structure that was being provided by industry itself. It might be argued that the industries that once existed in the local areas, provided a social hierarchy for the residents that lived amongst them. As the industries declined and the structure was removed, it created a power vacuum in the local areas. Arguably, these changes can have a profound influence on the culture of the communities.

Willis (1977: 102) found that “Status and identity are constructed informally and in the group, and form resources of the working-class culture and especially its themes of masculinity and toughness”. Anderson (1999) also acknowledges this to be the case in the US. He argues that schools can become ‘staging grounds’ for young people to carry out displays of toughness. This is an example of how cultural practices of the street can percolate into institutions such as homeless

youth hostels. Anderson (1999) contends that many young black people in the US do not behave in school, this is because they do not want to conform to white values. Bourgois (1999: 115) highlights how these attitudes translate to adulthood, arguing that “Obedience to the norms of high-rise, office corridor culture is in direct contradiction to street culture’s definitions of personal dignity – especially for males who are socialized not to accept public subordination”. Here, Bourgois (1999) offers an example of how engaging in a street culture, can further alienate individuals, preventing them from engaging in conventional activities, such as employment.

Many of the above arguments suggest that a unique culture exists amongst many post-industrial, working-class populations. Willis (1977) described this as a ‘counter-culture’ which rejects the norms and values of mainstream culture and is reflected in the culture of a school. In its place, he described an ‘informal status system’ which is governed through a process of gaining ‘honour’ to secure one’s place in the social hierarchy or ‘pecking order’ (Willis, 1977). It is contended that the ‘informal status system’ is heavily influenced by a member’s ‘masculine presence’ which was a part of their working-class culture. Willis (1977) comments on how the young boys used violence and fighting to progress within their peer group. However, he also observed that actual violence was rarely used within the group, and fights amongst peers rarely escalated. Instead, the group members used “Verbal or symbolic violence” to resolve disputes (Willis, 1997: 35). Additional to being tough, he also commented on how “being from a ‘famous²’ family, being funny, being good at ‘blagging’, extensiveness or informal contacts” contributed towards a higher status in the group (Willis, 1977: 35). Arguably, these characteristics can each be recognised to contribute towards an individual’s stock of social capital within the group. Again, these examples demonstrate how different cultural norms and values can become dominant within different institutions.

So far, this chapter has discussed some of the existing literature that relates to homeless youth hostels in the UK. It demonstrates how much of the literature addresses youth homelessness and its causes, rather than the experiences that people have when they live in a hostel. It points out that many youth hostels provide accommodation to people from a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds, this includes both children and adults. Because of this, homeless services such as

²Well known in the community.

youth hostels are experienced by individuals in very different ways. There is limited research on the specific culture of youth hostels and how these cultures develop. Therefore, the chapter pays attention to some of the literature that focusses on the cultural backgrounds of young homeless people and how this might influence the culture of the youth hostel. It is argued that many young homeless people come from poorer backgrounds. And many come from areas where street cultures and estate cultures exist. The following sections will describe how these cultures permeate into the homeless youth hostel and reproduce themselves. Additionally, it demonstrates the impact that these cultures can have on the long-term development of the hostel's residents.

Encountering Street Cultures

As previously mentioned, experiences that are deemed as negative, dangerous, or scary to many, are sometimes perceived as being positive, safe, and mundane to others (Yates, 2010). This was demonstrated when discussing how some people feel safe on council estates, whilst others feel unsafe (Davies, 1998; Yates, 2006; Hanley, 2012; Taylor *et al*, 1996). Therefore, culture can become paradoxical in its nature, as described as Bauman (1999). Arguably, when unfettered, a similar paradoxical culture would be able to form in a hostel environment. If the culture of the hostel is one that is largely influenced by conventional mainstream culture, this might impact how safe those from alternative cultures experience the hostel. This was discussed by Yates (2010), who argued that young people experienced feeling of insecurity when they engaged in mainstream cultures. Similarly, if the hostel culture is influenced by norms and values from lower socioeconomic areas, such as council estates, it might impact how safe those from more affluent areas experience life in a hostel. This is a very interesting area of consideration when thinking about the development of the culture in the hostel and how this culture can provide different levels of security to young people, depending on their social background.

A hostel's cultural development is heavily influenced by the norms and values of the young people who reside at the hostel. Residents are often influenced by the culture of the area that they are from and a wider youth culture that exists in the city. Lankenau *et al* (2005) found that a specific street culture exists amongst young homeless people; one that values "street competencies" such as buying and selling drugs, sex work, and shoplifting. They argue that young homeless people develop street competencies by engaging with more experienced youths. Baron (2013) argues that

when delinquent subcultures form, delinquent peers will often reward negative behaviour and punish positive behaviour. This has been described by Anderson (1999) as a ‘code of the street’ - an unwritten set of rules, which governs the way that people should behave whilst attempting to manoeuvre the complex terrain of the street. Miller (1958: 5-6) argues that:

“[In] the case of ‘gang’ delinquency, the culture system which exerts the most direct influence of behaviour is that of the lower-class community itself – a long-established, distinctly patterned tradition with the integrity of its own – rather than a so-called ‘delinquent subculture’”.

It is sometimes the case that homeless youth culture will become largely influenced by a ‘street culture’ (Hagan and McCarthy, 1995; Lakenau *et al*, 2005). This can result in young people being faced with the choice of joining a group, which operates in line with street values, or not engaging with other young people in the hostel. Hall (2003) describes the importance of reputation amongst young people living in hostels, they might be seen as a form of social capital amongst young people (Hall, 2003: 94). Stone (2010) describes a dominant group of young people in the hostel and suggests that a failure to join that group may result in young people becoming excluded from the social network of the hostel or their status within the hostel being reduced. Additionally, those who do not conform can experience bullying and isolation whilst they reside in a youth hostel. Through engaging with the dominant group, they enter a social contract that requires them to subscribe to the existing group culture, therefore influencing their behaviour. Choosing not to abide by the rules of the group breaks the social contract and results in them becoming expelled from the group. When social contracts are discussed by Rousseau (1762/2004: 128) he says that when “there are opposing voices at a time when a social pact is made, the opposition does not invalidate the contract; it merely excludes the dissidents”. Although Rousseau (1762/2004: 8) would recognise this as true freedom, he points out that “To renounce freedom is to renounce one’s humanity, one’s rights as a man [or woman]”. Therefore, when young people choose not to enter a social contract with the main group, they are freed from the rules of its unique hostel. However, when doing so they become outcast and potentially submissive to those who are part of the group.

Stone (2010) tells how a resident, who would not usually engage with older drug users, joined a group in the hostel. She was given drugs and alcohol before being taken advantage of sexually. Stone (2010) reiterates that this was not the type of behaviour she would usually engage in. Whilst

she was in the group, she followed the behaviour of the group, engaged in drug and alcohol use, rather than following her usual conduct. This example is reminiscent of Becker's (1966) descriptions of a deviant group in his study "Outsiders". Becker (1966) recognised that subscription to the deviant group meant following an informal set of rules. His description offers a unique approach to viewing deviance in relation to culture. Becker (1966: 15) argues that "Social rules are the creation of specific social groups [which are] highly differentiated along social class lines, ethnic lines, occupational lines, and cultural lines". Sometimes this means that behaviour that is viewed as normal in the eyes of mainstream society, is deemed deviant by the group. And deviant behaviour is praised. Therefore, not following the rules of the hostel might be seen as an important aspect of being a part of the group. This suggests that young people may be confronted with the choice of following two contrasting sets of rules. Goffman (1961) describes unwritten rules in institutions as "secondary adjustments". He argues that although an inmate is bound by "primary adjustments", there are always ways in which they can deviate from the rules through secondary adjustments. As will be seen, it is these deviations that are valued amongst some groups in hostels. The work of Stone (2010) and Becker (1966) recognise that abiding to rules of a group is important when attaining group membership. Even when the group have rules that run in direct opposition to an individual's persona conduct or what is expected within mainstream society.

As suggested in the following sections, the temporary label of 'homelessness', can further outcast young people from society through social stigma (Phelan *et al*, 1997). Goffman (1963) argues that when individuals become alienated, stigmatized, and categorized in mainstream society, they often form groups that celebrate their stigma. Describing the group members as "tribally stigmatized persons", Goffman (1963: 35 -36) argues that "when one member of the category happens to come into contact with another, both may be disposed to modify their treatment of each other by virtue of believing that they each belong to the same 'group'". This may include those who are accustomed to a particular existing group culture. For example, being associated with a particular council estate, social background, or negative label. However, Goffman (1963) argues that throughout the "moral career" of the stigmatized individual, they can experience certain patterns. Goffman (1963: 49) identifies one of these patterns as those who are "initially socialized in an alien community, whether inside or outside the geographical boundaries of the normal society and who then must learn a second way of being that is felt by those around them to be the real valid one". When thinking about this in relation to the hostel, this might suggest that some young people

choose to join groups regardless of their social background and alter their behaviour to fit the requirements of the group. Suggesting that some may join groups in an attempt to establish feelings of belonging, identity, and security. Once they enter these groups, they are governed by new rules and place emphasis on different kinds of social capital. These discussed further in the following section which consider the ideas of social capital and ontological security.

Although it may seem that the young people in the hostel have a choice regarding joining a group, some of the push factors must be considered regarding this choice. A lack of opportunities arguably results in young people spending lots of time hanging around the hostel and being bored. Joining a group in the hostel is a way to overcome isolation and boredom. Epstein (1998) views youth alienation as a key driver of youth subculture. Macdonald and Marsh (2005) argue that when young people feel alienated at school, they are more likely to play truant because they feel disconnected from school. Willis *et al* (1988) found that when unemployed, a third of the young people in their study felt alienated and felt that society was in some way against them. This can result in young people joining groups to achieve a sense of belonging, safety, identity, or self-esteem (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Crocker and Luhtanen, 1990; Maslow, 1971; Tajfel, 1981).

Additionally, as a result of their circumstances, many young people believe that the police cannot offer them sufficient levels of protection within mainstream society (Walklate, 1998; Yates, 2006; Anderson, 1999). When they are living in a social setting such as a hostel they may be expected to live in the same building as a perpetrator (Crelin and Pona, 2015; Stone, 2010). Consequently, young people living in hostels are unable to get the same level of protection from the police as others. Therefore, entering a group can be viewed as a survival mechanism that offers them a level of safety and protection that they are unable to get from mainstream society (Harvey and Green, 1981; Barchas, 1986; Mobs *et al*, 2015).

A final point to be made is related to the role of deviance amongst groups within organizations. Cohen (1966) discusses the role of deviance in relation to social disorganization. He warns that within organizations, deviance can undermine the organization by destroying people's willingness to take part. He points out that:

“Distrust, even if it is unfounded, weakens organizations by undermining motivations; to distrust others is to see one's efforts as pointless, wasted, and foolish, and the future as hazardous and uncertain. One is inclined to ‘pull out of the game’ if he can, and to

invest his resources with those whom he can trust, because deviance, quite apart from its other effects, destroys faith in future performance” (Cohen, 1966: 5).

Therefore, if a young person loses trust in conventional society, they may be inclined to join another group, one that they can trust to look after them. This might include engaging with a particular culture whilst they reside at the hostel. The following section shall discuss the cultural development within the hostel and consider how some unconventional cultures become embedded within these social institutions.

Negative Social Capital

Bourdieu (1984/2010: 145) describes social capital as being “The overall volume of capital understood as a set of actually useable resources and powers – economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital”. Many research studies that use social capital as a sociological tool, fail to recognise that the concept is not only associated with measuring conventional or mainstream power or success. Ravenhill (2008) argues that homeless social capital is an inverted version of mainstream social capital. She argues that “homeless people use problems and difficulties like badges of honour and what is seen to be negative social capital within housed society is positive social capital within the homeless community” (Ravenhill, 2008: 39). The following section shall, therefore, discuss types of social capital that are of little use in conventional and mainstream society, but which are valuable for an individual’s success or power within cultures that run-in contrast to mainstream society. The section will discuss how social capital can be a useful tool to understand the behaviours of young people operating outside of conventional society. It shall be argued that some young people procure “negative social capital” amongst their groups to increase power and status among their peers. Additionally, it is argued that a group’s legitimacy is dependent on how much “negative social capital” is accumulated among the group members. High levels of capital validate a group’s position among other groups that operate within a street culture.

Much of the literature describing working-class cultures in post-industrial communities has suggested the existence of social capital that is not necessarily useful in conventional society. Negative social capital is often represented through actions of toughness, masculinity, audaciousness, or violence (Miller, 1958; Willis, 1977; Campbell, 1993; Humphries, 1993; Adler and Adler, 1998; Anderson; 1999; Bourgios, 1999; Alexander; 2002; Michalski, 2017). These

traits are also visible in what Anderson (1999), calls “street culture”. Anderson (1990, 1999) links post-industrial, working-class communities, and street culture. The term “street culture” describe a specific culture that exists among homeless populations and includes behaviours such as street drinking and begging (Fitzpatrick and Johnsen, 2009; Fitzpatrick *et al*, 2011). However, for the purpose of this thesis, “street culture” should be recognised as being a culture that is “consciously opposed to those of main stream status” (Anderson, 1999: 33). Sandberg and Pederson (2011) argue that street culture can sometimes result in the emergence of a form of social capital called ‘street capital’. Sandberg and Pederson (2011) undertook an ethnographic study in Norway. Much of their fieldwork took place alongside a riverbank where local young people hung out and sold cannabis. They identified a street culture that existed amongst the young people who spent time there, arguing that the culture is driven by “street capital” (Sandberg and Pederson, 2011). They contend that street capital is similar to Bourdieu’s version of social capital, but adds that “the competence, skills and dispositions involved are limited to a violent street culture” (Sandberg and Pederson, 2011: 4). Bender *et al* (2007) discuss a similar form of capital amongst young homeless people and describe it as “street smarts”. These are important attributes that confirm whether an individual is trustworthy amongst their peers or not (Bender *et al*, 2007). Szreter (2000: 57) recognises that:

“Social capital flows from the endowment of mutually respecting and trusting relationships which enable a group to pursue its shared goals more effectively than would otherwise be possible. Social capital, therefore, depends on the quality of the set of relationships in a social group [...] A social group or institution which is potentially capable of generating capital may be composed in almost any conceivable way: a neighbourhood, those in a business company, ... [or] a ‘social class’”.

Therefore, the concept of social capital is a useful tool when considering cultures that run in direct contrast to that of mainstream society. Halpern (2006: 119) argues that “Criminal social capital – having friends who are involved in crime – is certainly a form of social capital in that it can make conducting crime easier”. Halpern (2006) points out that formal sanctions to deter individuals from committing a crime, can sometimes have a paradoxical effect or even increase their level of criminal social capital. This is something discussed by Baron (2011) who argues that homeless

street youth, sometimes view criminal behaviour positively and therefore reward it. When thinking about negative social capital in relation to Rock House, it might argue that the accumulation of negative social capital, within a group, gives the group a level legitimacy within the domain of the street. The more social capital that a group has, the more safety it can offer its members.

This idea of “negative social capital” is recognised by many academics, however, there is no consensus on the name of this specific form of social capital. Thornton (1995: 11) points out that subcultural capital is often subjective, arguing that “Subcultural capital confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder” (Thornton, 1996: 27). Hagan and McCarthy (1998: 19) identify capital that exists amongst Canadian street homeless youths as “criminal capital”. Sandberg and Pederson (2011) expand on Anderson’s (1999) US study of street culture, they identified the capital in their research in Norway and refer to the idea as “street capital”. This name is also used in a later study by Shamas and Sandberg (2015), who also discuss the idea of a “street field”. Barker (2013) carried out an ethnography with young homeless people in Australia and refers to this form of capital as “negative social capital”. Also, referring to the idea as “negative social capital”, Liu (2004) identified the use of this capital amongst offenders in China. The lack of semantic consensus regarding the name of this capital may be due to the sensitive nature, given when discussing different cultures. Recognising this concept to be directly related to culture, Halpern (2006: 119) argues that it is “problematic in a wider context as it rests on a *post hoc* judgement from a particular point of view as to what is negative”. For the purpose of the research, this form of capital shall be referred to as “negative social capital”. However, it is important to stress that this takes no moral judgement of the cultures that engage in the use of “negative social capital”.

Hagan and McCarthy (1998) describe the use of negative social capital amongst young homeless people on the streets of Toronto. They argue “quasi-family structures” form amongst young homeless people and that “transmit skills and knowledge about street crime” (Hagan and McCarthy, 1998: 19). They point out that delinquency amongst young homeless people takes place when they subscribe to a street culture that runs in opposition to the mainstream (Hagan and McCarthy, 1998). This idea has been discussed by Baron *et al* (2013) who warn that in street culture, formal sanctions have an opposite effect on young people. They recognise that being punished by the law, provides them with capital and elevates them within their social circles

(Baron *et al.*, 2013).

In the sub-discipline of developmental criminology, there is a consensus that views delinquency as a common behaviour associated with young people. Sampson, Laub, and Wimber (2006: 267) found that “social tie[s] [create] interdependent systems of obligation, mutual support, and restraint that impose significant costs for translating criminal propensities into action”. Arguably, an “independent system of obligation” is that which is driven by conventional social capital rather than that of an opposite or negative form. Further to this study, Barry (2010: 128) found that young people often start offending because they do not want to be left out of social groups; they continue offending to “uphold a reputation ... [and] maintain the status quo among existing friends as a ‘face-saving’ mechanism”; they stopped offending when more legitimate opportunities arose in their lives. When describing the young people’s relationship with peers, Barry (2010) discusses “reputation” as a form of capital. When thinking about young people who join groups in hostels, this might suggest that group membership is sometimes dependant on the aspiring member to engage in criminal behaviours to achieve acceptance from the group.

Another important point about social capital within groups, is made by Bourdieu (1997: 37) who argues that:

“[T]he aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possessions of a durable network of more or less, institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition [...] provides each of its members with the backing of collectively-owned capital”.

This suggests that young homeless people might join groups as a way to pool together resources and combine “negative social capital”. When thinking about street culture, pooling resources among groups can offer group members more security. Particularly when encountering other groups on the street. Hagan and McCarthy (1998) suggest that this is something that takes place among young homeless people. They refer to the group as a “quasi-family” but fail to expand on areas such as membership and hierarchy (McCarthy and Hagan, 1996: 19). Arguably, access to these groups requires young people to contribute negative capital for them to gain access and position within the group. If this is the case, it could be said that when young people are homeless, they might commit a crime to gain access to a group to achieve a sense of safety, belonging, or identity.

When considering the importance of negative social capital and the protective role it can play for groups operating outside of conventional society, a ‘bad’ reputation might be seen as a positive thing to some young people. Assuming that there are other groups outside of the hostel, who are also operating on negative social capital, a certain reputation could act as a deterrent for such external groups, preventing them from upsetting the hostel group members. If this was the case, contributing towards a negative reputation of the hostel could provide safety to the hostel residents in the wider context of the street.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the most pertinent literature that is related to life in homeless youth hostels. It has demonstrated that although there is much evidence about the causes or correlations of youth homelessness and the experiences of young homeless people, there is little written about the development of cultures within homeless youth hostels. To examine this, the chapter has described some of the social backgrounds that the young people who are engaged in this study are likely to have come from. This has been done to recognise the development of the unique cultures that young people may be accustomed to. Gaining a better awareness of these cultures allows one to better understand the participants involved in this study. The existing experiences that young people have will directly influence the cultural development of the hostel. This chapter has highlighted how an individual’s social background will directly impact how safe they feel when they live in a homeless youth hostel. It points out that some young people are more accustomed to unconventional cultures than others. This can impact how safe they feel when they live at the hostel. However, it is also noted that those coming from lower class backgrounds can also be insecure whilst engaging within mainstream cultures. The chapter has introduced the idea of negative social capital. It suggests that negative social capital is often used within groups that exist within a wider street culture. The accumulation of negative social capital amongst group members is important when accomplishing legitimacy in the eyes of different groups that also engage in street culture.

The cultural influences of homeless youth hostels are important areas of consideration as they directly affect the lives of the young people that live there. Homeless youth hostels are services provided to young homeless people, with the aim to support them through the transitional period, until they can live independently. They should facilitate the personal growth of young people and

provide them with positive pathways. If the culture of a hostel is not carefully considered, it can result in the emergence of cultures which promote behaviours running in contrast to the hostel ethos. These cultures might place emphasis on criminal behaviour, drug use, or violence. All of which could have severe negative impacts on a young person's transition into independent living and they are also detrimental to their lives.

Chapter 3 – Situating Culture

Introduction

This chapter will introduce the definition of culture that is used throughout the research process. Linking the concept of culture to various theoretical perspectives, it shall draw attention to how fluid the culture of the hostel is and its dependency on the influences of residents. The main aim of this chapter is to provide the reader with a comprehensive definition of culture. After this has been done, the following sections shall describe how young people's insecurities when living in a hostel could contribute towards the formation of groups which possess their own norms and values. Here, the concept of ontological security is helpful when explaining why young people form groups. It is argued that when people are socially excluded or lose faith in conventional society, some turn to unconventional groups to gain security. The chapter then uses the theory of structuration to describe how, when unfettered, certain cultures can reproduce themselves in a social setting such as a homeless hostel. The chapter then discusses the idea of identity, and how being young and homeless can impact on how young people engage with society. The final section describes how homeless hostels can be viewed as contradictory social environments. Contradictory environments can obscure young people's perception, especially as they consider their relationship with conventional society, and their personal and social identity. It is recognised that young people's experiences are often influenced by their culture. These experiences are therefore important aspects of the culture that exists in a youth hostel.

Interpretivism

When engaging with another culture through an interpretivist paradigm, it is important that this culture is not compared with one's own (Jenkins, 1997). Doing so leans toward a positivist approach and can create epistemological issues through a barrier between the researcher and the researched. Through acknowledging culture from an interpretivist position, one can avoid

becoming ethnocentric. This is when the researcher uses their own cultural view to measure the culture that they are observing.

Bauman (1999) recognises two opposing views of culture; he describes the pair as being paradoxical in their nature but at the same time, very much interdependent on one another. He says that culture “is the ambivalence between ‘creativity’ and ‘normative regulation’” (Bauman, 1999: xiv). Therefore, Bauman (1999) recognises the two contrasting ideas as being two sides of the same coin. This is an important area of consideration when thinking about culture in the hostel. If an unconventional form of culture is allowed to flourish, those residents who are only familiar with mainstream culture are at risk of being oppressed. However, this works both ways, and young people from unconventional backgrounds can also become oppressed if mainstream/conventional culture is enforced in the hostel. This feeds into the idea which suggests that services can be experienced as both places of care and places of danger, simultaneously by different people (Johnsen *et al*, 2005; Cloke *et al*, 2010). It might be argued that the development of culture is largely influenced and guided by the formal systems that exist in the hostel. This is a fundamental area of consideration when understanding the development of culture in an institutional setting such as Rock House. It calls into question, whether hostel culture can/should be guided or manipulated by those responsible for the running of the hostel. This might require more rules or sanctions to control certain behaviours and ensure consistency within the hostel.

Culture is an important variable when one thinks about common, everyday concepts such as ‘safety’. The perception of an individual’s external reality is directly influenced by their own culture. Assuming that a young person’s experience of safety is the same as an adult, is a positivistic understanding of youth culture. James and Prout (2005: 14) take an interpretivist view of culture, arguing that young people’s “Social reality is not fixed, constant or unitary”. They recognise that children and young people’s lives are often defined through adult perspectives, which has “muted” the voices of young people. Kitzenger (2005) argues that children and young people are taught powerlessness and are therefore oppressed by adults. Therefore, ideas such as “safety” need to be revisited and explored from a young person’s perspective rather than adults.

Ontological Security: Notions of Safety and Belonging

This thesis argues that, when young people enter an alien environment, such as Rock House, they

look to achieve a certain level of “security” or “safety”. Many feel vulnerable, and achieve a sense of security, they look to identify cultures that exist in the hostel, that they are already familiar with. If the culture that exists within the hostel is unfamiliar to the young person, this will have an impact on their ontological security. The following section shall describe how young people come together and form groups in a hostel to maintain, or repair, their ontological security.

When considering the hostel as a social arena, one should reflect on how young people engaged with their communities before entering the hostel. Some of the communities that the young people come from, are like the ones described above. Many of them are post-industrial, working-class areas, and some are council estates or other social housing districts. Some of the areas are recognised as being the most deprived in Wales; others are described as being ‘rough’ or sometimes dangerous. Yates (2010) found that some young people coming from housing estates felt safer within the confines of estates, than they did outside. Although the housing estate he describes has a distinct criminal culture, Yates (2006: 198) maintains that

“Young people identified an element of community cohesion on the estate intrinsically linked with the traditional working-class extended family networks that facilitated a feeling of safety and arguably an element of solidarity in the face of negative regard, in which the estate was held”.

Yates (2006) further supports the idea that many of the working-class areas that young people come from possess a unique culture. His findings imply that the culture of some of these communities exists in opposition to mainstream society; to the extent that the residents there, feel alienated when they leave the communities. Taylor *et al* (1996) and Westwood (2015) offer similar circumstances where certain groups in society prefer not to leave their local area due to feeling unsafe. Watt (1998: 253) recognises that many people have “feelings of danger [when] moving outside the ‘safe space’ of their own neighbourhood”. This was also found by Jackson (2012, 2015) who suggests that young homeless people often become afraid when they enter an unfamiliar area.

Hanley (2007) grew up on a housing estate and she takes a negative view of such estates. In a rather pejorative tone, she described it as a prison that she managed to escape. Hanley (2007: 20) argues that “[C]ouncil estates have the effect of making people worse about themselves [...] than

other members of society, because [...] they are in many ways cut off from the mass influence – the mass middle-classness [...] that the rest of the nation enjoys”. The example of unique cultures existing on housing estates, with some residents feeling more integrated than others is useful when considering the culture of hostels. Arguably, those living in a hostel bring with them norms and values, shaped by their backgrounds, which feed into hostel life. Some people may directly relate to existing cultures in the hostel and feel safe within them, whilst others are alien to the cultures and therefore feel afraid by them.

Laing (1960/2010: 41-42) argues that people display ontological security when they experience:

“[their] own being as real, alive, whole; as differentiated from the rest of the world in ordinary circumstances so clearly that his [sic] identity and autonomy are never in question; as a continuum in time; as having an inner consistency, substantiality, genuineness, and worth; as spatially coextensive with the body; and, usually, as having begun in or around birth and liable to extinction with death. He thus has a firm core of ontological security”.

Therefore, ontological insecurity lacks these features when an individual fail to display a “this stable sense of being [...] and identity and autonomy are always in question”. The individual “may lack the experience of [...] temporal continuity [...] not possess an over-riding sense of personal consistency or cohesiveness [and be] unable to assume that the stuff he is made of is genuine, good, valuable” (Laing, 1960/2010: 42). Giddens (1991) builds on this definition identified by Laing (1960/2010) as well as Erikson (1950) who argued that identity was a means of controlling anxiety and provides a mechanism for ensuring trust, predictability, and control as a reaction to disruptive change through re-establishing previous identities or developing new ones. Giddens and Erikson determine that self-identity involves the development of a persistent feeling of biographical continuity where actors can sustain a narrative about the self and deal with investigations and interrogations, relating to acting and being. Ontological security involves an individual’s “fundamental sense of safety in the world and includes a basic trust of other people. Obtaining such trust becomes necessary for a person to maintain a sense of psychological well-being and avoid existential anxiety” (Giddens, 1991, pp. 38–39). Existential anxiety creates absurdity through undermining the taken-for-granted sense that things exist for a reason.

In this way, Giddens (1991) addresses the complex idea of ontological security concerning social being, identity, and culture. He recognises it as being a “protective cocoon” which is developed by a caregiver (parent) throughout childhood (Giddens, 1991). Recognising ontological security as being a “framework of reality”, Giddens (1991) describes it as being a trust system that blocks out certain negative possibilities of everyday life. He describes ontological security as “the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and the constancy of their surrounding social and material environments of action” (Giddens, 1991: 92). Giddens (1991: 44-45) acknowledges that there are both “fears” and “anxieties”. He contends that fear represents a response to a specific threat (conscious), and anxiety represents a “perceived threat of integrity of the social system of an individual (unconscious)” (Giddens, 1991: 44-45). Giddens (1991: 44) points out that everyone has developed “a framework of ontological security [...] based on routines of various”. Arguing that anxieties are learned from the caregiver, he highlights that anxiety emerges when someone’s social system is under threat; therefore, reducing an individual’s ontological security. Consequently, it can be deduced that ideas around safety are subjective and heavily dependent on an individual’s perception of reality which is largely influenced by their culture.

Commonly, for those young people who have recently separated from a familiar group, such as the family home, the hostel will be an alien environment to them. They enter a new setting, one that is familiar to them in some ways, but very different in others. Mayock and Parker (2020: 39) argue that home is a “safe and secure place where people feel autonomy, control and a sense of privacy; home is also a space that provides a source of identity and belonging”. Although there are contrasting views of what a home is (Somerville, 1992), Dupuis and Thorns (1998) have identified four characteristics of a home. They argue that a home should be a place of constancy, a place of daily routine, a place where people have control over their lives, and it should be a secure base around which identities are structured (Dupuis and Thorns, 1998: 29). Once they become homeless, they are stripped of feelings of security, identity and belonging.

Fromm (1942) recognises that separation from a group can result in a person experiencing severe anxiety, aloneness, and doubt. Fromm (1942) recognises that being a part of a group offers identity and security. Influenced by the writings of Kierkegaard, Fromm acknowledges that leaving a group results in the individual becoming “alone and free, yet powerless and afraid” (Fromm, 1942: 28).

He argues that “growing separation [from a group] may result in an isolation that has the quality of desolation and creates intense anxiety and insecurity” (Fromm, 1942: 25). Fromm (1942: 25) contends that this can often result in a “new kind of closeness and solidarity with others”. It can therefore be suggested that when young people come to the hostel for the first time, they will gravitate towards other young people from similar backgrounds from themselves, to reproduce relationships and cultures that they are familiar with. Fromm (1942: 207) argues that individuals experience an “illusion of freedom” as we are all bound by internal psychological structures and there is no distinction between subject and object. Like Giddens (1991), Fromm recognises that socialisation detracts from pure freedom.

Whitaker *et al* (1998: 3-4) describes how culture develops in residential care settings. They argue that young people “develop shared concerns, preoccupations and fears. To survive, they need to find ways to maintain themselves as a group and to cope with the features of their environment. To do this, they are likely to adopt customs and practices which support survival”. This can sometimes include identifying a common enemy, increasing solidarity amongst group members (Whitaker *et al*, 1998). As well as being confronted with aloneness, young people who enter hostels are also faced with new risks. This can act as a push factor to encourage them to come together and form new groups. Beck (1992) argues that in a risk society, shared anxieties can offer individuals a common ground and therefore promote a level of social solidarity. He recognises “safety” as being a driving force of community (Beck, 1992). Therefore, it can be said, that when young people feel alone or at risk in the hostel, it encourages the emergence, formation, and reproduction of certain group cultures.

When considering this, it is worth noting that in new social settings, individuals from certain backgrounds, can repair their ontological security through replicating the social system they are accustomed to. This would mean engaging with others who share similar norms and values as themselves. If many residents come from a particular geographical area or social background, it could result in the hostel culture being replicated to be more complementary to that of the majority. Adler and Adler (1998) argue that friendship patterns have an “additive nature”. They point out that when lives overlap in a variety of ways – such as gender, age, interests, common friends, or relatives – they are more likely to form stronger bonds of friendship (Adler and Adler, 1998). Cloke *et al* (2010) describe how homeless people who do not use drugs and alcohol (straightheads),

and those who do (pissheads/junkies), very rarely interact with one another when using homeless services. However, pissheads and junkies are much more likely to engage with each other (Cloke *et al*, 2010). This is an example of how those with common cultural behaviours will gravitate towards one another. Group formation has long been recognised as a practical method to ensure human safety and survival (Harvey and Green, 1981; Barchas, 1986; Mobs *et al*, 2015). Additionally, groups offer individuals a sense of belonging, identity, and self-esteem (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Crocker and Luhtanen, 1990; Maslow, 1971; Tajfel, 1981). However, when the formation of a group results in the reproduction and dominance of culture, this can potentially become a threat to another's framework of reality. Consequently, the dominant culture becomes an oppressive one (Bauman, 1999). Therefore, resulting in other young people experiencing anxiety or fear, due to their ontological security being damaged through the threat of being faced with an unfamiliar culture.

Fromm (1942) argues that feelings of isolation and loneliness can also result in individuals experiencing masochistic or sadistic tendencies. He recognises that people can overcome the uncertainty of freedom by allowing others to make decisions for them; therefore, becoming submissive. Additionally, he concedes that insecurities can also be overcome by dominating others. He suggests that these two opposing characteristics both seek out the same goals: to overcome feelings of aloneness and powerlessness/insignificance. Fromm (1942: 130) also argues that "The frightened individual seeks for somebody or something to tie his self to; he cannot bear to be his own individual self any longer, and he tries frantically to get rid of it and to feel security again by elimination of the burden: self". Fromm (1942) links these ideas with the growth of authoritarianism within groups and argues that they are reactive actions or "escape mechanisms" allowing individuals to escape feelings of anxiety. Arguably, the idea of authoritarian cultures, which run in contrast to conventional societal norms and values, is a disquieting one. When considering Bauman's (1973/1999) previously mentioned dichotomy, not only could this result in the formation of oppressive cultures within the hostel, but it could also encourage young people to join a group in an attempt to overcome feelings of insecurity. This might include those who are unfamiliar with the group culture.

When thinking about cultures that may form amongst residents in a hostel, it is vital to consider the types of culture that already exist there. Particularly, hostels aim to provide young people with

safe and suitable temporary homes. They are responsible for helping residents to develop independent living skills and positive pathways into independent living. If cultures develop that do not recognise these goals as important, this could result in the hostel providing a service that is detrimental to a young person's progression³. On discussing institutions, Goffman (1961: 23) said "Inmates come with a 'presenting culture' [...] derived from a 'home world' – a way of life and a round of activities taken for granted until the point of admission to the institution". Some of the young people who enter a hostel may be unfamiliar with the norms and values of some of the cultures that exist within the hostel. For example, some of the residents will have no experience in engaging with street cultures. This section has suggested that young people will sometimes become impelled to join these groups, in an attempt to gain feelings of security, identity and belonging. The following section will discuss some of the literature regarding the formation of cultures which may be controversial when trying to achieve the objectives of the hostel.

Sub-Cultures and Strain

This section describes the sub-cultures that can form in the hostel and strain that can occur amongst then residents. It argues that homelessness can result in young people feeling isolated and alienated from mainstream society, leading to the development of sub-cultures in the hostel. Here, I describe how sub-cultures form amongst young people, offering them a level of security that they are socially excluded from. Considering the social backgrounds of the young people, the section highlights how their communities influence the production of culture in the hostel. As mentioned in the previous chapter, many of the young people who live in hostels come from impoverished communities. Arguably, those coming from these backgrounds experience stigma, isolation, and alienation from mainstream society (Adamson, 1999; Yates, 2010; Gill; 1977; Epstein, 1998; Slater 2018; McKenzie, 2019). Drawing upon previous arguments related to ontological security, this section suggests that, in the hostel, young people from similar backgrounds gravitate towards one another. They then reproduce cultural elements that they are most familiar with. In doing so, this can sometimes result in the formation of subcultures in the hostel. The second part of this section describes how feelings of alienation and a lack of viable opportunities, can result in young homeless people resorting to come to achieve feelings of feelings of self-worth. The section is

³ This idea of progress relates to the "staircase to transition" model.

useful when considering the structural influences that impact young people's decisions whilst they are homeless. The ideas discussed are particularly interesting when considering the opportunities and lack of incentives that are described in Chapter 7.

Epstein (1998) argues that when young people become alienated from mainstream society, subcultures which run in opposition of mainstream values can form. He recognises there to be two main sociological types of alienation: "estrangement experienced as a result of social structural position" or "the internal feeling of detachment felt by the individuals in given situations" (Epstein, 1998: 4 - 5). When considering these two types of alienation, it is reasonable to say that young people will experience alienation whilst they reside in a homeless youth hostel. This is because, when they become homeless, they are allocated with several labels which they may not have been formally associated with (e.g., homeless, drug user, mentally challenged, youth). This will undoubtedly have an impact on how they interact with society, and how society interacts with them. Cohen (2015) recognises cultural deprivation as an important contributing factor that encourages young people to engage in delinquent subcultures. Cohen (2015) argues that when young people are unable to attain adequate levels of "status" through conventional means, instead they seek status among unconventional groups. Delinquent subcultures run in contrast to "respectable" mainstream society: "The delinquent's conduct is right by the standards of his subculture, precisely because it is wrong by the norms of the larger culture" (Cohen, 2015: 136). Describing delinquent subcultures as "gangs", Cohen (2015: 135) says that young people exhibit "gracious hostility towards nongang peers as well as adults", he argues that they take "keen delight in terrorizing 'good' children ... and in general making themselves obnoxious to the virtuous". Cohen (2015: 137) suggests that young people join delinquent subcultures to achieve a sense of "loyalty and solidarity". In his discussions around the importance of status, Cohen (2015) describes "status" as being a form of negative social capital. He also suggests that, among subcultures, an aggregate amount of social capital exists amongst its members. Cohen (2015: 138-139) says that "Each actor may contribute something directly to the growing product, but he may also contribute indirectly [...] The product cannot be ascribed to any one of the participants". This suggests that subcultural membership can be based upon the levels of negative social capital that an individual can contribute to the group. When thinking about the hostel, this indicates the potential formation of unconventional groups, which create their own norms and values.

The second part of this section describes how young people can sometimes experience various strains and pressures whilst living in a homeless youth hostel. The section is useful when considering the structural influences that impact young people's decisions whilst they are homeless. The ideas discussed are particularly interesting when considering the opportunities and lack of incentives that are described in Chapter 7.

When discussing organic societies, Durkheim (1933) recognised that when individuals do not feel fully part of a society, they are socially excluded. He described this occurrence as "anomie": an inconsistency within the emergence of natural solidarity. He argued that limitless and unachievable objectives lead to adverse feelings, driving individuals to suicide (Durkheim, 1897/2005). The concept of anomie was later used by criminologist Robert Merton to explain the existence of crime and deviance (Merton, 1938). In this context, the experience of anomie can result in anomia which refers "to those who experience personal frustration and alienation as a result of anomie within society" (Shoemaker, 2000: 92). This idea is discussed in Merton's (1964), strain theory which outlines the difficulties that can arise when individuals are unable to achieve success through legitimate means. In his "strain theory", Merton (1964) describes how individuals are sometimes pushed into gaining wealth and status through illicit means when they fail to do so legitimately. Additionally, Merton (1968) discusses the idea of 'status frustration' amongst young men in working class communities. This idea was previously discussed by Cohen (1955) who argued that status frustration occurs when individuals recognise that they are unable to achieve the goals of mainstream society, such as engaging in employment or education, and they become frustrated with their lower status in this respect. This can result in them rejecting the goals of mainstream culture and joining a criminal subculture. These ideas relate to the residents of the youth hostel because, as previously mentioned, when young people reside at the youth hostel, they are usually unable to earn money through legitimate employment. Additionally, they are limited in opportunities such as education or training. This often means that their connections to conventional social networks are restricted, and they can become alienated from mainstream society.

Agnew (2006) draws upon the idea of status frustration in general strain theory (GST). He recognises that when young people are treated negatively, and are unable to achieve their goals, they can form negative emotions and resort to committing crime (Agnew, 2006). Agnew (2001: 319) argues that the individual's involvement with crime becomes more likely when they are: "(1)

are seen as unjust, (2) are seen as high in magnitude, (3) are associated with low social control, and (4) create some pressure or incentive to engage in criminal coping”. Whilst carrying out research with homeless street young, Baron (2006) examined strain theory. He found that relative deprivation, monetary dissatisfaction, monetary goals, homelessness, and unemployment, were all significant predictors of crime (Baron, 2006). In his later research, Baron (2013) found that street youth often enter delinquent street subcultures. He found that some of these street subcultures often undermine formal sanctions, so that they become inverted (Baron, 2013). He points out that “the rewards of peer approval and the costs of peer sanction outweigh the potential costs of legal sanctions that deter offending ... when groups are focused on facing risk, daring and courage those who violate the law when the threat of certainty and severity of punishment is high demonstrate to their peers and others on the street that they are ‘willing to pay a more significant price for maintaining identity’ and ... any punishment experiences that result from their offense to further elevate their status in the group and on the street” (Baron, 2013: 947).

When young people living in homeless hostels are in receipt of housing benefit⁴, they are often advised not to find employment (Robinson, 2008). The rent at Rock House is £251 per week, and if they become employed, they are then expected to pay a large portion of the rent themselves (Buchanan *et al*, 2010). Robinson (2008: 28) points out that "Because Housing Benefit tapers off as income rises, every additional pound earned through work yields as little as ten pence in real income. Effectively this means that moving off benefits can actually increase the risk of poverty and debt”. If a young person decides to get a job whilst living at the hostel, they will need to notify the Job Centre. A recent report from Scotland also highlights how this is a problem that disincentivises employment in most forms of temporary accommodation (Watts *et al*, 2018). The combination of abnormally low wages and unusually high rent results in young people being left with very little after deduction from their wages have been taken. Unfortunately, this administrative error excludes hostel residents from the labour market, reducing their capability to engage in legitimate employment.

Cultural Reproduction: The Role of Structuration Theory and Identity

When considering how the culture in a hostel develops, it is also important to consider the ideas

⁴ This has now been replaced by Universal Credit.

put forward in Giddens' (1984) *Structuration Theory*. Giddens (1984: 25) recognised the process of structuration as being "Conditions governing the continuity of transmutation of structures, and therefore the reproduction of social systems". When describing the "duality of structure", Giddens (1984) argues that culture is formed through an ongoing "durée" of actions, which are simultaneously informed by both agent and institution. As will be discussed below, this idea describes the relationship between the agency and structure. Using Giddens' *Duality of Structure*, it argues that young people are responsible for shaping the hostel culture, whilst being bound by its rules. This idea is useful when using structural theories alongside interactionist theories. Although structural theories such as Strain Theory and Subculture Theory suggest a lack of agency in the lives of the residents at the hostel, Giddens (1984) recognises agency, as existing within these structures which are directly influenced by individual agents. Using Rock House as an example this idea is expanded on in the following section.

