Within Reach: An ethnographic study of homeless outreach in Manhattan

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This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Social Sciences)

Cardiff University, School of Social Sciences

May 2022

Funded by the Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC)

Abstract

This thesis contains the details, aims, questions raised, objectives, findings, and the contribution, of an ethnographic study into the everyday practices of outreach workers in Manhattan, New York. The study is informed by, and in keeping with, sociological topics and practices of research conduct. More precisely, this thesis seeks to attend to the sociological exploration and description of street homelessness and the practices of those who attempt to encounter it.

Within the follow pages is an exploration of existing literature, a discussion of methodology (both practical and conceptual), followed by a presentation of findings, observations, and an accompanying sociological-analytical commentary. The contribution of this thesis is to consider these things together as a practical methodological apparatus for the assembly, and intelligibility, of a social issue, homelessness. This is in addition, and a response, to a long-standing tradition of sociological and anthropological study of homeless populations and the services that are provided for them. The intention being to explore how a 'hard-to-find', and hard to define, social category might be accurately and usefully studied and understood.

The thesis draws on symbolic interactionist and ethnomethodological traditions to explore how the meaning and subject position of homelessness is constituted. This is done via the close detailing of the encounters between outreach workers and those in need of their services, presented as three portraits of outreach work. A discussion is put forward of how paying attention to these details (much of which are counterintuitive and challenge assumptions about street homelessness) can reveal the order through which homelessness is made sense of, how it is generated as a category, made detectable, and addressed. In doing this, the thesis speaks to the instability of homelessness as a category, showing how members of society adapt to this (looking for signs and noticing what is out of place). Demonstrated here is that to understand homelessness, proximity to it is required, sensitivities need be developed, and a longstanding engagement reveals the complexity and humanity amongst those involved.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisors, Prof Tom Hall, and Dr Robin Smith, for their guidance throughout this project. Their support, advice, and trust has enabled this study to extend far beyond what I originally thought possible, for which I am very grateful.

I am thankful to Prof Setha Low and the Anthropology department at the City University of New York for kindly hosting me during my time in New York.

I wish to show my appreciation to the Economic & Social Research Council for funding this project, and for the additional funds enabling completion of the New York fieldwork.

I would like to thank the following people for their discussion, feedback, and motivation: Dr Jon Ablitt, Dr Lucy Sheehan, Dr Luke Roach, and Patrik Dahl.

I wish to show my gratitude to my parents for their support and encouragement throughout the finalising of this project.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Patricia Jimenez, whose patience and conversation was essential for the completion of this thesis.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Thesis

The chapters to follow contain the details, aims, questions raised, objectives, findings, and the contribution, of an ethnographic study into the everyday practices of outreach workers in Manhattan, New York. The study is informed by, and in keeping with, sociological topics and practices of research conduct. More precisely, this thesis seeks to attend to the sociological exploration and description of street homelessness and the practices of those who attempt to encounter it. The exact details of how this occurred, as a research task, has much to do with 'nature' of these constituent aspects. Firstly, in relation to the nature of 'homelessness', what this may be understood as meaning and by whom, then further, of encounters, where and how one might find homelessness, and what to do with it once located. Equally as significant as the topic of study (encountering homelessness) is the means of doing so, of conducting that research. This too is taken as an opportunity for reflection; on the 'nature' of sociological exploration – with attention directed to the ethnographic method and tradition – and for the assembling and function of sociological description also. These two things, outreach work and the ethnographic method, share a purpose, at least in the case of looking for and at homelessness, and share a method also.

The working – and unworking – of topics, tasks, practices, and descriptions of homelessness and homeless outreach, constitute much of the material and surrounding arguments of this thesis. In format, this is presented in keeping with convention; an exploration of existing literature, a discussion of methodology (both practical and conceptual), followed by a presentation of findings, observations, and an accompanying sociological-analytical commentary. The contribution of this thesis is to consider these things together as a practical methodological apparatus for the assembly, and intelligibility, of a social issue, homelessness. This is in addition, and a response, to a long-standing tradition of sociological and anthropological study of homeless populations and the services that are provided for them. Accumulatively, such a 'methodological apparatus' is a concentrated attempt to address a

fundamental challenge faced by this tradition, a problem that carries across both the academic field of study and for practitioners. Namely, the problem of defining homelessness.

The difficulty of defining homelessness is identified in the review of existing literature. This forms a first chapter, one which details a history of ethnographic work on homelessness, highlights the various reoccurring themes in related studies, and examines three works closely connected to the topic, method, place, and theoretical discussions of the study conducted for this thesis. These studies approach the difficulty of defining homelessness in differing ways, looking at practical and operationalised definitions, assembled for the range of tasks that form outreach work. Equally, these works discuss how outreach work is organised around, or to accommodate, those definitions. People, homeless people, in actual occasions in which they are encountered by outreach workers, are seen to conform to available notions of what homelessness looks like – the act of 'seeing' being an important element of this. However, they equally are seen to unsettle the stability of those same notions; what homelessness is becomes flexible, in both theory and practice. Identifying this flexibility in the existing literature poses a research task, finding and using a method, a means of collecting data, in which to study a changeable and dynamic social category. This leads to the third chapter, 'Methodological considerations'.

'Methodological considerations', details the methods developed for this study and considers the 'status' of those methods in observing, recording, and commenting on, the members of society it aims to observe, and the researcher in the field. To repeat, this is an ethnographic study, one in which the researcher integrates with the daily lives of their participants, informants, with members of the society being studied. Anthropologically, the details are firm; go to New York, join with an outreach team, study their practices, leave the field. There is, however, as highlighted above, a sociologically blurry subject, homelessness (what is meant by 'blurry' is dealt with in the following chapters). How then to methodologically deal with a subject that potentially changes from situation to situation, as well being left undefined in the informative literature? To do this, ideas, analytical resources, and ontologically significant standpoints are borrowed, heavily, from a range of authors and thinkers from ethnomethodology. That is not say this is a conventional ethnomethodological study, it is not, the approach adopted and the analytical commentary offered remains ethnographic – insomuch as it is based on understandings obtained through first hand observations of the practices and meanings of outreach work, recollected over an extended time frame, a series of occasions, in which

practices are considered as repeated, collected, and patterned – but it is informed by the ethnomethodological sensibilities to be described.

The purpose of this is to reformulate homelessness from a subject which is 'there to be found', to a method. That is, the method members of society display for assembling and communicating an understanding of homelessness. The research task then, is not to define homelessness, or its typical features, but to describe the definition-work that outreach workers do, as a part of their practice, for making homelessness (along with other categories) an intelligible feature of their work. The intention with this approach is stay firmly focused on outreach worker's own methods for negotiating the object of their enquiries, rather than presuming a theoretical understanding of the subject is applicable.

The three chapters following 'Methodological Considerations' provide the details of the observed occasions. To a large extent, the way in which the study is arranged, according to those ethnomethodological principles, means that methods become a primary concern for the remainder of the thesis, forming an essential contribution of the overall study, and enabling an analytical insight to be worked into the observations presented (as fieldnotes). As such, in terms of the intended contribution, this thesis starts where it means to finish. There is however, a fundamental implication of this approach; to consider sociology (and in turn, the sociologist) as a predetermined, disciplinary, means of viewing interactions, is to distract from the actual accomplished nature of those interactions. The findings chapters then – the original contribution of this thesis – present in detail the encounters outreach workers have during the course of their work. As an attempt to familiarise the reader with those encounters, extended fieldnotes are included, with attention paid to the 'granular' details of the interactions. These are interrupted by analytical commentary, introducing sociological descriptions of the methods for assembling meanings, understandings, and practical accomplishments involved in outreach work.

The three findings chapters address three different 'stops' (places throughout the city in which the outreach team stop to meet with their clients). There is a logic, and a type of progression, to the order of these chapters. Firstly, the order addresses an observed severity of the conditions which might classify a person as homeless. This classification, and category-work – as it is referred to in the upcoming chapters – is done by the outreach team members. The sequence of chapters begins with a group of people who are not 'homelessness enough', secondly, a group

who are firmly homeless, and lastly, with a person whose condition is so severe, extreme, to the point in which a categorisation as homeless is no longer the most adequate description.

The chapters follow the social resources necessary for both entrance into and exit from, being considered as homeless by the outreach team. The category-work is a continuous feature of the analytical commentary, in part due to the ethnomethodological influences, and further a way of showing how when outreach workers talk about people, about individuals, their talk is often about those people as categories, or as types: types of clients, types of homeless, types of person. It is a means of describing the lay sociological work that members of society do in the course of their everyday activities. Enabled by this is the possibility of talking about individuals not only in terms of personal biography, of a person's story (which is, of course, often interesting in its own right) but sociologically also; how individuality is social resource, a category in use, implicated in the local organisation of social life and of outreach work. As the chapters progress, this aspect becomes increasingly important to reiterate, as the discussion of outreach work shifts from how practitioners interact with groups, to how they deal with individuals – often individuals who are difficult, have complex needs, and chaotic behaviours (prevalent themes in the existing literature).

The descriptions, made up of fieldnotes, follow from a long-standing tradition of ethnographic study into homeless populations and the care available to them. Straightforwardly, this study adds to that field of research and to the available materials on this subject. In the ethnographic approach, and the choice of location (downtown Manhattan), the descriptions here layer on top of those studies that have been conducted in the exact same places (to the metre in some cases), although, at another point in time. As such, the observations here serve to update these existing works, to test their methods and commentaries, and extend their analyses. That extension is not only in the substantive detailing of outreach work practices but, as mentioned, is strongly oriented to the methodological and ontological considerations of this field; of how a 'hard-to-find', and hard to define, social category might be accurately and usefully studied and understood. Although it could be claimed that this approach 'fills a gap' in research and discussion (the approach adopted here, ethnomethodologically informed ethnography of outreach work, is an underrepresented area) the material here heavily capitalises on the contributions of some works in particular. Most notably is Kim Hopper's (2003) 'Reckoning with homelessness', Tom Hall's (2017) 'Footwork', and Michael Rowe's (1999) 'Crossing the border'. This study aims to refine and at times, correct, certain aspects of the existing literature,

attempting to fine tune the methodological tools (referring to the attention paid to category use in interaction) that sociological research has available to it. Simultaneously, this thesis represents a modest continuation of an ongoing conversation about care provision for street homeless populations, of 'seeing' need in the city, and of encountering difference.

Chapter 2: Literature Review – Definitional Difficulties

Introduction

In this chapter I will examine a selection of works surrounding the topic of homelessness, homeless outreach, and the ethnographic study of this 'topic'. Homelessness has long featured as a subject of interest and concern for ethnographers. The visibility is often the starting point, of poverty, of inequality, and other imbalances. Homelessness is very much there to be seen, or rather, it is very much 'seeable', to the ethnographer, the law, the pedestrian, the journalist, even to 'the city'. However, it is equally commented on that the nature of homelessness consists also of invisible aspects alongside the visible. Things, people, and places are hidden from immediate sight as the result of a selection of preferences; individual to institutional, or some combination of both. The tension between the publicness and the hidden condition of homeless people's lives, if nothing else invites curiosity, at least when exoticized. The visible and hidden 'nature' of homelessness, for those whose work is considered in the following pages, is a central problem or topic. How exactly that nature is represented, and what that nature represents, varies significantly. This offers the opportunity for some essential distinctions and definitions to be made which prove instructive for building a sense of the contributions of the existing literature on this topic, and where amongst those contributions this study can be located.

Of the work included here all of which is about homelessness in some way, there is an omission of a lengthy list of other publications which too are oriented to the subject. An initial filtering of all the possibilities necessarily took place guided by three features of my own study: the study is an ethnographic one, it took place in New York in the borough of Manhattan, and is focussed on the practices of outreach workers for encountering homeless clients. These features assist in a first locating the logic (regarding methodology, location, and subject matter) behind the

discussion of certain works in the stead of others. Overviews on the subject and history of homelessness more broadly do feature in this chapter and are better positioned to adopt a wider scoped discussion of a more extensive selection of references (see for example, Hopper (2003), Jenks (1994), Lee. Tyler. And Wright. (2010), and Meanwell. (2012)). This is not to state that only ethnographic studies in the sociological tradition are considered here, neither to suggest that homelessness and outreach in the way it is talked about in this chapter is distinct to New York – although it is certainly the case that New York is distinctly linked to the topic of homelessness. And further, it is not being suggested that only discussions of outreach worker's practices are informative or relevant for the direction of the research project. The purpose of the following discussion is to examine the ways in which the nature of homelessness, and the nature of help available to homeless people, has been written about. The how, where, and who, has been limited according to the above reasoning of relevance.

To attempt a definition of the term 'homelessness' is to begin to generally summarise much of the work that will be included in this chapter. Its meaning in actuality, and as a concept or a category of some kind, is hard to pin down precisely in any way which carries from one occasion to another. Still, even with – or perhaps due to – the lack of a definitive definition, homelessness is undoubtedly 'there' and recognised as such. Its meaning is simultaneously nebulous and clear. It is the case that the word when used does not necessarily account for what it suggests in a literal sense (being without a home) but can be an adequate description of some collection of observable circumstances. The close study of 'adequate descriptions' and the circumstances in which they are made possible is, in some way, the subject matter of this study. As such, for my own research purposes, a stable definition of homelessness, even one with flexible parameters, is not a concern for the researcher but becomes one for the members of society who assemble circumstances from which definitions arise. Keeping this precursor close, there are benefits for momentarily dabbling in definitions as they appear in the various publications to follow. Primarily, to distinguish between those who approach homelessness as social problem, as a case for public health experts, and for policy makers. In those cases, the literal reading of the term is functional, and homelessness comes to mean just what it suggests, so as a solution can be implemented – housing people without homes. The distinction is between being interested in studying and developing the kind of expertise needed to organise solutions to homelessness as a social problem, and of the study of the kind of expertise needed to engage with homeless people face to face on the street. This project, and the proceeding chapter, is concerned with the latter.

With this definitional quandary in mind, the contribution of this chapter will be to examine how homelessness has been topicalised and defined by various parties and how, using which reasoning, they have made it possible to arrive at their conclusions – if a conclusion is arrived at all. The eventual function this review will have for the overall study is, perhaps paradoxically, rather than identifying with or building upon those definitions, to put them aside temporarily, observe members of society's own topicalising of homelessness, and see if those definitions stand. The intention with this is not to prove or disprove any former studies, or to take a particularly strong and sure stance of different definitions, but to linger amongst the existing writings on homelessness and its various meanings, at times noticing where an update might be offered (intentionally or not), and tentatively testing the viability of different studies of homelessness.

For this chapter, the focus will traverse different kinds of existing literature. Different in purpose, discipline, date published and so on. The aim is first to build a slightly broad sense of what the ethnographic writings on homeless can provide a discussion of the topic. With this, there is general chronological logic at work in how these are presented. The chapter then moves through common themes amongst the literature and examine some examples. The focus and closest examination of literature comes in the latter half of the chapter in which attention is paid to three core contributions, all of which are studies of homelessness, using the ethnographic method, and have (two more obviously than one) a geographical similarity to this study. Each of these works represents a significant contribution to this study in terms of providing insightful preparatory information for fieldwork, highlighting analytical themes, and in one case, a clear example of the kind of ethnography and analytical practice that is avoided in this project. The exact details will follow, however, as an organising principle this chapter moves through a broad look at work on homelessness to an increasingly specific one, with a guiding question of how a definition of homelessness has been treated in the existing literature.

Ethnography and Homelessness

Looking to the 'definitional difficulties' that homelessness might present, the ethnographic works that follow offer information on both the 'nature' of homelessness in its situated details (situated in a moment in time, place, or circumstance) and a commentary on how that nature is made possible, how it is organised, recognisable, according to the sociological details they offer. Reviewing how it is that various researchers have 'defined' homelessness enables the locating, amongst the landscape of existing literature, how this study might be more precisely considered. Such a practice opens the possibility for comparisons to be made in terms of observed circumstances, practices and methods surrounding homelessness (and in this case, care practices towards homeless people). Features that are both general and particular can be informative when discussing other's discussions of the topic. There is the further opportunity to look at how different authors and ethnographers have gone about the definitional work themselves as authors, how they represent participants' perspectives, present observations, construct arguments, or possibly take for granted certain features (invoking the kind of textual analysis Atkinson (1990) does in 'The Ethnographic Imagination: Textual constructions of reality' here). Further again, the kind of contribution this study offers can be contextualised according to the substance of the information available; is this an update on previous studies? Is the substance much the same as others only in a different time and place? What is the specific contribution? Such questions help guide this study overall and prompt a line of questioning into its own logics, both in preparation for, and for conducting, the eventual analysis of data.

The first-hand observation of homelessness offers much in terms of addressing the question of what the nature of homelessness is. It enables the researcher to describe who the homeless are, how they got there, and how they manage to survive as homeless people. The details of this are not only of those people caught up in the throes of life, but also of ingenuity and resourcefulness alongside poverty, crime, and vice. Included here, is not only details of personal troubles but of ways of interacting with institutions, laws, public perceptions. Reviewing ethnographies of homelessness serves two purposes. First, it provides an illustration of how the topic of homelessness has been represented in sociological (and anthropological) texts. Second, it offers the chance for a first commentary on the ethnographic methods for studying homelessness.