Homeless youth hostels often have bad reputations in the geographical areas where they exist. At times, this is perpetuated by negative representations in the media. For example, newspapers have described homeless hostels as "crime dens" (*Manchester Post*, 2019). The *Guardian* (2014) wrote "Cannibal' killing of woman at hostel in Wales as suspected attacker is left dead". Headlines such as these contribute towards tarnishing the reputation of homeless hostels. There is also confusion created by the media regarding different types of hostels that are experiencing problems. The example given above by the *Guardian* (2014), did not take place in a hostel. Instead, the horrific incident took place in an (unsupported) Bed and Breakfast, that provided housing for adult prison leavers. Mistakes or inaccuracies like this are not uncommon when it comes to homeless accommodation and care homes.

Hutson and Liddiard (1994) identify the media as perpetuating negative attitudes towards youth homelessness. However, they also acknowledge that the public plays an active role in the maintenance of negative narratives (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). They argue that "the public tend to adopt and endorse only those media messages that are compatible with their existing viewpoint" (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994: 83).



(Signs placed in local village protesting homeless youth hostel)

There are many examples of the media offering incorrect portrayals of young people causing “moral panics” (Cohen, 1971). Cohen’s (1971) work demonstrates how media portrayals of young people can directly influence how the public perceive them. As well as distancing the public from the issue of homelessness, the media are also successful in using these examples as deterrents to prevent others from falling into homelessness themselves. Ravenhill (2008) illustrates a functional role of homelessness which actively deters people from falling into hardship. These attitudes are similar to those that existed in the nineteenth century. However, whilst doing so they further stigmatize the young people who are unfortunate enough to experience homelessness. The way the media portrays homeless youth hostels will also impact how young people view these homeless services before they access them. This could result in young people viewing homeless hostels as negative places and choosing not to access services when they need to.

Additional to the public having a negative opinion of hostels, residents in youth hostels are of the same age group and often know one another from similar social circles. Before agreeing to live in a hostel, prospective residents will usually find out what the hostel is like from asking people who have previously lived there or current residents (Fitzpatrick, 2000). Stone (2010) describes how many young people in homeless hostels paint the hostel in a negative light. He also tells a story of a young person who, after becoming aware of the culture of the hostel, decided they had to “toughen up” if they were going to live there (Stone, 2010: 31). This is a good example of how the hostel as a structure/institution directly influences the behaviour of the individual/agent before

they live in the hostel. Then, after becoming “tough”, the individual/agent becomes a part of the structure/institution, they later become an active representative of the structure/institution and play a role in influencing other individuals/agents. This offers an interesting example of how cultures can reproduce in a hostel through a process of structuration. Furthermore, this example demonstrates how the hostel reputation can influence a resident’s identity before moving into the hostel.

The remainder of this section considers how the culture that a young person becomes part of in the hostel, influences their identity, impacting how they engage others. This interactionist explanation demonstrates how some young people may change their behaviour once they identify with a particular group in the hostel. Once they become part of the institutional structure, and therefore contribute to its cultural development. With recognition to Goffman’s (1961) *Stigma*, it should be acknowledged that the negative labels of being ‘homeless’, can impact how young people position themselves in the world and is likely to form part of their social identity. Hoolachan (2020) describes how being homeless can be associated with negative or “spoiled” identities due to stigmatising views within society. Many of these ideas are closely related to the theory of labelling. Becker (1966: 32) recognises that when an individual breaks social convention, they become “revealed as a different type of person”. Once this has happened, they are labelled, their status is reduced, and they are “treated accordingly”. Jackson (2012) points out that being a ‘youth’ can also be viewed as a negative label. She draws attention to the fact that young people often face scrutiny from the police and the public which has been recently demonstrated in the increase of Stop and Search procedures in cities across the UK (Jackson, 2012). This is an example of how carrying negative labels directly influence how people interact with young people based on their social status. Goffman (1961) argues that when a person projects a “social identity” to another person, the other person will often assume many personal attributes associated with the specific identity. Goffman (1961: 12) also points out that “Social settings establish the categories of person that are likely to be encountered there”. When thinking about this in relation to the homeless hostel, how a young person views a hostel could therefore influence how they identify with self. A good example of this is discussed by Fitzpatrick (2000), when she described how young people often made prior assumptions before visiting a hostel. For example, one of the young people said, “Don’t fancy goin intae a hostel, know what I mean. Aw the hostels are aw full of junkies. Heard of people gettin robbed in them. I don’t fancy gettin robbed” (Fitzpatrick, 2000: 52). This demonstrates how

people living in hostel, recognise their negative reputations. Many young people who become homeless are limited in their housing options and are obligated to move into some hostels (Fitzpatrick, 2000). Once they become part of the hostel, the labels that young people are allocated with can influence their individual identities. Bowler (2010: 55) argues that “Labels and their resulting identities go beyond the positioning of individuals but also play a crucial part in the way different groups in society see themselves and each other”. Therefore, when a young person is viewed in a negative light it can result in them embracing the culture of the hostel.

Becker (1966: 37) points out that negative labels do not affect some people and that many will “decide that he [or she] does not want to take the deviant road and turn back”. Once this choice is made, they are welcomed back into the conventional community, “but if he [or she] makes a wrong move, he [or she] will be rejected and start a cycle of increasing deviance” (Becker, 1966: 37). However, when a young person becomes homeless, they are unable to simply “turn back”. They are therefore burdened with a label that is often viewed as negative (McCarthy, 2013). In their ethnographic research with homeless people, Snow and Anderson (1987) point out that homeless people are often stigmatized due to negative views that question their role within society and “moral worth”. Additionally, they point out that a lack of engagement within conventional labour markets connects them to underground economies (Snow and Anderson, 1987). They found that, due to the negative ways in which they are viewed, homeless people construct identity in three different ways. The first is described as “distancing. This is when a person tries to conceal their homelessness and distances themselves from the label of homelessness. This also includes avoiding engagement with the homeless community. The second way that they constructed their identity was by “embracing” the label of homelessness. This included fully engaging amongst the homeless population with a sense of pride. The final way in which Snow and Anderson (1987) found that homeless people construct their identities is through “fictive storytelling”. This is when individuals continuously invented stories and exaggerate stories to construct their personal identity in a positive light. This includes “embellishment”, which involves “exaggerated laminations of past and present activities and experience” (Snow and Anderson, 1987: 1360). It also includes “fantasizing”, which “involves future-oriented fabrications about oneself. [...] fanciful constructions that place the narrator in positively framed situations that seem distantly removed from, if at all connected to, his past or present” (Snow and Anderson, 1987: 1360). Zufferrey and Kerr (2004) argue that understanding the complexity of people’s identities whilst they are

homeless is crucial when meeting their needs and delivering “client focussed” practice.

Snow and Anderson (1987) argued that some homeless people construct their identities through ‘distancing’. “Associational distancing” was when an individual completely distanced themselves from anyone who was homeless and denied they are anything like the other homeless people. Others made a “self-conscious attempt to foster the impression of a lack of commitment or attachment to a particular role to deny the virtual self-implied” or “role distancing” (Snow and Anderson, 1987: 1350). Additionally, they describe the act of “institutional distancing”. This involved showing deep hostilities towards the institutions that were trying to help them.

Newburn and Rock (2004) have argued that, although it is commonly assumed that homeless people commit crime, this is not the case. They contend that homeless people are 13 times more likely to be a victim of crime, and these crimes are usually committed by members of the public (Newburn and Rock, 2004). They found that homeless people were reluctant to report crime as they believed that the police viewed them as criminals (Newburn and Rock, 2004). When young people initially leave the home, they are expected to present themselves as homeless people in order to receive help. They then are expected to endure a formal process which includes form filling which shall allow the agency to decipher whether they are eligible for support. During this process, the young person is expected to meet the criteria of what is formally understood to be a homeless person and therefore subscribe to the status of a ‘homeless’ person. This situation is like the process described by Goffman (1961) where inmates were stripped of their existing identity and given a new one. When considering Becker’s (1966) deviant labelling theory it might be argued that placing a negative label such as ‘homeless’ on a young person can have a negative impact on how they identify with themselves and therefore affect how they engage with society.

Social Establishment vs Total Institutions: A Paradox

In his book *Asylums*, Goffman (1961) identified five main groupings of total institutions. The first, he said, were institutions designed to care for people who are unable to take care of themselves. The second grouping includes those who are both incapable of looking after themselves and also a threat to the community. The third grouping he describes are total institutions designed for those who are recognised as intentionally dangerous to the community. The fourth grouping is for those who are trying better to pursue a work life tasks e.g., army barracks, boarding schools, ships. The

final grouping describes situations when people retreat from the world by living in total institutions, such as monasteries or convents (Goffman, 1961). Goffman (1961: 16) points out that “This classification of total institutions is not neat, exhaustive, nor of immediate analytical use, but it does provide a purely denotative definition of the category as a concrete starting point”.

When thinking about how young people perceive the homeless youth hostel, it is possible that they could view the hostel to be fitting with any one of these groupings. Arguably, this can therefore impact how they identify with themselves whilst they live at the hostel. As previously discussed, the hostel is explicit in expressing their main objective: “to ensure that people are better equipped to live independently when support is withdrawn”. This includes giving guidance around managing a home, budgeting money, cooking, maintaining relationships and developing social skills. Offering practical support around these basic life skills suggests that young people are incapable of looking after themselves. Therefore, this suggests that they are unable to take care of themselves and are somewhat similar to Goffman’s (1961) first grouping of total institutions. Additionally, the “stairways to transition” model, suggests that young people are in some way not normal, and they therefore need to be prepared or disciplined before they can fully engage with society.

Although the second group is not immediately comparable to the hostel setting, it should be noted that hostels are often seen to contain the social problem of homelessness. Carlen (1996: 124) points out that youth homelessness is “a threat to society not because of their minor lawbreaking activities but because the economic, ideological and political conditions of their existence are indicative of the widening gap between the moral pretensions of liberal democratic societies and the shabby life chances on offer to the children of the already poor”. Homeless youth therefore act as evidence that a society is failing to provide for its citizens. Additionally, homelessness in general has long been viewed by some as being a risk or danger to society, with homeless people being criminalized (Fooks and Pantazis, 1999). Consequently, the second group provided by Goffman could be seen as a valid description of the hostel. This grouping overlaps into the third grouping, and the hostel could also be viewed as an institution, which protects the public from a dangerous population. Such comparisons can be drawn from historical examples which describe the containment of vagrants in the workhouses of the nineteenth century. Foucault (1977/1991: 141) describes this as “enclosure” and he argues that this is done to contain and control a social problem. The fourth grouping can also be applied to the hostel. Especially as the young people who live there, must

live there before progressing to getting their own flat in the community. Thus, the hostel can be hypothetically viewed to be any one of four groupings described by Goffman (1961) or even a combination of them all.

When considering Goffman's (1961) four groupings, along with Holland and Peace's (1998) contrasting attributes, it can be seen how certain characteristics of the hostel could be viewed in different ways, depending on the individual's relationship to the hostel. When describing cultural values, Hofstede (2001) outlines ten "plus and minus poles". Each can be used to offer a contrasting perception of reality (e.g., dirty/clean, evil/good, moral/immoral, normal/abnormal, and ugly/beautiful). He points out that the way we view reality in relation to these poles are programmed into us through our individual culture. Ultimately, he argues that "values determine our subjective definition of rationality" (Hofstede, 2001: 31). The following section will identify several characteristics of the hostel that are subjective and their paradoxical meanings for residents. Arguably, the perception of these characteristics can be informed by the cultural backgrounds of the resident. If residents interpret the hostel as a total institution, it might make the case that they take on the role of inmates.

When contemplating the role that an individual's culture plays whilst living in a hostel, is the paradoxical nature of these types of institutions. Because young people are free to come and go from hostels as they please (unlike, say, a prison), it is suggestive that a homeless youth hostel is a social establishment, rather than a total institution. However, apart from this aspect that young people are free to come and go, hostels have many attributes that are highly similar to the characteristics of a total institution (e.g., locks on all doors, security cameras, 24-hour staff). Additionally, due to the young people's unfortunate position, a lack of housing choices might result in them feeling that they are not free to leave the hostel if they wish. Peace and Holland (2001) have highlighted how residential care homes can often present contradictory dilemmas. They outline some of the problems that arise when trying to provide accommodation that resembles a 'home' (see Table 1). They discuss six characteristics of a home environment and point out how achieving these characteristics in a residential care home is problematic. Table 1 demonstrates how certain characteristics can differ when they are associated with a domestic or institutional setting.

Domesticity	Institutionalisation
Privacy	Surveillance
Informality	Regulation
Risk	Security
Normalisation	Specialisation
Personal	Professional

(Table 1.)

Here, it can be seen, that the provision of homeless services, such as hostels are more complicated than one might think. Particularly, when the service providers are trying to adopt an informal role concerning delivery. Willcocks *et al*, (1987: 1) point out that “In reality, the ideal of providing a ‘homely’ setting is a genteel façade behind which institutional patterns, not domestic ones, persist”. This conflict of practice suggests that there may be a level of confusion in relation to how these services are managed by staff. McGrath and Pistrang (2007) describe how different staff members of the same homeless youth hostel had contrasting views of what the hostel should provide. Within their research, they identified three core themes that describe the relationship between the staff members and residents. These were, “enforcement versus support, emotional involvement versus distance, and resident- versus staff-centred practice” (McGrath and Pistrang, 2007: 595). Their work demonstrates how these opposing views can cause confusion amongst the residents using the services and the staff members working there. Some of the residents may feel like they are living in a home, whilst others might feel as though they are living in an institution. Parsell and Martson (2016) argue that the provision of supportive housing is often offered on a conditional basis. They point out that supported accommodation is supportive of a paternalistic “threefold change process: first to address extreme need; second, to teach people how to become ‘good tenants’; and third, for tenants to achieve independence” (Parsell and Martson, 2016: 201). Arguably, this type of change process is one that is often associated with methods of normalization and correction in institutional settings (Goffman, 1961; Foucault, 1975). Sahlin (2005) points out that hostels are often deliberately made less attractive so that people aspire to move out of them and into their own accommodation. Mattison and Pistrang (2000) describe how residents who form

positive relations with staff members, can experience separation and loss when they move away from residential living. Arguments over how appealing emergency accommodation should be, are very similar to nineteenth century opinions regarding deterrence and the workhouse (Sahlin, 2005).

Johnsen, Fitzpatrick, and Watts (2018) argue that coercion and bargaining are “soft” forms of social control, which is often used to contain homeless populations. Mahoney (2019) points out that this type of treatment adds to the continuation of disciplinary measures, aimed to socially control homeless people. He argues that “even the most benign forms of support are inseparable from coercive, regulatory, routinized and surveillance strategies to which homeless populations are subjected” (Mahoney, 2019: 260). However, Mahoney (2019) fails to recognise in this argument, that homeless hostels are sometimes intended to house both adults and children together (e.g., sixteen to twenty-five-year-olds). This is an important consideration when discussing how services are delivered to the residents. Hostels often have one set of rules for all their residents - regardless of their age. It can be seen how this might become problematic when trying to apply a fitting set of suitable rules for both adults and children. There is a legal acceptance that children who are mature enough can make informed decisions for themselves in proportion with their competence (*Gillick v West Norfolk and Wisbech Area Health Authority* 1986). However, there is also much research which suggests that when children and adolescents experience increased levels of stress, it impairs their ability to make decisions (Margolin and Vickerman, 2007; Birn *et al*, 2017).

Additionally, one set of rules could cause further confusion amongst staff members who use a mixture of judgement and discretion to select outcomes to situations daily. Donnison (1977) identifies the difference between judgements and discretions. Judgements are an interpretation of certain rules, and discretion is when individuals can make decisions accordingly (Donnison, 1977). However, the problem with discretions is that it can be driven by “moral judgement” or even discrimination (Donnison, 1976). An illustration of how this could cause confusion might be seen in the following example. An adult is caught drinking alcohol in a hostel. The staff might use their discretion to verbally warn them not to do it. However, if it was a sixteen-year-old, the staff might decide to bring the issue up in a support session. Arguably, this might be viewed as preferential treatment in the eyes of the residents. Crelin and Pona (2015) describe how 16- and 17-year-olds fail to differentiate themselves from older residents, leading to the sexual exploitation of younger

residents.

When discussing challenges and complexities of working in children's homes, Whitaker *et al* (1998) raise concerns around having too much diversity within groups. They argue that this can make it "difficult for staff to establish a regime suitable for the range of young people that they are trying to help" (Whitaker, 1998: 78). Brown *et al* (1998) point out the importance of supporting strong staff and resident cultures in residential care homes. These cultures should be supportive of the aims and objectives of the home. They argue that "With children and young people, the relationship with the home is different from that enjoyed by the staff. They are not paid to be there" (Brown *et al*, 1998: 84). This could therefore disincentivize young people from subscribing to the aims and objectives of the home. However, they warn that "The resident culture must not have the opportunity to cohere against the goals of residence, not at any point in the home's development" (Brown *et al*, 1998: 85). They warn that such deviations can result in disruptions in the home. However, the advice and guidelines advising the best way to run a children's home could be seen as patronising or paternal in a setting intended for older residents. Indeed, when discussing homeless services for adults, there is much more discussion around the importance of promoting autonomy amongst residents (Parsell and Martsen, 2016; Watts, Fitzpatrick, and Johnsen, 2017; Johnsen, Fitzpatrick, and Watts, 2018; Parsell and Clarke, 2019; Mahoney, 2019).

Although, it might be recommended for children's residential homes to adopt a paternal approach to providing support to residents (Whitaker *et al*, 1998). These methods of social control could be deemed as patronising or demeaning when applied to adults. Johnsen, Fitzpatrick, and Watts (2018) describe a five-point typology that is used as a method of social control amongst homeless populations. They point out that force, coercion, bargaining, influence, and tolerance, are five methods used to control homeless people. These mechanisms of social control are very similar to the ones used in children's residential homes (Whitaker *et al*, 1998). Mahoney (2019) suggests that, due to these mechanisms, hostels might be sites of discipline and regulation. This idea is suggestive that, to some, homeless hostels might be seen more as total institutions rather than social establishments. However, it must be recognised that some young people living in homeless hostels will fully comply with the hostel rules and therefore not experience coercion, bargaining, influence, and tolerance. Therefore, it can be said that they might experience the hostel as a social establishment rather than a total institution. This supports the proposition that young people

experience the hostel very differently, depending on their individual culture. Those operating in line with the standards of conventional culture experience less mechanisms of social control and therefore view the hostel as more of a social establishment. However, it is proposed that those who engage in unconventional culture are likely to experience more social control and therefore view the hostel more like a total institution.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the interpretivist theoretical definition of culture. This is done to support the argument that cultures in the hostel are directly influenced by the residents that live there. Using theoretical ideas such as Structuration and Ontological Security, it is argued that when people from similar backgrounds come together, they replicate cultures that they are most familiar with. Applying the theory of Ontological Security, it is argued that young people first come to the hostel, they are afraid and alone. The chapter maintains that young people often look for familiarity to repair their ontological security. When doing so, they can reproduce the culture that they are most familiar with. However, it is pointed out that this can sometime result in the emergence of non-convention cultures that run in contrast to mainstream society. Therefore, when young people come to the hostel from certain geographical locations, the hostel culture will reflect the culture of these locations. As discussed in the previous chapter, these cultures can sometimes run in contrast to mainstream culture, having opposing norms and values. When this happens, it can challenge the status quo and sometimes result in the hostel failing to achieve its main objectives. The chapter draws upon concepts such as culture, groups, and identity, to better understand the formation, and reproduction, of culture in a homeless youth hostel. The final part of this chapter has discussed the paradoxical nature of the hostel and argued that the hostel represents different things to different people, causing confusion amongst the residents and the staff. This section recognises that culture has a direct influence on how the residents and staff perceive the hostel. It acknowledges that culture plays an important role in a young person's view of self and their role within the homeless youth hostel.

Chapter 4 – Methodology

Introduction

The following chapter outlines the methodology and methods that were deemed suitable for carrying out research with young people and children. Each of the choices selected throughout the data collection process primarily focused on maximising the voices of those involved in the research. Consequently, many of the decisions made during the data collection process were influenced by the research participants. Scott (2008: 96) recognised that “the best source of information about issues pertinent to children is the children themselves”. This has also been acknowledged by Christensen and James (2008) that positioning children as an ‘object’ in research (from a positivist perspective), can exclude them from the research process. Additional to this view, one must consider that understanding the lives of a marginalised group of young people, from an adult’s disposition, can result in ethnocentricity or ‘adultcentrism’. Therefore, young people should be offered full engagement in the research role (Christensen and James, 2008). Thus, the research will assume a critical disposition and recognise “the strictures caused by ... situations and their value-laden agendas” (Fontana and Frey, 1998: 62). This methodological style moves away from “the narrow focus of socialization ... to a sociology that attempts to take children [and young people] seriously as they experience their lives in the here and now as children” (Morrow and Richards, 1996: 92). Instead, it recognises children and young people’s roles as central in the research, as they are experts in their own lives (Clarke and Statham, 2005). The research acknowledges the important steps that the ‘new’ sociology of childhood has made in achieving this initiative. Whilst also embracing the Welsh Government’s commitment to Article 12 of the UNCRC and its promotion of participation when working with young people and children.

The chapter gives a broad overview of how the research strategy, before going into the field. To do this, this chapter is split into four parts. The first part of the chapter shall briefly describe the location where the research took place. It should be noted that an in-depth description is given in the following findings chapters. The chapter shall then move on to describe the fieldwork process and how data was collected in the field. Next, the chapter will then introduce everyone who took

part in the study. This includes young people and their friends, staff members, and third-party organisations who work with young people. The following section will explain my position in the hostel as a researcher and any outline of other potential influences that I may have in the hostel. The chapter then describes the methods of data collection that were used and why each one was selected. It also describes my relationship with the staff members at the hostel. The final part of this section describes how I prepared to leave the field. This section focusses on the ethical considerations that were made before carrying out the research, whilst in the field, and after I had finished the research. This section includes issues around consent, anonymity, power issues, and protecting myself in the field.

Youth Research: Amplifying Voices

Due to limited governmental funding, when hostels offer high levels of support, it increases the likelihood that the residents will be younger (Robinson, 2008). Many of the residents in Rock House are likely to be 16 or 17 and although they may not view themselves as children, they are in a legal sense. However, in contrast to this, one of the main goals of the charity who manage the hostel, is to treat young people like adults and respect their choices and opinions. This is something that has been given careful reflection and consideration when making methodological decisions within the research design. Particular attention is given to specialist literature that focuses on research with children and young people. It is recognised that children and young people are a disenfranchised and sometimes voiceless group in society (James and Prout, 2005). Additional to their age, all the young people living in the hostel are perceived as being vulnerable for many other reasons. For example, they are part of the youth homeless population, many are from poorer backgrounds, some are drug users, and some are youth offenders. Many of these groups in society are recognised as being “spoiled identities” which are often stigmatised throughout wider society and sometimes silenced. Consequently, the methodology used for this research has attempted to locate the voices of the young people within these groups, emphasize their ideas, and give prominence to their views.

It is accepted that, when positivist approaches to research are adopted, the researcher can risk muting unrepresented voices rather than projecting them (Charmaz, 2006). There are also additional concerns that suggest using methods of deduction in social research can result in the

reproduction of previous existing assumptions. Charmaz (2011) recognises the importance of preserving social justice when carrying out social research, through social justice inquiries. She describes social justice inquiries as being “studies that attend to inequalities and equality, barriers and access, poverty and privilege, individual rights and the collective good, and their implications for suffering. ... [Studies which] includes taking a critical stance towards social structures and processes that shape individual and collective life” (Charmaz, 2011: 359). She argues that through adopting this approach, researchers can preserve the essence of social justice. To overcome imbalances between the researcher and young people involved in the study, the research was carried out from an inductive standpoint. The use of critical ethnographic methods empowered the participants “by challenging the status quo and addressing various concerns about power and control structures” (Lune and Berg, 2017: 132).

Doing Ethnography

When carrying out research with children and young people, James and Prout (2005) recognise ethnographic methods as particularly suitable. They argue that ethnography gives “a more direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data than is usually possible through experiments or surveys” (James and Prout, 2005: 8). Based on an interpretivist paradigm, naturalist ethnography recognizes that it is important for researchers to submerge themselves within a social group to better understand a group’s culture. Atkinson (2015: 173) argues that ethnography is one of the most ethical forms of research, as the “general methodological attitude of cultural relativism implies not merely a non-judgmental perspective, but ... one which the culture and social organisation of a given people are granted serious attention”. Therefore, an ethnographic approach was considered the most appropriate methodological for this study of culture. Additionally, it was this interpretivist understanding of reality that has guided the researcher to recognize the subjectivity of concepts when considering different cultural understandings and worldviews.

Ethnography is both a methodological approach to research and a paradigm of inquiry. Fetterman (1998: 1) argues that “Ethnography is the art and science of describing a group or culture”. Early ethnography has long been associated with anthropology, whose roots were previously related to positivism, colonialism, and imperialism (Howell, 2012; Silverman, 2001). Therefore, before the twentieth century, ethnographic methods were viewed as tools to understand other societies from

the white male perspective, so that they could be controlled by the British Empire (Silverman, 2001). As previously mentioned, the study aims to amplify the voices and opinions of young people, ensuring participation in the research process. Therefore, the research method should be one that aims to better understand the young people and their culture from their perspective; not one that is dominated by an 'adultcentric' point of view. Although they view ethnography as a good method, James and Prout (2005) warn that "ethnographic material has to be understood reflexively, and as a product of a research process in which a particular interpretation is made by the observer in relation to the setting in which the observation is made" (James and Prout, 2005: 25). Gobo and Marciniak (2016) argue that ethnography is still a colonial method and therefore needs to be de-colonized. This has been noted by Gobo (2011: 418) who argues "decolonizing contemporary methodology requires a reflexive investigation of what are the common-sense assumptions, conceptions, or ideologies behind research methods". However, Wall (2015) points out that ethnography has departed from its positivist roots with the emergence of critical ethnography. She recognises "methodological creativity, interdisciplinary perspectives, reflexivity in representation, and shifts from positivist to postmodern thinking" as important paradigmatic changes in the evolution of ethnography away from positivism.

Howell (2018: 1) describes ethnography as being "the paradoxical activity of participating fully in peoples' lives, while simultaneously observing it from a distance". This was recognised by early twentieth-century anthropologists, who departed from the positivist understandings of culture. This can be seen in the writings of Malinowski (1922: 11), who argued that "The field ethnographer has seriously and soberly to cover the full extent of the phenomena in each aspect of the tribal culture studied, making no difference between what is commonplace, or drab, or ordinary and what strikes him as astonishing and out-of-the-way" (1922: 11). A statement such as this one pulls away from the common positivist understanding of society and is suggestive of an interpretivist understanding of culture.

Bourgois (1999: 13) suggests that ethnography "violate[s] the canons of positivist research" when the ethnographer becomes "intimately involved" with the people that they study. He warns that "ethnographic presentations of social marginalization are almost guaranteed to be misread by the general public's obsession with personal worth" (Bourgois, 19899: 15). Arguing that through "politically motivated timidity", ethnographers risk obfuscating people's understanding of the

“mechanisms and the experiences of oppression” (Bourgois, 1999: 18). Therefore, the researcher has a responsibility to communicate the lives of the researched in a realistic style. He contends that “overwhelming pain and terror of the experience of poverty ... needs to be talked about openly and confronted squarely, even if it makes us uncomfortable” (Bourgois, 1999: 18). Once the researcher has provided an accurate description of the lives of the researched, the responsibility is then “in the eyes of the beholder” (Bourgois, 1999: 18).

The young people who engage in this study are recognised as being a marginalised group in society. One which is often disenfranchised from our political system, rendering them voiceless. Furthermore, it is suggested in the literature that young homeless people are sometimes accustomed to cultures that run in contrast to the mainstream. Therefore, ethnography has been used in this study to understand young homeless people from their own perspective, accurately presenting their daily lives and their worldview. Taking a constructivist view of ethnography, the study acknowledges individuals to be ‘defined and determined by ideology, power, politics and culture’ (Howell, 2013: 127). This form of ethnography rejects the idea of realism and instead “portray[s] people as constructing the social world, both through interpretations of it and through actions based on interpretations” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 11). Hammersley (1995) argues that a fundamental problem with the constructivist view of ethnography is that the ethnographer becomes in danger of creating a social world, rather than representing an independent social reality. Therefore, it shall form a view of the world that is "constructed on the basis of assumption, those assumptions being interpreted not as universal givens ..., but as culturally relative" (Hammersley, 1995: 46).

An Overview of the Hostel

The hostel that the fieldwork took place in is called Rock House. This is a pseudonym that has been given to protect the identities of those who took part in the study. I selected this name as it can have multiple meanings to different people. For some, the name is Rock House because it acted as a bed rock to their lives, offering stability that they have never had. Others, experienced Rock House as a place that they were unable to escape from and it is therefore more like the rock of Alcatraz. However, for a majority, Rock House was a place to have fun, party with their friends, or rock out. These ideas are consistent themes that re-emerge consistently throughout the thesis.

The fundamental aim of Rock House is to provide temporary accommodation to young homeless people aged sixteen to twenty-one. Staff members are to teach the young people necessary independent living skills that will enable them to live alone. Rock House is part of a larger charity called Clear Start⁵. Clear Start mission is to (i) provide practical and emotional support to young people; (ii) provide accommodation and a safe and caring environment where support is tailored to individual needs; (iii) and to our services empower young people to take control of their lives. The charity's, beliefs attitudes and values, are in line with Welsh Government ethos and which are driven by a child rights agenda. When a young person becomes homeless, they must be referred to the hostel by a charity called SHORE⁶. After they have completed referral forms, their name is passed to a "pathway team" who decide on a suitable pathway⁷ for them. This includes what form of accommodation they will be provided with. When the young person is 16 or 17-years old, they are recognised as vulnerable and consequently allocated accommodation with high levels of support. Because Rock House offers twenty-four-hour support, they are more likely to have referrals for people aged 16 or 17. After the referral is passed over to the staff at Rock House, they invite the young person to the hostel to carry out an "initial needs" assessment. This assessment is designed to determine whether the young person would be suitable for Rock House or not⁸. This includes a consideration of the personal traits of the young person and the current dynamics of the hostel. If a young person is deemed suitable to live at the hostel by the hostel staff, they will be put on a waiting list until a room becomes available. Many of the young people who live at the hostel knew each other before they moved in. They connections are often demonstrated when young people attend their initial needs assessments, and they tell the staff who they know who is already living there.

When residents at Rock House are ready to live independently, they are then provided with a flat/house in the community. Clear Start continues to provide support services to young people but at a lower level. This is done in a four-tiered process that slowly reduces the amount of support a

⁵ This is also a pseudonym that has been created to protect the identity of those engaging in the study.

⁶SHORE is a pseudonym that has replaced the name of a local homelessness charity that refers young people to Rock House.

⁷ A pathway is an individual personal plan that sets out a realistic strategy to enable people to live independently. It takes into consideration a person's specific needs when proving housing to them, to ensure they are provided with suitable accommodation.

⁸ It should be noted that this is more of a formality. Young people were rarely deemed unsuitable for the hostel.

young person receives until they are capable of independent living. The charity takes a level of responsibility for the young person to make sure they tend to the upkeep of their flat and sufficiently budget their money.

Access to Research

One of the main reasons that I chose to carry out the research at Rock House was that I already had existing relations with Clear Start and I had been an employee at Rock House from 2011. This provided me with the necessary contacts needed for me to gain access at the hostel. As a former employee, my position at the hostel was somewhat different from a normal researcher. Additionally, I previously carried out my MSc research at the hostel that investigated the causes of youth homelessness in Swansea. My PhD research allowed me to further develop research findings from the MSc. When planning the research, I initially wanted to do a comparative study of a hostel in Cardiff and Swansea. In preparation for this, I contacted a Cardiff based youth homelessness charity several months before starting the research. However, I did not receive a response from them so I decided to carry out the research in Swansea. Due to the ethnographic nature of the study, I thought it might be better to focus on one site. This would allow me to spend more time with residents, allowing me to build better relations with them. Furthermore, I thought it was important to take time in documenting accurate data, offering thick descriptions of the hostel.

The research for the MSc included interviews with young people and focus groups with staff members. The director of Clear Start was very interested in the findings and supported the idea of further research. Before I started my PhD, I spoke with the director of Clear Start and asked her if it would be possible to carry out further research at the hostel. Again, she was supportive of the idea and agreed that I could carry out participatory observations at Rock House.

Having existing contacts with the staff members at Clear Start was very useful. However, my familiarity with the organisation might have created some issues with data collection. For example, I might unconsciously overlook certain important aspects of the daily routines because I was so familiar with them. I had existing knowledge of all the processes that went on there. I knew nearly all the staff members throughout the organization, most of the previous residents, and many of those working in services alongside the charity. Because of this existing knowledge, I was already

embedded within the hostel, and had already developed ideas about what it was and what went on there. However, I tried to overcome pre-existing assumptions, of life at the hostel, through taking an inductive approach throughout the research process. I was conscious that I may overlook important findings if I didn't take extra care.

Adaptations made to the Original Research Strategy

Before the fieldwork commenced, there were a few amendments that needed to be made to the initial research strategy. Firstly, due to my previous position as a staff member, I recognised that there could be a potential conflict of interest if I went straight into a researcher role. To prevent this, I resigned as a youth worker with Clear Start, five months before starting the research (April 2017). Also, there were amendments made to the ethics application to say that I would no longer carry out the research as a staff member – this was approved via email. By the time I started my fieldwork, there were all new residents in the hostel, whom I had not previously met, allowing me to re-enter the hostel and introduce myself as a researcher.

On first entering the hostel, at the beginning of October 2017, I was known personally by most of the staff members. However, all the staff members knew that I was coming to the hostel to carry out research three weeks prior to data collection. To make sure the staff at the hostel were correctly informed of my role within the hostel over the coming year, I spoke to all the staff members in a team meeting and explained my role as a researcher. The meeting took place on Monday 18th September 2017 in the learning zone of the head Clear Start head office.

A second area of reconsideration took place 2 weeks after I started participatory observations. Much of the existing literature related to youth homelessness, identifies the problem of crime as a significant issue for young homeless people (Barker, 2012; Baron, 2006; Hall, 2003; Hagan and McCarthy, 1998; Stone, 2010). Therefore, one of the main research areas looked to investigate young people's experiences of crime whilst residing in a homeless youth hostel. However, shortly after the fieldwork commenced, it became apparent that telling the residents that I was interested in their experiences of crime could distort or skew the data. I noticed that some of the participants only spoke about their experiences of crime. Although this was very interesting, crime was just one aspect of their lives that was to be investigated. Additionally, using crime as an example of what I was researching seemed to feed into a much larger pattern of behaviour in the hostel. It

seemed to provoke a level of competition among the boys who appeared to compete against each other to tell stories of the types of illicit behaviours they had been a part of. Some of the stories seemed far-fetched and improbable. I felt that using crime as an example of what I was researching was misleading and unhelpful. As mentioned above, I wanted to maximise the voices of the young people in the study. Providing this example seemed to limit what was being discussed in the field. For this reason, I decided to leave it out altogether and when introducing myself to residents, I simply said that I was researching young people’s daily experiences of life in a homeless youth hostel.

Research Participants

Between October 2017 and September 2018, I spent over 400 hours carrying out interviews and participatory observations at Rock House. As previously mentioned, I had ended my role as a staff member and, as a researcher, the young people knew I was impartial from Clear Start. During the time spent at the hostel, I engaged with a total of twenty-one, different residents. Also, I regularly engaged with thirteen staff members: ten permanent members of staff, and three part-time members. I also engaged with friends of the young people and ex-residents on a regular basis. In total I engaged with twenty-three participants at the hostel. It can be seen in the following table that the amount of time spent with each participant was dependent on the length of their stay at the hostel.

Pseudonym of young people	Age	Gender	Time Involved as a Research Participant	Engaged in Research from the Start?	Reason for leaving
Zac	17	Male	4 months	Yes	Evicted
Vicky	21	Female	2 months	Yes	Evicted
Kenton	16	Male	11 months	Yes	Evicted
Mia	16	Female	9 months	Yes	Moved on
Keith	16	Male	1 month	Yes	Evicted

Rhian	17	Female	5 months	Yes	Moved into own property
Emilia	17	Female	5 months	Yes	Moved into own property
Brandon	16	Male	2 months	No	Sent to prison
Ethan	17	Male	9 months	No	Moved back with parents
Logan	16	Male	6 months	No	Abandonment ⁹
Michael	18	Male	6 months	No	Moved into other supported accommodation
Seren	17	Female	11 months	No	Evicted
Olly	21	Male	6 months	No	Moved into own property
Skyla	18	Female	4 months	No	Evicted
Henry	16	Male	10 months	No	Moved into own property
Leah	16	Female	5 months	No	Moved into own property
Becky	16	Female	4 months	No	Moved into own property and later returned to hostel, before

⁹ The Abandonment Policy mean that residents could be evicted if they did not spend a minimum of 4 nights a week at the hostel.

					being evicted.
April	16	Female	1 month	No	Moved into own property
James	16	Male	2 months	No	Moved into own property
Bilbo	17	Male	9 months	No	Evicted
Thomas	18	Male	2 months	No	Evicted
Damion	21	Male	1 month	No	Moved into own property
Mo	16	Male	1 month	No	Moved into own property

Undertaking Participant Observations

Participatory observations are the central data collection technique in ethnography. Goffman (1961: ix-x) argues that “any group of persons ...develop a life of their own that becomes meaningful, reasonable and normal once you get close to it”. As an ethnographer, my main goal, when carrying out research, was to immerse myself within the culture of the hostel to uncover meaning. Becker (1966) also makes this point and argues that if one is to understand the “outsider”, they must become an “outsider” themselves. Fetterman (1998: 35) recommends that the researcher should spend between 6 months and a year in the field, to allow them to “learn the language and see patterns of behaviour”. For these reasons, I chose to engage with the young people at the hostel as much as I could over eleven months. In total, I carried out over 400 hours of participatory observations with the young people at the hostel. This involved hanging around with the young people on a one-to-one basis or within a group. These interactions took place in the communal areas, inside their rooms, on the front/back steps, and in the carpark. Other times they included staff members, and young people together. Sometimes, I watched films with the young people, cooked food with them, or just listened to music with them in their rooms.

Adler and Adler (1998: 81) argue that qualitative observers “are not bound ... by predetermined categories of measurement or response ... [and] are free to search for concepts or categories that appear meaningful to subjects”. Participatory observations, therefore, took an abductive approach to data collection. In social research, abduction is when ‘the researcher grounds a theoretical understanding of the contexts and people he or she is studying in the language, meanings, and perspectives that form their worldview’ (Bryman, 2015: 394). The data was analysed whilst it was collected in the field. The emerging themes that were identified in this analysis, then went on to inform further inquiry. Every day, I would type up the fieldnotes into a word document. This allowed me to carefully consider and reflect upon the data that had been collected that day. I found this process very useful to identify gaps in the data and also areas that might need revisiting. This process of abduction was applied to maximise the voice of the participants in the collected data. It also ensured that the data was rigorous and driven by the research findings rather than the researcher’s interpretations (Taylor, 2002). It was recognised that entering the field with a theoretical understanding of young people’s lives would be ethnocentric. With the recognition of one’s personal biases, the researcher aimed to be as non-judgemental as possible in the field. Fetterman (1998: 23) warns that ‘ethnocentric behaviour ... is a fatal error in ethnography’. Once themes began to emerge in the data, this informed further data collection.

For the researcher to truly submerge themselves within the culture, they need to fully engage with the natural setting (Fielding, 2008). Participatory observations, therefore, required the researcher to embrace a specific role in the hostel. A role that was deemed as legitimate in the eyes of the young people. Building rapport and gaining trust from the young people played an important role in legitimising my presence at the hostel. However, Mandell (1991) points out that rapport can often lead to unexpected demands on the researcher. In her research with children, she found that building rapport often resulted her participants becoming confused regarding her role. However, I found that clearly explaining who I was and what I was doing at the hostel helped with this. It was important to take the time to make sure they understood what I was saying. This often meant giving the young people examples in the form of books and reports. I also showed them another piece of research that I had done at the hostel. Gaining trust was a lengthy process and required me to dedicate a long time to ensure that they did not view me as a threat.

Observations took place day and the night, seven days a week, throughout the whole of the hostel.

I tried to make sure I spent an equal amount of time with each of the young people at the hostel. However, this was sometimes hard because only some of the young people invited me to spend time with them in their rooms. Some of them just preferred to spend time alone. However, many of the young people who chose not to use the communal areas were grateful for my company and were happy for me to chat with them in their rooms. They preferred this because it meant that they did not have to come into contact with the other residents at the hostel. Observations that took place with the young people in communal areas were often censored by the presence of staff members coming and going, so it was better to speak to the young people in their flat. Goffman (1961: 172) describes the concept of 'secondary adjustments' as being "any habitual arrangement by which a member of an organization employs unauthorized means, or obtains unauthorized ends, or both, thus getting around the organization's assumptions as to what he should do and get and hence what he should be". He recognises the importance of "standard places of vulnerability" to allow the members of organisations to act autonomously. He argues that "These are the damp corners where secondary adjustments breed and start to infest the establishment" (Goffman, 1961: 268). Within the hostel, there were many "standard places of vulnerability". Recognising these places was a crucial detail to allow me to understand what was going on in the hostel.

The data that was collected in the participatory observation was then used to directly inform my future interactions with young people. Analysing the data alongside data collection allowed me to identify emerging codes and to probe further into subject areas that seemed to be important to the young people. Theoretical coding was a useful way of creating interview schedules guiding unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and the focus group. This grounded theoretical approach ensured that each of the areas discussed throughout the data collection was informed by the participants. This method also protected the data from being dominated by any existing unconscious views of the researcher.

Adler and Adler (1998: 87) point out that "After observers become more familiar with their setting and grasp key social groups and operation, they may distinguish features of the scenes that interest them". They recognise the importance of spending time in the field to develop the researcher's understandings of problems that may exist in the field. Additionally, observations should help develop clearer research questions and form typologies (Adler and Adler, 1998). This approach played a vital role in developing in maintaining an abductive approach to carrying out research.

Data that was collected in the participatory observation theoretically coded and used to guide the interviews.

Unstructured and Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews with the young people were audio-recorded for transcription. I carried out two unstructured interviews at the hostel and seven semi-structured interviews. All the interviews lasted between 35 and 90 minutes. Interview questions were designed around data collected from participatory observations. I tried to make sure the guiding questions were derived from previous data that had emerged from observations. Kvale (1996: 129) argues that “A good research question should contribute thematically to knowledge production and dynamically to promoting a good interview interaction”. Additionally, Fontana and Frey (1998: 56) point out that using data in this way helps us ‘understand the complex behaviours of members in society without imposing any prior categorization that may limit the field of inquiry’. The interview schedules for the semi-structured interviews were in written form. The unstructured interviews were carried out on more of an informal basis. These interviews were guided by rough topics. Interviews either took place in the young person’s flat or in the lounge of the hostel. All the young people that I engaged with were invited to take part in an interview. Due to the young people’s lives being quite hectic, I only managed to carry out interviews with seven of the young people. One of the young people declined being interviewed. She said that she felt uncomfortable taking part and would not want to be recorded.

The following table gives details of all the interviews that took place at Rock House:

Interview	Date	Time	Type of interview	Participant/s	Length of time	Location
1	Saturday 30 th December 2017	1730	Unstructured	Mia and Kenton	86 minutes	Mia’s Room
2	Tuesday 23 rd January 2018	1500	Semi- structured	Mia	47 minutes	Lounge

3	Wednesday 24 th January 2018	1400	Semi- structured	Rhian	35 minutes	Rhian's room
4	Thursday 1 st February 2018	1430	Semi- structured	Michael	34 minutes	Michael's room
5	Monday 12 th February 2018	1400	Semi- structured	Olly	30 minutes	Lounge
6	Wednesday 14 th March 2018	1800	Unstructured	Skyla	55 minutes	Skyla's room
7	Tuesday 17 th July 2018	1300	Semi- structured	Becky	17 minutes	Lounge
8	Wednesday 22nd August 2018	1500	Semi- structured	April	35 minutes	Lounge
9	Friday 24 th August 2018	1400	Semi- structured	James	50 minutes	James' flat

Interviews were a useful tool to engage with the young people who did not mix with the other residents, spending much of their time in their room. Interviews also allowed the participants to speak more openly, without their opinions being influenced by their peers. When young people engaged in a group setting, their responses were often influenced by the specific culture of the group rather than their own thoughts and feelings. In an interview with Mia, explained to me that she sometimes had to act differently when she is with the other young people at the hostel. Mia said that it is important to maintain an image in front of the other young people. She said “you gotta put your guard up and pretend to be someone you are not in here”. Logan told me something

similar and said that he felt that he had to alter the way he spoke and his body language in front of different people. I assumed that the young people felt that they had already projected a version of themselves, within the group, which would not allow them to express certain concerns or worries. This idea has been discussed by Goffman (1959: 32) who argues that individuals subscribe to a “personal front” when they engage with others. Personal front can include a person’s “insignia of office or rank; clothing; sex, age and racial characteristics; size and looks; posture; speech patterns; facial expressions; bodily gestures” (Goffman, 1959: 32). This idea is also discussed by Anderson (1999: 98) when he describes the “dilemma of the decent kid”. The young person from a decent family needs to act tough on the street or he/she will risk being targeted by others (Anderson, 1999).

Position of the Researcher

The following section shall discuss some of my own personal characteristics as a researcher and how these features could impact the data collected. It shall question the influence that researchers’ personal features could influence how data is communicated by research participants at the hostel. The section will describe how personal attributes affected interactions with the young people that used the hostel and the staff that worked there. It shall consider how being a male, and an adult can influence power dynamics between the researcher and the researched. Secondly, the section shall discuss what measures were put in place to try to minimise these effects. It is recognised that problems that emerge as a result of these features cannot be eliminated completely. However, through careful consideration, power inequalities can be reduced and, in some cases, neutralised. Although the following section touches upon issues with power dynamics, this is an ethical issue that will be discussed in further detail at the end of the chapter.

A key feature of consideration when contemplating the research methods for this project is the power dynamics of being a male. Although this may not have been an issue for all, some of the participants had been subjected to abuse which can create barriers when forming trusting relationships (McGlyn *et al*, 2021; Robbins and Cooke, 2018). Additionally, from personal experience of working with young homeless people, I was aware that many young people who become homeless, have experienced conflict with a male stepparent. Moreover, many young people who have become homeless because they have been a direct victim of

sexual/physical/emotional abuse in their nuclear family. Sometimes, they become homeless due to unmanageable behaviour which has resulted from experiencing abuse in the past. Therefore, I recognised that some young people in the hostel may have trust issues around men or authority figures in general.

To minimise this the impact of this limitation, I made sure that I was always sensitive to their situation. Due to my relationship with staff members, I also have ‘backstage’ information about the young people’s lives. I usually knew when a young person was wary of men because they had experienced abuse. This information was very useful when evaluating how I should engage with the young people. If they had undergone any of the experiences discussed above, I took extra care not to be too invasive when engaging with them. Instead, I simply introduced myself and got to know them on their terms. This is something that could not be achieved with other methods. Spending prolonged periods of time at the hostel enabled me to avoid being pushy or intrusive when engaging with the young people living there. For example, I spent several days wandering around the communal areas of the hostel, when I first started the participatory observations. The young people were polite and briefly spoke to me. After a while, they would regularly come to see me in the communal areas. During the fourth week of participatory observations, I was invited to a young person’s flat. On this occasion, Keith was bored, and he had to tidy his room, so he invited me up to help him tidy up. I did not join the young people in their flats unless I was explicitly invited. I did not want young people to feel coerced into allowing me into their lives.

A second personal attribute that needs to be considered is that I am an adult. Bucknall (2014: 79) points out that “No matter how childhood and adulthood are constructed culturally and socially, children [and young people] will always be ‘other’ to adults”. Adler and Adler (1998) recognise that a common criticism of ethnography is that the researcher often has more social power than the researched. This is magnified when carrying out research with children (Adler and Adler, 1998). In the eyes of the young people, being an adult in the hostel can have many different meanings. In the hostel, young people might associate adults with those in positions of authority, such as parents, staff members, or police officers. This could therefore alter the interactions that take place in front of an adult researcher. It could also result in the young people not trusting me and consequently, granting me limited access to their lives. Therefore, considerably influence what the young people are prepared to share with me. For example, the young people might choose not to tell me the truth,

if they feel that it might get back to staff members and therefore affect their housing situation. Additionally, they might feel uneasy sharing information with me if they think it will get them into trouble. Mandell (1991) argues that this position can be lessened through assuming “the least-adult role”. She recognises the differences between older and young people and argues that “the goal is to minimize these differences by assuming the less-threatening role of non-interfering companion” (Mandell, 1991: 40). This involves gaining better understanding of young people’s situations and taking their lives seriously.

Initially, I planned to continue my employment as a youth worker at Rock House. However, I recognised there was a clash of interests if I remained an employee whilst carrying out the research. When introducing myself to the young people, I told them that I used to work at the hostel but ended my employment so that I could offer full confidentiality to everyone who took part in the study. I explained to them that continuing my employment would mean that I would be unable to ensure confidentiality. I informed them that if I was being paid by the charity, that I would be obligated to notify the organisation about certain things such as rule breaking in the hostel. Corrigan (1982) was faced with a very similar situation in his research. He engaged in an ethnographic study at a school, and he decided not to adopt the role of a teacher whilst carrying out his data collection. He said that he ‘felt the gap between teacher and taught would preclude me from obtaining some of the more sensitive information about the boys which I think was essential’ (Corrigan, 1982: 12). From previous experience, as working as a staff member at the hostel, I was aware of a potential ‘us and them’ divide between the young people and the staff members. Consequently, being seen as a staff member, could limit the information that the young people were prepared to share with me. Within an institutional setting, sharing information with staff members could be viewed as “grassing” to some residents (see. Wielder, 1978).

Willis (1977) carried out a similar ethnography with young people in a school. He said “There is a universal taboo amongst informal groups on the yielding of incriminating information about others to those with formal power. Informing contravenes the essence of the informal group’s nature ... Hammertown lads call it ‘grassing’. Staff calls it telling the truth” (Willis, 1977: 24). He describes an ‘us and them’ divide between the pupils and staff members. Willis (1977) points out that “by getting someone to ‘grass’ – forcing them to break the solemnest taboo -that the primacy of the formal organisation can be maintained” (Willis, 1977: 24). Wielder’s (1974) ethnography

of a halfway house revealed extreme tensions between staff members and inmates. These tensions were perpetrated by what he called “the convict code”. The code meant that too much engagement with staff members could get an inmate into serious trouble with his fellow inmates. With this in mind, it was clear that I was unable to continue as a staff member if I wanted to be accepted into the young people’s lives.

It was pointless trying to conceal my former role as a staff member because many of the young people living there were still friends with previous residents. These residents often came back to Rock House and were signed in as visitors. After a while, all the young people knew that I used to work at Rock House. Although this occasionally raised suspicion, I tried to be as open and honest with the young people as possible regarding my intentions. After I explained this, they became more trusting towards me. They initially thought I was working covertly for the charity or the police to spy on them. Wellin and Fine (2007) point out some of the ethical dilemmas that can arise when people carry out research in their previous workplace. They recognise that when people access a workplace as a researcher, they can often be viewed as spies. One of the young people thought that I was working for the police and explicitly warned other young people not to trust me. Some of the other young people joked about me working for the police. However, as time went on and I spent more time with the young people, I gained their trust. This trust became fortified after I witnessed them breaking the rules of the hostel or sometimes the law, and I did not report them. On one occasion, Zac told Keith to hide a weapon from me because I would “grass them up”, Keith told Zac that he trusted me because I hadn’t told staff when he had snuck a visitor in the previous day. There was another time when Zac warned Ethan not to tell me how he stole bikes. Ethan replied by saying “no mate, I trust Matt now mush, he is one of the boys”. This was confirmation to me that the residents at the hostel trusted that I would not disclose information to anyone.

Tewksbury and Gagne (1997) outline some of the issues with being seen as an insider/outsider, whilst carrying out social research. They argue the researcher should share some “cultural patterns” with participants, to allow the maintenance of rapport. Tewksbury and Gagne, 1997 acknowledge that the researcher must sometimes present themselves in different ways to maintain access within a social group. This includes assuming the position of a knowledgeable insider; a potential participant; a marginal member; an empathetic outsider; and/or a knowledgeable outsider (Tewksbury and Gagne, 1997). Whilst carrying out the research, I positioned myself as a marginal

member/potential participant of the group. However, I could see that this raised some ethical issues related to the activities that I could, and often could not, engage in. For example, taking drugs, smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, and stealing bicycles. Describing this situation as a “professional dilemma”, Giulianotti, (1995) discusses problems created by the fine line between “going native” and being an “insider”. Whilst researching Scottish football hooligans, he describes the problems that emerged from him not actively engaging in violence with his participants. Giulianotti (1995) had previously set himself ground rules to never engage in any violence. However, this resulted in him becoming mistrusted by some of the research participants, to the extent that some of them accused him of being an informer. Hammersley and Atkins (2007: 87) describe “going native” as occurring when “the task of analysis be[comes] abandoned in favour of the joys of participation, ... [and] bias may arise from ‘overrapport’”. Pearson (2009) also carried out covert observations with a group of football hooligans. He describes how this put him under immense pressure to engage in illegal activities during his study. On occasions, he committed Public Order offences, such as charging onto football fields and drinking alcohol on public transport. Engaging in such behaviour proved successful for Pearson, one of his participants described him as “a bit of a nutter” (Pearson, 2009: 248). I did recognise that not fully engaging with activities could result in some of the participants not fully trusting me. Tewksbury and Gagne (1997: 133) argue that, when the researcher is unable to participate in certain activities, they “must then work harder to establish trust and rapport in other ways, by communicating a commitment to unbiased research, assurances of confidentiality, and [engage in] reflexive listening” (Tewksbury and Gagne, 1997: 133). This was an approach that was adopted throughout the research process.

A second problem that was considered after gaining the young people’s trust, was that their trust could increase to a point where they might become too revealing. Or they may feel as though they are being led into a false sense of security. This could result in them disclosing information to me, that I was unable to keep to myself. There were occasions where I felt that I may have had to report the young people to the authorities. One evening, I was in a room with Kenton and Bilbo when they were planning on robbing another young person for drugs. They had a knife, which Bilbo said he would use to scare the other young person. Fortunately, Bilbo and Kenton decided against the robbery and looked to other methods of getting drugs that evening instead. If the boys had chosen to leave the hostel with the knife, I would have reminded them that I was obligated to make the authorities aware if anyone’s life was at danger or if they become at risk of being seriously hurt.

This may have damaged my relations with all the young people at the hostel as they might have seen me as an informant. However, I was very prepared to do this if somebody was in danger. Additionally, I do not think it would have come as a surprise to the two young people, because it was normal for me to continually remind them that I was able to keep confidentiality, unless someone was at risk of serious harm.

I was very clear with the young people about how much confidentiality I could guarantee. I also made sure that I was very clear with staff members regarding the levels of confidentiality that I could provide. One month after I started the participatory observation, I emailed the director of the charity to verify my role within the hostel. I had become quite concerned because as the young people spent more time with me, they began to openly break hostel rules. There were occasions where I witnessed young people vandalising the hostel premises and dealing drugs. In the email, I informed the director that I try to remove myself from certain situations, but there are times where I am unable to do this, and I am therefore present when rules/laws are broken. However, I reconfirmed that the young people are aware that I must report any incidents which may result in someone being seriously hurt or killed. The director was happy for me to continue with the role I had assumed. A few weeks after sending the email, I was accused by Zac of being an informant of some kind. I showed him the email as proof that I was not. He was satisfied by this proof and then said that he believed me.

Engaging with Staff

Staff engagement played an important role throughout the research process. When I came to the hostel, staff members were usually very happy to fill me in on any activity that I had missed whilst I was away. Staff briefings were an important source of information that allowed me to keep up with the many goings-on of the hostel. Staff members were very open with the information that they shared with me. They treated me like another staff member because I had previously worked there. As well as being very useful, this also had its limitations. Firstly, I became aware that the information that was being shared with me by the staff members were from a staff perspective. These versions were often based on pre-existing assumptions that the staff members had about the social dynamics of the hostel. I became concerned that the versions of events being provided by the staff members were tainting my understanding of what was going on in the hostel. I wanted to

avoid seeing the hostel from anyone's perspective other than the young people living in the hostel. To overcome this, I stopped getting updates from staff members when I came to the hostel and made sure that I asked the young people what had been going on whilst I had been away. This was a much better method of ensuring that I was gaining an understanding of hostel life from the young person's perspective.

A second limitation with engaging with staff members too much was that I was risking being viewed as another staff member. I thought it was a problem if the young people saw me as a staff member as this might have influenced how they interacted with me. This is something that is discussed in more detail later in the chapter. However, it also became a problem when staff members began to view me as another staff member. For example, asking me to pick up a telephone or giving me the keys to open a door. This is something that the young people picked up on. There were occasions where I had to tell staff members that I was unable to answer the phone, open a door, or watch the office for them. Although I had already explained why this was, I think that they continued doing these things because they lacked understanding. This sometimes resulted in things becoming slightly awkward between myself and some staff members.

Focus Group

A focus group was arranged to take place at the hostel on Friday 3rd August 2018 at 6 pm. All young people were personally invited to the focus group. I promised to buy a take-away pizza, cakes, and fizzy drinks, for all those who attended. When inviting the young people to participate in the focus group, I told them that it was a group interview. Most of the young people living at the hostel agreed to join the focus group and some were excited about the prospect of having pizza and snacks. Kreuger and Casey (2015; 191) suggest providing food in focus groups with young people to make the group "more comfortable, relaxed and enjoyable". When I told Becky about the Pizza, she turned to Leah and suggested that they could get stoned beforehand and then have a "fat munch". I was a little bit concerned that this may affect their ability to fully engage in the focus group and suggested it might be better not to.

The topics that were chosen for discussion were made up of some of the themes that had previously been identified in the participatory observations and interviews. The themes included:

- identity,

- peer influences,
- role models,
- social networks,
- ideas about safety,
- privileges and deterrents in the hostel,
- honour,
- respect,
- toughness,
- and rules.

A detailed plan for the focus group was written before the group took place (see appendix 3). Kreuger and Casey (2015: 35) argue that “A written plan forces the researcher to think through the study in a logical manner and clarify ideas”. They recognise planning as a crucial part of the focus group that allows the researcher to anticipate problems and develop strategies (Kreuger and Casey, 2015). Each of the questions in the plan was tailored to address the ten main themes mentioned above. Morgan (1997) has discussed the benefits of linking data from individual interviews and participatory observations, to focus groups. He argues that using interview data can be used to inform focus group development guides by “giving a feel for how people think and talk about the topics that the groups will discuss” (Morgan, 1997: 22). Additionally, he argues that participatory observations also offer a “concentrated insight into the participants’ thinking on the topic” (Morgan, 1997: 23).

In the focus group, I included two vignettes which gave examples of the types of people that live in the hostel to facilitate discussion (see Appendix 4). Each of the vignettes was examples of young people and was an amalgamation of characteristics of young people whom I had worked with over the past eight years. Morgan (2019) describes vignettes as being “a special form of stimulus material”. During the focus group, they allowed the young people to freely express their thoughts in front of their peers without the danger of repercussions that may arise from discussing real people. Bryman (2004: 159) points out that “The advantage of the vignette ... anchors the choice of a situation and as such reduces the possibility of an unreflective reply”. The vignettes were very useful in the focus group and prompted a significant response from the respondents.

Before the focus group started, I positioned the chairs in the lounge in a circular shape. This was

done to enable everyone to see each other. I had printed out the guide and the vignettes and stood in front of a whiteboard when the young people joined the group. I was wearing glasses in preparation for reading the questions and vignettes. The room had a similar layout to a classroom. A total of five young people turned up to the group. Some of them looked at me strangely as they were not used to me wearing spectacles. I think that a combination of the room layout and myself standing in front of the whiteboard like a teacher influenced how the young people felt about engaging in the focus group. Becky, who had previously been enthusiastic about engaging in the focus group, immediately began to ask how long the group would take. She told me that she had ADHD and was unable to sit in the same place for prolonged periods. She became very anxious and said that she felt like she was in school. If I was going to run a group with young people in the future, I would try to avoid the group from resembling a classroom. Krueger and Casey (2015: 191) have advised taking particular care when considering the location of a focus group. They argue that “Some locations, such as schools, represent places where young people are subordinate to adults” (Krueger and Casey, 2015: 191). This could have been avoided by asking the young people their opinions on how I was going to set up the room beforehand.

At the beginning of the focus group, I introduced myself and made sure that all the young people were happy to participate in the group. I explained why I was carrying out the focus group and informed the young people why he had been invited. After this, I moved on to tell the young people how the group would be structured and what I would be discussing over the next hour or so. I made the young people aware that the group was being recorded and placed two separate recording devices in the room. There was no need for introductions, as all the young people knew one another. James said he wanted to take part in the group but did not attend. He was relatively new to the hostel and I think he may have been nervous.

In the plan, I had a list of several questions that I could use to prompt the young people throughout the focus group. Sometimes the young people did not understand the questions and I had to reword them and explain them. There were also a few other problems including background noise from Olly eating crisps. In the end, I had to ask him not to continue eating food because his rustling became very loud. He was happy to stop doing this and apologised. Before asking him this, I was concerned that I may receive a negative response from him resulting in him leaving the group. However, he was quite apologetic and stopped immediately. This is an example of how important

it is to develop good relations with young people when asking them to engage in something like this. If I had not developed a good level of rapport with Olly, he may not have taken this request so lightly. This could also be seen with Becky. She was adamant that she would be unable to hold her concentration in the group. I told her that she did not have to stay and that she could leave whenever she wanted. Fortunately, I had developed very good relations with Becky, and she managed to sit through the full focus group out of choice. This may have also been influenced by her not wanting to be on her own, whilst her friends were all in the focus group.

The group became very noisy at times and the young people wandered away from the set questions. At times they began talking in smaller groups about different things. To overcome this, I asked the young people to focus on the group so we could finish up and have some pizza. All the young people who attended the focus group were part of the same friendship group. This is something that is discouraged, and it is recognised that existing cliques can be detrimental to the group dynamic. Kreuger and Casey (2015: 188) warn that when close friends attend focus groups, the group diversity can be reduced due to the presence of “pack leaders”. However, I felt that this have an opposite effect and much of the time, the young people were talking over one another and having a healthy debate. One member named Thomas seemed to follow what everyone else was saying. He was very new to the hostel and had only been hanging around with the group for a short time. It was clear that Thomas’s responses to question were largely influenced by the other group members.

At the end of the focus group, we all had some pizza. Many of the young people took some pizza and went to their room. I went to the rooms of the young people who had not attended the group and asked them if they wanted some pizza as there was plenty to go around. James came and got some. He apologised for not attending and explained that he was felt a bit anxious joining in because he didn’t know anyone. However, he was very keen to speak to me. Unfortunately, he was put off because he knew everybody in the group were already friends. I had previously been concerned that if a dominant group attended the focus group it might dissuade others from joining. I interviewed James a few weeks later in his new flat.

I transcribed the focus group from the audio recording shortly after the focus group. Some minor problems were understanding what the young people were saying at times. However, I used two separate recording devices and places them in different parts of the room. This proved very useful

to work out what was being said when the young people were debating. I also had some written notes that I had made. This recorded where the young people sat in the room.

Taking Notes

Whilst carrying out the research, writing fieldnotes were an important way of retaining data. Although some conversations were audio recorded, written notes were the primary means of recording data. When recorded conversations took place, I made the young people aware that I was going to record the conversation. Additionally, all the interviews with the young people were audio recorded. However, even when audio recordings were used, it was important to keep some handwritten notes to record the body language and physical behaviours of the participants. Bourgois (2002: 33) recognised that in his ethnography, recordings did not prove successful as they could not record ‘the complex, stylized punctuation provided by body language, facial expression, and intonation’. He described his transcribed recordings as ‘flat, and sometimes even inarticulate, on written page’ (Bourgois, 2002: 33). For this reason, I chose to make handwritten notes alongside all recorded conversations such as interviews and the focus group. When the recordings were later transcribed into electronic form, the written notes were also elaborated upon written notes.

Handwritten notes, taken from memory, were my most used form of notetaking during participatory observations. Emerson *et al* (2011: 9) points out that “Writing fieldnote descriptions, ... is not a matter of passively copying down “facts” about “what happened.” Rather, these descriptive accounts select and emphasize different features and actions while ignoring and marginalizing others”. Here, Emerson *et al* (2011) recognises that when we take notes, we are unable to provide a full account of the social situation. Instead, what we provide is a personal interpretation of the events as they unfold. Recognising my own personal bias within the notetaking process, I utilized the notetaking process to engage more reflexively in the data that was collected. The act of writing notes up became a reflective activity that enabled me to assimilate my thoughts and actions. Typing up notes is similar to re-reading the data line-by-line. Emerson *et al* (2011: 172) argues that doing so “inundates the ethnographer with new ideas, insights, and connections”. Davies (2002: 7) points out that “In its most transparent guise, reflexivity expresses researchers’ awareness of their necessary connection to the research situation and hence their

effects upon it". Writing up the notes enabled me to be self-critical on two occasions. Firstly, when I wrote the up by hand, and secondly when they were typed up on the computer. The written notes were kept in a journal along with personal reflections of the research. They were sometimes short notes, written to provoke memories later. These are described by Lune and Bern (2017) as "cryptic jottings". After being handwritten, the notes were typed up into a word document.

Whilst carrying out participatory observations, I took handwritten notes at intervals throughout the day. I tried not to take notes in front of the young people as it could have been viewed as a symbol of power to them, making my position confusing to them (Foucault, 1973/2003). I regarded taking notes as an act that could be perceived in various ways by both the staff and young people. Therefore, I never intentionally took notes in front of young people. I also avoided taking notes down in front of staff members where possible. However, this was not always feasible; I was sometimes pressed to write notes in front of staff members due to time constraints. Also, there were not many places in the hostel where I could take notes which were both out of staff and young people's view. In total, the transcriptions taken from the participatory observations amounted to 113,500 words. There were an additional 48,098 words transcribed in the interviews and focus group.

To avoid raising any suspicions around my notetaking, I decided to make notes in the small office at the back of the staff room. This was out of the view of the young people and I could see who was coming into the office on the CCTV. When I spoke to the young people in their rooms or the communal areas, I did not take handwritten notes. Instead, I remembered what was being said and headed down to the staff room in intervals to write my notes. Sometimes it was better to write a shorthand in the notes of my phone. This simply looked as though I was sending a text and therefore did not raise suspicion. I felt that it was acceptable to take notes in front of staff members as I had already informed them about the importance of confidentiality of what the young people tell me. However, I feared that taking notes may also act as a barrier preventing staff members from discussing things with me. It seemed like a constant reminder that I was recording what was being said and done in the hostel.

The main concern regarding notetaking in front of the young peoples was that the young people might have asked if they could read the notes. From making confidential "log entries" in my previous job as a youth worker, I was aware of the potential problems that could arise when you

write about young people and do not show them what you have written. It can cause deep mistrust and result in the young person become highly suspicious of you. This was demonstrated one day when I was writing some handwritten notes in the office and didn't realize that Logan was stood behind me. He managed to read some of the notes over my shoulder and said, "what you writing? Poetry?" When I immediately hid the notes, Logan looked at me suspiciously and I became concerned that this may have damaged our relations. Additionally, the act could potentially be seen as a symbolic act of stature. Or an attempt to demean them. Although I had previously explained to them that might take some notes, I feared that taking secret notes could create a level of suspicion and mistrust. Additionally, staff members would record all the hostel activity in a logbook. Writing notes visibly in the office all the time could have therefore resulted in the young people perceiving me as being affiliated with the staff members. Foucault (1973/2003: 66) points out that writing in secrecy is suggestive of being part of a privileged group. Consequently, this could insinuate to both young people and staff members that I am claiming to possess an esoteric form of knowledge (Foucault, 1973/2003: 66). Additionally, it risks having a panoptic effect on the participants: staff and young people. Foucault (1975/1991: 204) recognises that the panopticon functions "as a kind of laboratory power" and argues that the use of observation "penetrate[s] into men's [or women's] behaviour".

Ethics

The ethics application was made, and the considerations were guided by the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics (2015). Within the application form, the areas of confidentiality, risk of harm, and informed consent were highlighted. I proposed full confidentiality for all those engaging in the research through anonymisation throughout any data collected. However, I also stated within the form that if I obtained information that put another person at severe risk or endangered their life, I would have to disclose the information. Additionally, it was suggested that formal consent could be given by those under the age of eighteen through upholding the Gillick Principle - *Gillick v West Norfolk and Wisbech area Health Authority* 1986. These areas are discussed in further detail in the following sections.

Once access was granted to carry out the research at the hostel, the ethics form was written. A detailed plan was then sent it to the director of Clear Start so that she could query anything that

she was unsure of. Once she had confirmed that she was happy with the information stated in the plan, the ethics form was sent to the Cardiff University School of Social Science Research Ethics Committee. On receiving ethical approval, I contacted the director of Clear Start telling her that the research had been approved and could therefore commence. She then told me that I could start carrying out the research when I wanted to.

After making the decision to resign from my position as a worker at the hostel, I had another meeting with the director and expressed my concerns. Once the changes were accepted by the director, I emailed the ethics committee informing them of the proposed changes. I told them that I was concerned about confidentiality and power issues that may arise whilst I was an employee. The revisions were accepted, and I received an email from the ethics committee on 19th July 2017 informing me that they were happy for me to proceed.

Gaining Formal Consent

A staff meeting was arranged in the Clear Start head office and all the full-time staff members of Rock House were asked to attend. During the meeting, I gave a short presentation to provide the staff members with some more information about the research that I was doing. I provided an information sheet and asked the staff members if they had any questions. Staff members were told that I was no longer that of a staff member and that I would no longer be able to carry out any tasks associated with the staff role. I warned them that I would no longer be able to discuss personal information that the young people share with me. Even if this meant me failing to disclose information about rules being broken at Rock House. The staff members seemed to understand my new position in the hostel, and all agreed to take part in the research.

A total of six full-time staff members attended the meeting. I spoke to the remaining eight staff members individually when I was carrying out the participatory observations. It was hard to get everyone together because some of the staff members lived quite far away from head office. Additionally, some had been working night shifts or were due to work on a night shift that evening.

Being so friendly with staff members, made it quite hard to gain full trust from the young people. Although I told them that I should not be treated like a staff member, many staff members continued to speak to me as though I was still a staff member. Small details like asking me to answer a telephone, open a door, or allowing me to stay in the office when a confidential meeting

took place, often made my social position look suspicious to the young people. I was aware that being seen as too friendly with staff members could endanger my relations with the young people. There were occasions where I had to remind the staff members that I was no longer a member of staff. This sometimes made my relations with staff members a bit awkward. I got the feeling that they may have thought I simply did not want to help them. I also feared that they may think that I felt that I was above them and should not have to open doors. However, some staff members took a genuine interest in the research that I was doing. I felt that they fully understood the importance of not getting the two roles mixed up.

Briefing the Young People

I asked the staff members when they were going to hold the next house meeting and asked if I could use it as an opportunity to introduce myself to the young people. In the meeting, I told the young people that I was carrying out a piece of research to offer them a voice about their experiences of living in the hostel. I also told them that the research could potentially result in positive changes being made at the hostel through recommendations. This could result in the hostel becoming more of a safer and comfortable environment for young people to live in. I explained that I write about young people's experiences. These writings might be read by policymakers or other charities, enabling them to improve services that are offered to young people. I assured the young people that I was on their side and my only intention was to make sure they have a voice.

During the meeting, I provided them with different examples of research and explained how they impact the young people's lives. I also showed them an example of an ethnographic study carried out by Barnardos (see. Stone, 2011), to demonstrate to them the kind of thing that I would be doing. The paper had numerous examples of how young people's voices had been used in quotes to voice their opinions. This was a helpful way to illustrate to the young people the type of information that would be written about. It acted as a clear example, enabling the researcher to explicitly show the young people how their identities will be anonymised. I also told them that the findings could end up being published in a book and showed them a copy of an ethnographic book by Tom Hall (2003). Corrigan (1982) carried out an ethnographic study with schoolboys and recognised that telling the participants that he was writing a book about them, offered the truest example of why the research was being carried out. All the young people in the house meeting

were happy with the information that was supplied to them, they all agreed to participate in the research. At the end of the meeting, I provided them with a clear information sheet with my photograph, details about the research, my contacts details, and my supervisor's contact details. These information sheets were also placed around the hostel, such as on notice boards and communal areas. I also made them aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time. I finished the meeting by asking if they had any questions.

Although it was planned to engage in weekly house meetings with the young people, it became evident that this would not be an option. The young people tended not to usually engage in the house meetings, and although they are compulsory, staff members usually go around the rooms of the hostel and speak to the young people individually. Some of the young people at the hostel led very hectic lives and I found it hard to arrange a weekly meeting at a time when everyone could attend. Instead, I spoke to the young people separately, explained who I was and why I was at the hostel. This was a very informal approach to gaining consent from the young people. I also felt that it removed any pressure that they may feel if they had to decide to take part in front of others. During the one-to-one meetings, the same level of information was provided to the young person. These measures were carefully considered, and much thought was given to ensure that everyone was aware of who I was, and what I was doing at the hostel.

Maintaining Informal Access with the Young People

Although formal access was granted by Clear Start, there were other informal forms of access that had to be gained. This included informal access with both staff members and young people at the hostel. Once informal access was granted by different groups in the hostel, it had to be maintained (Bryman, 2012). Atkinson (2015: 176) describes these informal levels as access which “means that social actors grant the researcher access to their everyday lives: they grant a licence to witness, participate in and converse about issues that might otherwise reach a more restricted social circle”. I was therefore required to form adequate relations with the young people and staff, so they would grant me access to their social world. Additionally, I had to gain other forms of access with the young people within their groups that they would “hang around” in. This was not straightforward because an “us and them” mentality often existed at the hostel (Robinson, 2008; Deakin, Fox, and Matos, 2020). This was not only between the staff members and young people, but sometimes

amongst some of the young people living at the hostel.

I felt that my pre-existing relations with the staff members hindered my integration into the groups of young people. It became apparent through my early interactions with the young people that they were suspicious of me; they were unsure of what they could and what they couldn't say around me. Miller (1952) found that "over-rapport" with some groups can be detrimental when building rapport with other groups. During my first few weeks at the hostel, I tried not to come across as too keen with the young people; and instead, waited for them to talk to me. I recognised that engaging with staff members over the first few weeks at the hostel, had a negative impact on my relations with the young people. I felt like it might result in the young people assuming that I was in some way affiliated with the staff members. Consequently, I could be seen as an outsider to the young people which can often be perceived as a threat (Becker, 1966; Gill, 1976; Walklate, 1998, 2002; Yates, 2006). If the young people thought that I was feeding back information, they might have seen me as an informant and chose not to engage with me. I therefore tried to minimise my engagement with staff members in front of some of the young people. Trying to avoid too much engagement with staff members during the first few weeks was hard because I knew them very well and I felt that I might come across as rude if I distanced myself from them. Unfortunately, I recognised that if I wanted to maximise my engagement with the young people, I would have to sacrifice some of my engagement with the staff members.

When I began carrying out observations, an "us and them" divide became visible between some of the staff and residents. The young people would regularly ask me if I was "staff". Even after I clarified to them in our first meeting that I was a researcher and not a staff member, it seemed as though some were still uncertain about why I was there. Gaining trust varied amongst the young people, with some taking longer than others to fully engage with me. Additionally, their trust seemed quite fluid, some of them believed that I was not a staff member one day, but then became suspicious of me a different day. Sometimes the young people spoke openly in front of me, but they became more closed when I spoke directly to them.

Before some of the young people decided if they trusted me, they openly debated this idea in a democratic fashion. Contrasting ideas were revealed on one occasion when Keith and Zac were in the kitchen talking about an impending fight that Keith was going to have. Keith showed me a metal strip in the kitchen. When I looked closer, I could see that it was a carpet gripper that is used

to separate carpets between doorways. It was two-foot-long and made from thin aluminium; he had hidden under the kitchen worktop. Zac became very annoyed at Keith and said, “don’t show him that you fucking idiot, he will grass you up”. Keith responded by saying “no he won’t, he won’t say nothing. He didn’t grass you up to staff the other day when you sneaked your visitor in”. This encounter took place after three weeks of me spending time at the hostel. The situation demonstrated how Keith was willing to grant me access to the group based on previous interactions he had with me. However, Zac was less trusting. He required more evidence to indicate that I wasn’t affiliated with staff members before granting me access to his social world. It was interesting because Zac had come to the hostel from prison. He was visibly hostile towards the staff members. It was almost like he viewed them as being prison guards. However, once I had gained the trust of some of the young people, I gained further access through a type of “snowballing” that is like that described by Giulianotti (1995). Those who trusted me also went on to introduce me to newer residents or their friends. They often told them that I was not a staff member and could be trusted. For example, when I first met Henry, Seren introduced me to him and said that I was “sound” and that we will get on well.

I was also told by another young person in an interview that young people would accept outsiders into their group, based on their interactions with staff members. Michael gave the example of drug use. He told me that if young people refuse to take drugs in a group, they will become suspicious of them and will not be trusted. He told me about a time when a new resident was in the room with them and refused to take any drugs. Coincidentally, a staff member caught them taking drugs in the room and they all blamed the new resident for being a “grass”. It therefore became apparent that my trust had to be earned by the young people. If they suspected that I was passing on information to staff members, our interactions could be influenced. I was very conscious about this throughout the participatory observations. At times I became fearful that the young people would suspect that I had passed on information when I had not. And this would result in them choosing to no longer engage with me. Gaining entry to the group was important because making observations whilst I was not a part of the group were not participatory. Taking this standpoint could result in the observations becoming taking a positivist standpoint. I aimed to submerge myself within the group and take a naturalist ethnographic approach (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1996). Arguably, making observations from outside of the group could rouse suspicions amongst the group members.

McRobbie (1991: 41) found suspicion to be a “general hallmark” of working-class youth culture. Whilst carrying out her observations with working-class girls, she commented on how gaining access to observe the girls could be complicated at times. She described the groups of girls as being “exclusive coteries” and said this made it difficult for her to gain entry to the groups. During her observations, she adopted the role of a Youth Leader at a local youth club. McRobbie (1991: 41) said that she would “observe discretely” because looking at the girls was seen as a “sign of aggression”. She also commented on how it was “crucial” that she did not engage with the girls on disco night (McRobbie, 1991). This indicates that she was not a part of the group and was therefore an outsider. McRobbie’s (1991) research approach gives a good example of how observing groups as an outsider can make things difficult as a researcher. Fortunately for me, the young people were less hostile to my presence. They would usually invite me to hang out in their rooms and rarely left me on my own if they knew I was around.

After a few months at the hostel, most of the young people in the hostel trusted that I was not a staff member. I had very good relations with Logan and his influence had a positive impact on the young people’s trust in me. When they introduced me to their friends or spoke about me on the phone, they would say that I was “one of the boys”. On one occasion two of the boys were showing me the “Penlan handshake” by the front door of Rock House. One of the staff members was observing this and when I walked back into the office, he said “we all love Matt because we talk to him about drugs, and he doesn’t grass us up”. This was said sarcastically and seemed quite abrupt. When this incident took place, it occurred to me that through spending a lot of time with the young people, I could also erode existing relations with staff members. Additionally, I feared growing relations with the young people in a single group at the hostel could become detrimental to my relationships with other young people living at the hostel. For example, they might feel they were unable to openly talk to me, in fear of me disclosing information to the group. The key was finding a balance by engaging equally between everyone at the hostel. Eventually, this included engaging with staff members a bit more. Maintaining access in the hostel is a lot like walking a tight rope; much care had to be taken to make sure that I didn’t accidentally subscribe to one of the groups in the hostel. Doing so could act as an automatic barrier to access all the other groups.

Data Analysis

Using a grounded theory approach, I used theoretical coding when analysing the data (Emerson *et al*, 2011; Charmaz, 2011). This meant analysing much of the data, as it was collected. The approach allowed me to identify codes and revisit them with the young people whilst carrying out participatory observations. Therefore, the initial data collection informed the development of the methodology in an abductive fashion. This constructivist, grounded theoretical approach to data collection, aimed to continually reassess the methodology, ensuring that the young people's views and opinions were central to the discussion throughout the research process. Glaser (1978: 2) argues that "Grounded theory is based on the systematic generating of theory through data, and itself is systematically obtained from social research". Only through recognising the inability to achieve total objectivity in social research, can subjectivity be minimised. Once codes were identified, they were then used to help refine the focus through identifying "hypothetical relationships between conceptual codes (categories and their properties) which have been generated from the data as indicators" (Glaser, 1978: 55). When examining the data, the following questions were asked:

- What are people doing? What are they trying to accomplish?
 - How, exactly, do they do this? What specific means and/or strategies do they use?
 - How do members talk about, characterize, and understand what is going on? What assumptions are they making?
 - What do I see going on here? What did I learn from these notes? Why did I include them?
 - How is what is going on here similar to, or different from, other incidents or events recorded elsewhere in the fieldnotes?
 - What is the broader import or significance of this incident or event? What is it a case of?
- (Emerson *et al*, 2011: 177)

This offered me a structured and systematic ways of analysing different sections of data. Additionally, when analysing group interactions, I made supplementary notes which recorded what the young people saw as "good" and what they viewed as being "bad". This allowed me to compare different group cultures, and how individuals present themselves within different group settings.

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) point out that, although coding is an important part of the data analysis process, it is not data analysis itself. They suggest linking codes to segments of data and then creating categories which relate to concepts (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). They view coding as an opportunity to go beyond the data, by thinking creatively, asking questions, and generating theories and frameworks (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Emerson *et al* (2011) argue that once coding is done in a systematic way, the researcher can then generate analytic categories, memos, and integrative memos. Although they warn that this open-end approach can result in some anxiety for the researcher, Emerson *et al* (2011) suggest that through time, practice and wider reading, the researcher will gain more self-assurance, making the coding process less threatening (Emerson, 2011). As well as theoretical coding, memos were used throughout the data collection process to comment on core interactional processes that occurred in different social settings (Emerson *et al*, 2011). This grounded theoretical approach to data analysis, allowed me to develop ideas from the data whilst paying close attention to the lives of the young people.

Conclusion

The chapter has outlined the methodology that was used to carry out the research in this study. It has taken social constructivist approach, one that acknowledges “that there can be no social or cultural phenomenon that is independent of the process of recognition, description or classification that render it as a social object in the first place” (Atkinson, 2017: 23). However, as mentioned by Hammersley (1998), it is recognised that the researcher’s descriptions are structured and influenced by theoretical assumptions. Nonetheless, the methodology uses descriptions that are aimed to enable the reader to free themselves “from those frameworks that we employ so routinely that we have come to take them for reality” (Hammersley, 1990: 599). Ultimately, the chapter demonstrates the importance of taking an “insider’s view of a society... to understand other people’s own worldview, instead of taking the outsider’s perspective of the conventional scientist” (Taylor, 2002: 3).

Chapter 5 – Entering Rock House

Introduction

Geertz (1973: 10) recognises that “Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of ‘construct a reading of’) a manuscript-foreign... written... in transient examples of shaped behaviour”. A description of the hostel alone, would therefore not offer enough information to enable the reader to understand the complexities of the young people’s lives and the culture that they are a part of. The young people’s wider surroundings enable the researcher to recognise certain influences that shape behaviour. Willis (2000) identifies life as a form of art, he, therefore, argues that ethnography should encapsulate life’s aesthetic form. He argues that to do this, the ethnographer must go beyond description and use their “ethnographic imagination” (Willis, 2000). He claims that “Ethnography is the eye of the needle through which the threads of the imagination must pass. Imagination is thereby forced to try to see the world in a grain of sand” (Willis, 2000: viii-ix). The following chapter provides an insight into the social world of the young people who engaged in this research. It offers a detailed account of the city in which the hostel is situated, and underlines some of the everyday issues and challenges that young people in the locality face. This level of detail is extremely important within ethnographic work as it contributes towards the “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973: 6 – 30), that are crucial for the reader to better understand the lives of the young people involved in the study. The intention is to offer a “written record of cultural interpretation” and share the participant’s perception of their circumstances and lived reality with the reader (Fetterman, 1998: 123). It highlights how homeless youth hostel do not exist in a vacuum and they are very much a part of a wider, city culture. Furthermore, it suggests a dialectical or symbiotic relationship between the two. The youth culture of the city informs the culture of the hostel and correspondingly, the culture of the hostel influences the youth culture of the city. If one is to fully comprehend the dynamics of the hostel, it stands to reason therefore that one must have some knowledge of the city it is situated within.