The partnering of the ethnographic method and the topic of homelessness, for anthropology sociology, has been prevalent throughout the 20th Century and into the 21st. A chronological beginning to this could be located amongst the earliest uses of participant observation by the Chicago School of Sociology, beginning with the school's first published monograph, 'The Hobo: the sociology of the homeless man' by Nels Anderson (1923). An earlier mention, although one less firmly linked to contemporary sociology or methodological innovation therein, is Josiah Flynt's (1899 [2012]) 'Tramping with Tramps Studies and Sketches of Vagabond Life'. Alongside these is George Orwell's (1933 [2013]) 'Down and Out in Paris and London', a work which Erving Goffman (1959: 123) describes as an example of 'downward-participant observation', which is perhaps a suitable description for Anderson's and Flynt's contributions also; they share the method of participating for the sake of studying, in a poverty they would otherwise not necessarily experience first-hand. For sociological theorising this was already not an alien concept, with resemblances to Fredrich Engel's 1845 (1993) 'The Condition of the Working Class in England'. Neither was this approach unfamiliar for others interested in exploring poverty by method of 'downward-participating' in it (albeit with an exit plan), Jack London's 'People of the Abyss' (1903 [2012) and Jacob Riis' (1980 [2004]) 'How the other half lives' being two examples.

From amongst this small collection of loosely connected and early examples, it is possible to already notice a contribution of this approach to both a line of sociological reasoning and theorising, as well as a contribution to addressing the issues faced by what we can uncritically call, 'homeless' people. Paying attention to the everyday details of lived experiences and circumstances produces an insight into both the subject and a sociological understanding more generally. Nels Anderson's work produced descriptions of the lives of homeless men in the Chicago area as well as contributing to the more general aim of understanding the organisation of the city. Orwell, championed for his level of detail and full immersion into the culture being studied, offers insight into the precarious working and living conditions of Parisians and Londoners, suggesting a practical solution to vagrancy and hunger would be to turn the flophouse yards into gardens and to train homeless people to grow vegetables. Later, Goffman (1959) takes Orwell's descriptions of kitchen work in Paris to illustrate one aspect of 'backstage/frontstage' could be understood as. The dual purposing of ethnographic work on homelessness, for description and theory, is common here and continues in the following works also. Added to this, is another feature that reverberates through much of the early ethnographic work on the topic of homelessness. The notion that to study homelessness (or at least,

circumstances of poverty), one must cross a border of some kind, a social border of poverty, inequality, circumstance, and a spatial one as homelessness exists somewhere 'else'. The way this looked, as Goffman notes, is of 'downward-participation', that socially and spatially, homelessness is something other and away from what the researcher is. This an aspect of the literature that will be revisited later in this chapter.

Despite introducing this section with a collection of works that date back to the first half of the 20th Century and before, the majority of the discussion is to be had about literature published in the later half of that century and beyond. This, in part, is due to the definitional difficulties that this chapter is attending to. Although the term 'homeless' has been in common use within the social sciences for some time, and in New York specifically – early published examples being Barnes (1915-1916), and Rice (1918) – what that means is hard to pin down. Terms such as 'hobo', 'beggar', 'vagrant', 'migrant worker', 'bum' and 'transient' were also prevalent and often interchanged despite referring to specific characteristics of their incumbents (see Crouse (1986) for an overview and Hopper (2003:16)). There are keen differences between each of these terms and what they represent for a period in history, some of which can be explored through Anderson's extended work (see Anderson. 1923, 1932, 1934, 1940, 1961, 1975). These commentaries are far removed – by time, political change, the city, and what is offered to homeless people – from the context of this study to warrant more than a passing reference. Moreover, the 'homelessness' of interest for this study is distinct from the terms used above, all of which refer to what has become a heroic national image of 'men on the move' (Anderson (1940)), pioneers in a North American labour force, defined by geographic mobility and the consistent pursuit of a transient 'free' way of working life.

As a distinction, the homelessness that is being looked at here is urban homelessness, in the city, on the streets and sidewalks, and in public spaces therein. Defined firstly by the location in which they can be found and often, the episodic nature of their circumstances. This 'variant' of homelessness came about with a change in the demographic characteristics of the visible poor in the United States and the resources available to them (Hopper and Hamberg (1986). Also see, Jenks (1994)) and with it came a shift in the orientations of ethnographic studies of homelessness. As Hopper (1991) has argued, this shift in both the type of homelessness and the study of it represents a change in the way homelessness has been commonly presented. He suggests that leading up to the 'new' variant of homelessness much of the research emphasised a cultural 'otherness' about homeless people. Whereas the revival of ethnographic studies of

homelessness that emerged in the 1970's and 80's was oriented to the psychiatric 'special problems' and disorders (another type of otherness) that became associated with homeless people (Hopper, 2003:59).

From the studies that followed on from this point in time, there are some common features. One, is the detailing of the kinds of survival skills (material and social) that homeless people employ in their daily lives, often with the intention of addressing stereotyped notions of the homeless as maladaptive. Examples of this include Snow and Anderson's (1987) 'Identity work among the homeless' and by the same authors, 'Down on Their Luck: A Study of Homeless Street People' (1993), Dordick's (1997) 'Something Left to Lose', Duneier's (1999) 'Sidewalk' (see also, Snow and Mulchay (2001) 'Space, Politics, and the Survival Strategies of the Homeless', Bourgois and Schonberg (2009) 'Righteous Dopefiend', and Gibson (2011) 'Street Kids: Homeless Youth, Outreach, and Policing New York's Streets'). The range of resourceful solutions to everyday problems that are explored in works such as these provide an insight into the ways in which people can maintain themselves whilst homeless. Further, there is a description of how communities – characterised by the adaptation to difficult circumstances and the resilience to endure them – are formed and organised by those experiencing extreme forms of poverty.

Stigma

One repeatedly noted issue related to homelessness is the stigma that comes with being recognised as homeless. The work in which Snow and Anderson present (1987, 1993. See also Snow et al, 1986) contributes to the literature on homelessness specifically, and further, to a sociological understanding of stigma and discredited identities more generally. In exploring the character of life on the street, they argue that homeless people use 'identity talk' to 'salvage the self' by establishing themselves as different from other homeless people or street people, and by distancing themselves from service providers. Further strategies described include the embracing of the identity of 'street person' by deepening social relationships on the street or by presenting alternative personal reasoning for their circumstances (religiously motivated denial of wealth, for example). Snow and Anderson explore how homeless individuals construct narratives of injustice and misfortune, such as 'I'm down on my luck'. The contribution is

valuable for both the discussion of 'street identities' that are observable amongst those experiencing homelessness, and for the sociological enquiry into the presentation, negotiation, and maintenance of identities more generally (building on the foundational work of Goffman, 1959, 1963 and Howard Becker, 1963).

There are some things of significance to consider here. Primarily, that homeless people *themselves* have distinguishable methods for negotiating their identities in direct relation to the circumstances which make them recognisable as 'homeless'. This challenges the notion of a 'hierarchy of needs', as broadly established by Abraham Maslow (1943). Maslow proposed that physical needs (food, shelter, safety) are of primary importance, with needs related to self-identity not being relevant until the physical variety of need is met. Snow and Anderson found, in their initial research, that issues of self-identity are more salient than Maslow's hierarchy might suggest, at least when considering 'survival' on the street. The back and forth of needs, and their salience, features throughout the literature on homelessness, however, for my purposes here I consider this point significant in the following ways. First, that a definition of homelessness and a kind of identity that might be interactionally bound to it, is troublesome, dynamic, and observably (for Snow and Anderson, and for Goffman also) socially negotiated. Second, that this negotiation impacts how those who are experiencing homelessness use identity-work to navigate their encounters with service providers. In essence, a reduction of observations of encounters between service providers and homeless people to a matter of 'meeting a need' is an unsatisfactory analysis. There are contingencies to these kinds of interactions that are best examined through their production and negotiation in everyday life – this provides a foundational point for this study's choice of both method (ethnographic) and the analytical tools used (symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology).

Robin Smith (2011) goes some way in doing just this kind of examination, with less emphasis on the 'survival strategies' and taking the interactions themselves as an object of study. Smith attends to how interactional order (referring here to Goffman, (1983) and Rawls' (1987) commentary on this) in locally occasioned encounters between outreach workers and homeless clients, provides a case in which role and identity are observably negotiated and accomplished. Alongside these interactions (and the methods for accomplishing them) we find not only that they enable the production of identities and roles such 'being a client' but that this situated understanding of identity, role, and stigma, enable other interactional possibilities that wander away from 'preformed' notions of stigmatic categories (such as homeless). Smith argues (see

also Lofland, 2003) that this close attention to interactional order 'allows for the discovery of the weak points of seemingly fixed and obdurate structures and reveals where the cracks may yet appear' (Smith, 2011: 373). The consequences of this for reflexive research practice and the sociological descriptions it produces are significant.

Smith's commentary confronts a feature of the ethnographic literature on homeless that is tied to our theme of definitional difficulties. The 'preformed' definitions of homelessness, and decontextualised notions of this subject are a useful yet, only and always, partially finished description. Ethnographies of homelessness contribute to the construction of decontextualised (theoretical in some cases) definitions of homelessness. Smith emphasises that the ethnographic method is well equipped to not take those notions for granted and can do this by looking to participants' own negotiation of identities via occasioned categorisation practices/encounters. The purpose of this work is not to disqualify previous, or ontologically variant, research but to provide further descriptions of cases in which members of society themselves establish the definitions (for their own practical reasoning) of the subject. As Smith outlines, this orientation to people's own definition-work, which is not abstracted from survival techniques, can be informative and instructive for both sociologists and practitioners. This has a bearing on this chapter's problem, the 'difficulty' of defining homelessness. The difficulty is not for the researcher, ethnographer, or professional sociologist to solve, but an observable accomplishment of the members of society who make these definitions as part of their everyday life. What comes to be seen in later chapters is that homelessness, for those members, is not always so hard to define but poses difficulties that certainly wander from 'preformed' notions of stigma, identity, and categories.

The Geography of Homelessness

Where exactly the encounters with homeless people might take place features as a prominent topic amongst the available literature on the subject. The 'where' in relation to homelessness becomes increasingly important for the discussions in this chapter, building to the point in which homelessness is made definable precisely because of where it tends to occur. Gwendylyn

Dorick (1997) is an ethnographer who has explored experiences of homelessness, her commentary focuses heavily on the aspect of location and how it features in the way homeless people construct and manage identities. Dorick suggests that the kind of social relations that she observed during her own study were often centred around the places and spaces in which they occur. The use of certain kinds of public space for shelter or security, and the relations that were produced within spaces specifically made for the homeless (shelters, soup kitchens, drop-in centres) were a foundational resource (materially and socially) in everyday lives of homeless people. Identities amongst homeless people became firmly attached to places they 'chose' to occupy. The location-bound features of how people account for their lived experiences were used to distinguish between different kinds of homelessness and, to some extent, establish social hierarchies from those 'kinds'. Dorick comments that the use of these locational distinctions was more common than any other demographic characteristic.

Whilst the focus on space, place, and location is a prevalent one within the literature on homelessness, it is often the publicness of these places, alongside the fact that people are occupying them beyond their intended function, that raises issue and interest for researchers. An example is the use of public transport for shelter. Nichols and Cazares (2011) examine some of these cases. An article entitled 'Subways are for sleeping' by Edmund Love (1956) (appearing in Goffman, 1959) is a well-known description of the use of public transport in this. 'Subways are for sleeping' also includes a description on how to use other public spaces for rest and shelter – referring to waiting areas in train stations – and how to appear as though you are waiting with a purpose, not as a homeless person. Hopper (2003) provides some similar discussion of these methods in his observations of homeless people living in an airport. Both share a commentary relating to the negotiation of the use of these spaces with other, often the intended, users of space or those tasked to police the area. The essential tension that appears in this negotiation is one of avoiding being seen *as homeless* in places that are not intended to accommodate people identifiable as that category. Being homeless in those public places means not belonging (as a strong case) or represents a misusing of that space.

A further note on 'spaces', with links to the topic of public transport, is the case in which distinctions of public and private are less of the concern and the issue is more about the appropriateness of certain place for human habitation. Being referred to here is the case which Jennifer Toth (1993) explores in 'Mole People'. This involves people who are living within the New York subway tunnels and official efforts to remove them has the result of those dwelling

subterrestrially becoming increasingly difficult to find, as the efforts to expel them serve to push them 'deeper' into the tunnels. There is a discussion within this publication of the 'search' for privacy and permanency of somewhere to live. These conditions increasingly lead people into extremely hazardous circumstances. Moreover, if being seen as homeless causes issue then 'Mole People' shows the attempt of an unhoused group attempting to recede from view altogether.

As a kind of counter to the literature above, there is simultaneously a focus on places and spaces that are occupied by homeless people by design, shelters, soup kitchens, drop-in centres, and the like. The literature on homeless shelters is extensive and includes ethnographic work including a standout study by Robert Dejarlais (1997) entited 'Shelter Blues' and a recent journalistic example entitled 'This Is All I Got' (Sandler, 2020) alongside an ongoing body of work sponsored by organisations and institutions (Hopper, 2003 provides something of an overview of this work up to the early 2000's and Baxter and Hopper (1981) make an in-depth analysis of shelter provision in New York in 'Private lives/Public Matters').

Of the places in which homeless people are found and looked for, the street, the sidewalk, holds a particular interest and issue for researchers. Notable amongst these is Mitchel Duneier's (1999) 'Sidewalk', in which he brings (what I would describe as) his 'stumble-upon' style of street corner ethnography to the subject of street vendors, which comes to include homelessness. He looks at the lives of street vendors (some which live homeless) in downtown Manhattan as they work and live on the sidewalk. Duneier's descriptions touch upon the 'survival strategies' and the identity work as described previously here, and further he discusses how they do this, negotiate this, in relation to their place on the sidewalk. Having a place there not only means to establish a spot, a territory, in which a group of men set up their stalls, but also being a part of sidewalk life, and by extension, part of the city. Their lives are intertwined with pedestrians, police, costumers and other business owners, and Duneier himself as they seek to establish, and in some cases, defend their right to be there. 'Sidewalk' does explore the conditions of homelessness, but perhaps it would be more accurate to say Duneier's observations are of 'street-based' people and activities. He details issues of life on the street, race, masculinity, addiction, networks of trust and friendship, most of which remain within the confines of a single street. 'Homelessness' dips in and out of relevance amongst these topics but the point remains that if you are looking for those you might 'see' as homeless, you will find them on the street, on the sidewalk. The experiences of those termed as homeless are vastly diverse, Duneier shows

some of these and Hopper (writing shortly after the publication of 'Sidewalk') offers the following take on the subject:

> *'It would take an elastic notion of homelessness to accommodate this unwieldy mix of station and circumstance. Indeed, the suspicion quickly mounts that seeking to impose order on the hodgepodge of dislocation, extreme poverty, migrant work, unconventional ways of life, and bureaucratic expediency that have, at one time or another, been labelled homeless may well be a fool's errand.'*
>
> (Hopper, 2003: 17–18)

Such a comment is used here to highlight the recognition of this elasticity within the study of homelessness – street homelessness in particular - and that a 'fool's errand' may well be considered another way, as a research task. The quote further serves to summarise the first half of this chapter and acts as an introduction to the second. Up to this point, this chapter has reviewed a fairly wide range of publications that range across points in time, disciplinary boundaries, and focus regarding the topic and definition of homelessness. The discussion moves now to the three core contributions, Kim Hopper's 'Reckoning with Homelessness' (2003), Tom Hall's 'Footwork' (2017), and lastly Michael Rowe's 'Crossing the border' (1999). The sequence here has its logic, starting with Hopper as his commentary provides a good amount of context to the precise study which this thesis engages in, an ethnography of homeless outreach in New York. Hopper's work is significant in the field of studies of outreach, but particularly significant for the New York context. His studies contributed to policy developments and legal precedents that shape the form of homeless outreach in New York today (he contributed to and appeared as special witness during the creation of the 'Callahan Decree'). Within this, he too addresses the difficulty of landing on a solid definition of homelessness and makes efforts to account for this when considering homelessness as a public health issue. Hall's 'Footwork' follows.

Hall (2017) builds upon Hopper, although the location of study is different (Cardiff rather than New York), Hall *looks* at homelessness in a carefully formulated way. He emphasises that *seeing*, visibility, is an essential element of how homelessness is dealt with. In doing this he provides a commentary based in ethnographic fieldwork, that shows outreach work and homelessness as similar, in movement, mobility, and in ways of seeing. Hopper and Hall contribute productively

to the foundation of my own study with content on homelessness, outreach practices, New York, and the methodological considerations (for both researcher and outreach workers) of looking at homelessness. Rowe's 'Crossing the Border' (1999) comes last and stands out in the contribution it provides. Whilst there is plenty of useful information and description, again based in ethnographic fieldwork, Rowe's approach to studying homelessness and outreach practices highlight some essential issues for consideration. Definitional issues on the one hand, and methodological considerations also. As methodology is the focus of the chapter following this one, Rowe's approach acts as an example of what this study intends not to do, the approach that is avoided, and so placing this work last serves as an introduction to the following chapter as well as a final consideration of a relevant text. Firstly, to Hopper.

Hopper: 'Reckoning with Homelessness'

The street plays a significant role in what homeless is presented as in Hopper's work and the questions he poses about the definitional difficulties surrounding homelessness features heavily in this project. To be without a home means that at some point privacy will become unavailable and there will be no option but to go public with both problems and solutions. Herein we start to find definitions of homelessness, not as list of possible circumstances, but in relation to the fact that those circumstances are available to see. Hall (2017, and 2018) writes that to be homeless is to have gone public with your problems, the exhibiting of these (moving reference to Hopper, 2003:62) signifies a disconnection with social values of 'belonging somewhere' and offers an initial explanation for the stigmatised status of homeless persons. Which is not to suggest that the circumstances, problems, personal issues that are commonly associated with homeless people are unique to them as a social group or category, it is that they are without the privacy needed to conceal those circumstances. Hopper provides some conceptual groundwork for this kind of definition, which consists of two framing constructs (2003:17) with which he intends to promote a move away from surface appearances and towards underlying processes. The constructs are 'abeyance' and 'liminality'. 'Abeyance' refers to the mechanisms devised to absorb surplus people and reduce imbalances in social cohesion by those with a redundant position in society. Taken from historical sociology this construct is an important aspect of

Hopper's approach towards a definition and informative this study's aims. As such, a more substantial direct quote might be excused:

> *'Note how abeyance subtly reframes the scandal of homelessness. Contrary to the moral calculus of advocates, the decisive issue becomes not whether homelessness will be "solved" but how; not whether adequate resources will be devoted to this problem, but how what counts as "adequate" will be determined; not whether a coherent response will take shape, but how the relative proportions of relief and repression that make for "coherent" policy will be calculated; not whether, when all is said and done, some measure of discomfort will be exacted of ordinary citizens, but how this potentially divisive spectacle will be held in check. The question is how people with insufficient resources to purchase housing on the market (and unable or disinclined to turn to friends and family) will be accommodated, and this remains the question even if such reabsorptive mechanisms never proclaim themselves as "solutions to homelessness".'*
>
> (Hopper, 2003:19)

The purpose with which he uses abeyance is a precautionary one, drawing the eye to the unseen, sometimes unofficial mechanisms of 'accommodation' for homeless persons that run in the background of what is commonly visible (on the street). If homelessness is readily defined by its visibility, Hopper suggests seeking out the invisible counterpart, or at the very least to be aware of it. The commentary here is in no small way a parallel one to the appropriateness of an ethnographic method to do that looking and, moreover, directs focus to the methods of ordinary members of society 'to look' also; visibility is a task for all parties involved.

Now to liminality. Liminality, as Hopper uses it, is taken from anthropology to refer to the 'states of passage' through which members of a society travel. People who are suspended "betwixt and between" societal roles, not occupying a fixed position. Typically, a state of liminality can describe a leading towards something new (a rite of passage, a pilgrimage, an initiation phase) or to a point in which 'life as usual' is put on hold for whatever number of reasons (a natural disaster, civil disturbances, wars), there is the expectation of returning to normality. Hopper describes this as the '*suspension of the rule of the commonplace*; *intermingling with unfamiliar others in strange settings, often mobile circumstances; and a heightened sense of uncertainty, of things being unfinished and in process*' (2003: 20). There is, however, the possibility that the liminal position

is extended, perhaps indefinitely, within which time the displacement becomes routine itself and '*the tug of broken ties and forgone appointments weakens, the becalmed voyager finds a substitute normalcy taking shape*' (2003: 20). It suggests an alternative destination (spatially, socially, culturally), people wandering off-route and winding up somewhere other than that notion, and that place, of normalcy. To be homeless is to be in a liminal position, to be outside of, or having not yet reached, the usualness of life.

These framing constructs of abeyance and liminality, rather than providing a definition that exhausts its usefulness when circumstances shift, positions homelessness as being available for defining by looking to the circumstances and conditions which produce and maintain it. Hopper makes his intentions clear, consisting of an analysis of both structural forces and direct actions that might be understood in order to better the chances of those in indeterminate places within society and the mechanisms of guidance out of those places.

Hopper's research, largely in partnership with Ellen Baxter, materialises in a series of ethnographic works based primarily in Manhattan and New York State. These works represent some of the early examples of ethnographic work with the 'new' homeless and with outreach efforts in New York which this study intends to build upon. Moreover, much of the commentary which Hopper includes resonates with the findings of this study, not only related to the locations of his observations (much of which are exactly the same places) but the concerns and issues that both the homeless people and outreach workers face in their encounters and their surviving on the street. Hopper's research is also significant for the objectives here insomuch as his studies and work were used in the founding of the outreach organisations that I myself (as an ethnographer) was able to participate with.

Hopper's ethnographic work seeks to address something of the social response to homelessness which, he suggests, includes a mix of pity and abhorrence, the impulse to care and the impulse to avoid, consisting of both acceptance and exile (2003:64). The research is posed as an intentional opposition to the idea that the nature of a social response can be understood according to a theorised 'defectiveness' on the part of the homeless – a common feature in literature on the 'hobohemia' of the 1930's and 40's and one which reverberates through early psychiatric studies. Rather, he sets out with the intention of determining how it is that 'street people' survive and why it might be that they have 'chosen' to do so over the alternatives of available services. Within this, Hopper explores the details of how people became homeless in

the first place, and the nature of available public provision once that situation had been confirmed. The findings of this were that many of those 'street people' justify remaining so due to the poor condition of the available alternatives – a challenge to the appropriateness of describing these circumstances as down to 'choice'. The most prominent of these discussions surrounds the use of shelters. The research found that many of those who were sleeping on the streets prefer to avoid the shelters due to the conditions being dangerous, demanding of personal information, unsanitary, often involving the loss or theft of personal belongings, and lacking privacy. However, the study was not restricted only to those who spent their nights on the street.

Hopper's studies were conducted using a 'working definition' of homelessness (2003:66) which includes those whose night-time residence was a public or private shelter, a park bench, street corner, doorway, subway, train station, bus and ferry terminal, abandoned buildings, those found at breadlines, or in hospital emergency rooms. As a definition, this list served the purpose of being practically easy to impose (for the sake of doing observations) and in-line with the 'official approaches' to recognising homeless people. The observations were done by looking in these places, mostly in the evenings, some in daylight. Hopper notes that observations made during the day produced different characteristics for making homeless people noticeable than at night. For example, he observes that people's presence in public places during post-commuter/pre-shopper hours and, moreover, their repeated presence for day after day was sometimes a telling feature. Further again, Hopper finds that, within these definitional parameters it is not always easy to tell who is homeless, neither is it always obvious who is not (2003:70). At night, looking in the places mentioned above, the 'signs' of homelessness were more easily available (people sleeping out of doors).

Throughout Hopper's descriptions he details the methods used by himself as an ethnographer and by the service providers, including outreach workers, to find, identify, and communicate with people who may be homeless. There are multiple similarities in how these methods appear. His own aim is to conduct short interviews, build ongoing relationships with 'street people', and get a sense of the provision available to homeless people. In doing this, he often finds himself bridging the gap between the role of ethnographer and service provider/outreach worker, regularly giving advice and information to those he encounters, he points people towards the services which he is ultimately assessing as a part of his research, offers people money, food, coffee, cigarettes both in exchange for conversation and because of the immediacy of the need

of some of those he encounters. This is made possible by becoming increasingly familiar with the work practices of the outreach teams and the assistance that is available to the homeless throughout the city. Bridging the gap in what might otherwise be considered 'different' roles of ethnographer and outreach worker becomes relevant for Hopper because of the nature and severity of the circumstances that many of the homeless people face on an everyday basis.

Much of the work which Hopper presents is concerned with actual cases of people living homeless. Through interviewing and observing, he establishes a sense of what the nature of homelessness is and what the attitudes are towards the available services. The conclusionary comments of this ethnographic work regarding the 'routes into homelessness' consist of three prevalent aspects, housing scarcity, unemployment, and deinstitutionalisation. He highlights the decreasing availability of affordable housing and lack of opportunities for work leading to a high level of housing insecurity, pushing people to the streets and shelters. In addition to this, a shift in state policy in the New York area at the time resulted in state hospitals releasing a large number of patients who were previously partially or completely reliant on state support. These kinds of structural circumstantial shifts appear consistently in the literature of homelessness (see for example, Duneier (1999), Hall (2017), Rowe (1999)). What Hopper found, however, is that psychiatric disorder in itself is neither necessary nor (or only rarely) a sufficient *cause* (and explanation) for homelessness. Rather, the conditions of living that people were faced with in public and private shelters in combination with those people's diminishing skills to cope with those difficulties, appeared as a common account for becoming homeless. These routes *into* homelessness and their difficulties were then partnered with difficulties *out of* it. An often-cited complaint of the service providers and outreach workers would be that a consistent response from those on the street would be to reject the available assistance in favour of continuing on the street, on their own terms. This 'choice' and rejection of service was commonly attributed to the impaired judgement of would-be clients. As Hopper phrases it, "it was alleged that pathology trumped need." (2003:114).

Hopper's discussion goes on to a critical commentary on the usefulness and effectiveness of the 'warehousing' approach to providing shelter, which involves the widespread provision of basic shelter requirements but is limited to emergency/temporary shelter. For the purposes of the study here, Hopper's ethnographic descriptions and his commentary leads to some questions for consideration. The connection made between the structural conditions that produce homelessness, the provisions (and the standard of them) that are made available for homeless

people, and then the specific ways in which street encounters happen, is an important consideration for the conducting of fieldwork. This thesis is concerned with the encounters between outreach workers and homeless people it is informative to have an existing study, taking place in the exact same places, street corners, breadlines, and shelters, in which this study takes place, that makes these connections. The question that arises, is how do these encounters happen, and – in keeping with definitions – are the kinds of 'working definition' that Hopper describes still being utilised in the same ways as he describes? That 'working definitions' are being used is not so much the question, they necessarily are, but to bring the discussion back to Hopper's interests, what are the social responses to these? Hopper cites the dualistic nature of social response to homelessness, of 'the impulse to care and the impulse to avoid', however, taking his completed study into account there is the response from service providers also, those whose profession is to care for their clients. The statement that 'pathology trumps need' raises the curIosity of what sense can be made of the homeless response to the outreach role? And how, given the possible complexity of sentiment towards available assistance, does the outreach encounter proceed with the diverse range of people that come under the 'working definition' of homeless.

Hall: 'Footwork'

The following refers largely to Tom Hall's ethnographic monograph 'Footwork' (2017, also see Hall, 2009 – an article with the same title is an earlier publication by this author detailing a stage in the same fieldwork) which presents fieldwork involving participating and observing with a homeless outreach team in the city centre of Cardiff, Wales's capital city. Hall holds closely to the dealing with a definition of homelessness that Hopper initiates, recognising too that fixed definitions prove problematic when attempted to be used across situations. Instead, the focus is turned to the context and the practices with which this 'category of need', a kind of definition in itself, arises. Within these contexts, Hall notes (considering Hopper's call for an 'elastic notion of homelessness') that 'homelessness' does not always mean what it suggests and could be considered to be 'just a word' insomuch as '*depending on what you take the word to mean it isn't really homelessness at all*' (2017:69). Hall's considerations here are presented in close company

with the visibility of this particular social issue; that looking (as a practice) at homelessness is both the means of putting together a definition and is the essential feature of its defining characteristics. So, when he says that homelessness is just a word what he does not mean is that no such thing exists, but that to understand what homelessness might be, one must look to the 'conventions of recognition' (Hall, 2018). The 'ways of seeing' homelessness make it what it is. The definitions produced are subsequently dynamic, changeable, and adaptable. For street homelessness, to be seen as homeless is to have gone public with both failure and need, '*failure to cope, to hold down a job, to get on in life…to be homeless is to have failed and to have done so in the sight of others*' (2017:82). In this way Hall highlights the stigmatic character of homelessness that is enabled by its visibility and the ways in which that visibility allow categories of need to be seen and attended to – visibility allows for both the generating of the category and for its detection.

'Footwork' contains the close description of certain ways of seeing and ways of addressing the need that is made public, and amongst these practices, how a more precise, situational, defining of homeless is done by a team of outreach workers and homeless people. How they themselves go about constructing homelessness as an object of work and as an identity. This takes place in a city that, over the span of a decade or so (within which Hall conducts his study), has seen significant redevelopment and renewal requiring the 'rough sleepers' to adapt to an increasingly changing cityscape. The outreach team whose job it is to 'reach out' to those people, adapt also.

Hall's interest is largely in the spatial politics and mobility within this shifting public space. The fieldwork consists of tracing the spatial practices of both homeless individuals and outreach workers, practices that result in, and are somewhat defined by, encounters between the two groups. The outreach workers are professionals, tasked to patrol the city centre in search of those who are visibly in need. They have processes of assessing the degree of that need, whilst finding possible remedies to immediate and long-term issues that span a range of other professional care practices (housing, mental health, involvement in criminal activity, drug use and addiction). Hall summarises part of this work using the expression 'hard-to-reach' both to describe the team's clientele as well as what comes to be a characteristic feature of their practical tasks. This has two meanings. First, in a geographical sense, the workers are faced with the task of locating and contacting clients. This involves various degrees of mobility throughout the city, going to where their clients are, and the development of methods for seeing clients (as homeless), identifying relevant characteristics. Second, 'hard to reach' refers to the difficulty of gaining the

trust of homeless clients, particularly within the first encounters. It attends to the marginalised position of homeless people as a group within society – and the city – and the attached experiences of alienation, exclusion, and the suspicion of offers of support and assistance. This difficulty of finding homeless people is not due to them being out of sight, indoors, or occurring in a private realm – homelessness is need gone public. Rather, the difficulty is due to the places that homeless people can be found are spread throughout the city, characterised by movement in some cases, and the homeless often occupy and inhabit places within public space that is in some way made out to be private; 'lying low' (underneath a stairway or amongst a group of bushes in a public park, for example). What comes to be discussed within Hall's descriptions of the outreach worker's practice as they seek out and offer assistance to this marginalised group, is that if one is to help, you need to know where, and how, to *look*. Looking, not just at and for the homeless, but always and simultaneously at the city.

How this appears in Hall's descriptions is the detailing of the signs that are available to those looking for these 'hard-to-reach' people. Further, knowing what they are looking at when they see them. These spatial and perceptive practices provide a picture of what the city looks like to both outreach workers and the homeless, making the point that for both groups these are largely the same thing. Again, the generating of categories, the detecting of them, and responding to them are generated via the same practices. Moreover, and similar to Hopper, this notion is not insignificant for describing the place of the ethnographer in amongst these practices. The actual cases of this are, firstly, the noticing of particular signs of the presence of homelessness; objects and things appearing in certain ways, certain places, indicate to the outreach workers that someone they are looking for is nearby. Another aspect of the outreach practice is already knowing where and at what they are looking at, the exact location and exact situation is not always the most relevant feature here but the *kinds* of places, the 'gaps in the city' (2017:145). Likewise, the kind of situation and people – an unknown person being identifiable as 'one of ours' (2017: 44) – prove to describe how it is that the outreach team see the surrounding terrain.

Hall draws out both the obvious and the more subtle signs of street poverty, invisible to many but leaving an identifiable trace, a 'signature' (as Hopper (2003:4) refers to these things) Here, Hall makes reference to visual theory (referencing Noe (2004)) and the ways in which things, places, and people might appear and disappear within the city (see also Chevalier, 1994) that allows for the outreach practice to be successful, for expectations to be built, and professional decisions made. Both the outreach workers as welfare professionals and the homeless are seen

to move through the city tentatively, exploring and investigating as they go, looking for the signs of the object of their interest; a sleeping place, a hiding place, somewhere to be still, or undisturbed amongst the movement of the city. For the homeless, this represents the kind of 'survival skills' necessary for living out of doors in the city. For the outreach team, these things are the object of their work and the clues that direct them towards the possibility of offering a care service to those who might need it.

'Footwork' can be taken to inform this study in a number of ways. The first of which is by providing a sociological description of outreach practice, geared towards the related spatial arrangements, but never straying from the undercurrent of meeting the needs of the visibly poor. To do this outreach workers must know the city and know their clients in ways that align to their interests and available services. Hall's descriptions lie palimpsest to others that exist on the subject and to those mentioned in this chapter already. 'Footwork' represents a continuation and contribution to the amounting of instructive ethnographic work on street-based care for the homeless which attempts to equip practitioners (outreach workers) alongside sociologists and inform relevant policy developments. Further to this, Hall's detailing of the significance of where the outreach work takes place as a significant feature for this kind of work and the understanding of it – the suggestion that it is best seen and experienced to be understood (for the members of society being referred to and for the ethnographer) – is informative for methodological considerations relating to this kind of practice. The discussion Hall goes into concerning the visibility of the places homeless people might be found is of particular interest here as the locations and people are possibly 'hard-to-reach' (with that double meaning). Further, with this comes the information that for the kind of work that outreach teams do, these kinds of places are needed in order to be effective, that outreach workers and the homeless seek out certain kinds of space within the city, and how these spaces are used might well be consequential for the success of outreach work.

The main point of discussion to highlight, is the way in which Hall goes about describing the encounters between outreach workers and their homeless clients once they have been found – even if this is only for a short time before they are 'lost' again. This is referring to that first meaning of 'hard-to-reach', the difficulty of negotiating the kind of care that is available to homeless people via outreach work. Hall's debating of some of these issues tunes into other writings regarding the politics of urban public space and of urban kindness (see for example, Amin (2006), Thrift (2005), Cloke. Et al. (2010), Simmel (1971), Sennet (2018), Jacobs (1961)).

Hall suggests that the close look at the continuing practices of outreach workers (and other street-based work) contributes to some understanding of how a notion of 'the good city' (Amin. 2006) might be possible or evident in these everyday occasions. Within this, there is found a consideration of appearances, of the city, and that a cosmetic 'fix' of cases of urban unsightliness does not constitute a proper 'repair' of the problem (see also Hall and Smith, 2015). This stands counter to the 'revanchist' dealing of homelessness (see Cloke et al, 2010).

This moves the focus of attention to the encounters between outreach workers and homeless people within the city, opening the consideration of how these kinds of occasions happen, and what the consequences of these encounters are. For Hall, a definition of homelessness comes hand in hand with where you find it. It must do, as any notion of homelessness must occur somewhere. The people who use those spaces and those definitions for their professional work construct methods around how, and where, they see homelessness. Taking them to the margins of society (socially and geographically) where homelessness can be understood as existing along a 'border' of inequality and visible difference. Hall gives us a guide to where homelessness is in the city. The guide is not cartographic but social, and perhaps even existential. The reasoning to this understanding can (and should?) be tested, extended, and complemented with the observation of other varieties of outreach practice and location, types of cityscapes. Are there those for whom 'searching' might appear differently in the spatial sense, but similar in the interpersonal one? A testing of this not only serves to add another layer of description to the accumulated work on homeless outreach, but also to expand on the observations already made about the characteristics of encounters with 'hard-to-reach' persons and the methods for doing this in the context of service provision. Moreover, taking Hall's requirement that to understand what homelessness is, one must go and find it for oneself (as an outreach worker, an ethnographer) the question that any ethnographer might reasonably ask is; where are the boundaries of who is, and where is, 'within reach'? How far are outreach workers required to extend their reach? And is it possible for an ethnographer to do so too?