The first part of this chapter will set the scene by providing the reader with an illustration of the city of Swansea, and the areas that surround Rock House. This shall enable the reader to build an appreciation of some of the backgrounds the young people are coming from and the cultures that they are already part of. The chapter shall provide insight into Rock House through understanding it on three different scales. Firstly, the hostel is positioned on a national scale, then we shall zoom in to the city where the hostel is situated, before discussing the hostel itself. This gives detailed descriptions of the systems/operations at Rock House. It will outline the main objectives of the hostel, how these objectives are confronted, and the desired outcomes of the objectives. The insight provided will allow the reader to identify some of the problems young people face when entering a hostel and highlight many of the barriers that prevent them from accessing opportunities such as employment, training, and education.

The second part of this chapter will describe some of the administrative procedures that take place at Rock House. When considering the role that the hostel plays in society, it must be considered how unique the hostel environment is. Although the hostel might be more attractive to some young people than others, hostels are not designed to encourage people to want to live in them; nor are they meant to deter people from wanting to live in them. This chapter points out that many of the characteristics of the hostel can be associated with total institutions. It is demonstrated how some of the characteristics of the hostel can be perceived in different ways by young people depending on their cultural backgrounds. The chapter examines how residents view the hostel, it is suggested that some residents perceive the hostel more like a social establishment, whilst others associate the hostel as more of a total institution.

Situating Rock House: Impressions of a City

The hostel is situated in the city centre of the Welsh city of Swansea. Like many areas in South Wales, Swansea was once an industrial powerhouse that acted as a cradle for the industrial revolution. Swansea contributed to the supply of essential raw materials that were needed to promote the growth of the British industrial-based economy. High demand for copper, iron, and tinsplate ensured high employment levels in Swansea and its surrounding areas up until the end of the Second World War. However, post-war economic depression resulted in the decline of industry, high levels of unemployment, and dire poverty across the whole of South Wales

(Thompson, 2006).

Several communities border the city centre. To the East there is Port Tennant, Bonymaen and St. Thomas; towards the North is Havod, Copper Quarter, Townhill, and Blaen-Y-Maes; further South of the city we have Oystermouth Road, and Swansea Marina; finally, in the West of the city is Uplands, Sketty, and Mumbles. Many of these small communities have a diverse historical sense of identity and are made up of a mixture of Victorian terraces and post-war council housing.

Heading East, from the city centre, is Port Tennant. There is very little in this area, apart from a few takeaways, pubs, off-licenses, and newspaper shops. Port Tennant and St. Thomas are right next to one another. The whole area is separated from the rest of the city by a six-lane traffic, round road system, that sets them apart from the rest of the city. The traffic system is a “formidable barrier between the established community of St. Thomas and the monied dockside enclave of SA1¹⁰” (Jenkins, 2012: 23). The area is relatively quiet and there is not much for young people to do apart from hanging around on the street or in one of the local parks. The area experiences high crime rates, and violent attacks, anti-social behaviour, and vehicle crimes are common (Police.UK, 2019). The whole area is made up of a few hundred houses, which are surrounded by fields and a rubbish dump. The smell from the rubbish dump has been described by residents as being unbearable. Some of the residents complain that they experience headaches from the smell, and some say they are awoken by the smell during the night (Cooper, 2019). Across the main road towards the seafront, is Swansea University’s new £450 million, Bay Campus. Building work began in 2013 when a patch of wasteland was donated to the university by a British oil giant BP (BBC, 2013).

When the Bay Campus first opened, there were growing concerns amongst residents about an influx number of students coming to Swansea. Along with the main campus, there are said to be roughly 20,000 additional students arriving in Swansea in 2018; and the university could only provide accommodation for 4,000 (Clements, 2018). Arguably, the increase will result in a larger demand for housing in the area¹¹. Consequently, the prices and rents of the houses in Port Tennant and St. Thomas are rising, resulting in some of the tenants having to move further up the valley.

¹⁰ Name of the area – based on the first three digits of the postcode.

¹¹ Written pre-Covid.

On the hill behind Port Tennant and St. Thomas is Bonymaen. Made up of post-war prefabs, the area consists largely of social housing. The area had a notorious reputation through the nineteenth century for cockfighting, boozing, and womanizing (Jenkins, 2008). However, although “The cockfighting may have fallen out of fashion ... Bonymaen still has something of a ‘reputation’ – undeserved, the locals insist – thanks to the headlines that accentuate the antics of a minority (car theft, joyriding, racism, badger bashing) while taking little account of the palpable warmth, good humour and resourcefulness of a majority” (Jenkins, 2008: 146).

South West of St. Thomas, over the river Tawe, there is another small community called the Havod. This was once home to the world’s biggest copper works, which was situated along the banks of the Tawe. Straight rows of terraced houses run along the Tawe, down towards the football stadium, which is located within a retail park known as Copper Quarter. Much investment has been injected into this area over the past 10 years, and new flats and houses have been erected on the adjoining land. Before this, Copper Quarter was a barren wasteland, infected by the remnants of industry. Now there are hundreds of fashionable ‘new builds’, restaurants, coffee shops, and designer outlets. The recent investment there has squeezed out the last remnants of industry, forcing factories to relocate to nearby towns (Bannon, 2019). The Havod is sandwiched between the city centre of Swansea and Copper Quarter. It has recently received a makeover in the form of government grants to restore the houses to their former glory. It is only a matter of time before the Havod becomes engulfed by the city centre causing housing prices and rents to rise, forcing residents to move further up the valley.

North of the city centre, at the top of an extremely steep hill, is Mayhill and Townhill. These areas are largely made up of social housing and it is visible that they have lacked any substantial development for decades. Local newspapers write stories about these areas saying that the houses sell between £69,000 and £100,000 and have £1,000,000 views. One story from August 2018 read, “Hidden in one of Swansea's so-called "rough" parts of town are rows of streets which boast some of the most stunning views in Wales” (Roderick, 2018). Some of the local young people from this area demonstrated feelings of discontent in the summer of 2021, as they rioted in the streets following a friend’s funeral. Between 30 and 40 young people gathered at the top of Mayhill, they smashed windows, attacked police, and set cars alight before rolling them down the road. This area borders Blaen-Y-Maes, Gendros, Mansleton, and Penlan. Kenton told me that these areas were a

bit like territories and some of the young people from these areas often clashed. Kenton describes what would happen if young people from a different area ventured into a different territory:

“if the Birchgrove boys came to Penlan they would get a beating and be sent off. Because you don’t go into someone’s area and try to take over. He described the Birchgrove boys as ‘rich cunts and snobby fuckers¹²’” (Fieldnotes, Saturday 30th December 2017).

He also said that those from Townhill and Penlan had formed an allegiance and the young people from there usually got along. Kenton’s example suggests that there is a divide between the young people that is based on their social status. Coming from a council estate, Kenton recognised that the ‘Birchgrove boys’ as being financially better off than he was. Because of this, he and his friends became disassociated with them. Blaen-y-Maes is a local authority-maintained housing estate which is a very run-down area that has a notorious reputation for drugs and crime. One of the young people named Thomas was from Blaen-y-Maes, and he would sing “Jump on the Blaena bus and get jumped by fucking nine of us”. These examples demonstrate how different areas around the hostel have pre-existing groups of young people who already subscribe to a particular group culture.

Jenkins (2008: 198 - 199) describes Townhill as being on a 180-meter-high ridge, which attracts the “attentions of the police helicopter, ploughing round and round with its imperiously inquisitive, crime hungry beam”. Residents from the areas complain that there is not enough money invested in their communities. One resident said the following when speaking to a local news reporter “Instead of ploughing money into new areas like SA1, which do look modern and lovely, why not spend that money on re-generating places like Townhill, Dyfatty, and Blaen y Maes, etc - places that need it the most” (Griffith, 2017). Dyfatty has a high-rise block of flats that towers over the areas. Many of the young people had stories related to the flats. They had a reputation for being extremely dangerous. Seren told me how her father once tried throwing her from the tenth floor of the tower block. Becky said that her uncle killed himself by jumping off a balcony whilst high on drugs. Skyla laughed as she told me a story about how Henry’s brother went to jail for going to a drug dealers house there, armed with a machete. The flats also had a reputation of being inhabited

¹² Posh

by two different “county lines” gangs. One was associated with a gang from Birmingham, and the other associated with a gang from London. The young people knew these flats were a dangerous part of the city. The young people’s stories about their experiences of spending time in the flats suggested they felt comfortable visiting these areas and engaging with the street culture that exists there. These areas are poverty-stricken and recognised as being some of the most deprived areas of Wales. All the above areas mentioned are included in the Welsh Government Communities First Programme. This is a community focussed initiative which targets the most disadvantaged people in Wales according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) 2011. These are some of the areas where a majority of the young people accessing the hostel come from. Regardless of their reputations, the residents of these areas show pride in their communities and the collective identity that exists there (Jenkins, 2008; Jenkins, 2012).

The coastline of Swansea bay is stylish and vibrant, with many newly built apartments, cafes, bars, and restaurants. Moving from the Bay Campus towards the city centre, there is a marina, filled with yachts and surrounded by luxury apartments. The old dockyards have been transformed over the decades. The original buildings which were once occupied by dockworkers, have been immensely gentrified. Many have been renovated and opened as fashionable bars and restaurants. Some of them have been converted into luxurious townhouses. Many of the people in the area are middle-aged and older residents, who seem quite affluent and drive expensive cars, dressed in stylish clothes.

Running adjacent to the city centre are some of the city buildings which survived the blitz during the Second World War. These buildings now stand dotted between the newly erected swanky apartments on the seafront. Amongst them is Wales’s tallest building. A thirty-floor apartment block, with a restaurant on the top floor with panoramic views of the city. The restaurant is costly and would be inaccessible to most of the young people at the hostel. Heading further West on the main road, along the seafront, is HMP Swansea. This old Victorian institution is home to 431 prisoners regardless of its intended capacity of 268; making it Britain’s third overcrowded prison (Williams, 2017). Many of the inmates have drug and alcohol problems and are locked up for twenty-two hours of the day (Dalling, 2018). Over the past four years, four inmates have committed suicide within the first week of entering the prison (Osbourne, 2018). The prison is home to family members and friends of some of the young people who live at the hostel. Seren

told me how her uncle had spent most of his life there and was potentially due to return.



(HMP Swansea)

Continuing down the coast road, there are rows of uninviting Victorian-styled bed and breakfasts. These bed and breakfasts used to act as accommodation for holidaymakers from all around Britain. However, like many seaside towns, they are now more commonly used as forms of temporary accommodation for homeless people, prison leavers, and asylum seekers. It was common for ex-residents to be placed in a bed and breakfast if there were no other forms of accommodation available.



(Bed and Breakfasts on seafront)

After the bed and breakfasts is the original University campus which is enclosed by neatly kept parks and gardens. The housing surrounding the university is made up of large attractive Victorian buildings, many of which have been converted into student accommodation. Brynmill, Sketty, and Uplands are all relatively affluent areas that are reflected in its wide selection of expensive cosmopolitan bars, stylish restaurants, and “hipster” coffee shops. There is a distinct student community in these neighbourhoods. Many of the local businesses employ students during the term time, which is perfect to tackle the influx of student customers. When the term is over, the workers usually return home so they will only require work when the businesses are busy. This leaves fewer job opportunity for local young people, who need work all year round.

Residents of these areas often get annoyed with students over issues such as parking, noise pollution, and rubbish disposal. The pavement is littered with discarded miscellaneous objects such as pieces of unwanted flat-pack furniture, broken television sets, and old soaking wet rugs. There

are bags of rubbish and recycling which has been left out on the wrong days. Some of the windows have notices written in Chinese offering rooms to rent to international students. Others have signs written in English: - “room for rent £75.00 per week (not included bills). No DSS / Housing Benefit Applicants, students welcome to enquire, no pets, smokers considered, not suitable for families/children”. Other houses have estate agent boards brandishing business names such as StudentDigz, StuRents, and Pads for Students. Some of the lampposts have pieces of laminated Planning Application Notices, requesting to convert large houses into Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO). There is an abundance of accommodation available suitable for young people, however, a vast majority of the accommodation is meant for students. Even if a local young person was accepted into a student house, they may face additional complication related to council tax. Students’ houses are exempt from paying council tax. However, if they live with a non-student in employment, they only get a 25% discount. This could result in the household owing more in council tax if a non-student resides there. Many of the residents at Rock House told me that they struggled finding suitable or affordable accommodation in and around the city centre. Unfortunately, many of the above factors limit local young people’s opportunities in securing affordable accommodation and transitioning into housing through conventional means.





(Student houses with To Let signs)

Further up the coast toward the East of Swansea, is an area called Mumbles. Some of the residents of Mumbles don't class their community as being a part of Swansea; they try to disassociate themselves from the inner city of Swansea. Jenkins (2008: 170) notes that Mumbles has been described as "all tourists and Tories". Mumbles is made up of expensive properties which would be unaffordable to many. Over the years the area has become somewhat gentrified and many of the houses on the seafront are worth over £1 million. Hollywood 'A-listers' such as Catherine Zeta-Jones and Bonny Tyler have owned houses in this area (Jenkins, 2008). Ridout (2020) points out that a recent increase in house prices "means that asking prices in the Welsh town [Mumbles] are a substantial £147,000 more than the Wales' national average".

Many of the towns and communities around the city lack opportunities for young people in the area. Most of the areas that young people come from, lack places for them to enjoy themselves. Some areas have places to go, but young people are often excluded because they do not have a disposable income or simply because they are not students. There is a divide between local young people and students. Local young people are treated differently from students by the authorities. An example of this is seen in regular raids on local youth hanging around in the dunes at the East

end of the beach. Local newspapers have branded the young people as “anti-social” because they drink alcohol on the beach and are occasionally loud. To tackle this, the police have widened their patrol and visit the dunes daily. They sometimes issue the young people with section 35 Dispersal Notices which prevent the young person from accessing the city centre for 48 hours (Row, 2019). The police also take their alcohol from them and send them on their way. However, if you walk 2 miles West towards the main University, there will likely be students drinking on the beach without the worry of police moving them on. It is highly ironic that the local young people have resorted to hanging around on the fringes of society - if they were any further away from the city they would be stood in the sea – and they are still being moved on by police officers.



(West end of the beach, dunes)

There are some youth schemes where young people can do activities in the area. Activities can be arranged by youth workers and support workers. Therefore, it is often easier to access the schemes if the young person is already connected to a particular charity or agency. For example, young

people who come into contact with the law are often allocated a YOS (Youth Offending Service) worker. These workers will often work with the young person to divert them from the criminal justice system. This can involve doing weekly activities such as kickboxing or DJ'ing. This is also the case at the youth hostel. When young people come to the hostel, they are allocated with a support worker. The support worker will know exactly what the young person is entitled to in benefits, training opportunities, and youth schemes. The young people learn that they can benefit from getting a support worker, or a youth worker, from their peers. It is often the case that young people find out information about youth services, and what they are entitled to, by networking with one another.

The city centre is made up of a mixture of banks, pubs, pound shops, cash converters, pawnshops, charity shops, betting shops, and empty business premises. Occasionally, I observed young people taking their possessions to these local pawn shops. They would then receive a fraction of the items value, so they could all chip in to buy drugs. One day I spoke to Logan and he had sold a watch that was worth over £100 for £10 so he could buy a gram of NPS¹³. There are quite a few homeless people who hang around drinking cans of beer on the outskirts of the city centre. Some live on the beach in tents or in doorways of disused shops. Sometimes they can be seen passed out on the high street from smoking NPS. There are some clothes shops such as a H & M and Topshop, but most of the high street stores are found in the Quadrant shopping centre. The indoor market is always full of shoppers buying fresh fruit and vegetables, fresh meat, and baked goods. Swansea market is the largest indoor market in Wales. Road works are going on in the centre which has been in progress for several years. This puts a lot of people off heading into the city. Throughout the city centre there are many dilapidated buildings that are slowly being developed; many of which look unsafe.

¹³ New Psychoactive Substances



(The roadworks on the one-way system)



(A dilapidated building which is now being converted into student accommodation)

The bus station is next to a shopping centre called the Quadrant. This is where large groups of young people choose to 'hang out'. Young people from many of the surrounding areas travel from their homes to socialize at the bus stop. The bus stop is a neutral territory for the young people. There are lots of people around and the whole building is watched by CCTV cameras. Many of the young people living in the hostel would hang around there. Particularly if they were a part of the main hostel group. However, those who did not integrate into the hostel group told me that they avoided the bus stop at all costs. James said that he would add five minutes on his journey to

walk around to the other end of the bus stop where there are fewer young people. The city of Swansea is one of the wettest cities in the United Kingdom (WalesOnline, 2004), and the bus station acts as a perfect shelter for young people when it rains. When the rain stops, many of the young people head towards the castle. The castle is not a real castle, but the remnants of a castle, and it looks like a bit of an old wall on the side of the road.

The castle is situated at the top of the infamous Wind Street. There are many bars, pubs, and restaurants on Wind Street. The street is well known in South Wales for its drinking culture. On the weekend, Wind Street is overrun with drinkers who travel from all over South Wales for a night out. Weekend drinkers from the neighbouring valleys dominate Wind Street on the weekend. The average Friday or Saturday night can become quite volatile on Wind Street and fighting in the street is a regular occurrence. Monday and Tuesday are usually quite quiet, then the carnage begins again on Wednesday and Thursday for the student nights. Many of the young people who hang around at the castle sit bored, observing the students in their new clothes, dashing from bar to bar, spending large amounts of money on alcohol. Some of the young people from Rock House head to Wind Street throughout the week, they beg for money in doorways to provide them with some extra cash.

Heading from Wind Street towards the train station is High Street. The road has several dilapidated original Victorian buildings. Although uninhabitable, the buildings cannot be demolished because they are listed. A lack of investment prevents them from being restored to their former glory. High Street is quite daunting in the evenings. It has a high crime rate, and the police are regularly called out to deal with anti-social behaviour complaints, violent and sexual offences, criminal damage, and drug-related incidents; it is also a hotspot for sex workers. There are regular local newspaper articles about serious assaults and stabbings on the street.

Shared Lived Experiences: The Creation of a Collective Identity

Many of the young people that I met at the hostel seemed quite alienated by the city. Some refused to go into the city centre alone because they were concerned that they might get attacked by other young people in the area. A sixteen-year-old called Mia fell out with an older resident called Vicky. After the resident moved out, Mia heard from mutual friends that Vicky was going to beat her up. She couldn't go to the police because she would be accused of being a "grass". This could

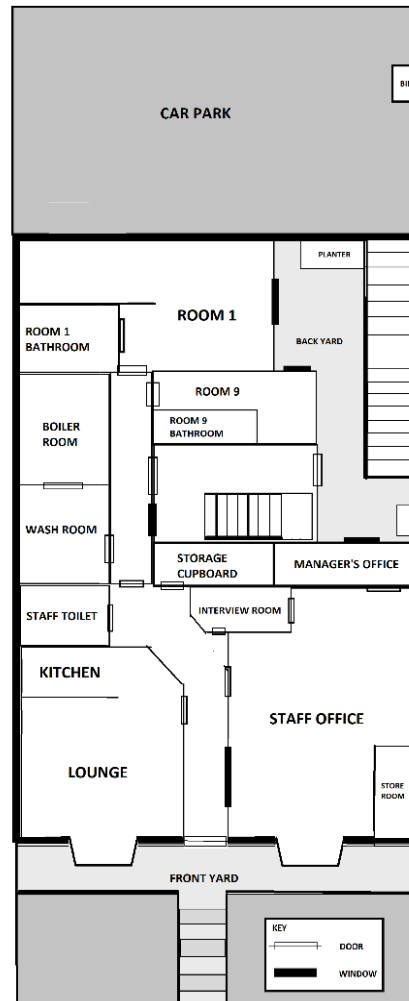
potentially make more residents dislike her and the police could not protect her twenty-four hours a day. Because of this, she refused to leave the hostel for weeks on end. Eventually, Mia chose to join a group in the hostel, and this offered her a level of protection from Vicky. Similar anxieties encouraged Keith to carry weapons and only walk in view of CCTV camera when he went out. He knew special routes that maximised his CCTV coverage whilst moving from one place to the next in the city. Many of the young people living in the hostel overcame these feelings of anxiety by joining larger groups of young people. These groups offered them protection from many of the other groups that hung around in the city. The young people told me that they had lost faith in the safety mechanisms provided by conventional society. During the focus group, the young people said that they did not trust the police. They told me that they felt that they could not get any help from them and Olly said, “They are the biggest harassers of them all”. Because of this, many young people turned towards safety in numbers when they entered the city centre. And this meant becoming a part of a larger group. Hebdige (1979) recognises that alienation from the larger society often results in young people creating their own sub-cultures. Furthermore, it is acknowledged by Epstien (1998) that the formation of sub-cultures amongst young people in circumstances such as these can often result in fatalism or exhaustion. He argues that when a collective identity is formed, “They wear their alienation from everything except their subculture as a badge of honour. It is who they are” (Epstien, 1998: 16).

Hagan and McCarthy (1998: 22) argue that for one “To understand street life... it is important to examine circumstances that lead youth from their families, as well as their lives on the street”. The following section shall give some examples of some of the reasons why young people become homeless which are specific to Swansea.

Many young people told me problems emerged in their household when they failed to meet an agreed curfew. Some spent nights away from home without their parents’ consent. Many said that they did this because they live miles away from where their friends hang out, and the last bus home is too early. Many of the young people at Rock House, have friends or family that live, or have also previously lived there. All the young people living in the hostel have likely experienced some form of family conflict or relationship breakdown before moving into the hostel. As such, the residents of the hostel often have a lot in common: they come from the same areas, or went to the same school, some of them are part of the same family. These commonalities seemed to enable

new alliances amongst the hostel residents. It offered them a sense of identity and belonging that they may not have previously experienced.

Arriving at the Hostel: First Impressions



The previous sections have situated the hostel on national and local levels. The following sections shall now zoom in to the hostel and pay close attention to the daily routines of young people's lives whilst they live there. A person's initial perception of the hostel could be largely influenced by the time of their visit. By day it feels safe, because there is a continual flow of people out the front, going back and forth to and from the train station. Most of these people are workers and

students who are going about their daily business. By night, the road is used by drunk people and drug users heading back and forth between High Street and Wind Street. From the outside, the hostel does not look very big. The entrance to the building is in the front yard, at the top of around twenty steps. The wheelchair lift is full of black refuse bags and covered in graffiti. A lady's pink bra hangs from a telegraph cable directly above the entrance. The front door is sandwiched between two large bay windows; a CCTV camera peers down over anyone who rings the buzzer. The buzzer is part of an intercom that allows staff members to check the visitor's identity before allowing them into the building. Rock House has a large front door made from PVC, which is cracked in several places. It is a very heavy door, but the lock is faulty, and the deadlock fails to shut properly on occasions. Additionally, the young people who frequently come back and forth the building often put the latch on, so they can come straight back into the building without buzzing. Some of the young people get annoyed that they must ring the buzzer and confirm their name before entering the building. Some refuse to say their name at all and just shout "let me in" when the staff member picks up the intercom. When it is dark the visibility of the CCTV is sometimes poor, making it hard to make out who a visitor is. Some of the young people seem to get very annoyed that they must confirm who they are and become abrupt towards the staff members. The young people don't recognise the formal rules that staff members are bound by. They regard the behaviour as being petty or deliberately being awkward. The upstairs bedroom windows are often open, and music can be heard coming from the rooms by passers-by. The resident's friends often sit on the steps, smoking cigarettes whilst they wait for the residents to join them. If a staff member asks them to wait somewhere else, the resident's friends can often become hostile towards them.

The front door leads to the internal corridor which has a reinforced glass window to the right and on the left is a notice board with posters and flyers with information about activities and additional support for the residents. The glass window is immediately followed by a door leading into a small room called the interview room. However, interviews rarely take place here as it is used for the storage of things that residents have left behind after moving out. Directly above the interview room door, pointing towards the front door is a second camera. This camera records all who enter the building and those who enter the office. On the left of the interview room is another corridor that leads towards the staff toilets and another door which leads to the back of the building where the young people's rooms are. Towards the left of the entrance is the door to the communal lounge and kitchen. It is an untreated wooden fire door with a window at the top, to enable staff members

to look in and check on the residents.

The kitchen has an electric cooker oven, a microwave, two empty fridges, and two sinks. There are also roughly sixteen partially empty cupboards. These cupboards are sometimes filled up when the hostel receives a food donation. However, it is a matter of days before the cupboards return to their previous state of containing jars of pickle, packs of brown rice, and tins of red kidney beans. The drawers are filled with an assortment of kitchen utensils that have been donated from various charity shops and house clearances. Many of the utensils are unused due to the lack of cooking that takes place in the kitchen. There is an abundance of whisks, peelers, garlic crushers, and tongs. However, there is a shortage of cutlery, tin openers, and pizza cutters. The amounts of plates, glasses, and cups in the cupboards fluctuates. When young people are evicted or move out, the staff then clean their rooms and return large amounts of plates and cups to the kitchen.

The lounge and kitchen have an open-plan layout. The lounge is very large which is accentuated by its lack of furniture. The uneven laminated floor contributes to an excessive echo in the room. The lounge has a flat-screen television on a wooden unit in the bay view. The TV is in working order, but it does not have a remote and the young people regularly take the aerial cable for their televisions in their rooms. There is also no DVD player because they also keep getting stolen. There are two dining tables in the lounge, one is a wobbly white flat-pack table and the other is a glass-topped table with a metal frame. The glass is not connected to the frame, and it slides about on the top when it's leaned on. The tables are surrounded by various chairs that have been donated to the hostel. The room has a large bay window that overlooks the front of the building to the left of the steps. There are no nets, and the curtains are too small, this enables people to peer into the lounge and see who is about. The window's small top opener windows are always left open because the handles do not work properly on them. The big middle window is locked closed but numerous attempts to prise it open have left it slightly open on the edge. This causes a cold draught in the lounge. On the walls, numerous posters offer young people counselling or advertising activities. There are also holes in the walls from where they have been punched or black rubber marks from trainers where they have been kicked. Some of the walls have graffiti on them. 'Tubbs is fat like Vicky Pollard' is written in black marker pen on the wooden fire door. Most young people tend not to sit in the lounge. This is probably because they often get bothered by strangers who come to the window and ask them for a cigarette or to be let in through the back door.

The walkway next to the staff toilet leads towards the back of the building. After walking through the door there is another long corridor, which is observed by a CCTV camera directly above the door. To the left is the door to a small washroom which contains an industrial washing machine and a tumble dryer. There is also a door in this room which leads to a small boiler room. At the top of the long corridor is the first of the rooms which accommodate young people - Room 1. It is a very large room, and the bathroom has been fitted with facilities to assist wheelchair users. The room has a single bed, an old armchair, a chest of drawers, a built-in wardrobe with no doors, and a small open plan kitchen. The kitchen has a sink, a fridge, and a microwave. The kitchens in the rooms are not allowed a cooker for insurance purposes, and young people are expected to use the cooker in the communal kitchen, Room 1 is particularly dark because it only has one window which looks out into the back yard. The yard is a level lower than the car park which results in much of the light being blocked out of the room.

When facing Room 1 at the end of the corridor, directly next door is Room 9. This room was initially meant to be an emergency room, but due to the high demand for rooms, it was turned into an additional room for the young people. Room 9 is by far the smallest in the hostel, and it is a third of the size of all the other rooms. It has a separate bathroom but no kitchen area. The bedroom has a fridge with a microwave on top of it at the bottom of the single bed. There is also a small chest of drawers for clothes. The window looks out into the back yard overlooking the window of Room 1. It is usually the case that new residents who join the hostel will be allocated to room 9. Young people often complain of the size of the room and say it is far too small for them to live in. When another room becomes available, they usually move out of Room 9 into a bigger room. And then the newer resident moves into room 9. This often means that the staff members must re-apply for housing benefits for the young person because their address changes. However, if the young person who is residing in Room 9 has failed to maintain the room whilst they live in it, they are refused requests to move into a larger room. They can also be refused if they fail to pay their service charge or continually receive warnings. The room is also used as a deterrent for young people who are in larger rooms and don't keep them tidy or fail to keep up to date with their service charge. Both Room 1 and Room 9 are considered by the young people as being insecure due to their location. Both external windows are on a ground floor and are out of view of the CCTV. If somebody wants to try and sneak into the building, they will often knock on the windows of Room 1 and Room 9 to gain access. It is common for ex-residents to pressurise the young people in the

rooms to open the window and allow them in. The staff are aware of this and sometimes advise the young people to close their curtains, so people don't know they are in.

A few meters down the corridor from Room 9 is another heavy wooden fire door that slams at intervals throughout the day and night. Michael told me in an interview that the noise woke him up through nights, keeping him on constant guard. This door leads to the stairs that go up to the second floor and to a white PVC door that leads to the back yard. Above the PVC door is another CCTV camera, this looks down over the back door, observing anyone coming in or out of Rock House. The outside of the back door is sheltered, this area is also monitored by a CCTV camera. The camera is up high and can see anyone coming down the steps from the car park, or anyone standing by the back door. This area is utilised as a meeting point for both staff and young people. Staff members tend to take a cigarette break there and sometimes the young people join them, and they have a chat by the back entrance. During the night, bored residents who have lost their visitor privileges sometimes hang around by the back door with their friends. Depending on the young person, or the people they are hanging around with, some staff members complain about them hanging around there and tell them to move on. This is largely down to the staff member's discretion. The rules say that nobody from outside of the hostel should be on the premises unless they are officially signed in. However, rather than creating any animosity between themselves and the young people, sometimes the staff members turn a blind eye.

Rooms 2, 3, 4 and 5, are on the second floor of the building. On the way up the stairs, there are holes in the walls and black marks from trainers. The stairs are a "damp corner" of the hostel, as they are out of view of the cameras. This made it very hard for staff to know who damaged the walls. However, the shared corridor on the second floor is equipped with a camera. This allows the staff to see who is going into each of the rooms. Room 2 is above the office and its front window overlooks the front yard. Room 3 is above the lounge and it also looks out over the front yard. The hostel is situated on a hill and although rooms 2 and 3, and rooms 4 and 5 are on the same floor of Rock House, rooms 4 and 5 are in line with the ground at the back of the building; they look directly out on to the car park. Apart from room 9, all the rooms are relatively the same size and contain the same amount of furniture.

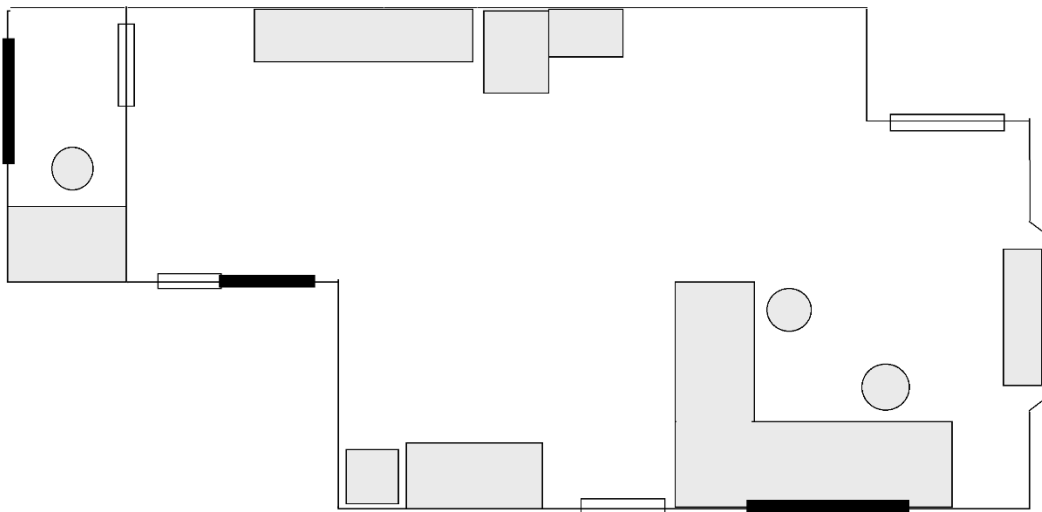
On the next floor are rooms 6, 7, and 8, the corridor has a camera in the same position as the floor below. Room 6 is an attic room and is larger than the other rooms in the hostel. It has a small

corridor, and the young people tend to like it because it is quiet and out of the way. It overlooks the front of the hostel, is on the third floor and it has an amazing view of the city and the beach. However, because of the sloped ceiling, it feels smaller than it is and sometimes slightly claustrophobic. Rooms 7 and 8 overlook the back car park and are the same size and layout as the rooms below them. All the rooms are similar in that they often sustain a lot of damage. Holes in walls, broken furniture, and graffiti are usually common when people move into the rooms. Some of the young people did not question the state of the rooms, whilst others made complaints about them being dirty and run-down. It was found that young people from wealthier backgrounds were more inclined to complain about the condition of the hostel. Although some new residents complained, Rock House had such a fast turnover of residents, they struggled to get the repairs made in time for the new residents. Staff members clean the rooms to a high standard and replace the bedding, but this does not conceal stab holes from kitchen knives or screwdrivers in walls or hateful graffiti. Some of the rooms have a dank smell from where the previous resident has lived unhygienically for months on end.

Directly across the road from the hostel, there is a newly renovated student flat. The student flat is highly visible from Room 2 of the hostel, and vice versa. I recall one Friday when I was sat in Room 2 with Logan and Zac. The students were dressed smartly as if they were going out to some bars. Their kitchen was brand new with lots of halogen lights brightening up the room. They were drinking white wine, and sparkling wine whilst chatting. As I was watching them enjoying themselves, I wondered what they thought when they looked back into Logan's room. When they saw his dimly lit room with ripped curtains, and nothing more than a coffee table cluttered with rubbish. Hopelessly, Logan, and Zac argued about how they could raise money to buy some drugs. They were both already under the influence of something and they did not notice the students. I am not sure they ever did notice them. Or even question why a group of young people the same age as they were, living a few hundred yards away from them, had so many more opportunities in life than they did.

Downstairs, the staff office is a large room, and it runs from the front of the building to the back. Inside the main staffroom there is a smaller office at the back. This is where the manager, John, works between 9 am and 5 pm. The main office has a stack of shelves in the bay window. The shelves have been balanced on an old metal locker to give it some height. The shelves contain 12

individual compartments which are used as pigeonholes for staff members and young people. Staff members used the ‘pigeonholes’ to store their lunch or their plate and cutlery which they brought from home. The young people’s ‘pigeonholes’ are used to store things such as mail, bank cards, birth certificates, phone chargers, cigarette lighters, or anything else that they had left lying around the hostel. The staff office does not have a CCTV camera in it and the closest camera is the one in the corridor outside looking over the staff office door. The main work desk in the office is made from a piece of kitchen worktop. The desk has a computer on it which is situated directly in front of the reinforced window. The desk runs along the wall towards the door and then turns at a ninety-degree angle, separating the office into two spaces.



ITEMS SHADED IN GREY ARE THE OFFICE FURNITURE

Who comes to Rock House?

During weekdays, the hostel is particularly busy, and it regularly has people coming and going. Professionals such as social workers, midwives, support workers, probation workers, parents, and police officers, regularly came to the hostel throughout the days. Young people that used to live at Rock House, popped in to say hello to the staff and residents. Family members of young people also visit the hostel throughout the days. However, most people visiting are professionals who are fulfilling specialist regulatory roles such as police officers, protective social workers, and

probation workers. Each role adding to the formal setting that the hostel assumes during the daytime.

There is a mixture of four specific staff roles, who share the office space daily. Firstly, the Support Workers, who are largely responsible for much of the goings-on in the day. They are expected to carry out support with all nine of the young people, making sure that they progress towards independent living throughout the duration of their stay at the hostel. Secondly, Support Assistants role was created to reduce some of the responsibilities of the Support Workers. Thirdly, there were Relief Workers, and they were regular workers who mainly covered night shifts. Relief Workers were all on zero-hour/casual contracts. They didn't carry out support with the residents at the hostel. Their responsibilities were more focused on assisting the full-time staff in undertaking their duties. Finally, all the above reported to John, the manager. He worked from a smaller office inside the main office and reported to the operational manager who was based in head office. The hostel was required to always have a minimum of two staff members working at the hostel. However, to save money, there would sometimes only be one support worker on in the day and the manager would stand in as the extra worker. This often meant that the pair of day staff spent more time fulfilling an administrative role, rather than spending time with the young people. This is something that shall be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

The Handover

The following sections will describe some of the administrative processes that occur in the hostel. They shall demonstrate how many of the daily processes contribute towards the creation of formal environments which are often associated with institutional settings. However, it is also revealed how these formal environments can quickly become informal, creating a level of confusion for the residents. During the night, the staff office becomes an informal area rather than a regulated one (Peace and Holland, 2001). The blinds are closed, chairs are reclined, and some of the lights are turned off, giving it a homely feel. Sometimes the staff members take their shoes off, get a blanket and some snacks, whilst they watch a movie together on the desktop computer. Residents come in for a casual chat, before going up to their rooms. As the night goes on, some of the staff members sleep very uncomfortably in the office chairs. When morning approaches, the staff members begin to tidy up. They do the bins and readjust the chairs; they turn Netflix off the computer and put the

radio on. They boil the kettle and clean some cups in preparation for the morning staff members. The floors are hoovered and the hallways are mopped on ground floor. Every morning, the informal space that the office had become, resembles a formal office space once again and staff members resume their professional roles as hostel workers. At 7 am, the first day staff member arrives to relieve one of the night workers of their duty. The other day worker will arrive at 8 am, followed by the manager at 9 am. The night workers work twelve-hour shifts, with one starting at 7 pm and the other at 8 pm. This gives one of the night workers an hour in the morning to update the day worker about what happened the previous night. This is called a “handover” and it is a professional or specialist form of surveillance, that might be associated with institutions (Holland and Pleace, 2001).

The handover involves passing on all the necessary information that was recorded the previous night. A sheet of A4 paper contains the main details that are needed by the days staff. The paper has the night staff members names and the date written at the top. The main part of the paper lists each of the resident’s names down the side, some comment on how the resident is, and whether the resident stayed at the project or not. The staff members use this time to update one another regarding any situations that have arisen or any change in the dynamics in the hostel. The staff members need to document whether the young people are in or not because they are expected to stay at the hostel for at least four nights a week. If the young person fails to do this, they shall risk being evicted for ‘abandonment’. Although this is a hostel policy, it is enforced by the funding body who refuses to provide beds to those who do not use them. Goffman (1961) describes this type of bureaucratic block management as central to the running of a total institution. He recognises a total institution as being one that breaks down the barriers of three main spheres of life: work, play, and sleep. He argues that total institutions require “The handling of many human needs by bureaucratic organization of whole blocks of people” (Goffman, 1963: 18). The following section identifies use of “bureaucratic management” that is used in the hostel and discusses how this might be interpreted by the staff and residents. The young people’s individual needs have been condensed into a single sheet of paper. The “handover” sheet lacks any real information about the young people. For example, one entry said: “Michael was in a good mood. He stayed in his room all evening”. Staff members all took different amounts of time discussing the “handover”. Some spent five or ten minutes talking through each young person individually, and others did not spend any time at all. As well as passing over important information, the handover is an opportunity for

the staff members to catch up on any gossip. Many of the staff members use this time to speculate about the goings on of the hostel. They might discuss whether they are suspicious of a resident sneaking people into the building, dealing drugs, sex working, or engaging in certain drug use. The handover was often used by staff members as a tactic to clear the young people out of the office. When staff members asked young people to leave the office for no particular reason, the residents often took offence. However, when they told the young person that they had to leave so they could do a handover, the young people accepted this as a legitimate reason and would leave the office quite happily. The main importance of the sheet of paper was that it recorded who was in and who was out. And the document itself contributed to a mass of other paperwork that could be used as proof that daily support was being given to each of the residents.

Once the handover was carried out, the day worker continues in their professional role by attending to a series of specialist tasks. They check the whiteboard to see if any of the young people need to be woken up. Wake-up calls are supposed to be for young people who struggle to get up for important appointments or attending education or training. However, some of the young people use the wake-up call more like a service that would be provided in a hotel. For example, one young person asked only to be woken up if it is sunny, so she could go and sunbathe. Other young people use wake-up calls as an alarm clock because they do not have a mobile phone. After the wake-up calls, the staff member then checks the diary to see if any of the staff or young people have appointments that day. Young people's appointments usually consist of doctor appointments, probation appointments, college appointments, Jobcentre appointments, or appointments with the Youth Offending Service/Team (YOS/YOT). The diary documents all the appointments that require the staff member to attend with a young person. It also notifies staff if a new resident is moving in or moving out of the hostel. It also informs staff members when a potential new resident due to attend a meeting, called an Initial Needs Assessment. Their aim is to discuss the suitability of prospective residents before they move into the hostel. The diary allows the staff members to plan their day ahead. After this has been done, staff members check their emails to see if there is anything else that they need to do that day. When the manager, John, came in at 9 am, the staff members were attending to their workload and the office turned into a strictly formal administrative office. Monday is particularly busy at the hostel, as there is often a backlog of calls from the over the weekend, which start coming through on the office phone.

Assessments

When young people present themselves as homeless, they approach the Swansea Housing Organisation (SHO), who make referrals to potential housing providers. They take relevant information from the young person to determine a suitable place for residents; one that will meet the young person's individual needs. This includes details of the person being referred, reasons for needing support, and a general Risk Assessment. It is then handed over to the hostel, and the young person is invited to attend an 'Initial Needs Assessment' at the projects that are suitable for them. The assessment lasts about 20 minutes, and once it is carried out, the staff members of the hostel then decide whether the young person is suitable for the hostel. When speaking with the young people, they were very clear in stressing the importance of getting the right mixture of young people in the hostel. They were aware that if you have a lot of drug users living together, it will result in a drug culture. They warned that the wrong mixture can have a negative impact on the hostel dynamics. In an unstructured interview, Skyla said, "You have really got to... think about who you are putting together, mixes, the crowds, the age groups, the people". She said that staff members should let prospective residents know who lives at the hostel before moving in. This way, they will be able to decide whether living in the hostel will be good for them.

Although assessments are not supposed to be an interview-like environment, the ones which I observed felt like a formal interview. The young person was often very nervous and hesitant to answer the questions when asked. During the assessment, the young person's SHORE worker was always present, and they sometimes guided the young person when they answered questions. Young people rarely got refused from being considered for the hostel. I felt that this was partly because the SHORE worker was complicit in the answers to the questions. Smith and Anderson (2018) describe how homeless outreach workers ensure that their clients tell "fitting stories" when they approach agencies for help. The "fitting stories" meant that the clients would often meet the required criteria, enabling them to get access to housing support. This sometimes seemed to be the case when SHORE workers attended Initial Needs assessments.