Hall's observations of outreach practices provide both principles and actual cases of this kind of work, detailing the things outreach work consists of and precise examples of these, proving instructive for those who might be interested in seeing what is otherwise hidden – outreach workers and ethnographers included. For the study here, there are some significant distinctions from Hall's ethnography of Cardiff based outreach work. The location for one, and the difference that comes along with the very substance of what allows Hall to build a sense of what

outreach work and homelessness looks like. It is shaped by the spaces in which it is found. Not just the cityscape but also the kind of city that Cardiff is, the moment of substantial and rapid urban renewal that the city centre was subject to at the time Hall was out on its streets. And further, what that renewal meant for the practices he was observing. Footwork's Cardiff is coloured by the changes it is experiencing, all of which enable certain features to be eked out and delved into (of the city, the outreach team, and the homeless).

The time in which the study for this thesis occurs, and the place, *looked* quite different and some of the discussions of urban renewal do not translate directly – which is not in itself a negative feature. New York experiences different kinds, and rates, of change and 'renewal', it is always in some state of regeneration. However, what does not necessarily change are the methods for picking out from the background the features that are *in* and *out* of place. In this way Footwork ends – in its final pages– with the very point of focus that the study here attends to. This involves an outreach worker spotting an incongruous person, the way, the where, they are found, who they are seen with, a seeming unknown. The outreach worker can make an assessment based on what might appear as very little information, just a noticing at first, and yet – although, in the case of Footwork we are left without knowing – that the person will amount to some interest to the task of the outreach workers. It is these methods for noticing that my own study pays some attention to and treats as a point of departure.

Rowe: 'Crossing the Border'

Michael Rowe's 'Crossing the border' (1999) provides a final contribution to the review of the literature for two reasons. First, the book is based in ethnographic research of the encounters between homeless people and outreach workers in New York State and so is, at first glance, conceptually and geographically close to this thesis. Second, that alongside these similarities, Rowe's study also includes points of significant difference in method and data analysis that highlight some distinctions between this study's approach and his. These two features allow for a commentary, via comparison, on what this thesis both is and isn't in attending to the study of outreach work practices and homeless individuals. The chapter to follow this one will be concerned with a methodological discussion of what this study entails. Providing a case for

comparison such as Rowe's 'Crossing the Border' serves as both a close to the current literature review and as preparation for the proceeding discussion of the methods adopted here. With these points in mind, 'Crossing the Border' forms the third core contribution of this literature review following on, and building upon, Hopper's 'Reckoning with Homelessness' and Hall's 'Footwork'. The links between these three books are established in their topic of interest, methodological insights, as well as similar bibliographies, there is some repetition. However, as will be elaborated in the following pages, 'Crossing the Border' provides some distinct points for consideration and from which this study deviates.

In 'Crossing the border' Rowe provides (similarly to 'Reckoning with Homelessness' and 'Footwork') both a conceptual and empirical look at homelessness and the practices of homeless outreach workers. The conceptual work orbits the notion of 'border encounters' and 'border crossings' to describe the kind of encounters that outreach consists of, and the client engagement involved with those practices. To provide a forward view into the interpretation of this work, Rowe's concepts are useful if dealt with lightly, with not too critical an eye, or if one were to keep close to his own disciplinary objectives (informed by theoretical and practical psychiatry). These contain some taken for granted, and perhaps 'missed' details that can be attributed to disciplinary priorities. Taken as simple descriptions, Rowe's study is useful for information on homeless outreach and the homeless themselves, it provides in-depth details of typical features, habits, daily practices, worries, and existential conundrums of both groups. The following section then, is concerned both with providing an overview of these descriptions, and dealing with the conceptual, methodological, and analytical approaches that might be taken inform a study of a similar subject.

Border Encounters

The concept of a 'border encounter' refers to encounters between outreach workers and homeless people at the 'margins' of society. The encounters, Rowe suggests, are 'composed of mutual perceptions, negotiated understandings about behaviour and identity, and the transfer of goods' (1999:1). The 'border' is physical insomuch as it consists of real places, emergency shelters, soup kitchens, and the streets. It is also 'social and psychological', in that it is 'staked out by experience and perception'. By 'margins', Rowe is referring to the edges of an established

social order where housing instability and social support, combined with the experience of severe poverty, put people at risk of becoming homeless. 'Crossing the border' is the explication of what happens along this marginal, physical, social, and psychological line between those who Rowe finds there. These encounters, according to Rowe, are 'homeless' in two ways. One, they involve people who are homeless, and two, that the encounters themselves have no 'home', no office, or any other set place in which to happen (1999:1). Thereby, the constitutive features of Rowe's study are introduced, homeless people, outreach workers, and the 'border'.

The 'border' is a conceptual device that Rowe uses throughout his commentary on the professional practices of outreach workers and the traits of homeless people. He describes it as the centre of a web, a line that divides outreach workers (and further, 'mainstream society'. Page 2) and homeless people, a symbolic border of difference, representing the mental placing of homeless people as apart from 'us'. Drawn out by the stigmata of homelessness, their observable features, bad luck, disabilities, and from 'our' pity, disgust, and fears, the border is both a take on the otherness of homelessness, a feeling of being apart from them as a group, whilst also being a response to the uncomfortable feeling of closeness to them. However clear or unclear this notion of a border might be, Rowe uses it more practically at times to refer to the place (as above, this place is physical, social, and psychological) in which outreach workers and homeless people encounter each other. As an extension to this, the border, and the crossing of it, concern the ways in which 'society' responds to the needs of homeless persons and (another extension) the needs of strangers more generally.

The crossing of this border is done through the negotiation of a pathway towards and through the available services that are on offer. Offered, that is, by the outreach workers, to the homeless people. This involves the distribution of tangible goods (food, clothes, other essentials) and information. In addition, it involves the interchange of a self, a homeless self, or identity, is considered along with the possibility of a housed self and the changes and responsibilities that this might entail. It is the outreach worker's job to engage in both these kinds of exchanges in such a way as to maximise successful border crossings (success occurs in the direction of homeless to housed). Outreach workers are described (initially) as both client advocates and as gatekeepers whilst not assuming that all those on the one side of the border (the homeless) necessarily want to cross to other side. Indeed, part of the problem that Rowe is leading to in describing the border, is the description of the circumstances in which homeless people may be actively resistant to the services available and how it is that outreach workers respond.

The border, then, on the one hand is handy metaphor for describing a changeable and complex point of contact between two 'groups' and the meeting of various priorities and limitations. It is those limitations, however, that Rowe suggests raises the most significant questions for the practice of outreach work has a whole. It raises questions of institutional mobility. How far should workers, care professionals, volunteers, be expected to go along or beyond the border, in order to 'rescue' homeless people from the conditions they are experiencing? The efforts that outreach workers engage in to shape homeless people's identities as clients who are ready for the border crossing and to be a successful service user, span a range of dilemmas and opportunities. With the institutional context of this comes concerns of cost, efficiency, time, needs of other clients, availability of services, all which Rowe suggests are considered within and beyond the actual outreach encounter. Moreover, even with successful border crossings, that is, homeless people becoming clients and accessing services, there are concerns about how that individual will be considered, and consider themselves, as a fully integrated citizen. Sure solutions to these dilemmas are hard to come by, if they exist at all. However, Rowe's study poses the intention of exploring how these dilemmas open opportunities within the outreach encounter for different kinds of work practices with homeless people. The border, boundary, or frontier of exclusion then, is possibly determined by the 'reach' into the lives (across the border) of those marginalised groups that the kinds, and quality, of outreach work can achieve.

In keeping with this notion of a border and bringing this to the task of looking for definitions of homelessness, for Rowe, to be homeless is to exist on one side of that border, geographically and existentially. During his discussions of the homeless people encountered as he goes about conducting research, it becomes clear that the people referred to as homeless are defined as such, mostly, in accordance with the priorities of the outreach worker's practice. This may be in part due to his own position as the director of the outreach program he is simultaneously studying. The program, and Rowe himself, is specifically oriented to outreach work attending to the mentally-ill homeless population of New Haven, New York. A chapter is dedicated to the description of homeless people as Rowe sees it and although much of the detail included there proves interesting and informative, it is largely situational or otherwise speculative about who is 'usually' considered homeless. Much more interesting are the cases included of outreach workers encountering homeless people and how they seek to differentiate between those who may be mentally-ill or not. These cases position homelessness as an object of, or consumers of, the available service. In this way, the definitions of who counts as homeless, and the kind of

homeless that the outreach workers are concerned with, are better defined as such through the actual practice of their work, rather than via the conceptual apparatus Rowe sets up.

As a consequence of the above point, to build an idea of what homelessness appears as in Rowe's study, it is necessary to review his descriptions of outreach work. It is here that some differences between Rowe's approach and the one taken in this study become useful. The following section will switch then, from descriptive review to critical discussion. This is not to dismiss Rowe's work as methodologically inadequate; it remains a point of reference for ethnographic work on outreach practices and homelessness more generally. Although, with that precursor, the limitations of Rowe's approach become a little too obvious at times. In his attempt at a certain kind of analysis we meet the analytical border of the study. The differences that emerge can be put down to disciplinary priorities and methodological sensitivities, however, why these differences are important, and what the different approaches achieve, will become clear.

The portrait of outreach workers that 'Crossing the border' assembles (focusing here on chapter three entitled 'Outreach Workers'. Page. 48) attends to the principles of their work and professional ethos, their perceptions of homeless people, and their methods for identifying and approaching potential clients. As a summary of the principles and ethos that Rowe details, his concern is with the way in which workers adopt a careful approach to those they attempt to recruit as clients. They go to where the homeless individuals are and do not require any solid commitment to treatment or help of any kind. Outreach worker's first priority is to gain the trust of potential clients, this is a slow process, goods are often given with no expectation of anything in return, and at first the outreach workers seek out a 'therapeutic connection' (Page. 50). This connection can begin with an exchange of a kind, of information at first, a name, age, some biographical details. However, the approach taken is one of not forcing the 'client' category onto any person. The power relationship is unequal, and the workers do have the choice to invoke the power of the state to intervene, but this only happens, Rowe reports, in rare cases. The ideals of the work, for the most part, is of client choice and avoidance of discomfort. Rowe (1999:58) describes the methods outreach workers use in identifying and approaching prospective clients as 'an odd mixture of entrepreneurial capitalism and bureaucratic people-processing. Workers go out to simultaneously sell their product to wary consumers and asses those consumers' eligibility to receive a limited but 'free' product'. The 'customers' are identified by their stigmata; workers look out for signals and snippets of

information relating to what could be seen as homelessness and as a mental illness, they use this as a rationale for making contact. They do this on the streets, in soup kitchens, shelters, and other public places. It is here that the 'working' definitions of homelessness become available.

Rowe highlights that there are 'subtler shades of stigmata' (1999:59) which the experienced outreach worker is able to notice. Examples of this are the particular ways in which a person who might qualify as one of a 'target population' might talk to themselves in public (there are particular ways in which this is taken as indicating 'homeless mentally-ill'), people might appear as 'closed off', or how there may be something that is noticeably neglected about their person. The 34anguagpment of these methods become refined through time and experience, and are necessary for their professional practice as the categorical requirements given to workers for approaching people are ambiguous (1999:61). This ambiguity is exaggerated by outreach work taking place on the street, where signals that are seen as characteristics of 'the mentally-ill homeless' are easily confused with other kinds of poverty and circumstances, with fatigue from surviving on the street, or the effects of drugs and alcohol, for example. Rowe (1999:61) further comments that 'distinctions are bound up not only in clinical terms but cultural and moral distinctions that consider the degree of putative control the individual has over his illness and thus the degree of compassion he can expect to receive'. The definition of homeless, and of client, is a situated one brought together by the methods and justifications of the particular occasion in which the encounter occurs.

The occasioned establishment of what homelessness is and by extension, what a client can be, represents for the outreach workers both a problem for the practices of identification and approaching people, and a distinction from other, more bureaucratic, forms of assistance. Outreach work is flexible by necessity, services are often worked out in the moment and based on a level of negotiation between the workers and their potential clients. Involved are tangible material goods as well as emotional support and degrees of compassion. This differs from the 'people-processing' practices of, for example, city welfare caseworkers for whom the term 'client' means something with a firmer definition. Rowe (1999:76) claims that the outreach worker represents, to their homeless clients, an ally against bureaucracy. Indeed, he goes on to suggest that the two 'instrumental rules of outreach' is to know your resources (that which is available for the giving) and to have compassion – even if you are being paid to do so. These 'rules', the management of resources and compassion, that are included in the negotiations are

geared towards humanitarian values and 'successful' conclusions for their work. Those being, housing the homeless and addressing the various issues that clients may be facing.

The actual encounters that Rowe (1999:6-7) includes are largely represented via responses to his interview questions from which he looks for outreach workers and homeless people to 'open up' to him. Rowe acts in his position as a researcher and as the director of the outreach program, he takes some time to reflect on notions of objectivity and being a 'native' in the field – discussion of this notion follow in the next chapter. His objective with the interviews being to access outreach worker's perspectives on the causes of homelessness and their strategies for approaching homeless people and assessing their needs. He includes further details on their emotional responses to their work, to the poverty they witness daily, and their coping methods and philosophies for dealing with these details. For the most part, one can treat Rowe's participant's accounts as informative, particularly in the context of preparing for fieldwork concerned with a similar topic.

The significant point of distinction between the study for this thesis and Rowe's work is represented well by a particular moment within his discussion of 'Boundary Transactions', the fourth chapter in 'Crossing the border'. This moment is distinctive for Rowe also, as it consists of one of the few extracts within the book that describes the situational detail of his own encounter with a homeless person. It does not include an interview or a given account of a 'perception' of one of his target objectives. It is the close detailing of an interaction. The encounter is an awkward one across a table at a soup kitchen. Rowe attempts to strike up a conversation with a homeless client, known to be homeless by other outreach workers (who are also present in the scene). The attempt at conversation goes badly and the client 'John', answers Rowe's questions about how he is doing and if he's receiving help with, "*You asked the question, you already know the answer*". The same answer is given to a couple of Rowe's attempted questions before John walks away, ending the encounter.

Rowe's analysis of the encounter involves a poor attempt at invoking principles from Symbolic Interaction and Ethnomethodology, in what is a slightly bizarre move to validate his own speculation about what the phrase, 'You asked the question, you already know the answer' could translate to mean. He offers the following comments:

> "*John has lost or chosen not to use the symbols of everyday interaction. The only way to get to know him is to learn to understand his world and the meanings he attaches to it. John's all-purpose curse ("You asked the question, you already know the answer") might translate as follows: "We share nothing, you and I, and I do not care to pretend that we do." Such a response, signalling defeat and despair, is also a power play. With a few words that struck at the unequal relationship implied in my encounter with him, John was able to keep the world at bay once again and remain at home in his otherness, his sense that the border between him and the world was fixed and forever closed. Or was this encounter a rejection only of my terms and an invitation on his? "Can you tolerate my world? Can you bear the discomfort of sitting with me? Will you pass the test and come back to be tested again?"*"

(Rowe, 1999: 99)

Rowe suggests that this encounter might 'expose' some taken for granted 'invisible' rules or expectations for everyday life. He refers here to Harold Garfinkel's (1967) (mis-named in the text as 'Herbert Garfinkel') 'Studies in Ethnomethodology', making a brief comment about encounters like this with John, at the margins of society allow us to be 'conscious' of the background expectancies built into social interactions. Continuing with this Rowe (1999: 99) suggests, quoting Erving Goffman, that for us to become conscious of the taken for granted features of everyday life we must look to 'extraordinary' situations by which we can 'stumble' into awareness. However, from Rowe's display of mystic-like insight into what a particular utterance might mean, I would suggest that what is being exposed is his own ability to speculatively theorise about the mind of another rather than become conscious of 'background expectancies'. The expectancies that Rowe puts forward here are not noticed from the background but imposed by the sociologist. He deliberately decontextualises an occasion to suit his own interpretative analysis and so, one could suggest, John was right. He asked the question, but he already knew the answer.

As an example of how one might use the principles of Symbolic Interaction and Ethnomethodology to provide an analysis of encounters with homeless clients, Rowe's case here is a weak one. Seemly poorly, or mis, informed about the 'what' and 'how' of both approaches. The majority of Rowe's approach and competent use of interview data provides useful and reliable accounts for discussing the topic. The divergence into a different form of data and the shortcoming in its analysis is where this thesis intends to step in. The following chapters describe

and develop both the conceptual tools and the method for gathering observations and fieldnotes on the topic and using the analytical tools that Rowe fumbles with here. The issue with Rowe's approach is that it is over-theorised. As a result, it misses the importance of a description of how the outreach workers themselves act in encounters with homeless clients and their own use of social resources to interact with a marginalised group. In the section in which John is discussed, Rowe hints (1999: 100) to the fact that the outreach workers already know how to deal with, what is described as, an example of 'incommunication'. It would appear that Rowe is aware of outreach worker's own methods for accomplishing their practice. However, this is left undeveloped, side-lined in comparison to his own speculative account. The study here is concerned with the kind of discussion that Rowe omits.

'Crossing the border' contains an array of information about the usual features of outreach work, the workers themselves, and the homeless people they meet and work with, as well as an interesting conceptual apparatus for thinking about these encounters. However, it fails to prioritise an analytical approach that grounds itself in the reference to actual observable practices of outreach workers and so, remains essentially descriptive. Which, as stated previously, serves a purpose for the research of this thesis and is certainly useful in the review of relevant literature.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has dealt with the difficulty of establishing a solid definition of homelessness throughout the existing ethnographic work on this subject. Moving through the literature on homelessness there are common characteristics which have been highlighted. Stigma, poverty, survival skills, place, health, mobility, are aspects that appear in connection with the description of what, where, and how, homelessness is. The details of these are in flux, changeable and dynamic and subject to the specifics of the occasion. As the literature is reviewed, and one looks to the various studies of homelessness, the definitions need readjusting, a task not only for the researcher but for the members of society being studied also. The defining of homelessness becomes an issue of methodological significance, for both the researcher and the members of society. The methods for definition-work become the focus, both to see how ethnographers present homelessness as a topic for study and how people 'see' (and 'do')

homelessness, as a category. Presented here are cases which attend to this task well (Hopper and Hall) and use a conceptual apparatus which is oriented to the elasticity of homelessness as a category. Further, this chapter has taken a critical position towards those (Rowe) who appear to establish a preformed notion of homelessness (as existing on one side of social and physical border) and use ethnographic observation to solidify their own theorising, rather than explore naturally occurring sociability.

It is with methods for doing definitional work that this thesis continues. The following chapter is arranged to describe the methods adopted and engage in a reflexive discussion of the researcher's position 'within' the field, as an ethnographer and as another member of that society. As that discussion takes shape, the comments from this chapter are carried over to establish a research 'problem'. The concern here has been with homelessness as a definition and as a category. This thesis intends to explore this further, paying close attention to how this category is accomplished by those whose job it is to encounter 'homeless' people, and to provide a service to them. To repeat a point, the accomplishment of a category is considered here as a methodological concern, for both the researcher looking to build a sociological description of a practice, and of members of society who recognise and define homelessness as part of their everyday lives. The understanding of that category and of that definition is one that is bound to the occasion in which it is found, not a 'preformed' understanding. The chapter to follow lays out the methodological approach with the aim, in part, to explain the efforts to avoid preforming an understanding of homelessness.

Chapter 3: Methodological Considerations

Introduction

This is a chapter of two halves. The first, a description of the methods used to collect data about the encounters between outreach workers and their homeless clients in New York. This first part is a conventional approach, a practical account of the details of my ethnographic project, a detailing of how I 'get close to the data' (Glaser and Straus, 1967). It includes, via a description of the field, information about access, 'recruiting' (or being recruited by) a group of outreach workers, alongside how, and where, my observations were made. This serves to provide a record of the method and make that method recognisable as belonging to a tradition of ethnographic fieldwork. The second half is perhaps less conventional, not so obviously practical, although I will make the case that it is practical, and essentially so. It includes a critical discussion of the ontological status of an ethnographer in the field, and the status of members of a society's own methods for observing. There is a link between the two sections, part of the practical working out of the fieldwork (the first half) led to the consideration of member's own methods for accomplishing categories (potentially categories of need) through their reflexive practices (the second part). This link centres around (what I am calling) an 'intermission' in the fieldwork, a geographical and reflexive time away from the field which facilitated a considerable reworking of my approach to the fieldwork (see also Williams, In press). The two halves, whilst distinct from each other, combine to provide a transparent account of the methodological considerations for this project.

The discussions to follow are considered in connection with the previous chapter and the central issue posed within it. That is, seeing homelessness as a category accomplished *in-situ* by members of society for their own practical purposes (outreach work, in this case). Using this to direct the following commentary, the first half is concerned with the practicalities of orienting a study towards this issue. The second half is concerned with the conceptual formulation of a

methodology with the continuing intention of relating this back to the practical matter of 'doing' outreach work and 'doing' encounters with homeless clients. What this second section *adds* is a reflexive discussion of how that practicality is possible and how it is possible to observe and report on it as an ethnographer, and as another member of society. Considering the previous chapter's remarks on homelessness as an 'elastic' term and definition (Hopper, 2003), that visibility enables both the generating and detection of homelessness as a category (Hall, 2017), and then finishing on Rowe's (1999) 'misdealing' with data, this chapter is organised in the following way. Firstly, the description of a fieldsite and a method of data collection introduces, if briefly, the research at hand and makes it clear how this is developed with the research aims in mind (as established via the existing literature). This is largely a combination of Hopper's and Hall's approaches regarding place and access. The proceeding conceptual methodological discussion, shows how that methodology engaged critically with the shortcomings noticed in the existing literature and clearly, and thoroughly, demonstrates how the same problems were avoided. There is a tendency, or danger perhaps, when discussing these things to veer off into an abstract dealing with philosophical musings. It is hoped, for the most part, to avoid this and maintain the practical relevancy of raising such issues for the sake of this project.

If the following pages draw on the preceding literature review chapter, they are further intended to develop the existing discussions in order to prepare for the following 'findings' chapters. The chapters to follow this one deal with the data collected. Before being able to progress to that stage and to enable the subsequent analysis of data, I will describe the circumstances in which my observation happened and the means by which they were enabled. Further, a conceptual formulation of methods (the second half of this chapter) lays some of the conceptual groundwork for my choice of analytical approach. As may have been noticed, there is also a switch to the first-person. This is due to the content here being in reference to movements and considerations of myself, as an ethnographer, in the field and in consideration of the field.

The Fieldwork

To start; the fieldwork. An ethnography of homeless outreach teams, taking place in New York, in downtown Manhattan, mostly on sidewalks handing out food to people from the back of a van. Data was collected as fieldnotes, collected documents, and a small number of interviews. I was to be in the field for one year, a duration determined by funding conditions, a visa expiration date, and an early (perhaps overly literal) reading of Goffman's 'On Fieldwork' (1989:130) in which he suggests spending '…at least a year in the field. Otherwise…you don't get deep familiarity'. The notion that ethnography often does, or should, be conducted over 'year or more' is also a common feature of methodological handbooks and guides (See Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). The 'field' was anthropologically clear (geographically and temporally) but sociologically blurry (exploring 'homelessness' as a subject and category). The exploration of this sociological blurriness was, of course, a central part of the fieldwork process. My immersion into the practice of homeless outreach began the day after I arrived in Manhattan and went on to take various forms. Forms which lent themselves to different kinds of exposure to outreach practice and to what could be (and certainly is) described as 'homelessness'. I shall give some detail of the various forms here before focussing on the one in which I include as the data for this study.

Homeless outreach, on the street, is not a standardised practice, yet comparing my observations with those of others (Hall and Smith, 2017. for example) practitioners tend to share some rules. You do not wake people who are sleeping. You do not judge people. You do not force assistance on those who don't want it (although, there are degrees of interventionist approach that mostly depend on what kind of authority one might wield). This ties into a common assertion amongst outreach teams, that 'we are not the police' – an important distinction which is frequently voiced. Lastly, you do not give too little, and you do not give too much. Too little is not enough, too much may go to waste and is more efficiently used elsewhere. The list of 'do nots', were largely shared amongst different outreach groups. The 'dos', however, the methods for delivery of assistance, is where things start to become more diverse.

To explore the diversity of methods involved in 'doing being an outreach worker', I arranged to meet and participate with several outreach groups. A group could mean anything from a team of twenty people, to only myself and one other. The level of organisation to an evening's

outreach would also change. Some groups would have a carefully arranged and prepared agenda, keeping to a strict schedule, whereas others would adopt a more sporadic movement through the city. One of the first groups I joined was run from a small shopfront upstate.

The evening, for me, would involve travelling upstate to help with preparing food and supplies, loading a van, a short briefing, before driving down into Manhattan and following a series of pre-arranged stops in the downtown area. Outreach workers and volunteers would supply homeless clients with a range of clothing items, hot drinks and food, sandwiches for the following day, and sleeping bags and blankets for outside/subway sleeping. The applicability of the category 'homeless' was confirmed by the question, "Are you homeless?". The right answer to get food and supplies was "Yes". When the planned route was completed, we would drive back upstate, unpack the van, and I would catch the train back to the city in the early hours of the morning. The outreach group consisted of mostly volunteers, some of which participated regularly and others less so. As such, some volunteers became familiar with regular users of the services whereas others were essentially strangers.

Another group I joined with included regular teams, who would volunteer multiple times a week and included 'workers'; professional outreach staff. Such teams would do much the same stuff as the first group described here but they came to know their 'clients' well. They were on first name terms, would know what their preferences were from amongst the food and supplies they had to offer, and they became well acquainted with the different, and particular, personal difficulties that clients may experience. They would arrange their practice to cater to certain needs and save food for particular people who they knew would most appreciate it. Further, they would arrange their outreach practice according to what they came to understand as a kind of hierarchy, and an urgency, of need. Again, the schedule they kept was quite precise, visiting locations were bound to certain times and the 'consistency' of their service was considered an important part of their work, providing some small measure of certainty to their clients. No matter the day, weather, traffic, they would be at their 'stops' throughout the city.

With both of the above groups, homeless people, clients, strangers who waiting for the service at the stops, or walked up unexpectedly, would be confirmed as 'homeless' in some way. Visibility of need plays a significant part here. However, that does not necessary mean that those people were homeless in any literal sense. The term 'homeless' as a word in use by the outreach teams, refers to a range of circumstances (observable in a number of ways) and is often

considered an adequate description (rather than literal) and a justification for the kind of care work that these groups do. A client may very well come to the attention of the outreach team by being literally homeless, however, that situation often evolves with clients becoming housed, entering a temporary shelter, finding some place to be that is not necessarily the street. This does not, in most cases, mean that there is a reduced urgency of requirement for what outreach teams offer. Being 'homeless' moves through meanings.

Fieldwork continued in directions which fell outside of what I suspected outreach would look like. A 'group' one night was just one other person. He worked in the city, had finished at the office, swung by a store to buy a car full of blankets, sandwiches, and bottled drinks. We had arranged to meet at a downtown intersection and spent the first part of the evening driving (and driving fast, in his convertible BMW) between some 'hotspots' for homeless people. The evening turned into night, and we still had plenty of supplies left. It was 11:30pm when he said "*I'm just going to drive around until I've given everything away. You in?*". "*Sure*" I replied. We drove until 3am, both of us scanning the sidewalks, doorways, and benches. Whenever he saw someone who 'looked' homeless, he would shout "*There's one! Joe, get them a blanket!*". I would jump out of the car and hand the person a blanket and some food or bring them over to the car and they could choose what they wanted. It was a frenzied effort, and one which the recipients were not expecting, but mostly not adverse to. On this one evening, there were several occasions in which we interrupted those who were on the street who were mid drug use, engaging in sex acts, and washing themselves. It would be unlikely that the more organised outreach efforts would encounter their homeless clients in the same way. The point here being that outreach work, and its social resources, included a varied range of practices and people. It was my task as an ethnographer to observe how these practices were assembled.

The methods for doing outreach work differed, so too did the clients. Outreach workers make attempts to organise clients based on familiarity with that person and their habits, their particular kind of need, the urgency of it, where they are encountered. However, the why and how of a person's arrival at being homeless in New York can be not only an individual set of circumstances but 'occasioned', by the encounter, the interaction. The problems commonly associated with homelessness such as addiction, mental health issues, financial problems, unemployment, lack of networks of support, are not solid explanations for people becoming homelessness. They are not useless or unused explanations, but their use, for the practical accomplishment of outreach work, is always of the occasion, of that particular moment. This is

not only because often people are in the midst of a combination of issues, and the prevalence of one over another might be seen at different times, but that on a night-by-night basis clients, homeless individuals, observably and through interaction, move in and out of particular categories of need. Further, some clients present different reasoning on a daily basis, reasoning for their homelessness or anything else. Others are unreliable in different ways. As such, what it means to be homelessness takes on that 'elasticity', which Hopper (2003) talks of and outreach workers organise their practice to attend to this elasticity.

This brief description of my fieldwork, highlights that whilst on the one hand the project and the 'field' was clear and easy enough to describe and talk about, representing homeless outreach and defining homelessness was not a straightforward sociological task. The focus of my study was oriented to looking for a way to deal with my observations and field notes so that I could attend to the 'elasticity' of homelessness and of homeless outreach practices. I wanted to show that homelessness does not mean something intrinsic of the situations in which it is established, be that outreach worker's encounters with clients or academic publications (I'm referring here to the kind of textual representations discussed in Atkinson (1990) 'The Ethnographic Imagination'). The understanding of the category doesn't carry from one situation to the next, not perfectly in-tact. It is re-established each time, indexed by familiarities, similarities, and differences. I handle this particular point of discussion in the second section of this chapter. First, I will include a note on gaining access to the field and the outreach teams. Following that, I will provide some further detail about the particular group whom I spent the majority of my fieldwork time observing. Those observations make up the data dealt with in the upcoming chapters.

Negotiating Access

As the fieldsite for this study was overseas, access was gained in two ways. Firstly, geographically, which involved obtaining visa's, making travel arrangements, finding accommodation, and securing additional funding. A student visa (hosted by the City University of New York) allowed a stay of twelve months in the USA. I sublet a room in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. I applied for and secured additional funding from the Economic & Social Research

Council (ESRC) to enable travel and expenses incurred by the fieldwork. The second kind of access, was ensuring I was able to join a group of outreach workers to observe their practice. Although an initial source of uncertainty for the project, as I was unable to fully negotiate access from the UK, in actuality this was a smooth process. Before leaving the UK, I had contacted several organisations and groups who conducted outreach work in New York via email. Of those who responded to my emails, the reply was much the same; 'get in touch when you are here'. This was the source of the uncertainty, as I did not have a solid 'yes' for participation with any one group. However, once in New York, I was able to meet with several groups (described above).

As a condition of obtaining ethical consent for my study as a whole, I was required to meet with a representative of each group and discussed my research interests, present information about the project, and obtain written confirmation of their willingness to 'participate'. As a condition of joining an outreach team for an extended period of observation, it was not practical for me to operate solely as a passive observer. As such, I assured the 'gatekeepers', and the teams I joined with, that when with the outreach team I was there first as volunteer outreach worker and second as a researcher. As the teams who I was able to join were looking for volunteers, and as I was not taking the outreach workers away from anything they would be doing as a part of their practice, I refer to this not as recruiting participants, but being recruited as a participant. A further commentary on what this kind of participation allowed me and other members to know and understand, follows in the second section of this chapter. As a feature of my selected method, however, I took a dual-role (acting as fully as both rather than half of each), of volunteer outreach worker and of ethnographer.

The Downtown Route

The fieldsite for my study was New York. More specifically, Manhattan, more specifically again, downtown street corners and sidewalks. The exact locations were bound to a 'route' followed each night by a group of outreach workers and volunteers as they drive between 'stops' with the purpose of meeting groups of clients. The route, and the stops, are prearranged (in

terms of place and time), they rarely change, and are almost exactly the same (to the metre and minute) each night. Once there, the outreach workers distribute food and supplies to people who are waiting or walking by. The different stops have location-bound names; 'The Chinatown Stop', 'The FDR Stop', 'The Ferry Port Stop', for example.

This allows those who wish to receive food and supplies to organise themselves so as to coincide with the outreach team. The stops are located in 'hot-spots' throughout that part of the city (there are other routes for the different parts of the city that run similarly to the 'Downtown Route'), with the intention of maximising the likelihood of encountering their intended clientele. The organisation is straightforward and consistent, a stop is assigned a timeslot, the outreach workers are in those places at the same time, every day of the year. The repetitive, consistent nature of these routes is an intentional feature, designed so as to provide a sense of certainty and reliability to a client base whose day to day lives are often unpredictable – an unpredictability which is both social and spatial. Although, in its entirety my fieldwork covered more ground than just the Downtown Route, for the data focussed on in this thesis, the route and its stops can be considered the geographical scope of the discussion here. In this way, my movements were determined by the ethnographic course of the observations that took place along this route through the city. I allowed the object of the ethnography to determine the 'boundaries' of the fieldsite, largely in line with Candea's (2007) comments on this issue. Put simply, my own movements were those of an outreach worker.

These movements did have restrictions. As travelling between stops was done in a van, the Manhattan traffic was often the biggest obstacle to reaching a stop, or reaching it on time. Traffic jams, and street closures often meant that stops would be reached late, putting their ability to reach the clients at risk. In winter, being late meant keeping clients, people who could have spent much of the day already outside, waiting in the cold. There was an emphasis on being as punctual as possible. My role in the team was in some way shaped by this priority, as I was one of the few volunteers who were happy to drive in the city – although many of the volunteers could drive, they would prefer not to do so in the tight streets and busy traffic found in Manhattan. Within the group it was often my job to drive the van and to get us to the stops on time.

Whilst these stops were the kind of situation I had envisioned previous to entering the field – a place, a public one, to make close observations of outreach workers encountering their homeless

clients – I found that time spent in the van was equally as important for my understanding of the observations. Much of the time was spent in conversation, discussing the work of the evening, organising 'roles' for next stop, and more significantly, commenting on the encounters with their clients, sharing biographical information, and negotiating how to approach their work. The van became an important space within the study – vehicles such as this have been discussed as a 'fieldsite' in Hall (2017), Hall and Smith (2017), and partially forming a subject of study for Watson's (1999) 'Driving in Forests and Mountains'.

The vans, depending on the particular evening and the time of year, contain crates of freshly prepared hot soup (turkey and vegetable or meatball) or sandwiches with various fillings (usually cold cut meat or peanut butter and jelly). Also included in the supplies are boxes of fruit (usually oranges) and cartons of milk. They carry enough portions to cover the usual demand of the route, which on an average night is somewhere in the range of two to three hundred people across the eight separate stops. As such, much of my time with the outreach workers was spent serving these portions of food to the clients. There were specific tasks within this practice: handling out empty bags to for the clients to collect their portions with, 'crowd control' (detailed further in later chapters), or handling out the food itself from the back of the van. The different tasks were usually repeated by the same members of the team each stop. Different members of the team tended to have 'their' job. The reasoning for this was often linked to time and efficiency.