Occasionally workers withheld certain details from the staff at Rock House. For example, when Zac carried out his assessment, he disclosed that he had been to prison for a 'non-violent offence' in the assessment. After he moved into the hostel, he admitted that he had been to prison for punching a man in the face and stealing his car. The following extract has been taken from the

fieldnotes a few weeks after Zac moved in:

“Zac’s referral was missing from his file and John had to email the head office to send a new copy. ... John told me that it was quite common for SHORE to leave out details in the referral forms. And that they do this because they think it will jeopardise the young person’s chances of gaining a place at the hostel” (Fieldnotes, 18th October 2017).

John told me that he felt that this prevented him from getting a good mix in the hostel. However, regardless of expectations of multi-agency working, the SHORE had a responsibility to house the young person somewhere; that is their job. Smith and Anderson (2018) described how “homeless outreach workers’ interactions with their clients as they developed fitting stories, or narratives that portray clients as worthy of housing services under existing bureaucratic criteria”. Through observing the meetings, it became apparent that the SHORE workers played an active role in ensuring that young people seemed suitable for the hostel.

Although it is very important to provide temporary accommodation to young people when they need it, it is also important to get the right mixture. As pointed out by Skyla, failure to do this can result in the development of cultures that run in direct opposition to what Rock House aims to provide, which can be detrimental to the resident’s transition into independent living.

Support Sessions: Staircase to Transition

Support sessions are formal meetings between young people and their support workers. They are arranged via appointment and require a support worker/assistant to meet with a resident. All residents are required to engage in a support session weekly as part of their licence agreement. If a young person does not engage in the support, they can be evicted. The support session is designed to identify areas where the resident is struggling and help them overcome this struggle. Support sessions are based on the “staircase to transition” model of housing, the support sessions are designed to evaluate the residents progress in the hostel (Sahlin, 2007). During the session, the support worker asks the resident how they are managing their accommodation in ten specific areas.

- Motivation and taking responsibility.
- Self-care and living skills.

- Managing money.
- Social networks and relationships.
- Drugs and alcohol misuse.
- Physical health.
- Emotional and mental health.
- Meaningful use of time.
- Managing tenancy and accommodation.
- Offending.

The aim of this is to identify the weaknesses that the young person has around independent living so that these areas can be strengthened before they move into their property. The resident is then set goals based on the areas that they are struggling with. The support worker sets targets in an action plan which are SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound. Once these goals are set, the support worker observes the resident over the next week and then reviews the action plan in a new support session. Foucault (1977/1991) would recognise this as a process of discipline through corrective training: surveillance, normalization, and examination. Arguably, the support session is a mechanism of formal social control which is designed to alter the resident in ways, so they are more fitting with the way's mainstream society. The process is therefore suggestive that the way the young people live their lives is somehow wrong or improper. Once the resident has become successful in climbing the “staircase to transition”, they secure more freedom and autonomy of their lives (Sahlin, 2007).

Moving in and out of Rock House

When a young person is deemed able to live independently, they are offered the opportunity to “move-on” from the hostel. It is important for young people to move out of the hostel to make space for new residents. Before moving out, they will have already attended an ILA (Independent Living Assessment) meeting, to establish the type of residence they should “move-on” to. The meeting identifies the potential needs that a young person may have, and levels of support that they might require. It will determine whether the resident can move straight into a permanent flat

with no additional living support or if the resident is to move into a temporary flat, with extended support. Sometimes, young people are deemed ready to “move-on” from the hostel irrespective of whether they want to or not.

Mia was offered a flat of her own and refused it. She said that she was not ready to be alone and would probably kill herself without 24-hour support. To Mia, the thought of living alone was very scary and she remained living in the hostel until she became pregnant. Becky also didn't want to move out, she did not see any reason for moving out of the hostel. She saw the hostel as her home and was happy with her room. She didn't see the need for having her flat in the community. When those are forced to move out of the hostel, they are faced with similar feelings of rejection and uncertainty as they did when they initially became homeless. It can be seen in the following extract how Becky viewed her room as a long-term home rather than a form of temporary accommodation:

“Becky started talking about how she was looking forward to decorating her room and putting some pictures up and things on the wall. The girls then asked when I was going to do the ‘group interview’ ... They asked what it [the interview] will be about I said, [the interview will discuss] what it is like to be homeless. Becky said, “I don't even feel homeless like. I am not homeless; the hostel is my home” (Fieldnotes, Wednesday 1st August 2018).

Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin (2007) point out that through using hostels, there is always a risk of institutionalization whilst living at a hostel. They argue that this is why hostels are often made to be slightly uncomfortable places. Seal (2005: 142) contends that “the move on represents a return to bare survival as the client will often be materially worse off”. Seal (2005) points out that the importance of not building a move on up to be more than it is. He cautions the use of words such as “home” and advises practitioners to recognise describe the new accommodation as a “house” (Seal, 2005). From viewing the hostel in this way, it can be seen that providers are often discouraged to provide the residents with a homely environment. When Becky finally moved into a flat, she did not like it and returned to the hostel daily for some time. She was dependent on staff interactions and told them she felt lost in her new accommodation. Eventually, her new support worker said that she was not coping living alone and moved her back into the hostel. Seren also complained that she was not coping when she was given her own flat. Shortly after she moved out, an entry in the hostel logbook made by a staff member read, “Seren rang upset says she needs to

move back into Rock House her anxiety is really bad finding it hard to go out”. However, a majority of the young people did want to move out of the hostel, and they were therefore incentivised to meet the hostel’s requirements of independent living.

On the day that a resident moves out, they are helped to move their things by the staff members at the hostel, and their new support worker. Their old room will then be inspected and prepared for a new resident. After the room had been cleaned and repaired, the staff members make sure that the room had all the required amenities for the new resident (e.g., new bedding, new towel, toiletries, etc). Once the room is ready, a new resident will then be invited to move into the hostel. They will usually come to the hostel with their SHORE worker on the arranged date and move their things into their new room. After they have done this, they say goodbye to their SHORE worker and then accompany a hostel staff member to complete the necessary paperwork in the office.

There was lots of paperwork that the new resident was expected to sign before moving in to Rock House. However, before they could officially move in, they were required to sign a License Agreement, a Housing Benefit form, and carry out the detailed Risk Assessment. These were the three most important things to be done. The license agreement and the housing benefit forms were needed so that the rent would be paid. The process was sometimes a very quick one and I was surprised that some young people signed the paperwork without reading any of it, including the house rules. This was usually because the new resident wanted to get out of the office and get settled into their new room. Mayock and Parker (2020) found that the formal processes of a service setting often undermined the autonomy of residents, leaving them feel debilitated. Staff members sometimes skipped the rule process to avoid making the new resident feel uncomfortable or disempowered. Or it could be that, due to the new resident moving in during the day, the staff member was busy, and was therefore keen to get on with other things. This means that the new resident often moved into the hostel being unaware of the rules and often dependent on the other residents to inform them of the rules at the hostel. It was often the case that young people moved into the hostel and they were totally unaware of any of the rules. They often turned to other residents to learn about the rules. When this happened, it resulted in the hostel rules being misinterpreted. This had an influence upon the cultural development within the hostel, which often undermined its main goals and objective. This is something that will be discussed in more detail during the following chapter.

Record Keeping

Staff members keep daily records of the events that take place in the hostel. As well as the information that they retain in the initial assessment, they continue to gather information about the young people living at the hostel through the duration of their stay. Information is recorded in resident's personal file, in the logbook, and in the handover forms. There is also an online database that contains information about the young people supported by Clear Start. The records that were kept in the resident's file are often viewed by staff members before they meet the resident. The information in the file offered details about the young person's history. This information kept in the files often influenced the staff member's first impressions of residents. They read the files before meeting them. Staff members often discussed what type of person a resident was, based on the information held in the files. Ciciourel (1974) found that police officers often use official records to make prejudgements about juveniles. He points out that these records can often act as a prerequisite that influences encounters between police officer and juveniles. He argues that "These labels provide meanings to the police ... for making both evaluations and disposition decisions" (Ciciourel, 1974: 94). Arguably, the information in a resident's file, could influence a staff member's judgement of a resident before they meet them. This data could therefore play a fundamental role in future ongoing staff/resident relations for the duration of their stay at the hostel. Although the staff are expected to be non-judgemental about residents, I noticed that some staff members being less trusting of some residents than others. For example, Zac moved into the hostel after being released from prison. The staff members were immediately very careful and would not allow him into the office. They became more inclined to lock doors and not leave valuable possessions when he was around. Although this reaction might seem to be a justified staff response to prevent things from being stolen. However, their reaction to Zac was obvious and could easily be seen as a continuation of the punishment that he experienced within prison. Zac seemed to pick up on this treatment and quickly became very hostile to certain staff members.

Keeping records and information sharing was a daily form of surveillance at the hostel. It was deemed necessary to ensure the safety of residents. The following gives an example of the type of entries that were written in the logbook:

"The project had a visit from PCSO, Charlie. The police are looking for a man who is known as 'Gay Dave'. He had been driving a burgundy coloured Ford Focus or a blue

4x4. The Police are suspicious that he might be involved in CSE¹⁴ and the distribution of NPS” (Logbook entry on Monday 23rd October 2017).

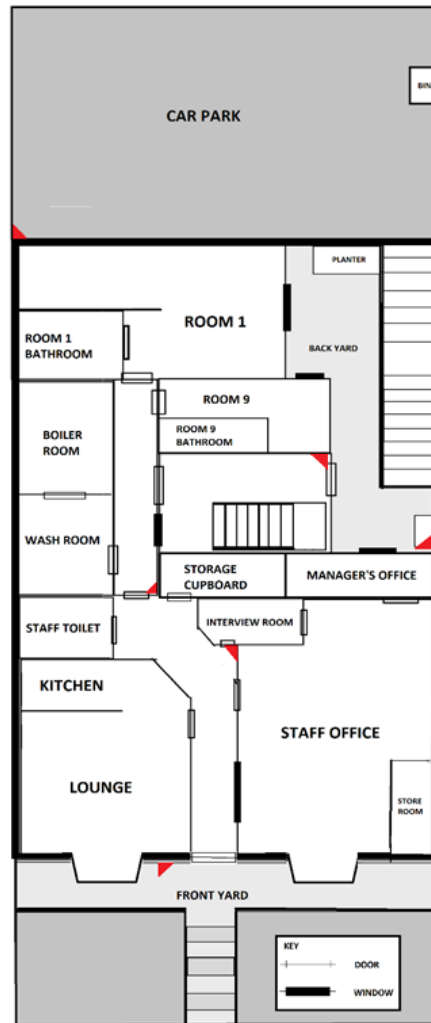
Staff members would also keep tabs on the resident when they came and went. They made notes of who they were with and speculated about whether they were engaging in illegal activity such as drug dealing. Although it might be seen as normal/acceptable to some residents, and intrusive/oppressive to others. Holland and Peace (1998) argue that surveillance and security are attributes of institutions and therefore run in opposition to privacy and risk in normal domestic settings. Zedner (2002) has pointed out that the expansion of surveillance is largely justified by a pursuit for security. However, Garland (2001) has criticized this approach, arguing social control is largely justified through the creation of concerns through political means rather than actual risk. Reiner (2010: 5) argues that “the creation of systems of surveillance coupled with the threat of sanctions for discovered deviance” is a form of policing; and the fundamental objective of policing is to secure social order or social control. This would suggest that continual surveillance in the hostel is like constant policing. There are several ethical debates which would call into question the dangers of constant social control through observation. Firstly, there is a recognition that when someone carries out constant observation over another individual, they assume a position of great power. Foucault (1976: 39) describes the idea of the “medical gaze”, he argues that in hospitals during the nineteenth century, the constant monitoring of patients resulted in an objective idea of Being, followed by increasing expectations of conformity and obedience – “the gaze that sees is a gaze that dominates”. Through the implementation of various forms of surveillance, the residents may feel dominated or oppressed. However, the young people rarely mentioned the record keeping of the hostel.

Closed Circuit Television and Surveillance

The cameras are all linked to two monitors in the main staff room and back office. The first monitor is visible to anyone who comes into the staff office. This enables the young people to see exactly what the cameras can see. The second monitor is in the smaller back office. The young people are also able to see this monitor through the back-office window; providing the blinds are open. The monitor in the back office enables staff members to rewind and record footage. Rock House has a

¹⁴ Child Sexual Exploitation

total of eight working cameras. There are an additional four on the outside of the building that do not work. They did work in the past but were never taken down. However, the young people living at the hostel were unsure whether the cameras were working or not. Out of the eight cameras that do work, there are three on the outside of the building and six inside. The red triangles in the following diagram show the position of the cameras that are located on the first floor of the hostel. There are also an additional two cameras on the second and third floors.



Due to CCTV monitors being visible in the office, the young people are able to identify blind spots in the building. Although the monitors are often visible to the young people, the staff can prevent them from being seen by the young people by locking the office and closing the blinds.

Additionally, due to monitors being in the office, a young person is unable to determine whether they are being watched or not when they are in the communal areas. The presence of the cameras - including the broken ones - could therefore induce a Panoptic effect providing the staff with an additional form of power (Foucault, 1977). Although many would see this surveillance as being a form of security (Huey, 2010), others might view the cameras as an invasion of privacy or even culturally oppressive (Young, 1999). Doherty *et al* (2002) point out that homeless people have long been subjected to oppressive forms of surveillance. They argue that technology, such as CCTV, is largely used to “monitoring and disciplining behaviour” (Doherty *et al*, 2002). A majority of the young people living at Rock House, viewed CCTV as an important security feature of the hostel. Many said that they thought the cameras were a good thing and recognised them being there for their safety. However, when thinking about the panoptic effect of surveillance, it should be noted the camera gives the staff members a level of power which is one-way over the residents. This machinery of power is recognised as being a disciplinary mechanism which is associated with total institutions such as prisons (Foucault, 1977).

On many occasions, I noticed that the young people were aware that they were being watched when they moved around the building. Sometimes you could see the young people glance directly at the cameras as they moved around Rock House. Sometimes young people would stick their figures up at the camera as they walked to their rooms. They would often glance at the camera for a split second and then carry on their routine. Foucault (1979) recognises a glance to be a specific form of knowledge. Like the gaze, he argues that “The glance, on the other hand, does not scan a field: it strikes at one point, which is central or decisive; the gaze is endlessly modulated, the glance goes straight to its object ... The glance is silent, like a finger pointing, denouncing” (Foucault, 1979: 121). Therefore, when the young people walk around the building, they are visibly aware that they are being watched.

As previously mentioned, many of the residents at Rock House recognised the importance of CCTV when it came to their own individual safety. When I asked Mia about the cameras in an interview, she said “It’s a good thing in a way because by my window there is druggies, back and forth. And there is that dodgy garage place, people inject like down by my window. So, with that [the cameras] it’s good”. She said that the cameras made her feel safer in the hostel and she felt that there were not enough cameras there. Mia was conscious that she could become a victim of a

crime when she was in the hostel; she recognised the cameras as a form of protection. Hughes *et al* (2002) argue CCTV is a technocratic solution to a current cultural fear of strangers. They point out that the presence of CCTV can often contribute towards a “new architecture of crime control”, one that ensures urban and community safety (Hughes *et al*, 2002: 332). However, life at Rock House entailed many situations where the cameras, not only made residents feel safe, but they worked to prevent incidents from occurring. When I asked Michael if he thought the hostel was a safe place, he said “Well yeah, because obviously, you shut your door, no one can get in. It’s all camera’d here. So, if anyone was kicking fuck out of your door, the staff would phone the police. So, it’s like, yeah safe here”. Michael also reflected on the fact that his bedroom window is out of view of the cameras, which resulted in that window being targeted by an ex-resident looking to enter the hostel.

When I was speaking to Keith, he told me that he had lots of people who wanted to hit him. When he came to the hostel, he told me that he prefers to hang around wherever there are cameras because his enemies “can’t do nothing” if they are in view of a cameras. However, when a person crosses the line and is seen to endanger another person on camera, this permits the other individual to act in self-defence. Once they become aggressive, the footage will then act as evidence that they became a threat to the other person. If a fight does break out, the other party can argue that they felt under threat and retaliated in self-defence. This was observed when a fight broke out between Keith and Zac. The two boys were having a stand-off in the corridor outside the office. Zac began to antagonise Keith by staring at him in the corridor and smirking at him. Keith began pushing his chest into Zac, but Zac remained calm. Zac then began to encourage Keith by saying “come on then”. It seemed as though Zac was encouraging Keith to make the first move on him. Keith then lifted his arm and it looked like he was going to grab Zac by the throat. It was at this point, Zac retaliated and suddenly punched Keith to the floor. When the police arrived, Keith said that he had “grabbed him by the throat in self-defence”. Due to his licence conditions, Zac had the most to lose out of the two boys. The conditions meant that re-offending during his licence period could end up in him going back to prison. Both boys were fully aware of the camera’s presence at the time of the altercation. Zac seemed to neutralize punching Keith as an act of self-defence. He told the police that Keith had attacked him first, but he did not want to take the matter any further. This example demonstrates how the cameras can protect a young person to an extent. However, there were certain instances where the camera would not protect them. On this occasion, Keith seemed

to be slightly naïve about the protection of the cameras.

Another example of this was demonstrated one evening when a few of the young people got into a fight with a passer-by on the front street. The altercation had been recorded by Becky on her phone and she showed the video to me. A few of the young people were shouting at a passer-by out the front of the hostel. When the passer-by retaliated, Seren shouted "go on then [hit me], because it's all camera'd up here" and pointed at the camera above the front door. Using the cameras as a way to deter the man, she reminded him that if he attacked them, they would have evidence to say he had done. It seemed to work, and the man backed down. This awareness of the cameras worked both ways, and other young people said that they deliberately refrained from assaulting other young people in the view of a camera. Even in the most heated situations, the cameras were recognised and used as a valid reason not to carry out violent behaviour on another young person in the hostel.

Alternatively, there were also occasions when I suspected prospective perpetrators used the presence of cameras as an excuse not to retaliate towards others when they had already said they would do so. For example, one day I was speaking with Kenton in his room, and he told me that he had recently been hanging out with friends in the bus station. Kenton had previously told me, in front of other residents, that he was going to beat Keith up when he saw him next. The following extract is taken from the fieldnotes documenting the conversation:

“Kenton told me that he had seen Keith in town this weekend and that Keith had smirked at him. Kenton told him to come down a lane and he would fight him. Kenton told me that he couldn't hit him there and then, because he was aware there were cameras in the bus station” (Fieldnotes, Friday 2nd February 2018).

Kenton wanted me to know that he had attempted to follow up on what he had said he was going to do. If Keith did ‘smirk’¹⁵ at Kenton at the bus station, I thought this was interesting because Keith had already told me that he used the camera as a form of protection. He believed people could not hurt him when whilst he was in view of the camera. From what the two boys had told me, the cameras offered a situation that benefitted both parties. Keith avoided getting beaten up but was able to maintain his dignity in front of his peers. And Kenton could avoid getting into an

¹⁵ A sign of disrespect or an excuse to hit someone.

altercation and still maintain his reputation.

The bus station is a place where young people from different parts of the city come together to hang out. The description that the young people gave of the bus station was similar to the social space described by Anderson (1999) as a 'Staging Area'. Anderson (1999: 77) describes the 'staging area' as a place where "a wide mix of people gather for various reasons". Staging areas sometimes revolve around "neighbourhood establishments" and can involve "music, alcohol, drugs, and rough crowds of young people" (Anderson, 1999: 77). Young people come together to present themselves to others and "represent" who they are and the "world" which they hail (Anderson, 1999). However, unlike Anderson's (1999) staging area, the bus station was relatively safe because of the presence of the cameras. Childress (2004) argues that young people often hang around in public areas as a result of their inability to own, or have control over, private property. He argues that this can result in young people making claims of public areas as a form of territorial place-making (Childress, 2004). Smith and Hall (2017) further discuss this idea in relation to street homeless adults. Like Anderson (1999), Smith and Hall (2017: 374) recognise territories to be "inextricably tied to and implicated in the organization of social interaction". Additionally, they point out that "that territory and interaction are mutually constitutive orders that, together, colour the actor's sense of personhood and Self". Therefore, when Kenton was defending his choice not to hit Keith, the presence of the cameras was useful in maintaining his tough persona at the bus stop. These examples demonstrate how the cameras in the hostel simultaneously protected young people from being a victim of a crime whilst deterring them from engaging in conflict with other young people. They offered a legitimate excuse for young people not to commit a crime.

However, it must also be noted that cameras were only effective when the residents knew they were in the view of the cameras. There were a few occasions when the residents planned to steal something when they knew they would not be seen by the camera. The following gives an example from the fieldnotes:

"Zac turned to me and said "I am busting for a shit mush! Go downstairs and nick me some bog roll son". ... He said that he did not want to pay a pound for toilet roll. One of the other boys said, "just go and get some". Zac said, "no, they will see me on CCTV". Kenton assured Zac that the staff toilet is not in the view of the CCTV cameras. Zac then went downstairs to steal some toilet roll from the staff toilet" (Fieldnotes, Wednesday 15th November 2017).

There were several ‘damp corners’ in the hostel that allowed young people to break the rules without being found out. Goffman (1961: 268) recognises damp corners to be “places of vulnerability ... [where] secondary adjustments bred and start to infest the establishment”. The residents at Rock House would often smoke in the lounge away from the door where the camera could see through. If they were buying or selling drugs, they stepped to the left of the front door out of the camera view. There were also ways that people could access the building out of the view of the camera. Zac would also use blind spots around the building to sell drugs. Blind spots were used when Keith’s PlayStation 3 was stolen. Zac had borrowed the PlayStation 3 for the evening and said he returned it to Keith by leaving it outside of his door. However, Keith was in room 2 at the time and the bottom half of the door is out of view of the camera. After a few young people had passed Keith’s room, there was no way of knowing who took it. Sometimes when the residents were on drugs or alcohol, they seemed to forget about the cameras and explicitly steal large objects such as televisions and laptops, from each other’s rooms. The CCTV was then used to identify the culprit and they would usually give back the stolen item when they were confronted with evidence that they had stolen the item. Some of the residents used other tactics to overcome the gaze of the cameras. On one occasion it was reported in the logbook, that Logan covered up the camera in the downstairs corridor when Zac tried to get into Kenton’s room. It was also common for young people to use the cameras to their advantage. One day I observed young people in the office distracting the staff member by requesting something from his file. When the staff members were busy, he watched his friends sneak in through the back door and go into his room on the monitor in the staff room.

Another form of surveillance in the hostel was carried out in the form of room checks. The residents at the hostel did not have tenancy agreement at the hostel. This meant that staff members could legally access their rooms. The young people found this extremely invasive and complained that their privacy was violated by the room checks. Some of the residents accused the staff members of unfairly targeting them to try and catch them breaking the rules. Some staff members tried to neutralize these checks by saying that they had to check all the smoke alarms every night. They would proceed to inspect the smoke detectors, checking their condition. This was partly true, as there were some concerns about young people covering their smoke alarms with socks - so that they could smoke cannabis without setting the alarms off. Some of the young people complained that the order of the rooms was checked inconsistently. If their room was checked first, it indicated

to them that the staff members suspected they had an unauthorised visitor. This area is touched upon further in the following sections that discuss staff and young person relations. Again, this is an example of daily routines that can contribute towards the hostel being viewed more like a total institution by its residents.

Conclusion

This chapter has offered an in-depth description of the hostel's geographic location and the history that exists around the hostel. Recognising the specific cultures that exist in the surrounding areas, can allow the reader to understand the diverse mixture of life which inhabits the hostel. Only when this foundation of knowledge has been provided, can one understand the finer details that influence the cultures that develop there. The following chapter moves closer into the hostel, describes many of the daily routines that take place there, and discusses how these routines are perceived by the staff and young people in the hostel.

The second part of the chapter has identified how certain administrative routines can be viewed paradoxically in the hostel. Therefore, influencing how the hostel is perceived by the residents that live there. Although there is the opinion that the hostel should not be run like an institution (Clark *et al*, 2004), this notion is difficult to achieve, especially when the hostel is subservient to bureaucratic and administrative processes. The chapter has demonstrated how formal general administrations is used as a means of coercion, control, and surveillance in the hostel. Making it a specialist, formal, and regulated environment, that has much in common with a total institution. The final section considers the role that surveillance plays within Rock House. It is recognised that, although the cameras at Rock House do not protect young people from dangers completely, they were seen as useful in increasing the protection of residents and deterring residents from committing a crime. Additionally, they made some of the residents feel safe allowing them more confidence when moving around the hostel. However, many of the residents complained about physical surveillance in the hostel – particularly room checks. They found these checks to be invasive and a violation of their privacy. Therefore, although surveillance sometimes contributed towards the safety of the residents, it also delivered “a specific mechanism in disciplinary power” (Foucault, 1977: 175), a feature that is sometimes associated with total institutions.

Chapter 6 – The Daily Routines of Rock House

Introduction

The following chapter describes some of the daily routines that take place in the hostel. This will include many of the systems and operations that have been employed by Clear Start to guide hostel procedures. Understanding these systems and operations will provide important context, which is needed to make sense of the young peoples' daily routines. Additionally, they will offer the reader guidance when thinking about the cultural development of the hostel. Bauman (1999) argues that the development of culture is largely dependent on the rigidity of systems. He points out that systems will often require newcomers to 'assimilate' themselves, transform, or adapt to a culture (Bauman, 1999). This is an interesting area of contemplation when considering how the systems influence a new resident's behaviour and actions in the hostel.

The following chapter further explores the characteristics of the hostel, further highlighting its paradoxical nature. With consideration to the above attributes, it will also be discussed how hostels are presented to their residents. Some of the hostel's features are discussed in relation to Goffman's (1961) description of total institutions. Through focussing on some of the basic features of Rock House, the reader will gain a better understanding of how different young people view the characteristics of the hostel. As well as drawing attention to the different perceptions amongst the young people living at Rock House, it will contrast the perceptions that exist amongst the staff members and others who encounter hostel type accommodation. Many of these perceptions shape the individual interactions of staff and residents. These interactions will contribute towards how the individual resident view the hostel. This might be through certain features of the hostel, or how staff members and other residents behave in the hostel. Additionally, it will also be considered how the staff's personal views of what type of establishment the hostel is, will further influence how they engage with residents. These interactions will also influence how young people experience life at the hostel. Each of the individual features will contribute to how the perception of the hostel is constructed by those who live there.

Systems and Operations

Goffman (1961) tells how the individuals who reside within total institutions play an important role when influencing the institutional culture. He argues that each person brings with them a “presenting culture, one that is reflective of their “home world” (Goffman, 1961: 23). This suggests that the culture that exists in the hostel will likely be influenced by the young people living there. In many ways, the hostel shares characteristics with residential children’s homes. They are both buildings that are designed to both house and care for children/young people. And they both have staff twenty-four hours a day, who engage in professional and personal roles whilst working with residents. Additionally, they both have staff twenty-four hours a day, who engage in both professional and personal roles in caring for residents. Clark *et al* (2014) argue that although residential homes for children are designed not to give off an “institutional feel”, achieving this can be a problem because of the building’s routines, rules, and hierarchy. Peace and Holland (2001: 407) argue “that internal and external influences are constantly at work to affect the balance between attributes of the domestic and the institutional”. As previously mentioned, Holland and Peace (1998) identified six contrasting traits, which highlight the difference between a home and a residential care setting. These traits will be used in the following sections to demonstrate how various characteristics of the hostel can be viewed in different ways by different people. The chapter demonstrates how an individual’s culture can influence how they perceive the hostel. Some residents experience the hostel as an institution and some experience it like a social establishment.

Unlike total institutions, the residents of a hostel are not captive, and they are free to come and go from the hostel as they please. This would indicate that the hostel is closer to a social establishment than total institution. However, it can be seen from looking at Holland and Peace’s (1998) six contrasting traits, how some attributes can be viewed differently depending on the individual and their relationship to the hostel. Each contrasting trait demonstrates how providing support in a professional manner, might not meet the expectation of someone living in a hostel. They might argue that the hostel is their home, and they should therefore be addressed in a personal manner whilst they reside there. The contrasting traits demonstrate how many of the characteristics of the hostel are paradoxical and can be viewed in different ways by different individuals. Arguably, to achieve a completely domestic experience for the residents at the hostel, it would require staff members to become less professional and more informal. It would require the dissolution of

professional boundaries that differentiate the staff members as professionals rather than friends.

The Hostel Rules

On signing their licence agreement to live in the hostel, when they first move in, the young people are given a paper copy of the house rules. Although it is widely accepted that short-term paternalism is a successful way of ensuring long-term autonomy (Watts *et al* 2017; Parsell and Clarke, 2017), this type of contractual living is something that would be expected in a formal situation. Therefore, the rules might be viewed as an indication of a regulated institutional setting. Goffman (1961) points out that total institutions often have a set of “house rules”, rewards and privileges for keeping the rules, and punishments. He describes this process as being like a “finishing school”, calling it a “framework of personal reorganization” (Goffman, 1961: 51). The hostel also has a similar system to encourage the young people to follow the rules. For example, they are told to pay their service charge if they want the privilege of having visitors. Failure to pay the charge meant that they wouldn’t not be allowed visitors and would sometimes be banned from using the phone or having tea or coffee from the office. A common punishment for those who do not conform to the rules is preventing them from moving into their own flat. The ultimate form of punishment is evicting the resident.

Before signing the licence agreement, the resident’s support worker is then supposed to then talk the young person through the hostel rules. As it has was suggested in the previous chapter, staff members often failed to take them through the house rules. This was sometimes due to the staff member being busy and the young person being eager to move into their new room. During the focus group, I asked the young people if they were aware of the house rules but none of them were. One of the young people said that they hadn’t really paid any attention to them when moving in. They all seemed quite confused and the only one they could remember was “keeping the drugs and drink out” to which they all laughed. Many of the young people learned about the rules as a result of being caught breaking them. When I spoke with Michael in an interview, he said that people who follow all the rules in the hostel can be viewed as being “boring” and lose the trust of the other residents. Consequently, this resulted in the creation of a set of informal rules that were made up by the residents. This set of informal rules will be discussed in more detail in the following

chapter that discusses ‘groups. Due to the young people not being told the rules when they moved in, many were unaware of them. They became dependent on other residents to learn about them. Some of the rules were vague and others were not enforced by staff members. This made the formal set of rules confusing to the young people. As a result of this, the hostel staff had limited influence over the cultural development within the hostel, which often undermined the main goals and objectives of the service.

Most of the rules relate to drugs, violence, and theft. However, one of the breaches warns against “Unsociable behaviour: Any behaviour, verbal or physical which affects other residents, staff or visitors, and/or the effective management of Rock House is forbidden. Action of this nature by you or your visitors will lead to a breach of your licence”. This rule is very subjective and could therefore be seen as quite draconian to many. The rule could deem any form of behaviour as a breach of the licence agreement. The second list of rules states at the top of the page that “Failure to comply with the following house rules will result in warnings being issued”. The rules include:

- general rules of the building;
- health and safety rules;
- rules regarding visitors;
- rules about community respect and responsibility;
- and serious breaches.

Many of the rules were open to interpretation, offering a lot of freedom to the young people. This resulted in staff members having to make decisions based on individual situations. Tensions were triggered between staff members and young people because of a subjective decision-making process. Some staff members would choose to ignore rule-breaking (or turn a blind eye), whilst other staff members always challenged it. One of the main reasons for rules being ignored could be due to staff shortages. Some days there would only be one support worker in the office. They were expected to man the office, whilst giving support to the young people. When some of the staff members were busy, they became more likely to ignore rule breaking. The young people saw this as an opportunity to sneak people into the building or to hang around the office. Those who went unchallenged tended to be the more rebellious young people. It seemed that some staff members chose to ignore the rule-breaking of the rebellious young people. Challenging their

behaviour could quite easily result in an argument, taking up precious time. Additionally, there were imbalances within the power dynamics of the young people, and those who were part of the main group seemed to get away with more than those who were not part of the group. If the staff member challenged the behaviour of a group member, the whole group could end up giving them a hard time through the day. As previously mentioned, staff members were usually very busy and often had to be selective regarding what issues were dealt with and what was left.

Bending the Rules

On occasions, staff members would allow rules to be bent due to unforeseen circumstances but would not explain to other young people the reasoning behind such decisions. An example of this was observed one day when Mia was sitting in the office, bored. Henry came back to the hostel with his girlfriend and was taking her up to his room. Mia immediately checked the whiteboard and looked at how much service charge Henry owed. After Henry had gone upstairs, she complained that the staff members did not stop him from having a visitor. There was a reason why Henry could have his girlfriend in, he had been having some problems with his benefits being processed. However, because this was a personal issue, it could not be discussed with Mia. Unaware of the reason, Mia put it down to favouritism.

Whether the staff bent the rules, was often influenced by the specific young person that was involved. Those who tended to retaliate in a hostile manner were confronted less than those that did not. One day I observed Zac steal the staff milk from the fridge and blatantly drink it in front of the staff members. The staff members did not give him a warning but punished him indirectly by preventing him from entering the office in the future. This was quite a common way of dealing with young people who deliberately broke the rules. Staff members would sometimes turn a blind eye but then put in place future deterrents, preventing the rule from being broken again and punishing the perpetrator. However, this was a very informal way of dealing with things. There were no records kept in relation to what a young person was, or was not, allowed to get away with. To an outsider, this might simply look like favouritism. One day I was with Bilbo out the back of the hostel. He was looking into the staff office. He noticed the staff members giving milk to some of the residents. He said, “Whenever I ask for milk, I get told no. And the girls are in there getting milk for a hot chocolate”. He seemed unaware that many of the staff members refused to give him

anything because he had stolen so much food from the office. This is a good example of how a young person's upbringing can influence the interactions that they have with staff members at the hostel. These interactions can go on to influence what type of social establishment that the residents perceive the hostel to be. The residents who are already accustomed to the types of rules that existed in the hostel viewed them as normal. This would contribute to them experiencing life at the hostel as a social establishment. Those who were not accustomed to the types of rules that exist there, experienced it more like an institution.

The staff members that enforced the rules, were more likely to be generally disliked by the young people and their friends. They would get given a hard time from the residents and their friends, and from previous residents when they returned to the hostel. Additionally, these staff members were usually very busy and had a heavy workload. Other staff members failed to enforce rules with the rebellious residents, but then enforced rules with the less rebellious ones. Young people often complained that they felt that their treatment was unfair and that some residents got away with more than others.

The hostel rules were quite subjective and open to the interpretation of staff members. At times, certain rules provoked discussion among the staff members as they would interpret them very differently. The rules would sometimes change or be altered by the manager. Residents would challenge the staff members interpretation of the rules and suggest they had recently changed. These inconsistencies made the processes somewhat confusing for the young people. When Kenton and Bilbo were evicted, many of the young people thought it was unfair because they had only thrown a glass bottle out of the upstairs window. When I spoke to Becky about this, she did not recognise that their eviction had been based on an amalgamation of rules being broken over an extended amount of time. This also suggested to me that they really did not understand the warning system. Because the young people were not aware of the rules, some of them relied on being told what to do by staff members; they often believed what the staff members said to be subjective rather than informed by an existing written contract. Rules were also unclear with staff members and there were many inconsistencies regarding which rules were implemented and which were not, making it very confusing for the young people. One staff member told me that this was because a majority of the staff members approach the job in different ways.

In addition to not knowing individual rules, the young people often struggled making sense of the

motivations of rules. Underpinning the house rules, there are many procedures, practices, policies, and standards, which are legally informed at Rock House. Although these might be seen as perfectly normal and acceptable by staff members, they could be considered strange and unjustified by young people. Staff members often view company procedures as normal ways of doing things, which are put in place for good reason. They might perceive them as being interwoven into the hostels policy, and legally justified. However, it is often the case that young people have no experience with these policies and procedures, and therefore do not understand them. This seemed to result in staff members having to continually alter their role from a domestic role to an institutional role. Or sometimes ignoring their role to achieve a personal role rather than a formal or specialist role.

An example of misunderstood motives of rules, could be seen when staff members refused to give out telephone numbers to residents. Sometimes a resident will request another resident's telephone number from staff members in the office. Although they could not see a problem with them being given their friend's telephone number, it is not allowed because of the Data Protection Act 1998. If staff members share any personal information with the young people in the hostel, they will therefore be breaking the law. The young person might be best friends with the person they are requesting the telephone number from, but the staff member is always expected to uphold the law. A young person might not be familiar with the Data Protection Act and may not see this an acceptable reason to be refused their friend's telephone number. This is an example of how the hostel is unable to achieve the presentation of a domestic space when it is governed by professional standards, which is more in line with that of a total institution rather than a social establishment.

There are many examples like this, where complying with the rules of the hostel, and sometimes the law, are viewed by the resident as staff members being purposely awkward or abusing their position of power. Other examples include not allowing young people to sit in the office because there are confidential documents on a desk. I observed young people asking staff members if they could borrow the master key to open their room. When they were told that they were not allowed, they acted as though the staff member did not trust them and seemed insulted.

The examples discussed above, reveal how several of Holland and Peace's (1998) opposing attributes can sometimes all be visible at once, therefore transforming their role. In order to enforce important rules, or meet legal obligations, it meant they were to assume an institutional role. This

meant interacting with the residents through specialization, professionalism, and regulation. However, the residents were sometimes surprised by this as they expected a domestic role from the staff member, one which is personal and embraces informality and normalization. It was often the case that the young people would base their opinion of a staff member on the number of rules the staff member enforced. This idea is discussed more in the following sections.

Implementing Rules: A Cat and Mouse Game

Many of the young people were fully aware of the staff shortage, sometimes using it to their advantage when breaking the house rules: for instance, when sneaking people into the building. An example of this can be seen in the following field notes:

“Kenton and Craig came into the office to speak to the staff member. Whilst they were talking to him, I noticed on the cameras that visitors were sneaking upstairs to Keith’s room. Kenton and Craig were creating a decoy to distract the staff members” (Fieldnotes, Thursday 2nd November 2017).

Instances like the above took place daily at the hostel and it was clear that staff members struggled to fully control the building. During the nights, staff members enforced the rules more consistently because there were always two support workers working. Also, they did not have administrative tasks to attend to and could turn their attentions to what was going on in hostel.

During the evenings, the staff had a constant battle to secure the building. Up until 9 pm, they would try to keep tabs on who was signed into the building and the rooms they were supposed to remain in. At 9 pm the staff members went around each room, to inform visitors that they had to go. This also allowed the staff members to check if there were any unauthorised visitors in Rock House. After 9 pm, the staff members used the cameras to make sure no visitors snuck back into the building. If they thought a visitor had managed to get in, they would rewind the CCTV footage and see whose room they had gone to. Catching unauthorised visitors sometimes turned into what Hoolachan (2009) describes as a “cat and mouse game”, where the residents and staff engaged in a struggle where the staff members tried to find the visitors in one of the nine rooms to remove them from the building. Residents had hiding places in their rooms where staff members might never check. An example of this is that one young person cut a hole in the bottom of the base of his bed, and he could fit two visitors in there. The staff members came to check the room and left

because they thought the visitors had gone. Another young person hollowed out a chest of drawers and balanced the drawer faces so the chest looked whole. The staff members knew that his girlfriend was inside of the drawers, but they were unable to check because it would be classed as searching his personal belongings.

Sometimes residents came to the office to distract the staff members, whilst their visitors entered the building through the back door or one of the back windows. On other occasions, residents would ask the resident in room 4 if they could sneak people in through their window because the window is out of view of the camera. There were many ways of getting visitors into the building. One of the more extreme ways into the building required the visitor to climb over the main roof to access room 6 window which is 3 floors above the front door. The residents were extremely creative when it came to new ways to sneak their visitors into their rooms.

This 'cat and mouse' game did not only apply to visitor restriction. Residents often invented new ways to break other rules, such as getting alcohol into the building, selling drugs from the building, have parties in one another's rooms. One day when I was in Olly's room, he was going to smoke cannabis and said he had a 'loop'. By this, he meant a special way to smoke cannabis in his room without the staff being able to smell it. Olly went into the shower room with the bong and came back looking intoxicated. His trick worked because I could not smell the cannabis. I assumed that he smoked it very close the extractor fan and the smoke had been sucked out. Residents would also try to steal food from the office fridge when staff members were not looking, wipe names from the banned board, or read confidential information from documents in the office. Staff members had to be on constant guard with the young people if they were to enforce the rules. Sometimes the residents engaged in the 'cat and mouse' game simply because they were bored. However, some staff members would get tired of the game and choose to turn a blind eye to some of the rules being broken. As previously mentioned, challenging the residents tended to risk situations being escalated which would sometimes result in more work having to be done, or more confrontation with the residents and their friends.

The Warning System

When young people broke the terms of their contract, they are taken through the hostel's "warnings and evictions procedure". The process consists of several stages which can result in the resident

being evicted from the hostel. The first step is a verbal warning which aims to resolve the issues through a chat. The second is the “first written warning”, if they continue to break rules, they are issued with a “second written warning”. The fourth stage is the “final warning”. If the resident continues to break the rules, they will be issued with a “Notice to Quit/Eviction” or “7DNTQ”, which is an eviction notice. The warnings and eviction procedure states that “you get a maximum of 28 days (usually 7) to find somewhere else to live”, but “if you are being evicted for threats of violence to staff or other residents, you could be evicted within 1 hour”. However, the manager, John, liked to keep evictions down to a minimum because it made his figures look better. Because of this, evictions only happened following an extremely serious incident or if he hadn’t evicted for a long time and he had a substantial amount of evidence to support the eviction. However, evictions were so rare that it rendered the warning system obsolete. Most of the young people picked up on the fact that people rarely got evicted and many completely ignored the warning system.

When speaking to staff members, they told me that there was not much point in giving too many warnings to some of the young people because the warnings will lose their power as a deterrent. They told me that young people very rarely get evicted from the hostel unless they do something serious. They said that the 7DNTQ warning carries little weight and it rarely results in an actual eviction. The young people at the hostel had different opinions about the warning system in the hostel. Those who broke the rules on a regular basis, recognised that they were unlikely to be evicted from breaking the rules; some went on to ignore the warning system altogether. Sometimes residents would notify other residents about the illegitimacy of the warning system. This undermined the warning system and sometimes rendered it useless. When Zac first came to the hostel, he told a member of staff that he knew the warning system was pointless because and it would take him a very long time to get evicted from the hostel. He had only arrived at the hostel that week, so it can be assumed that he got this information from someone else at the hostel. This was an example of how quickly informal rules and processes are learned by new residents in the hostel. The residents based their knowledge and understanding of rules on what previous residents had told them.