The Team

For the purposes of this research, I refer to 'outreach workers' as those members of the team I participated with. This term was not always in regular use by the team members themselves. In the actual occasions observed, the groups would more likely refer to themselves by the route they were driving; 'The Downtown Team'. Or would refer to themselves according to the night of the week on which they were working or volunteering on; 'The Wednesday Night Team' for example. However, as they referred to their role and program as something more specific and therefore difficult to anonymise. I have kept with 'outreach workers' or 'the team' to refer to

those doing the distribution. It is both accurate enough and broad enough a description to enable anonymity whilst being a recognisable title.

Amongst the team, there is a distinction between those that work for the charity/organisation in a paid position and those who are volunteers. Those for whom going out on the routes was a part of their position as an employee, would often go out on several evenings of the week. They were generally more informed regarding the wider work of the charity or other areas of provision taking place, and further, often possessed more detailed information regarding clients' situations and would 'brief' volunteers on these details. The majority of those doing the outreach work at the stops were volunteers. It was often the case that teams would consist of one staff member and several other volunteer members. Of those who are volunteers there is a range of experience levels for doing outreach work. These levels are largely based in the regularity, and number of years people have spent volunteering. Those volunteers who were more experienced could adopt the role of a 'team leader', other members would defer to that person during the route for clarity on organisational issues or advice on dealing with situations or clients. The majority of the team members were those who would volunteer once or twice a week, usually on the same route. They were familiar enough with the organisation and the way in which a route was intended to operate, any formal instruction for doing outreach was not necessary. These volunteers would rarely take any leadership roles or responsibility beyond what was necessary for any given evening.

I joined the downtown team as a new volunteer, unfamiliar with the team's methods for doing outreach. Learning those methods *as* another volunteer and team member was an intentional aspect of my ethnographic method. The approach is common in ethnographic fieldwork, both Lofland (1971) and Goffman (1989) suggest that the ethnographer accepts an attitude of incompetence regarding the social structure of the setting. However, that is not to say that the researcher does not bring ideas to the field (see Atkinson, 2017: 4) (Blumer, 1969. And Bowen's, 2019 discussion of Blumer's 'sensitizing concepts'). The topic of what ideas the research brings to the field will be critically discussed later in this chapter.

The becoming familiar with the way in which outreach work is practiced was a part of coming to understand the ways in which homeless was established as a category through outreach work, and in the same way, how the care work being done was formulated through these practices.

An initial part of this is being instructed on how to be an outreach worker, how to do the kind of work I was there to study. The instructive accounts are not constrained to the initial phase of research but continued throughout the fieldwork, often in increasingly specific ways (referring to how to deal with a particular client, for example). This is both a description of my own initial position within the team and of another type of outreach worker. New volunteers would join the teams at different points, and they would receive similar instruction and mentoring.

My position with the team developed as the fieldwork progressed. As my main purpose for being in New York was to study outreach practices, I was more available to go on routes than most other volunteers. As such, I became familiar with the routes and practices quickly, perhaps quicker than other new volunteers. I was also involved in other programs within the organisation, including those relating to shelter provision and advocacy. I found that, as the study progressed and I became increasingly familiar with the various programs, I was approached by other volunteers for information, or asked to talk to clients about a particular issue they might be facing (I would pass on information). On some occasions, it would turn out that I would be the most experienced volunteer on the route (this was usually when volunteer turn-out was low for a certain evening). I would then be deferred to for instruction by new volunteers or those less experienced.

Immersing oneself into situations with the intention of reporting on what is meaningful and important to members of those situations is often understood as the core intention of ethnographic study (Emerson et al, 1995). Goffman (1989:125) describes his view on this process:

> *"Subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation, or their work situation, or their ethnic situation."*

Taking a detached position was never my intention or, indeed, a possibility. Pollner and Emerson (2001) suggest that being fully removed is not possible as all field researchers, and any 'observers' (lay or professional) are incapable of being detached or independent of the observed phenomena. I attend to these comments in more detail in the following pages.

The Clients/The Homeless

The definition of homelessness, and what homelessness might mean as a category has already been established as the topic of study for this project. Offering an exhaustive list of features for what might be seen as 'homeless' would likely be counterproductive to this purpose. With that said, it is worth taking a moment to discuss the 'clients' of the outreach teams in order to note how I acted 'as a researcher' towards them – a point of methodological significance. The answer to this has already been offered, that is, I have explained how I acted as an outreach worker whist acting as an ethnographer. As such, in my personal encounters with clients, I behaved in way appropriate for that role. I was not interested in asking clients about their experience *as* clients or of homelessness but would prefer for accounts to be offered 'naturally'. I preferred to observe the way in which situations worked out rather ask for information about what I found interesting. The defining of homelessness, the formulation and use of this category, by members of society is a practical activity and a major phenomenon of concern for this study. Allowing those practices to happen without interruption from myself, was my general approach.

What can be said about the clients of the team can be used as an introduction to the substance of the following 'findings' chapters. Which is simply to note that there are different kinds of client. The differences in client are directly linked to the observations, understandings, and localised 'knowing' that outreach workers and clients 'do' (enact, assemble, make observable) during their encounters. Again, this is a point of analysis which is dealt with in later chapters and in connection to specific observations that I include to show how these interactions work, and the consequences of them. Notions of what homelessness *is*, along with observable poverty and need are present in these encounters and in the categorisation of people as clients. It can be summarised that of those who count as clients for the team (not all whom they encounter are considered this way) there is a range. Some are considered 'only just' a client, a 'regular' client, to something which is 'beyond' a client. For the purposes of this study, there is much to unfold here. Considering 'clienthood' this way is to explore the parameters of the outreach team's 'reach'; the beginnings and the limits of an ability to provide for those they encounter.

For considering my research method, it is these aspects of outreach work which I was interested in observing and was participating in. The formulation of my ethnographic method was done in a way to enable the observations of just this kind of work happening 'naturally' during the outreach practice.

As a method for doing both ethnographic work and outreach work, becoming familiar with those encountered was important. Getting to know 'the field', often looked (and involved 'looking' as a practice) the same as outreach work. Clients are met consistently, a soft approach to obtaining information is always at play. Outreach workers, tentatively, listen and ask in order to get a fuller idea of the client's situation and direct their services to attend to any issues, problems, or needs that arise. Outreach worker's talk about this task, they share information about clients and discuss best approaches to their work. As such, as an ethnographer, I was able to identify 'clients' and homelessness via outreach worker's own methods.

Fieldnotes/Passing

From the descriptions above, I have detailed aspects of my method regarding access, the geographical scope of the ethnographic work, the 'participants' divided into two groups, Outreach Workers and their (homeless) clients. There is an emphasis on how my methods for observation are closely bound to the actual practices of outreach work and of member's methods for making sense of situations, people, and occasions. Missing from these discussions are a few practical matters. Fieldnotes for one.

All data used in this thesis is from fieldnotes. These notes were made on notepads and a smartphone during or immediately following an observation. Noting taking was often made difficult when I was required to drive the outreach van, as otherwise, the time between stops whilst sat in the van was a good opportunity to makes notes. Within the moment, these notes were brief and acted as reminders for a more detailed note taking that would happen when I arrived home from an evening with the team. This meant many late nights writing notes. However, as a subway ride was needed to arrive home, I could often begin developing those

notes during this time. For the findings chapters to follow, I have developed these notes into a highly detailed account of occasions. A choice directed at the close description of the encounters and an enabling of a familiarity with the scene (for the reader) to identify features which enable the analytical points to be made. Geertz (1973:19) outlines:

'The ethnographer 'inscribes' social discourse; he writes it down. In so doing, he turns it from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscription and can be reconsulted.'

One can take from this that in producing this written account, I intend to achieve two things; to produce a record of the events that I observe, and to develop a text which can subsequently be analysed. For the most part within these notes, I focus attention on the practices and talk of others, however, there one occasion in which I am present, as another member, in the fieldnotes. I do not consider this a serious contamination of the data and have only included myself to accurately present the occasion, however, for the most part I intentionally avoid writing myself into the fieldnotes.

As has been repeatedly highlighted in this chapter so far, in order to reliably describe the work involved in outreach work, I had to do outreach work, as outreach workers already do it. This understanding of an observer as another member, or encompassing 'member's knowledge' is largely derived (in this case) from the work of Garfinkel and Sacks' 'On Formal Structures' (1970). It is further informed by Garfinkel's notion of the 'Unique Adequacy Requirement' (Garfinkel and Wieder. 1992: 182):

'[…] the unique adequacy requirement of methods is identified with the requirement that for the analyst to recognise, or identify, or follow the development of, or describe phenomena of order in local production of coherent detail the analyst must be vulgarly competent in the local production and reflexively natural accountability of the phenomena of order he is 'studying''.*

There is an ethical consideration here. One that relates to how visible or invisible my role as a researcher was to those present for the observations made, or whether I was conducting something resembling covert research. In addressing this I would highlight two points. Firstly, that (as briefly mentioned previously) I was transparent about my research objectives, my reason for being in New York, and my motivations for joining the outreach teams. In an

ongoing negotiating of access, I engaged in an extended and situated approach to ethics (Atkinson, 2015. See also Dingwall, 2008) also. This is a common feature of ethnographic fieldwork and involves being open to questioning about what you are doing there, whilst not interrupting an occasion to announce the intention to reproduce the events in a written description (Bell, 1977: 59). This has been described as an 'everyday and personal ethics' (Hall, 2003:13) insomuch as it aims to act as ethically as one would in any other circumstance. This approach resulted in all the outreach workers being aware that I was doing a project on outreach, they would ask about it often. They were aware of the possibility of their talk and actions appearing in publications, there were no issues raised about this possibility and I assured them that anonymity would be maintained. Although, in a discussion about this anonymity, none of the outreach workers felt it necessary and expressed that they were happy to be named if I chose to do so. Data has been anonymised here, with the intention of protecting the details not just of the outreach teams, but their clients also. Upon telling the team that I would be anonymising the data, their main concern was to pick out their own anonymised names.

To inform every client of the outreach team, of which there were hundreds, of my position as both a researcher and an outreach worker would have been impractical. I am again referring here to the 'everyday' ethics. To interrupt people's everyday activities and talk with information on informed consent would result in distorting the object of interest. For this study, only observations of outreach workers and their clients occurring in public space are included. That is, all data consists of details which were made public by the persons doing them, rather than myself making public what would otherwise have been a private action or talk. A final comment on this subject is that of those clients or homeless people whom I had in depth conversations with (as an outreach worker and as an ethnographer), most of them had forgotten who I was by the next time I saw them. This became a normal part of the ethnographic and outreach work; repetitive conversations are a contiguous aspect of both practices. Further, a large majority of those I spoke to were used to being interviewed by journalists and other students, sometimes complaining about how presumptuous these interviewers had been with their questions and representations of them (clients would read the articles about themselves). One client categorised me as someone doing research before I had a chance to mention it. The following fieldnote describes this encounter;

I was handing out bags to a queue of clients.
"You a journalist, or a student or something?". He asked.

I replied. “I’m doing a PhD.”.
“What, about Homelessness?”.
“Yeh kind of. About outreach really.”
“I thought you were something like that. You don’t get a lot of young people doing this kind of work, so I though you must be a journalist or something.”.

He was right. Of all those outreach team members who were in their mid-twenties, all were currently Journalism, Sociology, or Law students. The client here asked me directly about my approach to studying the subject, I briefly explained something resembling the methodological points I have made in this chapter. His response was, “*That’s good, people always ask about what they already know. You got to keep your eyes and ears open if you want to really find out what’s happening. If a reporter asks me a question I don’t like, I’ll give him an answer he don’t like*”. I took this methodological advice seriously. It was also a comfort to know that my being ‘a journalist, or a student or something’ was visibly available, and that clients already had methods for spotting students and journalists. Those members of society, such as this client, are doing category work (categorising me as a student or journalist) speaks to the next section of this chapter, the second half. To follow is an exploration of the significance of this category work for ethnography, or at least my own approach to it. I have organised this around an ‘intermission’ in the fieldwork.

The Intermission

The intermission in my fieldwork involved leaving New York and returning to Cardiff. The purpose being to meet with my supervisors and review the first half of the fieldwork. This hiatus was a condition of my funding, to check my progress, discuss any emerging lines of analysis, and prepare for the final stage of the project. The return to Cardiff also coincided with a post-graduate research conference for which I planned to give a presentation on my initial findings. At this point of the fieldwork, coherently describing the difficulty of the elasticity of homelessness was not something I was prepared, or in fact able, to do. Instead, my presentation revolved around what homelessness in New York looked like, using various forms of data, some fieldnotes, tables and graphs, and quotes from other current research. I was unhappy with my

own presentation of the topic, it lacked any means of accessing the complexity, the occasionedness, that I had been observing. I presented homelessness as a social problem, something generalised, broadly defined according to my own, not my informant's, parameters. The short discussion that followed the presentation was similar in its tone. Members of the audience using their own topicalising of homelessness as relevant to the discussion of homelessness as a social problem, with possible causes and solutions, and guaranteed features. The representation was a theoretical one, or rather, one that was bound up in a felt need *to* theorise instead of keeping, even if just for the time being, with the actual observations that composed the fieldwork.

I became dissatisfied with how my approach to presenting the topic proved to distort the phenomena, the frustration that my theoretical and decontextualised understandings *of the field* (obtained from reading on the 'topic' of homelessness and urban ethnography) were not matching what I was observing *in the field.* I began to explore different ways of considering the understanding and representation of an observed reality. This included an over-confident first reading of Wittgensteinian philosophy that quickly left me feeling unmoored. However, this led to a more careful look at some phenomenological readings, and eventually I focused my attention on some of the sensitivities put forward by ethnomethodology. There is a logic to this choice of focus and an accompanying caveat to some of what has already been said. I was interested in the *practice* of outreach work, the way in which encounters between service providers and clients happened. This oriented my sociological handling of observations to interactionism (I leave this broadly defined for now). Ethnomethodology directs much attention to the study of, and ontological dealing with, practical accomplishments through interaction. As such, my comments regarding members of the audience of my presentation misrepresenting the phenomena is not to say that they were 'wrong' to do so – much of what was said could be insightful for a study of another kind – my focus on practices made it clear that my study *had* to deal with specific occasions, rather than theorised topics.

The intermission, geographical and reflexive in nature, allowed for the circumstances in which I began a reworking of my methodological approach to the field. Having the requirement to present my research before it was complete and taking time to reflect on my own formulating of the subject of study, created a moment in which I could consider how a distortion the topic might be happening. Further, it provided an opportunity to adjust my approach before re-entering the field. Here then is the essential 'lesson' attended to in this part of the chapter; that the factoring in of an intermission in ethnographic fieldwork allowed for an essential moment

of reflexive thinking and reformulating of an approach to study. Moreover, and more specifically, the requirement of presenting data was a useful method for accounting (to myself and others) for the way in which the topic is being considered.

To follow is some of the details of the reformulation of the topic of study and of the overall approach to the field. As noted previously, here I largely borrow from ethnomethodology – its priorities and sensitivities – and can be read as a very brief overview of the ethnomethodological take on the status of the observer. I have made an attempt to be concise and economical with both words and principles here and do not intend to champion ethnomethodology over other methodological considerations. Rather, I show how this understanding of the field moulded my approach to ethnographic study.

Return to the field

The return to the field, following the intermission, was accompanied by an intentional shift from a topicalising of the field via sociological theorising, to observing how members of society are topicalising the field through their own localised practices. I became concerned with showing how members develop their own logic by which their practices, order, and correctness can be judged *in situ*. The way of doing this was to take a close look at how people are making sense, and making sense visibly, in and through the actual occasions observed, and how they are collaborating with each other to produce an account of the world (Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970).

I identified that the notions of homelessness in my initial observations consisted of my own topicalising of the subject, and so, I sought to reformulate the parameters of the phenomena, locating within my fieldnotes and observations where homelessness was being topicalised by my informants – for each other as members of society and as members of an occasion. In this way, the methods for discovering the phenomena became the same as the methods for producing the phenomena; being a member of that society and competently using the social resources which are available. This represented another shift, one which sees members of

society not necessarily as experts in the culture of which they are a part, but as fellow enquirers into it (Sharrock and Anderson, 1982). It is then through everyday methods people use in accomplishing mutual understandings that enable the 'culture' to be a reportable and discoverable phenomenon. The ethnographer gains access to these understandings through developing a similar competency in those methods. The analysis turns to showing just *how* is it possible for those interactions to be recognisable and intelligible to members; through their (and your) competent use of natural language, and natural language activities (Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970).

There is then, a sort of double sociology to do; first, the 'lay' sociology that members of the situation are doing (outreach workers and their clients ordering actions and talk into observable scenes). The second kind of sociology seeks to explicate the ways in which these practices are assembled and is done through sociological description (fieldnotes and ethnographic writings being one way). This could be simply described as the process of making observable, the ways in which the members make things observable. This is referred to as 'ethnomethodological reflexivity' – the reflexivity operating at the root of every situation. Garfinkel and Sacks (1970: 338) emphasise the following;

'Reflexivity is encountered by sociologists in the actual occasions of their inquiries as indexical properties of natural language. These properties are sometimes characterised by summarily observing that a description, for example, in endless ways and unavoidably, elaborates those circumstances it describes and is elaborated by them.'

Ethnomethodological reflexivity refers to the analysis that the participants are doing themselves, of their own talk and action, through which they produce the properties of social order and make this visible for each other. Ethnomethodology is concerned with showing how members develop their own logic by which their practices, order, and correctness can be judged *in situ*. The importance that this chapter would stress is that to attend to this kind of reflexive practice operating in every situation, interaction, and observation, one must (as a researcher with an agenda) suspend one's own theoretical thinking. Instead, taking a close look at how people are making sense, and making sense visibly, in and through the actual occasion, and how they are collaborating with each other to produce an account of the world.

The exploration of how one might formulate the field then, comes from the already mentioned concern of pre-establishing the topics of study. I am considering here not only the particular topic of the study (outreach and homelessness in this case) but also the choice of place, people, and relationship with these as potential factors in pre-determining 'results'. For ethnography, data is gathered in an abductive manner with the topics unfolding as the fieldwork continues. Whilst it may be the case that some aspects are treated this way, other aspects of doing ethnography, perhaps necessarily and for practicality's sake, are taken for granted. One has to choose where, who, and when to start a study of something. However, a rationale for pursuing a topic of study is not the same as knowing what you will find. It is reasonable to study something based on what you already know is going on (NYC having a large homeless population, for example) whilst not intending to validate pre-established notions. However, if not attended to, such pre-established notions can go unnoticed.

The tendency, it would seem, is to find what we are looking for, which warrants being reflexive about the process of choosing a field site and the subjects of interest. In discussing these kinds of analytical techniques, Rintel (2015:125) frames it this way; 'Categories such as gender or relationship are often treated by researchers as inescapably there *to be found* and amplified in importance rather than found to be relevantly occasioned'. In my own observations I treated 'homelessness' as an already defined concept and as 'there to be found'. I realised that I had oriented my ongoing analysis of collected materials to amplifying its importance as I *already* understood it. This proved to eclipse a noticing of member's own formulation of homelessness as a resource for intelligibility within interactions. Garfinkel (1991) addresses this, using the term 'Haecceity' to refer to the properties or quality of a thing which is unique or 'just this one' in 'just this situation', avoiding suggesting that topics have a stable core.

These are analytical issues made relevant for the work of conducting an ethnographic project. When planning to study people or investigate a topic, making informed orientations towards particular people and places is endowed with various forms of logic. The ontological significance of formulating the field as something bound up in member's *own* topicalising and use of topics, is that the work of observing, pursuing observations, and persons of interest, whilst being part of the ethnographic method is also part of the methods of every member of society (and is certainly the methods of outreach workers). For my own study, did going to New York and settling on a group of people to observe 'predetermine' a certain version of the topic? In a

logistical sense, yes. But what is interesting to notice, is that this is also something that those included in the study (or those who included me in their practices) do also.

Members are already engaged in a process of 'idealisations' (Zimmerman in Weider, 1974: 22-23) of social circumstances. Specific circumstances are sought out (or created) in which the activities of interest are more prominent and thus easier to study or engage in. In this way the unavoidable use of idealizations are present in the sciences (natural and social) and in everyday life. The link here, is that in formulating a fieldsite as well as in members' everyday sense-making practices, there will be a reflection of what the members are out to see. Or as Paul ten Have (2001:39) describes;

'*Idealizations are selective, abstract and logically coherent constructions that are used to collect phenomena in terms of selected features judged to be relevant from a specific, for instance theoretical, point of view*.'

Members make the organisation of that subject discoverable for each other as an essential part of enabling their interactions. Members refer to the order by which these things are discoverable via the practical accomplishment of occasioned understandings and meanings of these interactions (Mair and Sharrock, 2001). What this means, is that wherever you end up as an ethnographer (and with whom) no matter the logistical or topic-specific reasoning, what is there, is already being judged relevant by, and being made discoverable to, members by members. Garfinkel calls this the 'reflexive features of immortal ordinary society' (Garfinkel, 1991). Meaning, the world produces an account, and the account produces the intelligibility of that world, from which accounts '*…in endless ways and unavoidably, elaborates those circumstances it describes and is elaborated by them.'* (Garfinkel and Sacks. 1970: 338). What follows from this, for ethnomethodology, is that common sense practices are the topic of study, but those practices are also used as a resource for any study one may try to undertake (Zimmerman and Pollner, 1971).

What was important for my return to the field was that members are reflexively orienting to the observable order of everyday actions and talk, and this enables the ethnographer to go beyond just an 'ethnographic reflexivity'. Going further than considering how the researcher's methods are distorting the phenomena or the setting, and to see how member's methods are already constructing and negotiating the setting. The fact that members are already making observations for each other to discover, about the topics which are relevant, provides an

intentionally discoverable phenomena by which the setting is already being described, topicalised, and reflexively referred to. In short, members' own methods produce the field.

An understanding of ethnomethodological reflexivity (as a central element of both researcher's practice and the practice of those being studied) can inform a conceptualisation of sociability, social phenomena, and thus, 'the field'. Specifically, seeing social interaction in this way can avoid theoretical preconceptions of social phenomena (prejudging what you might find), take a radically reflexive approach to the study of interaction, and inform and reform (to the point of 'respecification') the notion of the researcher/informant relationship in the field. The intention then, is to put into conversation, ethnomethodological and ethnographic reflexivity, not as a methodological prescription but an exercise in reflexive thinking.

The Ethnographer as Another Member

The first definition is of 'member' or 'member of [a] society' is defined by Garfinkel and Sacks (1970: 342) as *'masters of natural language rather than individuals, or groups'*. The significance of this distinction is found in the definition of ethnomethodology itself. Garfinkel (1967: 11) offers this early definition:

"I use the term "ethnomethodology" to refer to the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organised artful practices of everyday life."

Given my study of outreach practice, it was the focus on the *practical* implications of indexical expressions that were of interest to me. The practical, rather than theoretical, interest that *members* have in their constitutive work. The indexicality of expressions refers to talk that is understood in reference to just what is going on in that occasion. For my own observations going forward I tried to notice what was understood by outreach workers when they talk about homelessness, and what it meant *for* their way of doing outreach work. Whilst, with the same breath, how their particular way of doing outreach work formulated their meaning of homelessness. This kind of observation practice is the essential methodological point derived

from this discussion. The description elaborates the circumstances, but the description is also elaborated by the circumstances. Further, the description does not stand outside of the circumstances it describes, it is oriented to by members to organise, and to make sense of, the situation. The definition of 'member' and 'natural language' then, is derived from this understanding of objectivity;

'The philosophical problem of the gulf between the abstract and general on the one hand and the concrete and situational on the other, can, for ethnomethodological purposes, be respecified, as a problem that members of society solve as a matter of course in their everyday activities.'

(Ten Have, 2001:34)

To a sociologist looking to read into ethnomethodological understandings, 'respecification' is a useful term to keep close (See Garfinkel, 2002). The concepts found in western science and philosophy, such as order, logic, rationality, action, are respecified as members practices (Lynch, 1993). For sociology, a particular respecification of interest is one of Durkheim's aphorism (originally found in 'The Rules of Sociological Method (1938)):

'The objective reality of social facts is sociology's fundamental principle'

Garfinkel and Sacks (1970) offer this adjustment:

'The objective reality of social facts is sociology's fundamental phenomena'

That is, the concern for not substituting objective expressions for the indexical properties of member's practical discourse, but to examine the rational accountability of everyday actions. That the knowing by members is achieved through the exhibiting of the account (talk and action), and the account organises the understanding of the setting (reflexively orienting to that account) and that this is considered as the 'objective reality of social facts' (the occasions with which the field is made). So, it stands that sociological discoveries are, in every case, discoveries from within society (Turner 1971: 177 cited in Ten Have. 2001) insomuch as the researcher, same as any observer, uses their membership knowledge to understand the materials produced. 'Membership knowledge' and the notion of 'member' is derived from Garfinkel and Sacks' (1970: 342) definition:

"*The notion of member is at the heart of the matter. We do not use the term to refer to a person. It refers instead to mastery of natural language, which we understand in the following way. We offer the observation that persons, because of the fact that they are heard to be speaking a natural language, somehow are heard to be engaged in the objective production and objective display of commonsense knowledge of everyday activities as observable and reportable phenomena. We ask what it is about natural language that permits speakers and auditors to hear, and in other ways to witness, the objective production and objective display of commonsense knowledge, and of practical circumstances, practical actions, and practical sociological reasoning as well. What is it about natural language that makes these phenomena observable-reportable, that is account-able phenomena? For speakers and auditors the practices of natural language somehow exhibit these phenomena in the particulars of speaking and that these phenomena are exhibited is thereby itself made exhibitable in further description, remark, questions, and in other ways for the telling.*"

Ten Have (2001:36) summarises;

"*The notion of member refers to capacities or competencies that people have as members of society; capacities to speak, to know, to understand, to act in ways that are sensible in that society and in the situations in which they find themselves*."

The implication of this 'notion of member' for ethnography, is that to be able to study the specific details of a practice, one must develop a competence in doing that practice oneself. Garfinkel refers to this as 'the unique adequacy requirement' (Garfinkel and Wieder, 1992:182). This is the requirement for the analyst to be at least 'vulgarly competent in the local production and reflexive natural accountability of the phenomena of order [he] is studying'. In essence, to be another member of that society, to develop sensitivities to the meanings within the exact use of talk and actions. In reflecting on the first half of this chapter, I would suggest that in describing my own method of joining with the outreach teams, I am showing how that 'unique adequacy requirement' was developed for this study.

This notion of member might be compared to another, and familiar, concept; that of the 'Native'. 'Member' and 'Native' have been considered in a recognisably similar way to what is being outlined here. Blumer (1969: 542) suggests that 'one would have to take the role of the

actor and see his world from his standpoint'. This is not a far cry from Garfinkel's 'unique adequacy requirement'. However, Alex Dennis (2011:349) offers this comparison;

> '*For symbolic interactionists, the sense of interaction depends entirely on actors' interpretations and understandings (Blumer 1969:2), while for ethnomethodologists the meaning of any interactional "move" is reflexively tied to its context: action, sense, and situation are mutually elaborative in situ (Garfinkel 1967:3-4).*"

Both approaches can be considered as an analytical apparatus and as a means of developing sociological descriptions. The crucial point here is a consideration of the native not necessarily as an expert in the culture of which they are a part, but a fellow enquirer into it (Sharrock and Anderson, 1982). It is through everyday methods people use in accomplishing mutual understanding that enable 'culture' to be a reportable phenomenon. The ethnographer gains access to these understandings through a competency in those methods.

Perhaps a useful comparison is considering the often highlighted 'common danger of… going native' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:87). The danger here is in reference to the potential for the abandonment of the analytical task in favour of 'the joys of participation', or a bias forming and leading to overrapport. The essential concern raised here is that a *problematising* (by the analyst) of member's perspectives will be missed. Consider this an important point of distinction, that the analytical task with which members are concerned, is done in the first case by members, and second (if at all) by the analyst. Watson (2015:31) in describing the work of Harvey Sacks, describes this as a 'primordial phenomenon'; it is the practical relevance of locally situated practices of social organisation and sense-making of members that is the topic of study. In this sense, the danger lies not in going native but in considering the native as different from 'us' (us and them/native and ethnographer). If the native is considered in this way, it risks turning their culture into a monolith constructed out of cultural differences of which it becomes the ethnographer's task to describe the typical features of, and not partake in as a member (Sharrock and Anderson, 1982). Such typical features may be adequate for comparing different cultures but not for analysing the situated practical accomplishment of the everyday life of members. For this study, one which is not ethnomethodological in a fundamentalist sense, I do both of these analytical tasks, they are intertwined and mutually informative. For the researcher, 'going native' – especially considering Garfinkel's 'unique adequacy requirement' – is a necessity rather than a danger. What could be considered a 'native', a member of a

society, is an ongoing negotiation, the practices of which are reflexively accountable in the occasion rather than existing in an absolute, intrinsic, state.

Representing the phenomena

Using the notions that have been established above – the field as constitutive of members' practices and considering the ethnographer as another member – there is a case for discussing how to [re]present the field as an ethnographer. What is being referred to here is fieldnotes and ethnographic writing. There are, of course, a range of methods for presenting observations, but this section only deals with written material – and that only briefly.

The first point would be to distinguish the 'phenomena' from the 'data'. Briefly, one can consider the difference as what actually happened during the occasions observed as 'the phenomena' and fieldnotes and the analysis of these as 'data'. This is an elementary (perhaps obvious) distinction to make, but one which highlights the dual priorities of the task of writing ethnographically and writing a thesis in this tradition. The first priority is concerned with my previous discussion of the ethnographer as another member. The accounts produced (via fieldnotes) in the course of the study have been done so as a member of the scenes and circumstances of which I have been present for. That is, they would not have been able to be observed in the way they have, if the member's own experiences had not been taken into consideration. As such, their reliability, accuracy, and validity (as an actual account) can only be fully judged by those who are familiar with the occasions themselves – although, it could be clear in other ways if these accounts were fabricated. The phenomena, the things that happened, are presented as an account that should be recognisable to those who are familiar with its topics. In this way, the written accounts are necessarily and fundamentally, reflexive accounts.

The second priority for some (almost certainly those writing a thesis) is to assemble an adequate report, contributing to a field of research, in the ethnographic tradition, matching the expected

standards of that task. There is a second readership with which to be concerned, an academic readership. Thus, a second kind of reflexive work is being done. A disciplinary reflexivity that demonstrates a keeping to certain expectations and standards. For this, the accounts (recognisable as accurate by academic members, other ethnographers, supervisors etc.) are then considered 'data'; materials collected and analysed. Reflexivity works in these two ways and equates to a single assembled work that is both complete and will remain unfinished. Complete for the sake of the task at hand (a finalised document that makes up an adequate thesis) but unfinished, insomuch as the data cannot be considered to be 'interpreted', not in any final sense. The working and thinking *with* data and the field, goes on (Atkinson, 1990).

There is a significance in recognising the ways in which – what could be described as – 'storytelling' is done in these ways, particularly for sociological ethnographic works. Natural language of members must be used to present the occasioned meaning of their actions. So too, scientific language is used to make a scientific text recognisable as such. Each should be considered a phenomenon of its own. Atkinson (1990:2) calls this the 'textual phenomena' of ethnographic writing. It seems important not to allow the scientific language to lead to vagueness or replace the natural language of members. Rather, to *show* how it is that members use of language and action produce the accountability of their own practices, and scientific/sociological language account for its analysis.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to briefly look at how an ethnomethodological understanding of reflexivity might inform a conceptualising of 'the field'. Where exactly such conceptualising work is done by the ethnographer (via writing), members, and the ethnographer as another member is an open-ended question. However, I have attempted a close and precise engagement with both the practice of ethnography and the practices of other members of society. The respecifying work that gets done by considering the field this way poses the potential to make a critical contribution to existing literatures and studies, a way of seeing topics not only according to a cannon of work but using the topicalising by members of society

through their accomplished practices. The kind of reflexivity this view makes available then is firstly the reflexivity of members of society, secondly that of the ethnographer. This keeps the field – to find and access and then to leave – firmly located with locally contextualised practices of members, rather than a decontextualised theoretical field.

In establishing a method of study and the means of collecting data, I sought to direct my focus to the practices, talk, and practical actions of the outreach workers I was participating with. Rather than fretting about the elasticity of the object of their work, the blurry notion of homelessness, I go on to describe in exact, situated, detail how it was that workers formulated notions of homelessness through, and in order to accomplish, their practical tasks. The noticings of my ethnography were redirected away from ideas about a society and sociability that were predetermined as 'there to be found' (a theoretical understanding of homelessness), and towards the occasioned reality of those I was there to observe and participate with. To summarise – in plain language – I have tried to show how outreach workers use understandings of homelessness (demonstrated by their language and practices) to organise their outreach practices. As will be seen in the following chapters, this has some significance for the kind of street level care that becomes available, and to whom. The analytical task that follows, borrows from the ethnomethodological sensitivities I have described here. This demonstrates an attempt to both show the features of outreach work in Manhattan and describe in detail how this is made interactionally possible. The resulting commentary attends to how category work amongst these members of society is a key resource for the organisation of care for the homeless.

Chapter 4: Introduction to Findings

The thesis now moves to discuss the findings, the observations, from time spent with an outreach team in Manhattan. As described in the previous chapter, the fieldwork as a whole was undertaken with several outreach groups and although each was different to the other, there existed common themes that run throughout their various practices. The following pages focus on one team and their route through the city, and the 'stops' in which they encounter their clients and strangers. Each of the three following chapters look at interactions at separate stops: the Chinatown stop, the 'Our Guys' stop, and the final stop along the route. The fieldnotes offered here are arranged to allow the reader, and the analyst, a close (very close in some cases) look at the details of the interactions between outreach workers and those people they encounter. These fieldnotes, however, are the result of an ethnographic process, of a repeated revisiting of the place and situation by the ethnographer – and, of course, by the outreach team also. As such, the descriptions found in the findings chapters both represent a detailed observing of particular occasions whilst simultaneously exemplifying the usual work of the outreach teams (this can be read as dual ethnomethodological and ethnographic sensibility). This arrangement is a response to the discussions of the previous chapters, relating to possibility of considering the *in situ* assembly of categories and localised understandings when doing ethnographic work.

The discussions accompanying the observations, - as a result of the methodological considerations of this study – switch from ethnographic observations (comments on usual practices, typical features of the scenes, and accumulated details from the time spent with, and as, the outreach team) to attention to specific moments of interaction and interactional methods. To reiterate an aim of this study, the intention here is to explore how homelessness is defined by those whose job it is to find and attend to it. Resultingly, information about the nature of homelessness and of homeless outreach is to be found not solely in the researcher's analysis, but in the descriptions of the situations, in the talk, actions, and behaviour of members of society themselves. Herein is one contribution of the following three chapters; details of actuals cases of outreach work in action. Such details add to an existing field of study (outlined

in the literature review) both extending and repeating themes and observations from other researchers.