Visitors

Visitors are allowed in the hostel between 3 pm and 9 pm from Monday to Friday, and 9 am and

9 pm on the weekend - overnight stays are not allowed. After the visitor signed in, they were then supposed to stay in the room of the resident that they were visiting. However, this again is rarely the case and visitors often had free run of the hostel and would go where they pleased. Being allowed visitors in their rooms is a privilege at the hostel. Depending on how much service charge the resident owes, dictates to whether they are allowed visitors. Any service charge owing over £18 or being on a 7DNTQ¹⁶ meant they were not allowed visitors at all. However, the service charge rules were rarely followed by all staff members, and some staff members would allow young people to sign in visitors regardless.

One tactic of residents with visitor bans would be for them to ask another resident to sign a friend in for them. A common problem with this was that new residents who do not owe any service charge often became befriended by older residents. They then ask the newer resident to sign friends in for them. These visitors were sometimes ex-residents who had previously lived at the hostel and were sometimes a lot older. Once introduced to the younger residents, they would come back and visit them and bring their friends with them. This sometimes resulted in residents as young as sixteen having unfamiliar older men or women signed into their room. On returning the hostel, old residents played a vital role in reproducing cultures that had previously existed in the hostel. Additionally, it meant that cultural influences of the street could permeate the hostel culture. The following is an example of how cultural norms and values that are potentially damaging to the residents can seep into the hostel. Becky told me that, one day Shaunna Sinclair came to the hostel to see her unexpectedly. Becky and Shaunna were acquainted but were not close friends. Shaunna used to live in the hostel and was several years older than Becky. However, Becky said that, on this day, Shaunna and an unknown friend randomly decided to come to the hostel to see Becky. Regardless of being unfamiliar with Shaunna's friend, Becky was hospitable and signed the pair in. Becky told me that she did not want to be rude and felt obligated to do this. When they were in Becky's room, the unfamiliar lady lit up a, what Becky thought was a cigarette. The girls then began to peer pressure Becky into smoking some of the cigarette. Becky said that she then realised that the cigarette had NPS in it. She told me that the older woman started "gouching"¹⁷ in her chair. She was surprised that Shaunna was with the woman as she was much older. Becky said that she

¹⁶ Seven Day Notice to Quit

¹⁷ She became oblivious of the obvious or mentally impaired by the substance.

looked like a “smack-head”. After a few minutes, Becky told the pair that they had to leave, and they left reluctantly. When I asked Becky how she felt about this, she said that other residents would not have had the courage to ask Shaunna to leave as they would be afraid of her. This sort of thing seemed to happen quite a lot, and residents were sometimes burdened with people in their room whom they had not personally invited in. They would complain that their belongs would go missing from their rooms but were unwilling to formally report them to staff members or the police without being called a “grass”. Some of the young people deliberately failed to pay their service charge so that they would not be allowed visitors. This way they could not be pressured to sign strangers into their rooms as staff would not allow it. However, this also reduced their chances of being moved out of the hostel into their own flat.

Rewards and Punishments

The previous section demonstrates how being allowed a visitor in the hostel was a reward for paying service charge. However, this privilege was easily removed for those did not follow the rules of the hostel. Rewards and punishments like this one, was a common tactic used by staff members to coerce the residents at the hostel into conformity. The following section shall describe some of the other rewards and punishments that were exercised in the hostel on a daily basis.

Many of the young people at the hostel did not have credit on their mobile phones. Consequently, they would sometimes rely on using the office phone to contact friends or family. There was a cordless phone in the office that was used by staff members when they were alone and needed to leave the office. The young people were not supposed to use this phone, but some staff members would allow some residents to take the phone into the lounge for personal calls. This was dependent on the resident, but some residents could use the cordless phone every time. This was also the case with other privileges such as making a cup of tea in the office, borrowing a lighter, using the staff toilet, and receiving food donations. Residents would ask for these things in a very polite manner and in some cases beg for them. This behaviour seemed evocative of Goffman’s (1961/1991) description regarding the “mortification of self”. In his analysis of total institutions, Goffman (1961/1991: 31) says that “inmates are often required to punctuate their social interaction with staff by verbal acts of deference, such as saying ‘sir’. Another instance is the necessity to beg, importune, or humbly ask for little things such as a light for a cigarette, a drink of water, or

permission to use the telephone”. Using the office phone was a very common occurrence amongst the young people. However, if a resident was suspected of using the telephone for illicit activity, they could be banned from using the phone altogether. The young person would often argue that they need to use the phone for legitimate purposes such as sorting out benefits or dealing with a family emergency. It was very interesting that staff members were in a position of power when it came to permitting residents to use the phone and letting some use the cordless telephone. Allowing young people to use the cordless telephone was suggestive that the young person did not need to be monitored at all as they were trustworthy; denying them access to the cordless phone suggested otherwise.

One day I was speaking to Kenton and he told me that a staff member was monitoring his telephone call when he was on the phone to the bank. He said:

“I was sorting out my internet banking for fuck’s sake”. On his internet banking, they ask him for his mother’s maiden name, which is Mead. Kenton said that the staff member had accused him of saying ‘weed’. When he told her that he said Mead, she said that he was lying and disconnected the phone. Kenton was laughing about this and said, “as if I would deal drugs on the office phone it is all recorded”.

I found this quote interesting for two reasons. The first being that the staff members assumed Kenton was dealing drugs. He had mentioned in the past that he had sold cannabis for his uncles and that he smoked cannabis regularly. Although this might seem like the reasonable ground to suspect he might be selling drugs, it is discriminatory to make such a judgement without actual evidence. He had not been using the cordless phone, the staff had only let allowed him to use the stationary phone in the office. This was so they could monitor his conversation and make sure that he is not using the hostel phone to engage in any illegal activity. However, by making the supposition that Kenton was partaking in illegal activity, the staff member has labelled Kenton as a criminal. This example of additional surveillance was apparent amongst many of the residents that were deemed more likely to break rules. The levels of supervision that were carried out on the residents who were known for breaking rules was disproportionate to the supervision carried out on those who were unknown to break rules. McVera and McVie (2005) have touched upon this idea when addressing the problem with additional supervision by police in lower socio-economic areas. They recognise over-policing to be a form of targeting young people and categorising them

as ‘unrespectable’ (McVera and McVie, 2005). It is also assumed that applying deviant labels to individuals can result in them becoming alienated and “make[s] it harder for him [or her] to continue normal routines of everyday life” (Becker, 1966: 179). As previously mentioned, the young people in the hostel who were less likely to conform to the hostel rules were often policed in different ways from those who conformed to rules. Again, this demonstrates how the young person’s culture, upbringing, and social background, could result in them being more heavily policed in the hostel, resulting in them experiencing the hostel more like a total institution.

The second point of interest was that Kenton was under the impression that telephone calls from the office were recorded. This was not the case and I had not heard anyone else say it was during the time I spent at the hostel. When I asked the manager, he told me that the calls were not recorded. Therefore, Kenton was experiencing a form of surveillance that did not exist. This is an example of Foucault’s panoptic effect, where the individual polices themselves out of fear of being watched (Foucault, 1977/1991). Delivering a “state of conscious and permanent visibility [which] assures the automatic functioning of power ... independent of the person who exercises it” (Foucault, 1977/1991: 201). The telephone is a good example of a paradoxical characteristic in the hostel. The regulations around the office telephone were highly subjective and dependable on the staff member on duty and the young person asking to use the phone. Additionally, the regulation of the telephone was interpreted in various ways by different young people. Some young people accepted that phone calls from the office needed to be supervised, whilst others viewed it as an intrusion into their private life.

Returning Ex-residents

Ex-residents came to see staff daily, which takes up a lot of the staff member’s time. Many of them return for advice about housing or their benefits. Some had no family or friends and returned years after leaving the hostel. During observations, I counted twenty-nine young people who would regularly come back to the hostel to get support from staff members. The oldest of these ex-residents was thirty-years-old and was supported by the project in 2002. Some of them were still supported by the charity but were living in the community or Core House. These young people had personal Clear Start support workers, that were either based in head office or Core House. Some young people were supported by different organisations but would return to speak to their

old support workers. As well as former residents, the current residents would also hang around the hostel with their friends. Friends of the young people would also ask the staff members for advice about housing, benefits, and training courses. When considering the staff members only had a certain amount of time in the day to successfully tackle their own workload, it could be seen that non-supported young people took up a lot of time during the days. Essentially, the staff members at Rock House provide support to young people who were supposed to be supported by other Clear Start staff members. Additionally, they continuously provided support to the public, which Clear Start is not paid for. This is all informal work which is not factored into their existing workload. Staff members were faced with the dilemma of giving time to ex-residents who they once supported or ignoring them and focussing on the current residents at the hostel. It was hard for some of the staff members to turn their back on ex-residents, knowing that they had nobody else to turn to.

Another issue with ex-residents returning to the hostel was that many of them engaged with a local street culture. Due to the larger social network of the street, they often knew the young people who were living at the hostel. As they were usually older and more well-respected members of the street community, they had a lot of influence over the young people living at the hostel. After introducing themselves to the young people living at the hostel, they would often ask current residents to sign them into the building, or if they were already banned, they would pressurize residents into sneaking them in through their bedroom windows. Some of the ex-residents had notorious reputations among the young. It could be seen that some of the young people looked up to them, whilst others were intimidated by them. It became apparent that when young people engaged with ex-residents, they became susceptible to engaging with the street culture. The return of ex-residents often played a role in reproducing the culture of the hostel that had existed when the ex-residents had lived there. Staff members knew that certain ex-residents would introduce drugs to the hostel, but they could not stop them from coming in until they had reason to do so. Some ex-residents acted as a representative of the “street culture”, they played a crucial role in maintaining the culture of the street in the youth hostel. On various occasions, I observed ex-residents contributing towards the reproduction of the previous culture through telling stories present residents. They often told stories which described the culture of the hostel when they lived there. This involved advice on what rules could be broken, how to sneak friends into the building, which staff members were strict, and how long they can continue breaking the rules before being evicted. Others told the

young people where they could get specific drugs and how to use them. Some ex-residents introduced the existing residents to their wider friendship groups.

Ex-residents seemed to gravitate towards the hostel for several reasons. The first being that the hostel had been like a home to them, and they were friendly with many of the staff members. But secondly, they had a level of status from the young people in the hostel. Arguably, when they moved out, they lost their status and part of their identity. Sandberg and Pederson (2011) note a similar situation in their description of the River. They recognised the River as being a place where criminals who had lost respect in the criminal economy, could go to sell drugs. At the River, criminals were viewed by the younger dealers as being rich in “street capital”. This seems quite similar to the situation in the hostel. When the older residents return to the hostel, they get a large amount of respect from the current tenants who engage in street culture. Like the River, a hostel is a place where ex-residents can always go make some money through selling drugs. They can also acquire important information from the hostel regarding the people who are living there and the levels of “street capital” that they possess.

After being supported by Clear Start for five years, Shauna often returned to Rock House regularly. She would say that she was visiting the staff members. However, whilst visiting, she would ask who was currently living at the hostel. If she knew of a new person who had moved in, she would ask them to sign her into the building as a visitor and then spend time with the new young person. New residents seemed to be overwhelmed that Shauna had taken a liking to them. She was very well known in the area and was therefore a good source of social capital. I don't know if Shauna enjoyed hanging around with the new residents because they were younger and looked up to her, or if she was just bored and felt the need to return to the hostel out of habit. However, it seemed that returning to the hostel to hang around with new residents was a common practice of hers. She was not the only person who did this, and it seemed like a large portion of the young people who were supported by the hostel tend to return.

Many of the young people at the hostel had actively complained about ex-residents returning to the hostel. However, it seemed as though some of the staff members were unclear on how to deal with the return of ex-residents. They had visibly built up high levels of rapport with the young people from when they used to support them. Sending them away from the hostel might be seen as them turning their back on the young people. This could be seen as cruel and have a real negative

impact on the ex-resident's life. Although the ex-residents were not supported by the staff at Rock House, many were still supported by Clear Start. This meant that there was always a possibility of them moving back into Rock House. Consequently, it would be important for staff members to maintain good relations with the young people, even if they did not currently live at the hostel. A final point is that the charity mission statement says that they will never turn their back on a young person. As representatives of the hostel, the staff members must recognise the charity's mission statement and follow it. However, through the observations, it became visible that remaining loyal to previous residents, the staff members were failing to meet the needs of the residents who were currently living at Rock House.

During an interview, James told me that he sometimes avoided speaking with staff members because other young people were hanging around the office. James said that this prevented him from engaging with his support sessions and he became isolated. In another interview, Michael told me that he isolated himself and stopped engaging with staff members because he thought there was always people hanging around outside of his room. Michael had previously lived in a flat provided by Clear Start, but he got into a fight with Stu, one of the other residents in the building.

He said that he did not want to bump into the boy he fell out with because he would end up fighting him again. However, the boy that he fought with was still supported by the charity and came to the hostel regularly. One day, Michael and Stu bumped into one another and got into another altercation. Michael was annoyed that Stu could come into the building. Also, when Michael first moved into the hostel, he had a bad experience with an ex-resident. It was shortly after Zac had been evicted and Zac had returned whilst under the influence of drugs. Michael had heard Zac kicking the front door and was confused as to what was going on. Shortly after, Zac had gone around the back and began banging on Michael's window and demanding that he unlock the back door. Michael said, "the guy was a fucking psycho, so I thought I better let him in before he smashes the window". He found the whole incident very unsettling.

After a few months of living at the hostel, I spoke to Michael in the corridor. I asked him how he was, and he told me that he had recently relapsed on amphetamine. Since the relapse, he had been smoking cannabis in effort to dull the need for amphetamine. He told me that the reason that I had not seen him in so long was that he had not been coming out of his room much. He said that the drugs had been making him paranoid and he thought people were knocking on his door all the

time. When Michael first moved into the hostel, he had an active social life and said “Well obviously if you are shutting yourself away constantly, you get depressed and whatever. Whereas with me, I am out a lot of the time. Because of that I will just get up or go out”. Arguably, bumping into Stu contributed to Michaels's isolation and consequently the deterioration of his mental health. Situations like this happened a lot with the young people in the hostel. Those who kept themselves to themselves and chose not to engage in the main group were more likely to become afraid whilst living in the hostel.

It was found that the young people were more likely to express concerns about ex-residents returning when I spoke with them alone. Some made complaints in the staff room to staff members when there were no other young people around them. On occasions there were so many people hanging around the hostel, it was impossible to tell whether they were friends of the residents or general members of the public. During the days, people could be seen hanging around the front of the building or in the car park. Sometimes they were not associated with the hostel or any of the young people there. Shortly after I had started my observations, Mia complained about members of the public outside of her window. She was living in room 4 at the time and she said that she had been disturbed on multiple occasions by people hanging around in the car park. She formally complained to John, saying that they had started knocking on her window and asking her for cigarette papers. John said that he had reported this to the police on numerous occasions. There had been two heroin overdoses out in the lane over the past two weeks. When I asked Mia about this, she said that the people who were hanging around out there were mainly about 30 or 40 years old. One day she said they banged on her window and asked for an ex-resident called Alanna Owen. Mia told me that Alanna lived in the hostel when she had first moved in. Mia said that Alanna and her friends used to bully her. This resulted in Mia becoming more intimidated by the people in the car park. She said that after this happened, she would not open her curtains in the daytime.

Over time the hostel had become a community hub for many ex-residents to access as a support service. The staff members at the hostel dealt with a multitude of issues daily. Many of the problems were nothing to do with the residents of the hostel. Offering this informal support consumed a large amount of their time on a weekly basis. Unfortunately, this meant that they had lesser time to work with the residents of the hostel. As mentioned previously, this resulted in a

deterioration of relations between the staff and residents. The following section shall analyse some of the roles of staff members at Rock House. It shall probe further into Goffman's (1961) discussions regarding the role of staff members in total institutions to better understand how young people experience living in the hostel.

Conflating Roles of Staff members

As previously mentioned, during the day there was sometimes only one Support Worker and a manager, that worked at the hostel. The residents often became frustrated by the lack of attention from staff members when the office was busy. Unfortunately, due to the high workload, this resulted in the hostel becoming a professional working environment during the daytime, rather than a personal or domestic space (Peace and Holland, 2001). Additionally, failure to spend time with the residents and enforce the house rules meant that the culture in the hostel often went unguided. This allowed the emergence of norms and values that were detrimental to the young people's ongoing progress when moving towards independent living.

Many of the young people at the hostel engaged with staff members on a friendly and sociable level whilst they lived at the hostel. The interactions that took place were often friendly and light-hearted. When I spoke to the young people, some said they liked the staff members and did not question their presence at the hostel. However, good relations were very much dependent on the mix of staff members and the young people. Some of the residents disliked some staff members more than others, and some residents disliked other staff members altogether. One of the problems that occurred with young people getting along with staff members was that the staff/resident boundaries could often dissolve. Avoiding an "institutional feel" (Clarke *et al*, 2014), whilst trying to maintain professional or specialised standards (Holland and Peace, 1998), is a hard balance to strike. When these contrasting attributes are considered, the contradictory nature of the hostel becomes more apparent. When trying too hard to avoid an institutional feel, it can result in residents assuming the role of a friend rather than a service user (McGrath and Pistrang, 2007). When staff needed to reassert their position and enforced rules, the resident would become confused, frustrated, and sometimes annoyed at the staff member. This could also impede the trust that they young person had for the staff members. Therefore, resulting in residents distancing themselves from certain staff members and failing to engage in support sessions.

An example of this was seen when Mia had been too afraid to leave the hostel for a few weeks because Vicky (ex-resident) had been threatening her. In the evenings, she had been spending much of her time sat in the office talking to staff members. As time went on, she began spending more time in the office speaking to staff members during the day. Although the staff members were friendly with Mia, they had to regularly ask her to leave the office so they could deal with confidential issues, e.g., support another young person, take a telephone call, etc. Mia occasionally became frustrated with this but agreed to sit in the communal lounge and would return shortly after. One day she had been in the office and the staff members were talking about a young person. It was later revealed that Mia overheard the conversation and told the young person what the staff members were saying. The young person later came to the office and complained about the staff for talking about them. The staff members were very annoyed about this because they had forgotten that Mia was in the office when they were talking. The manager then decided to enforce the rule where no young people are allowed in the office and asked Mia to go and sit in the lounge.

Mia was very angry about this and she complained that the staff members did not care about her when she needed support. When she was in the lounge, I went to speak with her. She was crying and said “is all I have ever wanted is a friend I can talk to, who won’t leave me. Because everyone leaves, it’s hard. I don’t wanna be on my own”. I later spoke to her about this again in an interview. One of the interview questions was “If you could change one thing about the hostel, what would it be?” Mia responded to this by saying:

“The way the staff are with the young people [Matt: What do you mean by that]. More understanding. You see the thing with staff, the way they see it is “yeh, we just got a job. We gotta do this, we gotta do that. We don’t really need to do anything else”. Like Andy, he just sits there, on his computer having his food. I mean Logan was in there earlier and he was like, “you need to get out now”. He was only in there two minutes. “otherwise, John’s going to give me a bollocking”. In the nights, when Dave Wendal works, or any of the relief [workers], I can sit down with them, I can speak to them. And I will say I am feeling a bit shitty. It’s the same as Emilia. Emilia will [text] message me and say, “I am going to talk to staff, but I can’t [not allowed to]”. She’ll say, “I feel like I’m having a mental breakdown”. I think if you live here, you should

be able to have a good bond with staff, otherwise you are not going to get anywhere”
(Interview, Tuesday 23rd January 2018).

When I spoke to some of the staff members, they told me that sometimes they struggle to give young people the support they need during the days because of their administrative duties in the office. Support workers were often under an increased level of stress and would struggle to complete multiple tasks. The residents sometimes picked up on increased stress levels, this could become detrimental to the young person/staff member relations. This had a negative impact when it came to young people attending support sessions and engaging with their support workers. When Mia said she felt that she got on better with the relief workers, it was probably because they do not have a specific workload like the support workers. Relief workers are on zero-hour contracts and receive very little training regarding company policy and procedure. They are not given the same responsibilities as full-time workers. Their role often seemed far less professionally guided and more informal than the contracted workers at the hostel. Furthermore, relief workers were more likely to work nightshifts, and due to the office being open as an administrative office from 9am to 5pm, it was a lot quieter during the evenings. Therefore, those working night shifts had more time on their hands to engage with the young people. I asked Mia if she knew why she was not allowed in the office and she didn't understand why. When I made her aware about the office having confidential data all over the place, she seemed to become more understanding. I asked her if she would be happy if somebody found out something personal about her from reading it from a file in the office and she said that she would be annoyed. She was upset and felt like the staff had rejected her. I thought that if she understood the rule a bit better, she might not be so upset about it. When she understood why residents were not allowed in the office, Mia said “If they sat us down and said what you just did, I would understand but they don't”.

Another important point that Mia made in the above quote was that some staff members let her sit in the office and others did not. This frustrated her because she thought the reason for this was because some staff members liked her whilst others did not. Clearly, the young people struggled to understand the motivations of the staff members' choices. Inconsistencies in the way that staff members worked was very common. It seemed as though the staff members who followed the rules, developed poorer relations with the young people. From having this discussion with Mia, the reason for these poor relationships were visible. On several occasions I observed certain staff

members bend rules or overlook things; whilst others continually upheld all the rules. This tended to increase their workload and made their job harder due to poor relations with the residents. Eventually, Mia got so bored at the hostel, she began to hang around with the main group at Rock House and relapsed on drugs.

The increase of staff members workload was continually visible when it came to influence staff/resident relations. It made staff member's jobs harder, and residents feel as though they were being singled out. In the focus group, I was speaking with Becky and Leah, and they told me that they were annoyed because a staff member had searched Becky's room. The staff member had seen somebody on CCTV and was suspicious that someone had sneaked into Becky's room. If the staff at Rock House suspects wrongdoing, checking young people's rooms is a staff responsibility. The conversation in the focus group went as follows:

Leah: Yeah, Delyth searched our room first the stupid little fucking cunt. Oh, I swear, I had a warning for that as well because apparently, I was really aggressive towards her.

Matt: So basically, because she searched your room first, you thought that...

Leah: Yeah, well why won't she check the bottom floor first?

Matt: Yeh.

Becky: Why would she just come straight up to our room?

Matt: How do you feel when you get treated differently like that? How does it...

....

Leah: It made me fucking fuming and I just want to punch her head in, but I can't.

Bilbo: Its only Delyth that I don't like.

Matt: So, it made you dislike Delyth did it?

Leah: Fucking can't stand her.

Delyth had been working at Rock House for several years. She took a firm but fair approach to the job and strived to maintain levels of consistency when working with young people. This was visible in her professional/specialist approach to working with the young people and her commitment to maintaining boundaries with the residents at the hostel. Because of this, many of the young people disliked her and would taunt her, deliberately challenge her, and argue with her. Consequently, Delyth's job became harder than some of the other workers. Over the years, she acquired a reputation amongst the young people and residents came to accept her methods. However, after a promotion, Delyth took on multiple new responsibilities. She became sick and the doctor signed her off work. Delyth returned to the hostel when I was carrying out the

participatory observations. There were a lot of new residents in the hostel that did not know Delyth and many of them complained that they did not like her. On a few occasions I observed young people talking amongst themselves about Delyth. They did not like that she implemented many of the rules that other staff members didn't. From looking at the extract from the focus group above, the young people were surprised that a staff member checked their room. They were also surprised when they were issued with a formal warning. Additionally, they seemed confused to why she would try to make things difficult when they wanted to have friends in the communal areas, play loud music in their rooms, or sit in the office. Furthermore, many of the residents thought that Delyth did not like them and therefore their interactions were often confrontational. It can be seen here that because Delyth was directly challenging many of the cultural norms and values, they immediately became hostile to her.

There were two main consequences of staff members taking a professional/specialist role at Rock House. The first is that it is a role that takes up a lot of time, this leaves less time to carry out other tasks. Secondly, the staff member who takes a professional/specialist role can be less liked by the residents, which, again, can make their job harder. The conversation that took place in the focus group highlighted the tense feeling that the residents had about Delyth. However, taking an informal approach to running the hostel resulted in the development of cultural norms and values that run in opposition to what the hostel aims to promote. Shortly after returning to work, Delyth became sick again and took more time off – but this time she did not return to the hostel.

There were other instances when young people had poor relations with staff due to the staff member taking a professional approach to their job role. One day I was sat in the office talking to Seren. She seemed very bored and had been in the office for some time. Andy was working at his desk trying to do multiple tasks at once. He was visibly stressed and was trying to engage with Seren between answering telephone calls and filling in paperwork. On one occasion, Andy had to tell Seren to stop shouting whilst he was taking a phone call.

“Andy walked out of the office to open a door for the handyman and Seren said that she really hates Andy. I asked her why she disliked him, and she said it is because he is the only one who enforces all of the rules in the hostel. She watched him on the cameras walking up the stairs and joked about his weight by saying that he will have a heart attack from running up the stairs” (Fieldnotes, Wednesday 13th December 2017).

The young people would often tease Andy and sometimes take jokes too far with him. At times, young people would show off in front of other staff members and laugh about the things that they had done or said to Andy. One day I walked into the office and Logan boasted that Andy had tried to wake him up for an appointment, so Logan threw a pillow at him. He seemed to struggle with his job because of the relationship he had with the young people. He also took time off work due to stress and did not return to the hostel. This is an example of how good staff members are sometimes squeezed out of the hostel. Leaving staff members who take more of an informal approach to their job role. However, as discussed above, this allows the residents more control when guiding the hostel culture. During the day, young people would phone the office to ask who was working on the nightshift.

“Seren phoned the office mobile and asked who was working on the nightshift. Andy would not tell her because he said she only wants to know because she wants to sneak Kane into her room tonight. He said that she knows it is easier to sneak people in with certain staff members and harder with other” (Fieldnotes, Thursday 21st December 2017).

This was a regular occurrence, one day when I was in the office and Zac asked who was on a nightshift, when he was told that Joanne was working, he rolled his eyes and said, “I fucking hate Joanne”. It was very likely that Zac was annoyed because Joanne often took a professional/specialist approach to her role and was therefore stricter than some of the other staff members.

This section has demonstrated how different understandings of the hostel can result in confusing environments for both staff and young people. It can result in staff members responsibilities becoming disproportionate and consequently more stressful. Additionally, it might be interpreted by the young people that some staff members like them more than others. Furthermore, it feeds into the broader argument made by Peace and Holland (2001) who recognise that institutional setting such as youth hostels can be confusing and contradictory unless they are consistently managed. Additionally, the section has pointed out that taking an informal approach to running the hostel can result in the development and formation of cultural norms and values that run in opposition to what the hostel is trying to achieve.

Control in the Building

Although many of the residents preferred staff members to have an informal/personal attitude towards the running of the hostel, others complained that this approach was too relaxed. Numerous comments were made by young people concerning drug use in the hostel, noise levels at night, and non-residents being in the hostel when they were not supposed to be. One day I was speaking to Emilia in her room whilst she was waiting for an appointment with her midwife. She told me that she was annoyed that the boys were smoking NPS in the building. She did not want to be around any drugs whilst she was pregnant. Emilia said that the staff didn't really do anything about the drug use, so she told the boys herself. Zac got annoyed with Emilia and called her a "little slag". A relief worker named Dave Wendal was working that night and when Emilia complained to him, she said that Dave stuck up for the boys. Emilia said that Dave had left the lounge open until 4am when it was supposed to be closed at 2am. She was annoyed about this because it meant the boys were up for longer which prevented her from sleeping. She told me that she partly blamed Dave for the problems as he is "too laid back".

Mia also told me that she thought the staff needed to be vigilant regarding the residents using legal highs in the hostel. She felt that too many people were smoking NPS and was concerned because she was pregnant. Mia also complained that ex-residents and people she did not know would hang around in the communal areas through the day which made her feel unsafe. She said that this was a big problem for her because she did not want strangers in her home. Mia told me that she thought people who do not live in the hostel shouldn't be allowed to hang around in the communal areas. On many occasions I observed staff members avoiding the enforcement of rules to avoid confrontation.

There was one time when I followed a staff member called Jason up to a young person's room. When we were outside the room, we could smell cannabis. He asked me if I would speak to the young people and tell them not to smoke drugs in the hostel. I politely refused and he reluctantly told the residents himself. He seemed very apprehensive to confront the young people and acted very nervous around them. When this happened, the young people tended to pick up on the lack of confidence and exploit it.

Seren said she likes Jason and said that she calls him 'Ginge' because of the colour of his hair. She

said that she was sat in the office the other day and asked him if he wanted a cup of tea. When Jason said yes, she said “go on make one for me as well then”. Seren laughed and said, “he was expecting me to make him a cup, but I said, ‘come on Ginge, you fucking make em’” (Fieldnotes, Wednesday 13th December 2017). This is a good example of how the residents imposed their dominance over some staff members.

Some of the young people told me that they sometimes thought the residents dominated the hostel too much. During an interview with James, he told me about a night that he spent at the hostel when he felt that the residents had full control over the building, and he was scared. I asked James if he thought the hostel needed more staff and stricter rules and he said:

“I dunno see, because ... there is always going to be the young people who take ... control of the place. So, I don't think there is anything either side could do to have full control all of the time. You know so, ... but then there is that thought that taking control is kind of like taking away freedom and taking away privileges Then that's going to feel more like, like a prison ... than a home” (Interview, James, 24th August 2018).

Although James was wary of the need for a more controlled environment in the hostel, he told me that he thought more rules were sometimes a good thing.

“I think when freedom is given to anybody it can be a bad thing like. If you can go out at whatever time you want and be back whatever time you want. Umm, I think it gives more of a window to, fuck up like and get... I dunno like. Because I can't really tell my friends that I can't come out now, because they [his parents] are not letting me. Because they know I can go out whenever I want. And like, if my friends did want to do something, that I knew that I didn't want to do, but they were pressuring me into it. Like when I lived with my parents I would have said "no, my parents are not letting me out". But with these [staff members], they know that I can go out whenever I want” (Interview, James, 24th August 2018).

James recognised some of the problems that he had experienced through having a lack of freedom or autonomy whilst living at the hostel. He seemed conflicted in his opinions around imposing stricter rules in the hostel. When talking to the young people about rules at the hostel, it must be taken into consideration that a lot of them had left home due to their parents imposing rules upon them. Hannah said “the thing I love, well most about here to be honest is that you get to have your

own space and you get to have like your own kind of freedom. nobody really kind of constantly nags you for anything. You know, your privacy is never invaded like”. Shortly after speaking with Hannah, her room was burgled by some of the other residents, and she moved out. Some of the young people had the opinion that they had escaped a situation where they were bound by the rules of their parents. Therefore, they felt that when they came to the hostel, they should be allowed a level of freedom. However, they also recognised the importance of rules in particular circumstances.

Regardless of some of the staff members being quite relaxed around the rules, some of the young people visibly resented the staff’s presence. They recognised that the staff’s job was to supervise the young people who lived in the hostel. On numerous occasions, I observed Zac being very confrontational with staff members. It seemed as though he was competing with them for control in the hostel. When he moved into Rock House, he had recently been released from prison. Zac would go into the office and provoke staff members by breaking minor rules such as stealing milk from the staff fridge or rubbing people’s names off the banned board. He would belittle the staff members and make jokes about them. Zac seemed to try and push staff members as far as possible to see what he could, and couldn’t, get away with. He would tell them that he had broken a rule or going to break a rule, and then observe the staff member’s reaction. If he thought there would be repercussions from what he had disclosed, he would withdraw and say that he had been joking. If the staff members did not react, he would continue. The following extract gives an example of how Zac used tact throughout his interactions with staff members.

“Wake Kenton up for a skin or I will take his fucking door off,” Zac said loudly. Zac was sometimes acting serious, but when he provoked a reaction from the staff member, he would backtrack by smiling and making out that he was joking. It was almost like he was pushing boundaries and constantly seeing how much he can get away with. He said “I need some Rizla, so I can smoke this...” He showed us a little package wrapped in tin foil. Staff said to take any drugs off the project, or he will be given a warning and the police will be called. Zac said “you can’t do nothing it’s just some foil. He said, “it’s not even mine, it was already in the pocket – I borrowed these jeans from a boy in town”. It seemed like Zac was backtracking and trying to make a joke to counteract the fact that he just showed his drugs in the office. The staff member laughed at Zac’s story about wearing someone else’s jeans.

It appeared that Zac took this as a cue to further push a boundary. He said, “you can give me a warning anyway, I will rip it up. I will use it as roach”. He seemed slightly concerned that he had been threatened with the police and left the office and went back to Kenton’s room (Fieldnotes, Thursday 16th November 2017).

Goffman (1957/1990: 59) describes interactions such as this one as displaying the “maintenance of expressive control”. He recognised reactions as being cues that are given by an “audience” to inform the interaction. Additionally, Goffman (1959/1990: 227) points out the importance of the use of “tact” within interactions. He contends that during social interactions, the “audience can inform the performer that his show is unacceptable”, and encourage him to modify it (Goffman, 1959/1990: 227). Additionally, if a performer becomes misrepresentative, and is caught out, “he can disavow any claim to seriousness and say that he was only joking” (Goffman, 1959/1990: 227). Zac’s continual assessment of the interaction could also be described as “reflexive monitoring”. Regarding human action as “a continuous flow of conduct”, Giddens (1986/1994: 3) recognises that humans reflect upon interaction whilst delivering action simultaneously throughout social interactions. Giddens (1991/2002: 35) argues that “The social conventions produced and reproduced in our day-to-day activities are reflexively monitored by the agent as part of ‘going on’ in the variegated settings of our lives”. Arguably, this type of interaction could also be understood as a form of symbolic interaction, where Zac was learning how to behave through interacting with the staff member; or discovering self through other. Mead (1934/2000: 140) recognises that the self “is essentially a social structure, and it arises from social experiences”. He continues, arguing that “In a conversation of gestures what we say calls out a certain response in another that in turn changes our own action, so that we shift from what we started to do because of the reply the other makes” (Mead, 1934/2000: 140-141). Further, Mead concludes that “The conscious life of a human being ... is a continuous flow of self indications” (1934/2000: 183).

Experiencing the Hostel as an Inmate: The Creation of an “Us and Them” Divide.

Zac’s hostilities towards the staff members at the hostel were often provoked by house rules or restrictions upon his freedom. He compared his room to a cell and said that living in the hostel was like being back in jail. As previously mentioned, Zac quickly realised that the warning system in the hostel held little weight. When staff members threatened him with a warning, he told them that

he did not care because “It takes ages for people to get evicted from here anyway”. Zac would visibly steal food from the office in front of staff members and refuse to give it back. He would usually talk to staff members in a sarcastic or argumentative tone. When staff members asked him to pay his rent, he refused to make payment for trivial reasons, such as his tap wasn’t working or the wi-fi was too slow. He would regularly walk into the office showing off how much money he had. Occasionally, he would mock the staff members by saying things like “while you are working for £8 an hour, I am earning some real coin” and show them a handful of money.

It was clear that Zac saw a divide between himself and the staff members. One day, he had been caught stealing milk from the office fridge and the staff members lock the door. He thought it was very unfair that the staff members locked the door and became immediately aggressive towards them:

“if you don't like me, why don't you just fucking evict me?” John said that he doesn't dislike Zac at all. Zac said, “you're always smirking at me and you want me to go to jail”. John said I haven't been smirking at you, I don't know what you are talking about. John seemed to be a bit intimidated by this point. Zac said, “you were smirking at me just now so don't lie” (Fieldnotes, Thursday 4th January 2018).

He would regularly accuse staff members of targeting him or being unfair to him. The staff members often spoke to Zac in what could be seen as a patronising tone of voice. Many of the characteristics that existed in Zac’s relationship with the staff could be recognised as being similar to that of a staff/inmate relationship in a total institution. Goffman (1961: 18) points out that in total institutions, there is often a staff/inmate split; arguing that “Each grouping tends to conceive the other in terms of narrow hostile stereotypes, staff often seeing inmates as bitter, secretive and untrustworthy, while inmates often seeing staff as condescending, highhanded, and mean. Staff tend to feel superior and righteous: inmates tend, in some ways at least, to feel inferior, weak, blameworthy, and guilty”. This was visible in the relationship that existed between Zac and the vast majority of the staff members. Through recognising the role of staff members as being domineering, Zac seemed to become frustrated with them which created a divide between himself and the staff members. Goffman (1959) might argue that Zac “dramatized” his role as an inmate in a total institution rather than a resident of a social establishment.

Wielder (1974) discussed the divisions that he observed during his observations in a half-way

house which prepared ex-convicts for living in the community. Wielder (1974) found that the relations between the residents and staff were influenced by power relations that existed between the groups. The initial aim of the half-way house was to create a supportive relationship between staff members and the resident. However, because the staff members were required to police the residents – with regards to rule-breaking and drug-taking – the residents saw the house as an extension of prison. Wielder (1974) recognised that many of the residents who had subscribed to the “convict code” in prison, continued this subscription when they entered the house. Wielder (1974: 75) noted that “Resident’s observable behaviour can be characterised as showing the interactional distance from, rather than solidarity with, staff”. He recognised the “convict code” as being a tool that is used by sociologists to explain behaviour patterns amongst groups. Wielder (1975: 144) argues that “The convict code is a classical or traditional explanation of those forms of deviant behaviour engaged in by inmates, convicts, or residents of rehabilitative organisations. During his time at the hostel, Zac seemed to influence residents that he was friends with and when a group formed, there was a visible divide between staff members and young people. Shortly after Ethan became a part of the group, he immediately showed explicit hostility toward many of the staff members at the hostel. It seemed as though he had joined Zac’s stance and subscribed to a “convict code”. Arguably, he brought the idea of the code with him from prison and continued to use it as a resource to guide his relations with staff members.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined many of the daily routines that take place in the hostel. Using Peace and Holland’s (2001) contrasting characteristics, it has highlighted some of the problems that arise when trying to provide a service to young people which is both personal and professional. The chapter has used characteristics of a homeless youth hostel to generate a discussion around what a hostel is - social establishment or total institution. Using young people’s opinions towards these characteristics highlights that young people can have contrasting perceptions of living at the hostel. These perceptions can be influenced by the young person’s existing culture and their interpretation of the hostel’s rules. Those that are familiar with the hostel’s expectations do not need to be policed as much as those who are not. Therefore, some residents experience the hostel in normal and informal ways, whilst others view it as being more regulatory and formal, like an institution. Also, staff members can treat residents very differently, which is confusing for the young people living

at the hostel. This confusion can sometimes result in young people believing that some staff members like them more than others.

It demonstrates how this confusion sometimes created a divide amongst residents and staff members, resulting in less compliance from residents. Additionally, common practices, such as surveillance at the hostel can be viewed differently, depending on the resident's relations with staff members. Although it is argued that surveillance is often viewed in society as being intrusive or oppressive, many of the residents at the hostel viewed it as being an important part of their safety. From analysing the data, it is recognised that the residents who required more control in the hostel were often in full agreement with the rules. Staff members who were prepared to 'turn a blind' eye to some rule breaking, had an easier time from the young people and lessened their workload. However, it was visible that inconsistencies in ways of working could result in some young people believing that they were being wrongly targeted by staff members or some staff members did not like them. Finally, the chapter demonstrated how taking an informal approach to running the hostel can result in the development and formation of cultural norms and values that undermines what the hostel is aiming to achieve. The following chapter will demonstrate how this can sometimes result in the formation of cultures that can be detrimental to the resident's ongoing life chances.

Chapter 7 - Limited Opportunities, Lack of Incentive, and Formation of Groups.

Introduction

The following chapter will outline some of the individual and structural problems that young people face after they move into a homeless hostel. A fundamental objective of the hostel is to develop young people's interpersonal skills, allowing them to independently participate in conventional society. Recognising this, the chapter will demonstrate how failure to participate in a conventional daily routine, can encourage young people to spend more time in the hostel. The first part of the chapter provides the reader with a better understanding of the routines that take place in the lives of the young people living at the hostel. It reveals how obstacles created by living in a hostel, can influence whether young people engage in EET. Through offering examples presented in the data, the chapter demonstrates some of the struggles that young homeless people face as they attempt to engage in EET. The second part of the chapter then moves on to highlight the consequential impact of this struggle. It argues that the difficulties and challenges discussed in previous chapters can often unsettle young people's structured daily activities. This can sometimes result in them choosing not to engage in EET at all. Not engaging with EET often results in young people spending their days at the hostel with other residents. Depending on the specific culture that exists in the hostel, this can result in them joining groups, and engaging in activities that might be detrimental to their pathway into independent living.

The chapter provides detailed examples revealing some of the daily battles that were observed at the hostel. It shows how young people's new levels of freedom and autonomy, coupled with

limited, realistic, opportunities in EET, can result in them deciding to claim benefits and not engage in EET at all. Additionally, it highlights how many of the opportunities that are presented to them, lack worthy incentives to promote their engagement. The chapter demonstrates how rejecting conventional opportunities, can result in residents becoming more inclined to engage with the hostel culture. Failure to engage in EET is detrimental to a young person's pathway into independent living. This chapter highlights how a lack of positive engagement, with conventional routine, can result in young people subscribing to other forms of unconventional living. Interestingly, these unconventional ways of life, often run in direct contrast to the traditional lifestyle that the hostel seeks to promote.

Education or Training: Incentives and Deterrence

One of the main objectives of the hostel staff, is to get residents to engage in EET. It is thought that participating in conventional daily activities, will provide young people with an adequate level of structure, allowing them to develop a regular weekly routine. Doing so, demonstrates a transition away from dependence on support, and instead the capability of independent living. However, whilst living at the hostel, engaging in EET is far from straightforward. Although many young people want to take part in EET, there are several barriers that prevent them from doing so. Additionally, there are numerous practical and financial incentives diverting young people from EET. These far outweighed the financial incentives that they would receive from engaging in EET. Due to their unique position as homeless youth, signing on to benefits alone, became a logical alternative to EET whilst they lived in the hostel. The following section describes some of the influential factors that influence young people's decision making when engaging in EET whilst they reside at the hostel.

Sometimes young people who are already enrolled in college, or who are still at school, come to live at the hostel. Although they try to continue their courses, living in the hostel makes it hard for them. It is very common for young people to drop out of education shortly after they move into the hostel. Even those who want to continue in education struggle to complete their courses. Unfortunately, due to the hectic environment of the hostel, the influence of other residents, and the general lack of structure, a very small number of young people tend to continue in education. Additionally, the circumstances of the hostel also prevent many young people from being able to

successfully engage in employment or training.

On one occasion I observed a staff member having a telephone conversation with a manager in a local sports shop. He was explaining that a young person was experiencing temporary problems at work because of his current housing situation. The boy had been kept awake at night by other residents playing loud music. This resulted in him being late for work and being very sleepy during his shifts. Although the support worker pleaded with the manager, he said that he was unsure whether the young person was suitable for the job and his zero-hours contract was discontinued. This is an example to the sorts of barriers young people were confronted with when trying to keep a daily routine.

I observed various other factors which contributed to young people's struggle to effectively engage in EET whilst living at the hostel. As previously mentioned, one of the main reasons that prevented young people from attending EET, was because they had very little sleep the previous night. This often happened because of two main reasons. Sometimes young people chose to hang out with other residents until early hours in the morning, and other times they were unable to sleep because they were kept awake by other residents. During observations, it was common to see residents who had woken up late rushing off to college as I arrived in the mornings. When I first started participatory observations, I would often see Rhian rushing to get ready because she had woken up late due to little sleep. Her lateness became so bad that the college threatened to throw her off the course.

In an interview with James, he told me that shortly after he moved into the hostel, someone decided to bang on his door late at night. James said, "I can't remember what time it was. Really late! I had training in the morning and that shook me up a bit". He said that people waking him up through the night often interfered with his daily routine. Sometimes strangers would bang on his door during the early hours of the morning, and ask for miscellaneous items, such as a cigarette paper or some milk. This made James feel constantly on edge. James also said that he stopped making food for college in the communal areas and he chose to go hungry through the days instead. Shortly after James moved out, Michael moved into the same room (room 9). He told me that he was experiencing many of the same problems that James had. The room was next to the laundry room, where people regularly walked back and forth. It was also on the main corridor leading up to the next floor. The doors in the building were heavy fire doors. Every time someone went to the

laundry or up and down the stairs, the heavy door sent a loud crash through room 9. Michael told me that the banging of the door constantly awoke him. The room was on the ground floor and there was a potential access point into the building through the room 9 window. This meant that the resident of this room would often get strangers knocking on the window asking to be let in. Either that or residents from inside the building would know the door asking if their friend could use the window to sneak into the building. If they chose to ignore the other residents, they risked becoming disliked by the main group.

It was very common that noise during the nights interfered with the resident's daily routines. When I asked those who complained of disturbances, why they did not report the noise to staff, they said that they did not want to get the others into trouble. However, it was usually the main group in the hostel that was making the noise. They had the potential to harass anyone who got on the wrong side of them. In the focus group, I discussed "grassing" with the participants. They were all very clear that you should not "grass people up" to staff members. Bilbo said, "Snitches get stitches" and Leah finished by saying "and end up in ditches" (Focus Group). The other residents were often intimidated by the main group members, they rarely reported them to staff members for anything. There were times when residents complained about the noise and they were later verbally abused and/or threatened by those who had made the noise. Many of the young people living at the hostel who were victims of serious crimes, such as theft and assault. They chose not to report these crimes to staff members because they did not want to cross the main group.

At the hostel, many of the young people had already suffered negative experiences of education. These experiences often continued to influence the young people's general perception of further education and training. Because of this, many young people at the hostel had no plans of continuing in any form of education or training. Instead, they expressed interest in getting a job and working full-time. However, their existing lack of formal qualifications often made it hard for them to compete within the local labour market. Jobs that were suitable for young people in the local area were usually, part-time and in hospitality or retail. Unfortunately, this often meant competing for jobs with a growing student population who already have existing formal qualifications and/or work experience.

Another factor that was noticed whilst carrying out participatory observations, was the young people's lack of confidence when engaging with people whom they were unfamiliar with. One

morning, I observed a girl who was very anxious about making a doctor's appointment. It was quite clear that she was genuinely afraid to make a phone call. In the end, she convinced a staff member to make the call for her, arguing that she did not know what to say. I thought this was quite concerning, considering she had recently been discussing the possibility of starting a traineeship with her support worker. However, many of the young people who lacked the confidence to engage in everyday formal interactions, had no problems communicating with staff members or other residents at the hostel. Some might be described as excessively confident within the hostel, but then severely lack confidence outside. Some of the young people told me they were too scared to leave the hostel. One girl told me that she regularly experienced anxiety attacks whilst attending her appointments at the local Job Centre. Lacking the confidence to participate with conventional society, seemed to act as a significant deterrent for young people to engage in training, education, or employment. The Princes Trust (2017) found young people who do not engage in education, training, or employment, to be the least confident in their Youth Index. However, confidence was only one individual aspect that fed into much larger structural barriers to opportunities.

One of the major structural barriers of young people living in hostels was a result of their age. When young people are aged sixteen and seventeen and are living at home, they are only entitled the £30 a week in Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA); providing they engage in education or training. However, when they come to the hostel as a homeless person, things change and become classed as a 'child in need' under the Children Act (1989). Due to this status, they are eligible to claim a weekly payment of £57.50 in jobseeker's allowance (JSA). It is important to recognised that this is only possible because they have become homeless. Young people are not usually allowed to claim benefits such as JSA and housing benefit (HB) until they are eighteen years old. However, when young people become homeless, they are allowed to claim these benefits "on a discretionary basis if you would otherwise experience severe hardship" (Child Poverty Action Group, 2016: 847). If a resident chooses to continue in their education or training when they come to the hostel, there is a £27.50 gap between the £30 EMA entitlement and the £57.50 JSA. There is an option to top up their EMA, so it is equal to the JSA. However, many of the young people choose not to engage in education or training after moving into the hostel, and instead they then sign solely onto JSA. This is done with the assistance of their support worker, who helps them apply for benefits, immediately after moving into the hostel. Benefits must be applied for, as the

HB payment will cover the young person's rent.

Due to the obscurity of the young people's position, as a group, young homeless people living in hostels are given little consideration by the benefits system. The rent cost for rooms in hostels is significantly higher than other forms of accommodation¹⁸. These high rents cause problems if residents start earning a salary as they are expected to pay a large percentage of the rent. Sometimes this takes up a large proportion of a resident's salary. This meant that for most of the young people living at the hostel, employment was not a sustainable option. If they got a job, it would dramatically impact their benefit entitlement.

A staff member told me that if the young people work whilst they are at the hostel, the hostel will receive a reduced level of housing benefit on the young person's behalf. The resident will be expected to pay the shortfall. If a young person does manage to secure employment, their housing benefit will then recalculate the amount that they are entitled to. This is based on their new income. For example, if a seventeen-year-old gets a full-time job, working forty hours per week, they will earn a wage of £162.00 at national minimum age or £4.05 per hour. The housing benefit that is paid to the hostel before any income is £247 per week. According to the government-endorsed online benefits calculator - Policy in Practice, when seventeen-year-old works forty hours and earns £162.00 per week, £90.93 of the young person's wage will be deducted for rent (Policy in Practice, 2018). This leaves the young person with a weekly net income of £71.07 per week. Additionally, they are expected to pay their £6 service charge to the hostel, leaving them with £65.07. This would mean that working a forty-hour week, they are £13.70 better off than when they are claiming Job Seeker's Allowance. This deduction is so big because it does not take into consideration the type of premises the young people are living in. Instead, the current system recognises the amount of rent being £988.00 per month for a single room rather than supported accommodation. Additionally, a larger percentage of the young person's wage is deducted when they are under eighteen years old. This was a major deterrent for young people to access employment. Consequently, many of the young people don't consider employment as an option. Alternatively, many sign on to JSA with no real intention of getting a job whilst they lived at the hostel.

¹⁸ £247 per week

Because of the benefit payments that are available, others do not see a realistic incentive to engage in EET. Some of them thought the idea of getting up early every morning and travelling into college with no incentive, as ridiculous. When I asked Keith if he was in college, he said “there is no point son, I get sixty quid a week anyway”. He was very clear about this and seemed slightly confused about why he had to explain this to me. When I asked Becky if she planned on gaining qualifications through college, she said “I got anxiety and am dyslexic, so I can’t go to college. I am signing on the sick, the second I turn eighteen”. This was followed by a comment from Kenton who said, “same here”. For many, the financial incentives of signing on to benefits, far outweighed the incentives to engage in EET. This lack of a commendable incentive is sometimes coupled with negative views of education/training, which are often derived from past experiences of school.

Becky’s opinion of school was revealed early in the focus group, as we sat in front of the whiteboard in the communal lounge. Before the young people attended the focus group, I rearranged the furniture so that I could use the whiteboard for a brainstorming exercise that I planned for during the focus group. I was also wearing my reading glasses because I was planning to read out some vignettes; I had rarely worn glasses in front of them before. Also, I was holding a whiteboard pen in preparation to write down the ideas during the group. When Becky entered the room, she became immediately hostile towards the situation. Although she had been previously looking forward to attending the focus group, when she walked into the lounge and saw me stood in front of the whiteboard, she immediately questioned the group. Her attitude towards participating in the group completely altered. The layout of the room reminded her of a classroom, and she vocally expressed her concerns around engaging in a classroom setting. However, she agreed to give the focus group a try.

During the focus group, I used a printed Barnardos report to offer examples of how the quotes from the focus group would be used in the research. Becky seemed quite intimidated by the Barnardo report. The following was taken from the focus group notes:

“she said 'I feel like I am in school'. She was sat on the sofa drinking a one litre bottle of energy drink, and I tried showing her a direct quote from a young person in the Barnardo’s report. Becky interrupted me and said “there is no point telling me, I will forget. I am stoned as fuck so...” I started showing Bilbo, then Becky said, “I ain’t looking at tha! I probably don’t even know what half the words means or says in it”. I told her that it is just some quotes

from the young people at the hostel and began to read her one. Becky noticed the word cannabis on one of the pages and interrupted. She said, “I can see the word cannabis, I know what that means”. She gave the report to Bilbo and he had a flick through the pages”.

She said, “I am not staying here for an hour, you must be nuts! I am not staying yuh longer than ten, fifteen minutes. I won’t be able to stay here for longer than fifteen minutes”. I began to feel like a teacher who was struggling with a difficult student. However, I told Becky that she was free to leave whenever she wanted. Becky had previously explained to me that she suffered from ADHD, dyslexia, and anxiety. Her attitude towards school was like the counter-school culture described by Willis (1977). During the focus group, it was made explicit to me that many of the young people living at the hostel were unable to sit in a classroom environment for extended periods. Consequently, they would find it very difficult to stay on a training course until a placement came up.

Many of the young people told me that they had bad experiences at school. This resulted in some dropping out of school earlier than fellow pupils or leaving school underqualified. The link between youth homelessness and young people who drop out of school is no coincidence. As previously discussed, when sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds choose not to engage in EET, their household can lose a lot of financial support. They enter a “legal limbo”, where they are can legally live alone, but have not got full adult rights (Howell, 2019). Therefore, the hostel sometimes offers a practical solution for sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds, who choose not to continue in EET.

Another factor which prevents young people from engaging in EET is that many of the young people already know existing residents when they move into the hostel. This is often through existing friends and family members, or they went to the same school. This meant that many of the young people wanted to spend time with their friends at the hostel during the days.

In an interview with Skyla, she listed seven young people whom she had been in school with; all of whom were either living in the hostel or had very recently moved out. After listing all the young people that she knew at the hostel, and how she knew them, Skyla said, “We are all, literally all of us are connected”. This is an interesting point, as it suggests that young people often learn about homeless services through word of mouth. If this is the case, there is a concern that young people with a potential need for such services are not being reached. However, it could also be the case that young people are provided with confidence to access services after enquiring with friends.

Furthermore, also implies that many of the young people at the hostel were already socially situated with their peers when they entered the hostel.

Arguably, many are already part of a 'counter-school culture' that has an existing set of norms and values (Willis, 1979). Ingram (2011: 288) recognises that much of the research around working-class identity in education is largely focused upon cultural deficiency. She argues that "To overcome [educational] disadvantage, one must first overcome being working-class and modify one's behaviour to the 'right' middle-class way." She identifies a struggle between teachers and working-class pupils, arguing that the struggle leads to the underachievement of pupils. Bourgois (1995) has also identified this struggle within the work environment. He found that those coming from unconventional backgrounds find it hard to fit into mainstream employment. This is because conventional middle-class culture as it was contradictory to their own culture. Bourgois (1995) described a participant who chose to make money through illegal means because he did not receive adequate levels of respect in a legitimate job. They felt underpaid and undervalued when employed in unskilled roles. Bourgois (1995: 115) describes preferences to avoid legitimate employment as "A straightforward refusal to be exploited in the legal labour market". He also suggests that social capital that holds value on the street, is worthless in conventional employment. It might also be noted that some of the residents in the hostel seemed to display this rejection of the norms and values of mainstream society. Overall, this example shows us how young people living in the hostel have commonalities that feed into a unique individual hostel culture.

Some of the young people had secondary educational social ties with other residents from attending a special behavioural school. Becky told me how she knew Kenton, Thomas, Bilbo, and Olly, from "behavioural school". On discussing this in the focus group, they all seemed very proud that they had been in this school together. It was as if they were a part of a special club. Their closeness became quite evident in the focus group when they were extremely enthusiastic about telling the group that they had been to a particular "behavioural school". Becky had previously described this school as having high levels of surveillance in the form of extra staff and CCTV. Arguably, sharing a collective history, such as this, will promote social solidarity amongst the group. In his discussions around habitus, Bourdieu (2003/1977: 86) argues that "within homogeneity characteristics of their social conditions of production, ... the single habitus of different members of the same class are united ... the history of the individual is never anything

other than a certain specification of the collective history of his group or class, each individual system of dispositions may be seen as a structural variant of all the other group or class habitus". Arguably, many of the young people who come to the hostel, have already rejected the consistent engagement of the conventional culture. Instead, they choose to reproduce their own, working-class culture, within the confines of the hostel.

During the focus group, the young people maintained a distinct level of solidarity among many questions. At times Thomas and Bilbo began egging one another on and shouting out statements like "fuck the police" and "fuck the pigs". Engaging in a structured daily routine and abiding by a set of rules was against their unconventional, chaotic, and unrestricted existence. Many subscribed to the view that education was a waste of time. They displayed symbols of hostility towards the education system in front of one another. Observed an example of this one day when I was sat with the boys in room three. Kenton said that he needed a paper copy of his GCSE results for something. He immediately followed any concerned that had expressed about the results with "I ripped up the original copy on results day". These attitudes towards education are reminiscent of Wills' (1979) or Corrigan's (1979) descriptions of working-class pupils. Furthermore, some of their attitudes towards education, and conventional society in general, were comparable to non-conformist attitudes of Wielder's (1977) participants. His participants would not conform to the ways of mainstream culture because they feared that they would be discredited by their peers. Their attitudes towards conventional culture were reflected in their set of rules or the "code".

Another example of a young person who decided to drop out of education after moving into the hostel was Logan. Logan had been doing very well in college and was enjoying his course before coming to the hostel. He had been going to college for two years and was in the final year. He was studying NVQ 3 in electrical engineering. Shortly after moving into the hostel, he began hanging around with some of the young people and taking drugs throughout the nights. He was eager to fit in with the rest of the residents. After a few weeks the college raised concerns about his attendance, and he dropped out of the course. By this time, Logan's drug use had become a visible problem. Five weeks after he had moved in, Logan told me that he had never smoked so much cannabis in his life before coming to the hostel. He was concerned that he had become addicted. At the time, he was taking and selling drugs daily, with the other residents. Like Bourgois' (1995) participants, selling drugs was an accessible alternative to engaging with legitimate employment. Selling drugs

was a practical way for young people to earn additional money on top of their benefits, whilst maintaining their street credibility. Also, the proceeds from selling drugs were all cash in hand so it would not affect their benefits in the same way as working in a legitimate job.

When young people got bored with the hostel, ran out of money, or fell out with other residents, they would sometimes make plans to go back to EET. Young people often romanticized about going back to college or getting a job and living a conventional lifestyle. They described the end goal of completing a college course, and getting a job that paid good money, as being the main incentive for this. They often got fed up with not having enough money to do all the things that they wanted. Skylia told me how she planned on quitting drugs, going to college, and eventually “travelling the world”. Kenton also told me how he wanted to “quit the weed” and go to college. This way he could get a good job and get a car. Kenton said, “One day I will turn up at Rock House and get out of my car in a tuxedo boy. You watch!” However, after enrolling, few of the young people were successful in maintaining a place on a college course. The temptation of staying up late with the others, taking drugs usually proved too tempting for them. Additionally, the financial benefits of signing on every week far outweighed the manoeuvring the complex terrain of the mainstream.

A final deterrent that prevented young people from engaging in training was the lack of placement opportunities on offer to them. Those under eighteen years of age are given the option of a level one ‘traineeship’. They had to complete the traineeship before they were allowed to do an apprenticeship. However, unlike an apprenticeship, the traineeship does not pay the young person a wage. Instead, they are entitled to claim EMA, and they are also reimbursed for their travel. The traineeships on offer are reminiscent of the Youth Training Schemes (YTS) that were offered to young people in the 1980s. When the young person enrolls onto the traineeship, they are expected to spend time in the classroom, learning essential skills such as employability or numeracy. The timeframe that they spend in the classroom is indefinite and is largely dependent on how soon the training provider finds the young person a placement. The placements for the more popular courses can take a very long time to come around.

After spending weeks in a classroom, Kenton told me that he had arranged a placement at a garage himself. However, the college that he was attending was unable to allow him to go there because the business did not have the right type of insurance. This was very common amongst the young

people and they grew tired of waiting for placements to come up and eventually stopped going in. A staff member also told me that previous residents had been accepted on to work placements and then were treated like full-time staff members. The staff members said that a local café owner would phone the hostel in the morning complaining that they needed the young person to go into work because they were busy. They would risk losing their placement if they did not go in. Exploitative stories such as this one, are well known amongst the young people. There was a consensus amongst the young people that EET was unfeasible.

So far, this chapter has described how young people are faced with several personal and structural contradictory dilemmas regarding EET opportunities, whilst living at the hostel. Some struggle to successfully manage the difficulties of continuing their studies or getting a job at such a hectic point in their lives. Others choose not to engage, due to the alternative opportunities such as spending time with friends. However, in both instances, there is limited incentive for young people to engage in EET, whilst they live in the hostel. The following section shall move on to discuss how a failure to engage in a conventional routine whilst living at the hostel, can result in young people engaging in unconventional lifestyles. These alternative existences might be viewed as detrimental to the main goals that the hostel aims to achieve for the young people living there: independent living. Instead, they can result in young people becoming more dependent on different forms of support services such a drug rehabilitation, criminal rehabilitation, and long-term exclusion from the labour market.

Late Nights: A Vicious Circle

One annoyance for both residents and staff were that the young people often stayed up all night making noise. After spending some time at the hostel, it became apparent that young people staying up all night and sleeping throughout the days entailed several problems. When young people stayed up all night, it was usually in groups. It often involved them having parties in the rooms and drinking or taking drugs together. As previously mentioned, noise throughout the night would often keep other residents up and cause them to be late for college/school or other important meetings/appointments. The hostel rules state that the young people should be in their own room by 1:00 am, but the rule is rarely enforced by staff members. As well as the interference with other resident's sleeping patterns, it can also mean the staff members need to be extra vigilant throughout

the night, keeping a constant eye on the cameras. When awoken, if the residents complained to staff about noise levels, it often caused problems between those making the complaint and those making the noise. Those making the noise would accuse those who report the noise of trying to get them into trouble. Additionally, this would also result in heightened tensions between staff members and young people. On one occasion, the staff members told the young people they all had to go to their rooms and the young people all refused. They were not used to being told to do this and it resulted in an altercation with two of the young people and one of the staff members. The police had to be called and the following day, two of the young people were evicted. The other young people in the group did not seem to be aware of the rule that was imposed. They believed that the staff member had deliberately gotten them into trouble. This resulted in the group taking a serious dislike towards the staff member. Whenever the staff member was working, the group members were hostile and sometimes abusive towards them.

James and Michael, both told me that loud banging noises through the night would wake them up along with people banging on their doors. They both told me that the noises would wake them up and left them feeling anxious. Mia described the hostel to me before I arrived, she said that the main group of girls were always arguing, and they were noisy. From looking at the logbook, I could see that there were many noise complaints over the previous months before I started observations. At times, it seemed like some of the staff members at the hostel would actively turn a blind eye to noise in the nights, to avoid confrontation in the hostel.

Frustration, and the Quest for Status

Benefits deductions for those seeking employment at the hostel caused much dismay. Some of the young people viewed the benefit deductions as a deterrent from engaging in employment. Many of those moving into the hostel, intending to earn money through finding work, quickly realised that earning money through employment would not be worthwhile. Additionally, many of the staff members are aware of complications that arise when a young person became employed; they advise young people to enrol in college instead. From looking at the UK government online calculator, it shows that a seventeen-year-old would have to work sixty hours a week to earn £94.96 after deductions. Most of the young people who came to the hostel were not aware of the exact figures; however, they were aware that their pay would be significantly reduced whilst living there.

This was immediately apparent to me within the first week of observations. Zac was on the phone to the Job Centre trying to speak to someone concerning his benefits being sanctioned. Whilst he was on the phone, he turned to his support worker and said:

“I can’t work whilst I live, here can I?” The staff member explained to Zac that if he did go to work, he would become liable to pay to live at the hostel... [They also] advised Zac that the amount that he would have to pay would mean that he would be better off on benefits. Zac said that he is going to look for a cash in hand job, so it won’t affect his housing benefit contributions (Field Notes, Monday 16th October 2017).

Zac was highly motivated by the thought of making money and would constantly try to come up with ways to do so. Shortly after the above conversation, Zac asked his support worker if his criminal conviction would prevent him from joining the army. His support worker said that they were unsure, but this demonstrated that he was thinking about different ways that he could legitimately earn a wage.

Zac struggled to make his benefit payments last, and he later found other ways to get money. He would borrow money from other young people, try to get money from his SHORE worker, and access food banks regularly. It seemed that Zac was embarrassed that he did not have much money. He seemed jealous that the staff members who had jobs. On one occasion after arguing with one of the workers, he commented on the staff member's position in the hostel. Zac shouted “I bet your children are proud of you working in a homeless place. My mother’s a nurse and is on £80k a year” (Field Notes, Tuesday 16th January 2018). On a different day, Zac came into the office with a wallet containing some £20 notes. He turned to the manager and said, “while you are working for £8 an hour, I am earning some real coin” (Field Notes, Friday 22nd December 2017). He said this in a London accent and then pulled out what looked like about £100 and started waving it in the manager’s face. I could see that Zac associated money with status.

On occasions, Zac blamed staff members because he could not work. When Logan got a job, Zac advised him not to tell staff members about it, because they would “grass him up to housing benefit for working whilst he is on benefits” (Field Notes, Wednesday 3rd January 2018). Zac seemed very frustrated when he did not have money and I witnessed him trying to think of ways to make money on several occasions. Zac desperately wanted to earn some money; one time I observed him walk into the lounge and randomly shouted out “get rich or die trying!” (Field Notes, Thursday

4th January 2018). Eventually, Zac started to earn money through stealing and dealing drugs. It was clear that his inability to legitimately earn money, had led to a status frustration, so great, that he became impelled to make money through illegitimate means. He began by taxing younger dealers for cannabis and shortly after, he stole a large amount of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) from a local dealer. Before coming to the hostel, Zac had been addicted to NPS, and since coming out of prison he had stopped using them. Whilst selling NPS, Zac started smoking them again and became highly dependent. Zac's drive then changed from a daily urgency to obtain money, to a daily urgency to obtain NPS. During the time I spent with Zac, it became apparent that one of his main problems with not having money was that it made him feel insignificant. Arguably, an inability for Zac to achieve status through conventional means, led to status frustration, resulting in Zac's engagement within a "delinquent subculture" (Cohen, 1955).

The above examples demonstrate how limited opportunities, and a lack of incentive, can result in young homeless people choosing not to engage in EET. Consequently, many young people that lived at the hostel chose to sign on to JSA and spend much of their time hanging around the hostel with the other residents. The following sections demonstrate some of the problems that can emerge when groups form within the hostel.

Avoiding the Main Group

The following section uses data to provide example of how young people attempted to avoid engaging with the main group in the hostel. Some of them were successful in doing so, whilst others were not. From speaking to the young people at the hostel, I could see there was a divide between those that were a part of the main hostel group and those that were not. Those who were not part of the main group often avoided the communal areas and the staff office. Because of this, I found it hard to engage them in participatory observations and carried out interviews with them instead. Additionally, the young people who chose not to engage with the main hostel group were often away from the hostel in the days because they were in education or training. Many of them explicitly said that it was important to "keep yourself to yourself" whilst living at the hostel. The main reason for this was that the residents knew that if they engaged with other young people at the hostel, they could become part of the main group. They were also conscious that doing so, could end up in them engaging in activities such as drug use and crime. Stone (2010) identified a

similar situation in his research at a homeless hostel. Residents were aware that the main group of the hostel had its own unique culture, which sometimes contrasted that of conventional society.

Mia described how she feared the main group at the hostel when she arrived there. She told me that although she tried to keep to herself, she would always bump into the main group as she walked through the building. Once she started hanging around in the main group, she started to take drugs and engaged in a street robbery with some of the other group members. This was also the case with Olly, who told me that he planned to keep himself to himself, listen to the staff members, and he hoped this would result in him being moved into his own flat quicker. However, regardless to abiding by all the rules, Olly was not moved on quickly due to a shortage of available flats. After several months, he became impatient, he began hanging around with other residents. Eventually, Olly became a prominent member of the hostel group. He began to break hostel rules, got into fights, take drugs, and his relationship with staff members deteriorated. Unfortunately, towards the end of my participatory observations at the hostel, Olly and some other residents burned down a garage behind the hostel and got into serious trouble with the police. He was charged with arson and given a 12-month suspended sentence.

When I spoke with April in an interview, she explained why it was important for her to keep to herself whilst living at the hostel. She said, “Sometimes when you join a group as well, you gotta act a certain way. Or you know, certain groups might be doing like drugs and stuff. And if you are not comfortable with that type of thing, and you don't want to do that, that's a way to get kicked out of a group. And I think there is a lot more pressure in a group than there is when you are not involved with that”. In the interview she specifically said that she would do her best to avoid joining the group in the hostel. I asked her what advice that she would give to a new resident, and she said:

“keep to yourself, and don't get involved in too much trouble. Try to be friendly, just get along with as many people as you can, but don't be afraid to kind of do your own thing as well like. Don't feel like you have to be pressured, like, to fit in or whatever”
(Interview, Wednesday 22nd August 2018).

She recognised that becoming a group member can result in experiencing peer pressure to engage in certain group activities which might involve drug use and crime. James also saw the potential risks of engaging in the main group of the hostel. When describing the main group, he said “I don't want to stereotype but, you know the type of people you see like in gangs, like? I see them [the group] as those type of people”. He went on to tell me that if he did engage in the main group, he thinks he would be easily pressured into doing “certain things”.

Michael had previously lived in the hostel and told me that he was going to keep to himself this time. He described how he had previously engaged with the main group at the hostel and ended up becoming dependent on drugs. Michael told me how the group that he was a part of, was extremely suspicious. He said that they did not like it if new group members refused to engage in activities such as drug use. Michael said that when people refused to engage in these activities, the group suspected them of being a “grass” and rejected them. Skylar recognised this when she came to the hostel. She had recently stopped taking drugs and spoke of the importance of avoiding to main group in the hostel to achieve rehabilitation. Although she kept to herself for a while, Skylar was correct in what she said, and she relapsed on drugs shortly after joining the main group in the hostel.

In an interview, Rhian told me the importance of avoiding the main group in the hostel. She was very aware of the types of activities that the main group engaged in. She described to me some of the things that she witnessed the main group members doing. She said that previous groups at the hostel had been involved in drug dealing, prostitution, and smoking crack. She told me how she was targeted by the main group and ended up having a fight with one of its members. When I asked Rhian what advice she would give to a new resident, she said:

“I would tell them to keep themselves to themselves, and don't like, go downhill with drugs and mixing with the wrong crowd. Like, if you are that type of person, if you like your own company it's not worth mixing with other people, the bad people because you are lonely. Like, that's, that's the thing you shouldn't do. If you are lonely, just spend time to yourself. Because you will get more depressed when you are with the bad people than you will be on your own” (Interview, Wednesday 24th January 2018).

Throughout the duration of Rhian's stay at the hostel, she was one of the few residents that managed to consistently attend college whilst living at the hostel. The above examples demonstrate how the residents were often fully aware of some of the risks that joining a group could entail. However, although the group in the hostel often meant engaging in certain "risky" activities, the group also offered its members a level of identity, belonging, and security (Emond, 2003).

Joining Groups

When speaking to the young people, there was a common consensus that when residents move into the hostel, they are faced with the option to either join the main group at the hostel or avoid the group. As previously mentioned, due to a mistrust of formal authorities, groups were very important to some young people, as they offered them a level of protection. This was demonstrated when Thomas first moved into the hostel and introduced himself to Kenton and Bilbo. Thomas had complained about being threatened by a young person who lived down the road from Rock House. Kenton got extremely annoyed about this. He said "what? He came in here and started giving you shit?" He then went on to say that if anything like that happens again to let the others know. He said, "there will always be someone about that will have your back". Moving away from their own local area meant that they no longer had their own friendship group to offer them protection. Additionally, because they were based in the city, this meant they were vulnerable to coming into contact with other groups or young people that they had had previous run-ins with. Therefore, joining a group in the hostel might be seen as a logical and sensible thing to do.

Those who chose not to join the group recognised some of the dangers that joining a group would entail. Sometimes groups expected their members to take drugs and engage in violence and crime. If a member had a lot of money or cigarettes, the other group members would expect them to share what they had. Non-group members had the opinion that joining a group could impact their lives negatively. Whilst others thought that joining the group would meet their basic needs such as security, identity and belonging whilst they were at the hostel (Emond, 2013). As the following sections will demonstrate, many viewed engagements in a group as entering a social contract where they would have to conform specific rules to maintain their access. When young people came to the hostel, it was likely that they already know young people who lives there. Some of the young people that I spoke to have said that they knew about the hostel because of a friend or relative who

used to reside at the hostel. When they already have existing connections in the hostel, the young person is more likely to become part of the main group. After joining the group, they were then faced with the task of learning the rules within that group (Emond, 2003).

It is recognised that the norms and values that young people bring to a group are often influenced by their own habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). The following case studies of different groups in the hostel, demonstrate how young people display levels of “negative social capital” (Halpern, 2006), to secure a position within the group. It shall then demonstrate some of the main values of the groups as they formed. From analysing the data, it was found that the main group often placed value upon four main types of capital: social capital, toughness, audaciousness, and involvement with drugs. Additionally, it is demonstrated how peer pressure is a common means of enforcing the norms and values within the group. The following sections reveal how young people display “street competencies” (Lakenau *et al*, 2005), whilst engaging in different group settings. Furthermore, it shall be demonstrated how the element of competition results in group members pushing the boundaries to the point where they enter situations that are detrimental to the young person’s pathway into independent living.

As previously mentioned, when I arrived at the hostel, several residents had recently moved out, disrupting the group structure of the hostel. The main group, which once existed there, was no longer, and a new group was quickly forming. When resident’s left the hostel, they left a power vacuum behind, and the dynamics of the main group would sometimes alter. This meant that the culture of the hostel was very fluid, and the norms and values were under constant negotiation through interactions amongst the group members. The diagram below (see Appendix 5) has been created to demonstrate how often the group changed whilst I was at the hostel. When members of the group left, they are often replaced immediately by a new member. In the subsequent sections, I shall demonstrate how the groups constantly negotiated their values among its members. Whilst interacting with a group, residents often placed emphasis on the importance of “street competencies” (Lankenau *et al*, 2005). These often included having social connections, being tough, being audacious, or knowledge about drugs. The following five case studies demonstrate how group members negotiated the values of a group at different stages throughout the research process. They also demonstrate element of competition during this process, resulting in young people engaging in some seriously risky behaviour such as drug use, crime, and violence.

Case Study 1: Social Capital, Audaciousness, and Drugs.

Shortly after Keith was evicted, Brandon moved into the hostel. At this time, Zac and Kenton had been close friends and they spent time hanging out in each other's rooms smoking cannabis together. Zac and Kenton immediately invited Brandon to hang around with them. Ethan had lived at the hostel for several weeks but hadn't ventured out of his room much. However, Ethan and Brandon were friends from school and when Brandon moved in, Ethan began hanging around with the group. It was 11 am, I was sat in Zac's room and the boys were having a chat and getting to know each other better. Being a new member of the group, Brandon began to tell the group about himself. Whenever, Brandon discussed any wrongdoing, he immediately neutralised his behaviour by providing a specific reason for the committed act. He told us how he was often in trouble with the police for burglary and theft, but he had to steal because he had no money due to being homeless. He also told us that he had recently stabbed a man on the beach with a pen knife. Brandon said that he did this "because the man was a pedo" and had been following his friends. Brandon told us that his mother thinks he should have anger management and described himself as being "absolutely mental". Throughout the conversation, Brandon projected a tough and audacious version of himself to the group. During his descriptions, he demonstrated a wealth of "street capital" (Sandberg and Pederson, 2011). He described behaviours that would be fitting with Anderson's (1999) *Code of the Street*. Additionally, through re-counting his survival on the street whilst he was homeless, he also demonstrated a range of street competencies (Lankenau *et al*, 2005).

He told us a story about his brother, and how he was in prison for head butting his girlfriend in the face. Brandon said his brother did this because she had spiked him with Valium, and she had been working as a "prostitute". He talked about his brother a lot. Brandon told us that his brother used to take steroids before he was in jail, then showed us a picture of him on his phone. At this point, Zac interrupted and said that he also used to take steroids. Then Brandon told us about some of the people that his brother is friends with. One of the boys he mentioned was an ex-resident at the hostel who was doing prison time for stabbing someone in the neck with a biro pen. I didn't know at the time, but many of the young people feared Brandon because of his brother and his brother's friends. In an interview, Mia said "That's why, with someone like Brandon, you don't fuck around with someone like Brandon, because he does know a lot of people".

This case study demonstrates how Brandon uses multiple stories to demonstrate how tough and audacious he was. Through displaying “street competencies”, Brandon was exhibiting a certain level of street capital (Anderson, 1999; Baron, 2013; Lankenau *et al*, 2005). By way of projecting this version of self to the other young people, he was warning them that he should not be messed with. Additionally, by mentioning his brother, and his brother’s friends, he demonstrated a certain level of street capital. The act of residents revealing their social networks to one another was very common when new people entered groups. This allowed them to figure out whether they had any common friends or enemies. More examples of this are given in the following case studies.

Case Study 2: Drug Use, Competition, and Audaciousness.

Shortly after Brandon moved in, Mia began to hang around in the group a lot more. Brandon used his contacts to introduce Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) into the group. Mia told me that the boys would become very competitive when taking drugs. She said that they would compete with one another to take the most. In an interview with Mia, she told me the following story:

I was taking MD¹⁹ all the time. ... Brandon almost died here. He almost died ... He sniffed three lines of Mandy²⁰ and he was on Valium and that, and he had a fit in my arms. ... his nose just started pissing out with blood. ... Then his eyes rolled to the back of his head, ... and he started fitting in my arms (Interview, Tuesday 23rd January 2018).

It did not take them long to develop a habit of taking drugs together on a regular basis. Brandon and Zac began to pressurize Kenton into giving them money to buy drugs. Kenton was the youngest in the group and he struggled to challenge Brandon and Zac. They constantly hassled Kenton for money and one day they took Kenton’s bank card and withdrew all his money from his account. Kenton was really upset, and he told me that he was worried he would be evicted because he could not afford to pay his service charge. Kenton avoided the group after this incident and went to stay with a family member for some time. This competitive nature demonstrates how the behaviour started to escalate within the group.

¹⁹ Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA)

²⁰ *ibid*

When Logan moved into the hostel, he already knew Mia and immediately spent time with the group. Zac, Brandon, and Logan became very competitive with one another and constantly incited one another to take large amounts of drugs, get into fights, or steal money for drugs. Less than a week after moving into the hostel, the boys were arrested for attacking a homeless man outside a kebab shop. Logan boasted to staff members that the three would go out and slash random tyres and kick off car wing mirrors. The three boys started selling drugs together to make money to support their own habit. Logan and Brandon developed a rivalry and ended up getting into fights with one another. Whilst spending time with them I could tell that their friendship was deteriorating, and Logan began to question the legitimacy of some of some of the things that Brandon said. One day I was sat in Logan's room with Brandon, Logan, and Zac, and the boys were passing a joint around. Brandon asked me if I have ever smoked weed before and I said that I had tried it a long time ago. Brandon asked if I 'ghostied' when I smoked it. The boys were all intrigued by this and asked what he meant by ghostied. Logan said sarcastically, "don't you mean whitied?" He laughed at Brandon and said that he had never heard anyone describe it as 'ghostying' before. Logan teased Brandon about this, and Brandon looked annoyed. He was mocking him because he did not use the correct term. Shortly after this, the pair fell out and Brandon stopped hanging around in the group. In an attempt to convince Ethan to rob Brandon's drugs with him, Logan began to undermine Brandon and tarnish his reputation. He accuses Brandon of copying Logan's mannerisms. He criticised the amount of cannabis that Brandon can smoke before he gets paranoid and attempted to discredit Brandon's friends by calling them 'a bunch of silly little Townhill boys'. Logan called Brandon a 'minge' and said that all you have to do, is say 'boo' to Brandon and he will "shit himself". This example demonstrates how Logan is attempting to expel Brandon from the group by questioning his toughness, audaciousness, social contacts, and ability to take drugs.

Case Study 3: Social Capital, Drugs, and Toughness.

Eight months later, I was sat in room nine with Becky, Kenton, and Olly. Becky had recently moved into the hostel. She was good friends with Leah, one of the existing residents, before moving in. Because of this, she integrated into the main group very quickly. While we were sat in the room Becky offered us all a bag of crisps. She asked us if we thought the room smelled of

anything bad. The room smelled as though it had been recently cleaned and I told her it smelled fine. Becky put on some Grime music on her small television and began to talk with the boys. Although Becky was familiar with Kenton and Olly, she did not know them very well. Olly and Becky began talking about a boy called Denton, who had sadly passed away the previous day. Becky told Olly that he was her father's best friend and she saw him as an uncle. Olly said that he knew Denton's brother, and that he had a reputation for being "solid" and was "not the boy to be fucked with". Becky said, "Denton is a faggot, but you put anyone in front of him and he would have a go". It is interesting that following Olly's recognition of the importance of toughness, Becky suggests that being tough is important, but when lacked, it can be compensated by audaciousness.

The group continued discussing the people that they knew from around the city centre. Becky asked the boys if they knew her Uncle Vinny, but both did not. She told them that he was a thief and that he would "nick anything". Becky then showed the boys a video of Vinny stealing a radiator from somebody's house. They all laughed together at this. Becky asked the boys if they knew the O'Neil family and she described them as a "bunch of cunts" because they always fight in groups rather than one-on-one. Here, she is suggesting that the O'Neil family do not conform to a particular rule. She said that two of the O'Neil brothers burgled her aunt's house. And that this was not acceptable because her aunty is disabled and in a wheelchair. She said that her aunty was just sat there, and she could not do anything about the robbery. I found it interesting that Becky felt that robbing houses was okay, unless the occupier is unable to defend themselves. She went on to say that another member of the O'Neil family had broken a homeless man's jaw, simply for asking for spare change. Becky confirmed that the homeless person was not a "spicehead²¹". She felt it necessary to differentiate between the "genuine" homeless population and those addicted to NPS. The boys commented that they both thought that "spiceheads" were annoying and that they ask for money too much. This suggested that attacking a drug addict was more acceptable than attacking someone not addicted to drugs. It also demonstrated to me that the group were intolerant of NPS. They also went on to discuss amphetamine, agreeing that "phet is a hanging drug".

Kenton asked the pair if they knew a boy who used to live at the hostel a few years back called Jason Walters. Olly said that he knew him, and Becky added that she probably does. Kenton said that he had bumped into Jason a few days ago and he had just been released from the police station

²¹ Addicted to NPS

for beating up two boys in Townhill. Jason had told Kenton that he had broken one of the boy's jaws and he had been charged for GBH. Becky mentioned a behavioural school that she once went to and Olly said that he had gone there also. During the discussion they spoke about who they were related to, what drugs they take, and the people that they liked and disliked.

Throughout this conversation, the young people discussed their social connections, demonstrated an admiration for personal traits such as toughness and audaciousness. Additionally, they clarified their stance on what drugs they thought were acceptable and those that are unacceptable, reinforcing the cultural norms and values of the group.

Case Study 4: Drugs Use, Competition, and Peer Pressure

In August 2018, I was sat in Becky's new room with Seren, Olly, Kenton, Becky, Bilbo, Thomas, and Leah. All the young people that were currently living at the hostel were present. It was Thomas's birthday and the group had been smoking cannabis together. They were trying to convince Olly to have a go of the bong²². Becky and Leah told me that they had spent £60 on drugs that day. Becky was taking photos of the cannabis on her phone and sharing it with her friends on Snapchat. She was in control of the cannabis and interrupted the group saying, "Oh boys, five puff pass on this joint alright?" Bilbo and Thomas started talking about getting some more drugs. Thomas said that they should get some vodka, pills, and cocaine. Kenton added that they should get some cannabis as well, but Thomas refused saying they should get cocaine instead. Kenton was not keen on this idea, but Bilbo reassured him that he "would love it". Bilbo said, "try it son, you will love it". Kieron said "nah, I don't want to". The boys went on to discuss the possibility of them getting "banged up"²³ that evening. Bilbo then said, "I will get banged up with you". Becky thought this was very funny and she laughed saying, "I love how he is planning it already". The pair were getting quite hyped up and were clearly encouraging one another to act audaciously. Thomas told me that he had been arrested the previous night for banging on the police station window on his way past.

Seren began to tell me about the court case that she had been involved in the previous day. A few weeks prior to the conversation, she had barged her way into a girl's house and attacked her. Seren

²² Water pipe for smoking cannabis.

²³ Arrested

told me that the court case had to go to crown court, which meant the crime was very serious. She claimed that the only reason that she had not been sentenced to six years in prison, was that her solicitor was so good. Her description of the court case was a dramatic one, she portrayed the solicitor as a protagonist. She said that he told the judge about her “terrible upbringing” and her current dependency on drugs. Seren said that if the solicitor did not stand up for her, she “would have been sentenced six [years] and done three [years]”. She said that “because it was my first time being done for GBH with intent to kill, they were gonna give me a tag for 18 months. But they didn’t then because they gotta pay to put you on tag”. Seren said that the solicitor was arguing with the judge for her, and that the judge really wanted to send her to prison. She was given a two-and-a-half-year suspended sentence and 250 hours community service. Seren said “I had to pay Hannah Rosser £250 because I nearly killed her” and that she also had “a criminal record for life”. Seren projected a version of herself that was extremely audacious and violent. She laughed about the court case and acted as though it did not bother her in the slightest.

Seren was interrupted by a phone call. It was her aunty, and she was trying to arrange buying some amphetamine from her aunt’s dealer. After the call, she said that they should play a game called “traffic lights” which involves passing the bong around in a circle. Each person must take a puff and hold the smoke down until it came back around. Bilbo said that he did not want to play the game and Seren laughed at him and called him a “fanny”. Becky also said she didn’t want to play because there wasn’t enough cannabis for the game. Seren then randomly said, “we are getting on it tonight!” and Thomas said, “Fucking right, I am up for that”. Becky turned to Thomas and said, “Why don’t you get on the phet²⁴ with Seren?” Thomas said, “nah, phet is hanging”. Becky then said, “yeah, but it is free drugs on your birthday. It’s your birthday, it’s gotta be done”. Dylan said that he had court the following day and didn’t want to turn up under the influence. Lisa said, “it’s your birthday, you gotta do any drug you can get your hands on”. Dylan said “yeah, except from smack”. Lisa said “yeah, that’s the exception. You need to go to court gurning your chin off”.

From reading the above case study the young people are seen to encourage one another to engage in audacious or risky behaviours, such as drug use. Seren projected a tough version of herself, capable of seriously hurting people. Bilbo and Thomas also display a level of competition when

²⁴ Amphetamine

discussing drugs. The group placed great emphasis on the ability to be able to consume large amounts of drugs and show little respect for the law.

Case Study 5: Toughness and Competition.

Bilbo, Thomas, and Kenton were all having a drink in Kenton's room. Kenton was relatively quiet when the boys first started drinking. He asked the other two to be careful not to spill anything on his floor and tidied away some of his clothes. As the boys listened to music, they drank full glasses of white cider in one go. Kenton then said, "I am on it now", and they began to do shots of vodka together. The following extract has been taken from the fieldnotes:

Over the space of a few minutes, I could see that Kenton's attitude was dramatically changing. He began talking to Thomas in a more confident and demanding tone. At one point he began shouting at Thomas and staring at him in an intimidating manor. "PASS THE SKINS!!!!" he shouted at Dylan. "DON'T FUCKING THROW MY SKINS!!" he said. Thomas was laughing off Kenton's behaviour at the time.

Kenton was clearly becoming intoxicated from the vodka. Bilbo kept giving the other two boys shots of vodka. When Thomas said that he did not want another Bilbo said, "he is a fucking faggot, I am going to drink him under the table". Bilbo offered me a shot and I said that I couldn't have one because I was driving. He said, "One fucking shot isn't going to hurt, son!"

They turned the volume of the music up and all began to talk much louder to compensate for the additional noise. Thomas began shouting out how much he loved alcohol. He said that he was going to be a "right dickhead" to the staff members that night. Bilbo interrupted him in a stern voice, saying that there were two female staff members working, so he had better not give them any trouble. Bilbo showed me a video of Thomas on the floor in a heap the previous night. He was screaming "I will fucking kill them", about the police. When I asked what happened Bilbo said, "I told him to neck half a bottle of vodka and he done it the mad cunt".

The three boys began kicking a football around in the room. They were pelting the ball at one another full force. They then went out into the corridor and started kicking the ball against the other resident's doors. After some time, the staff members came up and told them to stop. We

went back into the room and the staff went downstairs. Kenton started swinging his door wide open and banging it off the wall. He continued doing this for around 90 seconds. He came and sat down on the bed and then began to stab a DVD case with a pen really hard, and there was plastic flying around the room. Kenton walked over to a broken punchbag in the corner and began punching it as fast as he could. It was a though he was trying to demonstrate how tough he was in front of Thomas and Bilbo. Bilbo then said, “he needs to calm down, he is doing my fucking head in. He doesn’t want me to go on one son, because when I start, I won’t stop”.

Thomas then went over and began punching the bag also. He missed the bag and hit the wall. He said, “Look, I have popped my knuckle”. Kenton told Bilbo that he was going to drink the last bottle of cider and Bilbo told him not to. He said that they would need the other bottle for later. Kenton looked annoyed and drank the last drops from the empty bottles. Thomas said, “Scruffy cunt, drinking the dregs”. The boys continued hitting the punch bag until the foam started coming out. By this point, Bilbo had pulled it off its stand and began hitting Kenton with it. Bilbo shouted, “I warned you what would happen if my head went”. Kenton screamed “Aghh, stop, it fucking hurts son!” At this point, Kenton had no top on, and the leather of the punch bag was making a whipping sound as it slapped against his skin. Bilbo chased Kenton through the room, tripping up over the fan. I could see Kenton’s back was red raw from the slapping. Bilbo then stopped and said, “I told you not to wind me up boys”. The room went silent, and Kenton looked as though he was masking tears with fake laughter.

This case study demonstrates how the group in the hostel placed emphasis on the importance for toughness and competition.

Exiting the Group

Leaving a group was not straightforward for young people, especially for those still living at the hostel. Doing so could result in a young person being targeted or bullied by the main group. This was seen when Kenton decided to exit the group with Zac, Brandon, and Ethan. The boys kept pestering Kenton by banging on his door and phoning him. They threatened him and accused him of owing them money. To pay the debt, they took money and possessions from him. In the end, Kenton went to stay with his mother for a few weeks. This meant he was at a risk of abandonment.

However, he told the staff members that he had had a family bereavement and wanted to spend time with his family.

Logan also had trouble exiting the hostel group. He decided to avoid taking any drugs and got himself a part time job in an office down the road. On his first day of work, he returned to the hostel on his lunch. Zac made fun of Logan's shoes in the office and the pair had an argument. Logan went to speak with Zac in his, and shortly after he went back to work. When Logan returned, he told me that he had lost his job, for being under the influence of drugs. He said that when he went to speak with Zac on his lunch break, he had offered him a roll-up cigarette. Logan was unaware at the time, but Zac had put NPS in the cigarette. By the time Logan had got back to the office, he was extremely intoxicated and could not speak, so his boss sent him home. Logan was really upset because he had planned on moving out of the hostel over the coming weeks and renting a room in a shared house. Mia told me that Zac had purposely spiked Logan with the drug because he was jealous of him. This resulted in Logan remaining at the hostel for a prolonged period following the incident. Eventually he became dependent of drugs and was evicted from the hostel for abandonment.

When young people moved into their own flat, it was often the case that the group that they were part of would spend time there. However, very often, this would lead to noise complaints from the neighbours. Emilia, Rhian, and Michael, all had noise complaints and were moved back into the hostel as a result of the group hanging out in their new flat. Others, such as Becky, and Seren, complained that they wanted to move back because they were not coping alone. However, when I spoke to them, they described how they were fed up with their friends wanting to hang out in their flat all the time. Sometimes their friends would come over and vandalize the property. The following extract shows Zac and Seren describing how they behaved whilst in another young person's flat after they had moved out.

“Joel has very big parties and invites large amounts of young people. Seren and Zac were both laughing whilst telling me how all the young people who go to the parties, smash Joel's flat up, and that the police often get called out to break the parties up. They said that it is a “good laugh”. Zac said that one time he was at Joel's flat, and he smashed up his bathroom” (Fieldnotes, Monday 23rd October 2017).

When this happened, the owner of the flat would get the blame, unless they were willing to tell the staff who did the damage. This would never happen because they would be known as a “grass”, which was extremely frowned upon by the young people. Consequently, it often resulted in the young person moving back into the hostel.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how structural barriers and limited opportunities can result in young people turning away from mainstream culture and engaging with young people who are in similar situations as themselves. When young people move into a homeless youth hostel, they are sometimes faced with a series of structural barriers that disincentivise them, encouraging them to sign on to benefits instead of engaging in education, employment, or training. Sadly, there is more financial incentive for young people to claim benefits such as JSA, instead of engaging with education, employment, or training. Whilst living at the hostel, young people become frustrated and can turn to earning money through alternative means such as drug dealing and theft. Others spend days on end at the hostel, hanging out and taking drugs with their friends and become trapped in a negative vicious circle. Their actions contribute towards the development of the hostel culture that goes on to influence the actions new residents. Being a part of the culture can result in residents leading unconventional lifestyles, engaging in crime, and not meeting the relevant requirements that are required before they are allowed to move into their own flat.

The second part of this chapter has provided case studies which demonstrate how the young people interact when they become a part of the hostel group. The case studies provided, demonstrate how young people display an array of “street competencies” within their groups, many of which suggest that there is a level of street capital associated with them (Anderson, 1999; Baron, 2013; Lankenau *et al*, 2005). During these interactions, the young people can be seen to test what is acceptable and what is unacceptable among the other group members. Engaging within the group, can often involve being a part of a street culture that celebrates traits related to drug use, toughness, audaciousness, and a disregard for formal authorities. These traits sometimes act as forms of “negative social capital” within the groups which is important for group membership. Unfortunately, many of the behaviours that are promoted by the group run in opposition to what the hostel aims to promote and can be viewed as detrimental to a young person’s life chances. This

is an area which should be given careful consideration, to support young people in engaging in healthy lifestyles rather than falling into habits that will be detrimental to their ongoing lives.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion and Discussion

Introduction

Using ethnographic methods to gain a better understanding of the lives of young homeless people has been particularly useful. The ethnographic data has revealed how subjective the residents' perceptions of a homeless youth hostel are. Ethnographic methods have minimised the risk of muting the voices of the participants in the study. Instead, they amplify the voices of the young people, making their thoughts and opinions the central focus of the research. Chapters 5, 6, and 7, have demonstrated how young people who enter a homeless hostel are put in a unique position. A position where they can become socially excluded due to the lack of opportunities to engage within mainstream society. Some of the young people become alienated and search for feelings of belonging, identity, and security. They protect themselves from feelings of isolation, alienation, and social exclusion, by joining a group in the hostel. This thesis argues that the cultures that develop within a homeless hostel are a logical response to structural failures in society. Further rejection from mainstream society, leads to young people reproducing the cultural backgrounds that they are most familiar with to repair their ontological security. The contribution to knowledge demonstrated in this thesis, is the description and analysis of the ways in which different, competing, and sometimes contradictory cultures in a homeless youth hostel can directly influence a resident's behaviour, associations, and opportunities whilst they reside there. It is argued, drawing on Goffman (1963) among others, that when young people act in ways which are situationally defined as deviant, this can often be seen as a rational response and adjustment to that individual's particular situation. Although individuals are free to make decisions in their lives, the thesis has aimed to demonstrate how wider structural influences can play pivotal roles in that decision making process. This thesis shall now conclude by summarising the key findings of the thesis and answer the initial research question. This is followed by a discussion section with policy recommendations and ideas for further research.

Research Questions

The thesis recognises that the formation of culture in a homeless hostel develops through a dialectical *durée* of interactions between structure and agency (Giddens, 1984). When young

people become homeless, they experience more autonomy and freedom because they are often alone for the first time. However, as discussed by Fromm (2004), this can result in feelings of anxiety. Becoming a part of a group is an instrumental decision that is driven by the need for identity, belonging, and security. Identifying the hostel as possessing its own cultural norms and values, the research has explored some of the main influences of the hostel culture. This has included taking into consideration the social backgrounds of the residents that live there. When young people come to the hostel, they often gravitate towards other young people who they can better relate to. Influences can include norms and values from certain cultures. These are sometimes associated with geographical locations, with having mutual friends or common enemies, or sharing common interests. Sometimes young people already relate to particular cultures of the hostel before they move there. One example has discussed, how residents being part of a wider street culture, can have a direct impact upon the culture in the hostel. This demonstrates how norms and values – some that run in direct contrast the ones that the hostel aims to promote - can develop. The thesis has described how this process can result in the development, or replication, of certain cultures among the groups that live at the hostel.

Before entering the field, a detailed literature review was carried out which inspired the following question: How are young people expected to behave when they live in a homeless youth hostel? What form of institution do young people recognise the hostel to be? And what do the residents contribute towards the development of culture in the hostel? These questions were addressed by taking an ethnographic approach to better understand the cultural development within an institutional setting of a homeless youth hostel. Taking an interpretivist view, culture is recognised as being a fluid concept, one that is negotiated and developed by the members of a group. Each of the research questions are addressed individually in the following three sub-sections.

How are young people expected to behave when they live in a homeless youth hostel?

During the fieldwork, it was found that many of the participants who engaged in the research rejected various norms and values of mainstream society. This was because, when they arrived at the hostel, they became faced with multiple barriers, which contributed towards their social exclusion. Structural problems within the benefit system, weakened the prospect of full-time employment, rendering the idea as disparaging and unrealistic. Additionally, education and training opportunities were often undermined by inadequate incentives, in comparison to benefits. This lack of realistic opportunities left some of the young people feeling alienated and socially

excluded from mainstream society. Their logical response to this was to achieve a sense of belonging from elsewhere. Rejection resulted in some young people embracing their inability to integrate with mainstream society. Instead, they align themselves more with unconventional cultures that exist among the street. It is important to reiterate that the young people engaging within street cultures are not their own worst enemies who chose to turn to a life of crime. Instead, they are simply making rational choices within the already limited opportunities that they have.

Some of the residents were sceptical of mainstream culture before moving into the hostel. Many came from post-industrial working class areas. Some of these areas had developed reputations for possessing cultural norms and values that run in opposition to mainstream society (e.g., estate cultures, street cultures, etc). Residents told me that they did not trust the police, because they had existing negative experiences with them. Many of them were also suspicious of other formal agencies such as social services. In a revolutionary fashion, some displayed resentment to formal authorities, encouraging hostility towards them. This often included the admiration of breaking the law and engaging in acts of theft, violence, vandalism, and drug use. Some of the groups in the hostel placed much value upon, what has been described in previous chapters as, “negative social capital”. This form of social capital places emphasis on traits such as toughness, audaciousness, and knowledge of drugs. It is argued that “negative social capital” is an accumulative form of capital within groups of young people. When they subscribed to the culture of the hostel, they were often expected to abide by the cultural norms and values of the group. This often meant obtaining “negative social capital”.

What form of institution do young people recognise the hostel to be?

When young people came to the hostel, many of their perceptions of the hostel were influenced by interactions with other residents and staff members. Chapter 5 and 6 highlight the subjectivity of the hostel environment. Many of the hostel characteristics might be associated with total institutions and many could be associated with social establishments. Some of the examples discussed include formal procedures such as record keeping and surveillance. Other examples include informal practices such as relaxing in the office with staff members. This thesis argues that although a young person's perception of the hostel is largely influenced by their social background, their perception can be fluid. Sometimes they suggested that they felt the hostel was a prison and other times they acted as though they were in a hotel. Some days their staff/resident relations were

very formal, and other days informal. Much of the time these relations were influenced by the young people who lived at the hostel and the amount of work that staff members had. Limited staff resources (time) often resulted in the deterioration of staff/resident relations. Additionally, the lack of resources meant that the norms and values from street cultures could take root.

One of the reoccurring themes that has emerged throughout the thesis is the idea of safety. It is recognised that the notion of safety is a subjective one. Young people can join groups in the hostel to achieve feelings of safety. However, when they are a part of these groups, they can be expected to engage in dangerous activities such as drug use, violence, and crime. Therefore, it is sometimes the case that they feel safe, but they are unsafe. Additionally, when a particular group comes to dominate the hostel, non-group members recognise the dangerous behaviours that take place in the hostel and feel unsafe there. Consequently, the freedom of some, results in the oppression of another. As described by Bauman (1999: xii), “Freedom of self-determination is a blessing – and a curse”.

There is much discussion throughout this thesis around guiding culture. This idea acknowledges that the young people are free agents who are each able to make informed choices. However, it also recognises that they are also faced with many external structural pressures which directly influence many of the decisions that they make. This idea was nicely summed up by James:

“I think when freedom is given to anybody it can be a bad thing like. If you can go out at whatever time you want and be back whatever time you want. Umm, I think it gives more of a window to fuck up like and get [into trouble]. (Interview with James, 24th August 2018).

Here, James recognises the problem with having too much freedom in the hostel. He acknowledges the importance of rules. However, some residents felt very differently about freedom and they would argue that they did not have enough freedom in the hostel. It was pointed out that young people were often monitored more regularly by staff members if they were deemed to be a troublemaker. Staff perceptions of young people were often influenced by the young person’s social background. Therefore, young people were likely to experience the hostel more like a total institution if they were from a particular social background. It was often the case that young people who were not deemed as being a troublemaker, were given more freedom and privacy by staff members. Resulting in them experiencing the hostel more like a social establishment. However, as

mentioned previously, this dynamic was largely influenced by how much time the staff members had on their hands. When they were overly busy, they were less able to work in a consistent manner and treat all the residents the same.

What do the residents contribute towards the development of culture in the hostel?

This thesis has suggested that when young people come to the hostel, they are often alone for the first time. They seek to overcome feelings of insecurity and anxiety by identifying other young people who are like themselves. Once they identify other residents who share common norms and values, they reproduce a version of culture that they are more familiar with. This familiarity helps them overcome feelings of anxiety and insecurity (ontological security). However, this sometimes means reproducing a culture that has norms and values that run in opposition to that of mainstream society, therefore undermining the goals of the hostel. Young people sometimes subscribe to street cultures, drug cultures, or estate cultures. Sometimes they aspire to obtain “negative social capital” rather than the version of social capital that is valued in mainstream culture.

As previously discussed, young people often bring types of social capital with them to the group in a hostel. High levels of “negative social capital” within a group provide legitimation, asserting dominance among other groups that operate within the wider street culture. It might be argued that being a member of a group with higher levels of “negative social capital”, offers group members more safety whilst they engage in the street culture. This research has demonstrated that, losing faith in the formal safety mechanisms provided by conventional society, can result in young people becoming dependent on groups to achieve a sense of security. However, these groups are guided by a culture that is fit for purpose. It is a culture that has norms and values that do the jobs that mainstream society fails to do for the members. It offers them many fundamental basic human needs, such as belonging, identity, and security. Needs which mainstream society has already failed to provide them with. Although some of the cultural norms and values are deemed deviant in the eyes of many, the groups that the young people form, often promote virtuous and collective principles. The group members often share resources and provide one another with moral support when they are needed. Although they sometimes encourage one another to challenge mainstream norms and values, they look out for one another offering a level of protection that mainstream society does not provide to them.

This thesis argues that, as service providers, homeless youth hostels have more responsibility over the cultural development within their hostels. There should be more consideration around the vulnerability of some of their service users, whilst preserving the autonomy of its residents. It is recognised that, in Rock House, there are many processes in place to help guide the culture of the residents. (For example, house rules, one-to-one support sessions, and a selective referral process). We have seen that many of these processes fail due to a lack of staff numbers and inconsistent working among the staff members. As a result of this, the culture within the hostel becomes guided by the residents rather than the staff members. This can result in the hostel culture becoming an extension of a street culture, therefore undermining the hostel's main objectives. Finally, it is acknowledged that this conundrum feeds into a wider argument around what sort of establishment the hostel should resemble: a total institution or a social establishment. Many of the paradoxical characteristics and contradictory features of the hostel created a confusing environment for the residents. This resulted in some of the residents experiencing the hostel as a social establishment while others viewed it as more of a total institution.

Cultural Development in an Institutional Setting

The research highlights how when young people come to a homeless youth hostel, they have limited opportunities. Structural influences within the benefit system can result in them being excluded from the labour market. Additionally, there are limited incentives for them to engage in education or training. Sadly, this lack of engagement with mainstream society - along with their social position of being homeless - can result in them feeling alienated and disconnected from mainstream society. When this happens, young people become more inclined to join groups within the hostel. They do this to achieve feelings of identity, belonging, and security. Unfortunately, as previously mentioned above, these groups sometimes fail to promote the norms and values that are regarded as important when achieving independent living in the eyes of the hostel staff. This means that they will take longer to move out of the hostel, increasing their chances of eviction and lengthening the duration of their engagement within homeless services.

The first chapter of this thesis gave a historical overview of the development policy related to youth homelessness. It described the creation of homeless youth hostels as an evolutionary process that resulted from changes to an existing form of institutional service provision for adults. The main criticism here is that services provided for young people are often an adaption of previous

services and are not specifically tailored to meet the requirements of the young people that access the services. The introduction has provided the necessary context that helps situate young homeless people's places in society through acknowledging social changes through history. Ultimately, this chapter highlights how youth homeless service provisions have emerged from pre-existing adult services. It suggests that homeless youth hostels have slowly developed from previous institutional settings, which have long been used to contain poor people. And to stigmatise and deter other people from falling into homelessness.

Chapter 2 moved on to talk about some of the existing research that has been done on homeless youth hostels. It is recognised that much has been done in relation to the causes of youth homelessness, and the experiences that young people have within the confines of a hostel. However, it is acknowledged that much of the literature fails to address the unique cultures that form within these institutional settings. This chapter has given a broad overview of the types of social backgrounds that young people living at Rock House come from. This offered an insight into the types of experiences that many of the residents will have already had. This is important as their experiences will directly contribute to the cultural formation of the hostel. Each of the residents bring a set of cultural norms and values which goes on to influence the unique culture of Rock House.

Chapter 3 discusses the complex concept of culture. Recognising culture as being fluid and interpretivist, the chapter argues that people are inclined to join groups with those from similar backgrounds to achieve security. Whilst doing so they reproduce certain cultural norms and values, allowing them to repair feelings of uncertainty that are associated with ontological security (Giddens, 1984). Therefore, when the majority residents in the hostel come from a particular area, they reproduce the culture that they are most accustomed to. This can result in the formation of cultures that run in opposition to mainstream society and therefore undermine the main objectives of the hostel.

The next chapter critically discussed the methodology and methods of the research. The chapter points out that some of the residents of Rock House are legally classed as children. This is carefully considered when making methodological choices prior to the research. The chapter also points out that, children and young people are often a marginalised group in society and their voices sometimes go unheard. Consequently, the methodology took an inductive approach to research to

maximise the voices of the participants whilst minimising the potential of their voices remaining marginalised. This involved using theoretical coding to steer the data collection process, that nonetheless, aimed to retain a sensitivity to emic understandings and meaning. The chapter outlined many of the processes that led up to the research, it included an assessment of any risks along with many ethical considerations that were thought out before entering the field.

As previously mentioned, the three findings' chapters were written in a way that tried to gradually zoom into the hostel. This was done to ensure the reader was provided with contextual details that are very important when understanding the participants daily lives and their interactions. Chapter 5 describes the geographical location of the hostel, offering thick descriptions of the surrounding areas. This chapter has provided a unique insight into the social worlds of the participants, giving details about some of the challenges that local young people face daily. The chapter points out that young people coming to the hostel come from similar backgrounds and are often familiar with one another. These similarities can provide the residents with common ground and social cohesion, which promotes the creation of groups with shared norms and values. The second part of the chapter describes some of the daily activities that go in in the hostel. It highlights how the hostel can transform from a formal administrative environment into an informal homely environment between day and night. It is suggested that this constant transition can result in the hostel being a somewhat confusing environment for the residents that live there.

Chapter 6 zooms closer into the hostel again, focussing in on many of the daily processes and routines that take place there. As well as looking specifically at the hostel practices and process, the chapter discusses how they are interpreted by the residents that live there. It is suggested that inconsistencies in the ways that staff members work can create confusing and sometimes contradictory environments for the residents living at Rock House. These inconsistencies are usually due to the staff members being limited on time to carry out their duties such as implementing rules. It is further suggested that can result in the formation of cultures that undermine the hostels fundamental objectives. The chapter also recognises that Rock House is perceived in different ways by different residents, and this is largely influenced by their own individual culture. It points out that the type of organization that the hostel is, is not clear cut. At times, some view the hostel as being more like a social establishment that is more informal and unregulated. At other times, the residents experienced the hostel as being more like an institution,

with formality and regulations. In a broader sense, this thesis has demonstrated that institutions are perhaps not so readily placed into a formal typology but, rather, have a dynamic, shifting, kaleidoscopic order.

The final chapter zooms right into the hostel, with emphasis on the individuals that live there, their associations, and practices. Focussing on the interactions that take place there, the chapter demonstrates how residents are discouraged from engaging in purposeful activity or positive culture, such as education training, or employment (Robinson, 2008). Instead, they chose to spend a majority of time within the hostel with other residents and engage with the group cultures which exist there. It is pointed out that although the residents are free agents and they choose to become a part of the group, once they subscribe, they are directly influenced by the group culture. The culture of the group is therefore recognised as being a structural influence that guides individual agents. The chapter then goes on to describe how this can further contribute towards the development and formation of the hostel culture - which often has norms and values running in contrast to that of mainstream society. This chapter points out that some of these cultures are often detrimental to a young person's long-term progression into independent living. Therefore, undermining the fundamental objectives of the homeless youth hostel.

The thesis demonstrates how becoming a resident of a homeless youth hostel can significantly influence their behaviour and have an ongoing impact upon the choices that they make. It has pointed out how homeless youth services sometimes fail to recognise how the cultural development of the hostel, can exert certain strains upon young people whilst living there. The hostel staff and management have a duty to better understand these structural influences that exist within the cultures that develop in the hostel. Being in a position of such responsibility, they should acknowledge the importance of nurturing cultures that are complimentary of their own objectives. It should be recognised that failure to do this results in the young people enduring certain strains upon their lives. These strains can result in young people engaging in activities or behaviours that they would not necessarily usually do so. Although the residents of Rock House are all free thinking individuals, behaviours that are viewed as deviant in the eyes of mainstream society, are sometimes logical or rational responses of the young people whilst they are in a particular social setting. With that in mind, there should be less blame on young people when they are seen to deviate from mainstream society. Instead, more responsibility should be put upon the hostel, as an

institution, to recognise the very sensitive nature of their role in relation to cultural development and the structural influences that exist there. Blaming the victim is an easy way out of facing up to the structural failures of mainstream society. However, this thesis has highlighted how young people are often failed when they become homeless. It has drawn attention to many of the ways that young people are failed leading to them becoming socially excluded from mainstream society. Whilst defending the cultures that young people become part of in the hostel, this thesis has recognised the paradoxical nature of the hostel and highlights the barriers that prevent it from being able to achieve their own objectives.

Implications for Policy / Practice

The previous chapter has drawn attention to many of the structural barriers that young people face when they become homeless. It argues that many of the problems that young people face have become atomised, and problems are associated with individual rather than structural failures. Some examples of this include the suggestion that youth homelessness is a result of family conflict. Although this might be the case, this narrative feeds into a wider discussion around ending youth homelessness. One that places emphasis on individual failings, suggesting solutions which single out families, offering mediation services in an attempt to internalise and rectify their problems. However, there is less recognition drawn to structural influences that create youth homelessness such as benefit failures and housing shortages. Additionally, when young people enter the hostel and fail to access education, training, or employment, this might be seen as being an irresponsible choice of the resident. However, there is limited knowledge about structural influences that dissuade or block young people from engaging in EET.

Within this thesis there are multiple examples which demonstrate how young homeless people are encouraged to claim benefits rather than engage in EET. The thesis highlights how this lack of engagement can contribute to feelings of alienation and social exclusion. Sometimes this can encourage them to engage with street cultures which can be detrimental to their ongoing progress into independent living. Addressing the discussed failures within the current benefit system could result in more young homeless people engaging in education, employment, and training. Consequently, this could result in more inclusivity, allowing them to gain feelings of belonging, identity, and security from mainstream society.

A second area of importance that has been discussed in this thesis is the adequate staff resources at homeless youth hostels. It is suggested that the hostel can often be a confusing environment for both the residents living there and the staff members who work there. Limited staff resources can result in staff members occasionally turning a blind eye or focussing their attention to certain residents in the hostel. This can be very upsetting for the residents with some feeling unfairly targeted by staff members. Some residents feel as though they are living in a total institution whilst others feel that they live in a social establishment. Higher staffing levels could allow staff members to become more consistent in their approach to working at the hostel. Arguably, more structure and consistency would make the hostel environment less confusing to the residents and result in them being treated more fairly. As discussed in chapter 6, some of the residents felt that they were treated differently by staff members. It was found that this was due to the rules being interpreted as being subjective rather than objective. From the participatory observations, it was clear that the staffing levels did not allow everyone to enforce all the rules. Instead, it was often the case that staff members would pick and choose their battles. However, some turned a blind eye more than others, making their job far easier than those who did not turn a blind eye. Imposing the rules was a key influence over whether a staff member was liked by the young people. If there were enough staff members at the hostel, they would be able to impose the rules of the hostel consistently. This could result in the residents being treated equally and each staff member being viewed similarly by the residents also. Therefore, greater staff numbers could free up much of the administrative demands of the hostel. This would provide staff members with more time, allowing them to build relations with the young people. But more importantly, putting them in a stronger position when ensuring the norms and values of the hostel are in line with its main objectives.

More staff members would also allow for more consistency around the implementation of hostel rules. When thinking about the development of culture in the hostel, these rules play an important role in ensuring certain norms and values do not become part of the hostel culture. Additionally, it would allow them to preserve the systems that have been created to ensure that the young people actively engage in mainstream society. As Bauman (1999) points out, the development of culture is largely dependent on the rigidity of systems. Therefore, appropriate hostel staffing could prevent the formation of unconventional cultures in the hostel and increase the resident's chances of successfully transitioning into independence. Although imposing rules and sanctions upon

homeless people might be viewed as paternalistic or authoritarian, a pluralistic relative perspective would enhance the situation and experiences of the residents.

Youth hostels provide an important service to young people in a time of desperate need. Yet, more thought needs to be given around the development of culture within the hostel. As it has been seen in this thesis that cultural development is largely dependent on the influences of individuals. If left unguided, individuals can influence the norms and values of a group, resulting in cultures that run in opposition to mainstream society and therefore endanger those who are part of it. Without meaningful engagements and opportunities, young people seek out relations, associations, that provide them with a sense of self and identity. Nevertheless, this thesis has demonstrated how certain behaviours such as drug use, criminal activity, and violence, are encouraged within some groups. This is an area that should be considered by those in charge of the hostel.

As a youth service, they are obligated to provide safe and suitable accommodation to children and young people (UNCRC, 1989). In this thesis, it has been mentioned that the idea of safety in hostels is highly contested. However, when considering a resident's individual understanding of safety and suitability, several topics were discussed. Many of the residents complained about 'strangers' visiting the hostel. This made residents feel insecure, preventing some from wanting to leave their rooms or access the communal areas. These strangers were often ex-residents who came back to the hostel for informal support of some kind. It was apparent that staff members often spent a lot of time with the ex-residents, preventing them from focussing their attentions to the existing residents at the hostel. Ex-residents also played a role in reproducing previous negative cultures among the existing residents.

If there was more regulation regarding the return of ex-residents, it would free up more time for staff members, make some of the existing residents feel safer, and prevent previous cultures from reproducing in the hostel. Obviously, this idea would involve providing a contact for ex-residents, where they can receive ongoing support, rather than being solely dependent on their previous support workers.

Further Research

The research that took place in this thesis has opened doors for numerous areas of research. Firstly, there is a need for more research around housing children (16- and 17-year olds) and young adults

(18 to 21-year olds) together in the same hostel. As mentioned in chapter 2, this can result in younger resident being exploited by older residents. This was also discussed briefly in chapter 6 when discussing the return of ex-residents. Additionally, there is a question around how much autonomy children should be given in comparison with young adults. Arguably, such inconsistencies could require different standards of rules for the pair.

A second area of research could look at how a loss of trust in the authorities can lead to young people becoming more dependent on one another for security. Many of the young people at the hostel joined groups that engaged in street culture. Within these groups they valued negative social capital, such as being tough and audacious. Not only did the group offer them a sense of belonging and identity, but it also offered them a level of security that formal authorities such as the police could not give them. This area is worthy of further research as it could help better understand why young people feel disconnected from mainstream culture and chose to engage in street cultures.

Appendix 1: Observation Information Sheet

Observation Information Sheet



"Hi, my name is Matt Howell and I am a researcher at Cardiff University. Over the next few months you might see me around CLEAR START talking to young people and staff members. I am doing this because I am interested the experiences you have when you become homeless. I believe that the best way to find out how somebody feels about something is to ask them directly. The information below aims to answer any general questions you may have. If this information sheet does not answer your question, I will be present at weekly house meetings in the hostel where you can raise any concerns. You can also ask any of the CLEAR START staff members to help or contact my supervisor through using the contact details provided below. If you do not want to be a part of my research, this is absolutely fine, just let me know and I will not include anything you share with me in my work. Thanks for taking the time to read this and I shall see you soon in the weekly house meeting".

Why am I observing Young People at the hostel?

The observations are a part of a study that looks to understand young people's experiences of crime when they become homeless in Swansea.

What will I do with the information you share with me?

All the information that you share with me is confidential and I will not share this information with anyone else. I may write things you tell me, but this will involve creating a false name and it will also not provide any information that is directly related to you.

What can you gain from getting involved?

This will give you an opportunity to voice your opinions around the topic of youth homelessness and your personal situation. It will enable you to speak out about things that you are unhappy about and that you feel needs to change.

What should you do if you have any concerns?

You do not have to take part in this study and are free to withdraw at any time. If you do not want me to observe you, all you need to do is tell me. If you don't feel comfortable with telling me, you can tell a staff member. If you have any further questions about observations or the study that I am involved with, you can contact my supervisor at Cardiff University:

Name: Janna Verbruggen

Telephone number: 02920 87 54803

Email: verbruggenji@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule

1. What was your first impression of the hostel when you came here?
2. How did you feel about the hostel after you moved in?
3. What do you like most about living at the hostel?
4. What do you like least?
5. If you were going to advise a friend on living here after you have moved out, what would you tell them?
6. Do you think the hostel is a safe place?
7. Do you think the hostel is suitable for everyone?
8. In the hostel, who do you think has the most control over everyone?
9. Do you feel that the hostel is unified?
10. If you were able to change anything in the hostel, what would you change?

Appendix 3: Focus Group Plan

Focus Group:

The focus group is an opportunity for the young people who live at the hostel to revisit a few of the areas that have arisen during the participatory observations and interviews. The areas will include the following six areas:

1. Identity.
2. Peer influences, role models and social networks.
3. Ideas about safety
4. Rules
5. Privileges and deterrents in the hostel
6. Honour, respect, and toughness.

This data shall be analysed alongside data taken from participatory observations, semi-structured interviews, and unstructured interviews, to gain a better understanding of a young people's experiences of living in a homeless youth hostel. The focus group will be useful in accessing a range of ideas, perceptions, and opinions from the young people. The focus group will also facilitate the formation of new ideas amongst the group.

The focus group shall be structured as follows:

Part 1

1. I shall make sure that the young people are happy to participate in the focus group and remind them that the discussion will be recorded. I shall ask if any of the young people have any questions in regard to the focus group. I will also make them aware that they are able to leave at any time throughout the focus group.
2. I shall ask all of the young people if they all know one another and introduce those who do not know each other.
3. I will tell the young people that the reason that they have been invited to the focus groups is that have shared many of the same experiences:
 - a. You are all young people.
 - b. You have all faced becoming homeless
 - c. You have all lived in a hostel.
 - d. You have all been expected to live alongside strangers.
 - e. Many of you have had similar problems at home.
 - f. Some of you have had issues with drugs and mental health in your lives.
 - g. Some of you occasionally have had problems with the police.
4. I will then tell them that these are the experiences that I hope to tap into during the next 45 minutes.

Part 2

1. The first area that will be discussed in the focus group is identity. This area shall be examined through a short brainstorming exercise. I shall read the young people six

vignettes and ask the young people what types of people we find living in the hostel [or what types of people are expected to be living in hostels]. I shall go around the room and ask each of the young people individually. Each idea will be written up on the whiteboard e.g., young person, homeless person, drug dealers, and drug users.

2. I shall then ask what we mean when we say, 'a young person' or 'a homeless person'. How do they view young people? How does society view young people? How do staff members view young people? Hopefully this will allow us to unravel what we mean when we compartmentalise individuals.
3. I will then individually ask what type of person the participants think that they are. They could be a mixture of the different types on the board, or they can give new examples to describe themselves.
4. I will ask them if living in the hostel has changed the way they view themselves or the way that they are viewed by others.
5. I shall move on to ask them about peer influences, role models and social networks. I will begin by asking them the following question: When a young person moves into the hostel, who contributes to influencing the way young people behave? Once again, I will use the whiteboard to make a list of influences. This might involve giving them some examples. "Who do you look up to? It could be anyone -someone on TV even.
6. I will then move on to ask them why they think these people have influence over young people at the hostel.
7. I will then ask them what impact these influences have on the lives of young people.
8. When we are discussing influences within the hostel, I will ask them if they think that sometimes young people who already live at the hostel take on the role of a teacher. If they say yes, I will ask them how?

Part 2

1. The second part of the focus group shall ask the young people about their ideas of safety. I shall begin by asking them to think back to before they moved into the hostel and ask them if they thought the hostel, was a safe place. I will use the vignettes as examples and ask them whether that character would feel safe living in the hostel.
2. I will ask questions like: What are young people who live in hostels biggest concerns or fears? What do they worry about?
3. Once we have discussed how people feel before they move into the hostel, I will ask how safe people feel after they have moved into the hostel. I will ask them to consider different personalities and ask them to consider the idea of 'safety from another person's point of view.
4. Once we have discussed the above, I shall ask them what they believe safety to be. I will use the whiteboard again and draw a mind map with the word 'safety' in the middle.
5. I shall then go on to ask the young people what makes them feel safe and what makes them feel unsafe or nervous. I hope to ask them about the authorities and ask them whether they make them feel safe or not.
6. We shall then discuss the rules of the hostel and I shall ask them which rules make them feel safe.

7. Moving slightly away from ideas of safety, I shall ask the young people which of the hostel rules are followed and why?
8. I shall then ask the young people if there are any informal in the hostel that exist amongst the young people. I shall say the following: “So there is a list of rules written by the staff members at the hostel; some you follow and some you don’t. Are there any rules amongst the young people that are not formal or official, but you follow them when you hang around with one another?”
9. I will ask the young people to try and think of some between one another.
10. Once the young people have thought of a few rules, I will ask them where they think these rules have come from.
11. I will ask the young people why they think that young people chose to follow formal rules and ignore informal rules and vice versa.
12. Moving back towards ideas of safety, do the police make you feel safe or not? Why is there a mistrust towards the police? And who would you go to if you needed protection?

Part 3

1. I will tell the young people that we are now going to move on to the third part of the group interview.
2. This part shall explore the following two questions: What are the privileges of following the rules in the hostel? What are the deterrents? I will use the whiteboard to make a note of some of the ideas.
3. I will then ask if the privileges and deterrents are the same for everyone. If not, why aren’t they the same. When asking this question, I will be exploring three separate areas: (1) How the young people feel when they are treated differently, (2) how inconsistencies impact social cohesion in the hostel [amongst staff and young people], and (3) whether privileges can sometimes be viewed as deterrents [e.g., moving on] and vice versa.

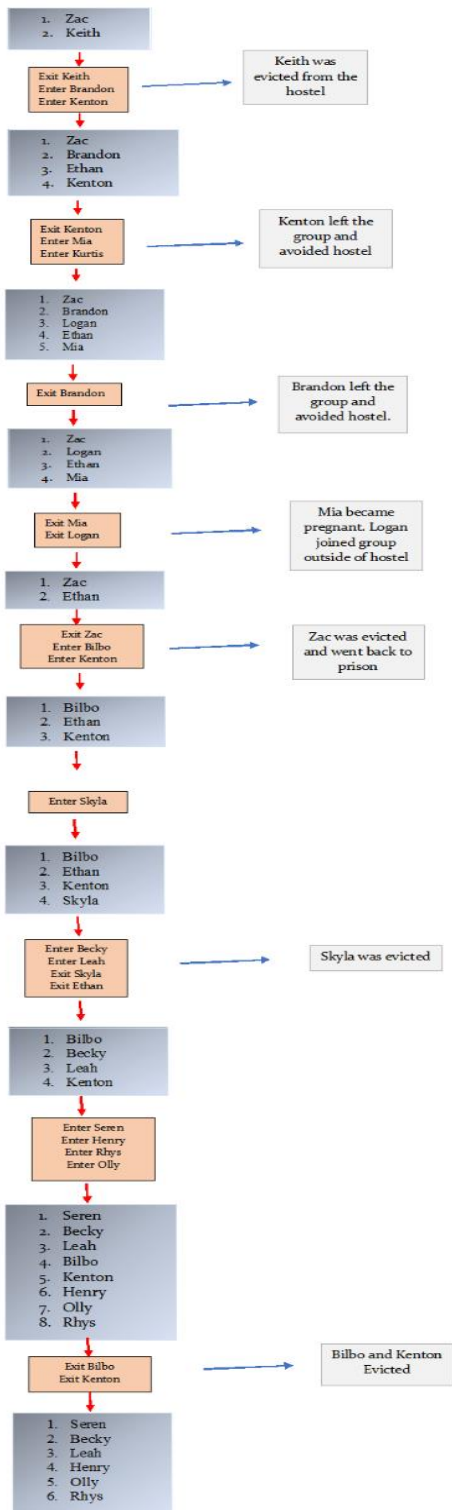
Part 4

1. This part of the focus group will draw upon areas that have previously been discussed. If they deem honour, respect, and toughness to be important, I will ask the young people why they think the three are important. Ultimately, what can they gain you?
2. I will ask them if the three can help them in other social situations such as the workplace. I will also ask them why they think it is or isn’t helpful.

Appendix 4: Focus Group Vignettes

1. Danielle is seventeen and has lived in Swansea all her life. She came to the hostel after having a fight with her mother. Danielle's older brother used to live at the hostel before he went to prison for dealing drugs. She comes from a very big family in the area and has cousins who also used to live in the hostel. Danielle regularly hangs around in town with her friends. She likes to go out drinking on the weekend and sometimes uses cocaine. She gets on with the staff most of the time but sometimes comes back to the hostel drunk and causes trouble. She has a previous conviction for assaulting a police officer when under the influence of Valium. She is in college doing beauty therapy but is on a final warning for her attendance.
2. Georgy is seventeen and is from the Mumbles. Before moving to the hostel, he lived with his grandparents. However, after arguing with his grandfather about him smoking out of his bedroom window, he was kicked out. Georgy's gran did not want to kick him out and she comes to see him on a regular basis. She comes to the hostel with lots of food shopping and gives him money. Georgy has very expensive clothes and always has a box of twenty Lambert. He always wears a clean white Adidas baseball cap and clean Nike air max trainers. In his room, he has a 42" TV, a PlayStation 4, a new iPad, and lots of computer games. Georgy does not know any of the young people at the hostel or in town. He doesn't get on with the staff members much and is often quite sarcastic when he talks to them. When he speaks to the residents of the hostel, it is usually very brief, and he pulls a funny face or laughs once they have gone.

Appendix 5: The Changing Group



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