The second contribution these chapters offer is in relation to the discussion of the preceding pages. That is, to show how the issues identified in the existing literature, and the methodological priorities highlighted, were operationalised into an observational study of outreach work. In this way, the three chapters represent a modest, yet successful attempt to explore how homelessness is made relevant via the interactional methods used by outreach workers. Those interactional methods are described in detail and in continuous reference to the scenes described. Moreover, the practical implications for the work of the outreach team and those they encounter are evident, making this an instructional document for practitioners also. This applies most firmly to the first two findings chapters, in which the material shows how definition-work around homelessness both prevents and allows access to different levels of street-based care. The third chapter capitalises on the work of the first two and returns the discussion to the issues highlighted in 'Methodological Considerations' and to the three core contributions of the literature review. This is due, in part, to that chapter detailing a situation in which homelessness, as a definition, becomes an inadequate description for the condition, and the requirements, of a particularly complex client. The discussion moves to explore how even when homelessness, the work object of the outreach team, and the topic of study for the ethnographer, is perceived as existing 'beyond' the encounter, it is still assembled as such via occasioned and localised interactions and understandings; it is still a matter of methods.

As the following chapters build upon each other and the discussions relate to each other, there are differences in both substantive detail and appearance. The first, Chinatown, goes some way to describe and explain the understandings of a method, an procedure for noticing incongruous behaviours. Alongside this discussion, being the first findings chapter, it also serves to introduce the practices of the outreach workers, including the workers themselves. In doing so, there is some comparative work to do, for the sake of distinguishing this practice among others. The second and third chapters are less concerned with that comparative work. Both contain descriptions of methods, although, these are increasingly focused solely on the case at hand. The eventual focus is back, to work already elaborated (referring to those core contributions from the literature review) with the objective of addressing the research aims identified there. Firstly, we look at Chinatown.

In speaking of contributions, it is significant to note the following descriptions and analyses do not constitute an applied study; they do not aim to arrive at an answer to the problem of homelessness. Neither do the analytical results of this project claim to make any difference to lives of homeless people – a feature shared by many of the inclusions in the literature review. Rather, the following discussions look to explicate how homelessness is assembled as a problem (to be solved), as an object of work, and as a recognisable identity, by outreach workers and those they encounter. The attention is towards how homelessness is put together by those whose intention it is to solve it, further, how the trouble of assembling definitions enables, and distracts from, successful solutions to experiences of homelessness. Similarly, with this attention to a particular objective there, necessarily, comes omissions; areas left undeveloped which might otherwise prove interesting and insightful. This might include types of service provision (shelter provision, for example) or the varying types of outreach work one might find in a city like New York. From the fieldwork conducted for this study, a continually observed feature was the selectivity of services amongst recipients of street-based services. Those who might be seen as homeless had complex systems of reasoning for pursuing certain services over others. However, due to practical limitations, the discussion of these was not possible for this thesis.

Note to reader; The passages of expanded descriptive writing in the following chapters are presented in their own formatting and font, making them visibly distinctive from the rest of the text. These descriptions possess a writerly quality and are, in part, a literary exercise of sorts. An exercise intended to allow a detailed and precise recounting of events. Of those events, conversations have been recounted verbatim, insomuch as the talk which is presented here is presented as it was spoken and recorded (via fieldnotes). The quality and extent of the recording forms part of the justification for choosing the particular events that follow. An important point of distinction, however, is that these descriptions are not raw fieldnotes, but worked up versions of events which were recorded via fieldnotes. The level of detail found in these accounts was enabled by the sensitivities developed through the repeated revisiting of the places and situations that make up the ethnographic method here. Which is not to say that the descriptions are assembled from different events, although, very similar descriptions arose from other occasions. The intended purpose of these descriptions is to evoke the work of outreach and of interactions, in qualitative detail, as well as providing a literary quality.

Chapter 5: Chinatown

Introduction

The chapter here is concerned with how homelessness as a category is constructed through encounters between outreach workers and their clients. The following pages will draw upon observations, presented as fieldnotes, to explore cases of 'category work' within outreach encounters and to discuss the consequences and practical implications of this category work for outreach practices. The case here is that of the 'Chinatown Stop', the third stop of eight along the Downtown route, and one which typically attracts the largest number of clients. The size of the crowds at this stop distinguishes it from the other stops, however, for the purposes of the discussion here there is also a distinction found in the 'kind of clients' at Chinatown. The category work exhibited around those types of clients, and about clienthood itself, is the subject of focus here. Specifically, in the follow extracts, it is evident that different types of clienthood allows access to different kinds, and amount, of treatment. Attention is paid to the interactional processes which accomplish the relevant categories, alongside the inclusion of ethnographic details that present the practices and features of the outreach teams and their clients.

This chapter is the first of three exploring the 'findings' of the fieldwork. The organising logic to the sequence of these chapters is three main 'types' of clients, three types of category work concerning homeless as established and exhibited via the outreach practices. These types are arranged as follows; Those who are not quite homeless, those who are firmly homeless and are clients, and those who are 'too' homeless to be clients. These are imperfect titles, the details of which will be worked out in the following pages and there is some crossover between the chapters. This is an attempt to move through the category of homelessness as it observably is worked out by those included in this study. The Chinatown case is a first look at the fieldnotes collected during the course of observations and show how people might 'enter' the category of homelessness. That is, there is a group of people at Chinatown who do not appear as homeless, but they do come to be considered as clients of a different kind. Following this chapter, I will look at those who do appear as homeless and are also considered clients of the team, and then

those who appear as homeless but that the team struggle to maintain a client-like relationship with due to the severity of certain conditions.

Presented first is a case in which the outreach team have some trouble in deciding who is homeless. And whether homelessness is the only criteria for receiving something of the service they provide. The first instalment of three chapters, there is a logic for placing this case first. As the discussion moves through the category of 'homeless' as the outreach team attend to it, this is largely a case of encounters with people who, the team suspect, may not be homeless. In the negotiation of this category, a key one for the work of the team, there is a group who hover at the entrance to it. As the chapter continues, the discussion highlights occasions in which the logic and understanding of this category is made clear by the outreach team and the 'clients' through their talk and actions. The consequences of this 'not really homeless' category is, on the one hand, straightforward. It primarily means, in practical terms, they receive less food. There is a further observation that the team and their clients 'do' homelessness or not in observable ways. To refer to the definitional difficulties of the previous chapters, the observations here present cases in which the outreach team display their own occasioned definitions of homelessness and the practical relevance of this for their practice.

The discussion here revolves around how it is the outreach team are able to manage the scene and provide a service utilising the material and social resources they have to hand. What is shown here is that outreach work is complex and organised around factors of requirement, or need, of their clients as well as unpredictable social factors. They use work practices of detection, assessment, and treatment in dealing with these issues, establishing notions of success and failure in which location, demographic, situational factors, and resources are implicated in the shaping of this.

Corman and Sacks

Throughout the following discussion two other street-based studies and examples of assessment practices are referred to, in addition to those found in the previous literature review chapter.

Michael Corman's (2017) 'Street Medicine' provides a discussion of how paramedics orient their practices to both the medical and social factors of providing care in 'non-standard work settings' (including on the street). Corman presents an understanding of paramedic's methods for adapting to the uncertain circumstances and patient characteristics and establishes how types of calls, mediated by the medical and social factors, come to be constructed as good and bad calls and good and bad patients. Corman's comments are drawn upon here as another example of street-based care work and assessments of need.

The form in which assessment practices are understood can be considered an example of Michael Lipsky's (1980) 'Street-level bureaucrats' (outreach workers, paramedics, and police are examples of this). Their practices are directed by the tension between what they are supposed to do and what the local circumstances require (the decision making happens on the street). For the outreach team, the category of homeless is crucial in how this works out, insomuch as, what they are supposed to do is to feed the homeless. Chinatown is a case which poses a challenge to this task and produces occasions in which the team are forced to justify, for each other, their actions in feeding a group who may not be homeless but are still in need of their services.

Understandings of this practice allow one to speak *to* subjects of sociological concern and to policy matters. Zero-tolerance urban renewal and 'cleaning' policy (those derived from Wilson and Kelling's (1982) 'Broken Windows' perhaps being at the fore, especially for New Yorkers) and notions of the revanchist city (See Cloke *et al.*, 2010) can be informed by an exploration of the work that those on the 'frontline' (or 'border' as Rowe (1999) puts it) do when working with a homeless population.

Harvey Sacks' (1972) 'Selective Attention: Notes on Police Assessment of Moral Character' is also drawn upon here. Sacks provides the description of a method used by police for inferring from appearances the probability of criminality, warranting the treatment of search and arrest. Sacks offers another implication for examining assessment methods, in drawing attention to the specialised methods for inferring characteristics from appearances, inferences that anyone *could* make but that specialists determinedly sensitise themselves to and verbalise in specific ways. As the judgement of these specialists is open to be done by those who have not developed such specialist methods – sensitivities and ways of verbalising – a description of member's own methods provides a valuable insight into the practice and can inform the wider sociological

conversation of the subject as well as the lay sociological work done by the members themselves. These kinds of contributions are the priority for this chapter; exploring the locally relevant methods for defining homelessness, and the contribution that examining local methods of outreach practice inform the wider discussions of the topic by closely looking at actual cases of homelessness being defined.

Both cases provide some useful cases of street-based care work and provide some conceptual tools with which to make sense of the outreach practices observed. What is not being suggested is that outreach workers 'act like' paramedics or the police, but that some features of their practices resonate with each other. The team's work negotiates various demographics, locations, situational elements, resources, time, and all within the essentially unpredictable backdrop of Manhattan's streets. Although their practices involve a degree of predictability (Sacks describes these as 'background expectancies') this contends with an inability to precisely anticipate what might arise. Their work practices are adaptable, with the teams necessarily being able to think on their feet. For Chinatown, this mostly applies to the question of 'who gets what?'. They are required to assess their clients. With limited resources on offer the team employ ways of assessing the degree of need, the severity of their poverty, and the trustworthiness of the client.

The other significance is directed at a wider context in which the team operates when encountering their clients. It is directed at, what is often positioned as, a social problem, as a crisis even, of homelessness. The outreach encounter can be seen as poised between being both a solution and a problem for addressing homelessness. On the one hand they are a solution as they go about providing essential care to a vulnerable and marginalised population. Help individuals who, for whatever reason, find themselves in a precarious situation. Pointing them towards, food, shelter, medical and mental health care, potential employment, onwards to more stable circumstances. However, this practice potentially poses a problem in that instead, or whilst, encouraging people off the streets and out of marginality, they are enabling them to maintain a homeless lifestyle. Keeping them in hot meals, fresh underwear, and blankets, and making it easier for homeless people to be homeless. There are occasions in which these issues are dealt with by the team themselves, Ih emerge via their practice.

The purpose here is not to reach the point at Ih we can say with certainty what 'homelessness' or 'need' is, not abstracted from a particular situation. The definitions themselves do not extend

beyond the limits of the observations. Rather, described here, is the way in which these categories are assembled, the principles the assemblages follow, and the fact these categories are always assembled through situated practical action, whether for the purposes of outreach work or assembling a theory of society (Sacks and Garfinkel. 1986). It is these principles for assembling categories that can be extended to other examples. The kind of discretionary work enacted exhibits an observable order and logic in the practices of outreach work. I will show how outreach workers practically (through action and talk) establish who is homeless and in need of their services.

The Chinatown Stop

Introduction

As comes to be seen here, at the stops there are expected to be two categories, homeless people and outreach team members. Not only is it assumed that anyone watching could make the observation that these groups are separate in their role and purpose, but the categories of outreach worker and homeless become relevant for the orientations of those present. They are, as Sacks (1992: 312) terms it, an 'omni-relevant categorisation device'. By this, it is meant that although people may not constantly refer to each other as 'homeless' or 'outreach worker', by virtue of the setting being one in which outreach activities are getting done, at some point something will happen which makes it appropriate to use or make relevant. The point here is a simple one; that there are two groups, easily identifiable, and of prImary importance for the organisation of outreach encounters. 'Homeless' is a kind of operational category and term used by the outreach team, and further, one enacted by those who queue to receive supplies (to some extent, queuing is an activity which makes that category detectable). It is used as a description of some of those who are on the receiving end of the outreach team's services. The same logic applies for the outreach workers, that by doing outreach work they both generate and make detectable that category.

A first (and basic) comment on the extract to follow is that these two groups arrange themselves differently, allowing these rudimentary categories, of homeless and outreach workers, to be observable. A second comment comes from the difference found in the kinds of interactions between the team and their various clients. The point here is not to approach these interactions as cases of individuals doing different things, but to show that individuals come to be treated as categories (of client, of homeless, of need) and this category work has implications for the kind of treatment they receive and the kind of practices they engage in. To reiterate points made in previous chapters, despite tending to a focus on categories and categorisation practices, presented here is not a strictly ethnomethodological analysis. Rather, analytical sensitives are recruited to enable a commentary about categories which is primarily informed and produced by ethnographic understandings of the occasion. These comments are directed at exploring how homelessness as a category is defined in situ (if at all), by members of society, for their own practical purposes. To begin the exploration of outreach work, the following extract introduces the Chinatown stop as the team arrive.

Fieldnote extract: Arriving

Approaching the stop it appears quiet. A wide road next to a fenced park, cars are lined up on one side, the other side is shrouded with scaffolding. The actual stopping place only has a few people waiting nearby.

"Hmmm seems quiet." Melanie Comments.

Pat tilts her head and smiles. "Just you wait."

As the van draws closer to the stop, figures start to emerge from beneath the scaffolding. It has been dark for a couple of hours already, and now, anything unreached by the light of the streetlamps is near invisible. As the figures merge into the light, they beckon to those still waiting in the shadows, pointing at the slowing van. From within the darkness the only sign of life is the glow of cigarettes being quickly finished and flicked to the floor. From these places, more bodies appear.

They come out running, chasing down the van, close enough to be engulfed by the exhaust fumes.
"Don't brake too quickly Mike, or they'll come in through the back window." Paul Jokes.
"Right?" Mike replies. "Some of them are really going for it!"

In the few seconds before the van comes to a complete stop the team allocate roles. Mike on soup, Kiersten and Melanie on bags, Pat and Paul on Bread, Milk and Oranges. They prepare to step out into the mid-winter night. Mike puts a pair of fleece gloves beneath the latex ones they use to serve the food. The latex makes your hands sweat and, on a night, as cold as this one, they will quickly freeze and become useless. Mike has prepared for this. He looks out the back window from the driver's seat. "Oof, there's a lot tonight. Better buckle up. Everyone ready?"
They step out onto the street. It is a calm night but cold. The air, crystalline, stings with each inhale and is omitted in thick plumes. It only takes a few seconds for the cold to attach itself to the material of the team's coats and find any weak spots. They pull up zips and tighten their scarfs.

At the back of the van two long queues have formed. One of men and one of women. The lines extend down the street. People are stood, talking whilst waiting, pacing on the spot trying to stay warm, and watching closely as the team open the doors and start to get ready. The first in line are stood only a few inches away from the bumper. They are ushered back to allow some space, forcing them to nudge into whomever is behind them. The shouts of protest and annoyance that follow, produce a fog of hot breath that rises and forms a hazed ceiling above the crowd. Once the team are ready, they turn to begin serving. The men are served first tonight. Before they receive any food, Kiersten walks up the length of the line giving each of them a plastic bag. She greets each one of them. "Ni hoa. Ni hoa." Once she reaches the back of the line she waits there, monitoring who joins or re-joins the queue.

The first man in line steps forward. A Chinese man, underdressed for the temperature, wearing only a tracksuit jacket over a white shirt. No hat or gloves but he appears unaffected by the frigid weather. However well acclimated, he places his attention fixedly on the box of soups, holds out his bag as he is served a portion of everything. He thrusts his now full bag forward towards the box. "One more soup! One more soup!" He is still focussed on the insulated box and so does not address anyone directly. Mike responds to the request, shaking his head.

"No sorry. Only one tonight."

"One more soup!" The man repeats. His voice determined. There is no intonation in the expression to determine whether this is a question or a demand.

Mike doesn't stop to consider. "No. Only one, ok?"

"One more soup! One more soup!" He persists.

Mike lifts his index finger. "No. One time. One time. Ok?"

The man huffs and exits to the left. The next client steps forward. He is tall, big - heavily built and heavily dressed - he has at least two coats on, the hoods pulled up over his head, hiding part of his face. He speaks with a worn-out voice and a Brooklyn accent.

"One time, huh? Sounds like my ex-wife." He meets Mike's eye and gives a partially toothed grin.

"Haha." Mike smiles back. "She give you turkey soup though?" He puts a carton in the bag.

"Nah, that woman couldn't cook for shit. Unless she was burning it in a spoon."

"Ah." Mike sucks his teeth.

With a practiced movement, the client collects the other items. "Hey, thank you. God bless you all. Good night."

"Take it easy man." Mike waves.

Another Chinese man comes forward to be served. His face is red with tension, jaw tight, his eyes misty with red rawness. Wearing only a patterned blue dress shirt, slacks, and sneakers. The smell indicated strong drink. The swaying, vomit stain on the blue shirt, and swollen bags under his eyes suggested he was a fair way into a

serious binge. And, seemingly, approaching the limits of his functional capacities. It is clear he could cause some trouble. Mike and Pat tentatively put the food into his bag while he sways and glares. Once the bag is full, he looks down for a few seconds, examining the contents. When he looks up a new expression of fury comes with it. He starts raging in Mandarin, sending spittle flying and running down his chin. The women in the adjacent line look on nervously and take a step back.

Mike steps forward, his hands at waist height and making a sweeping, calming, motion. "Hey. Hey. Ok. Alright. Calm down." The man continues shouting, Mike is unmoved. "Look buddy, you gotta go now. OK? Time to go." Mike points both hands to point towards the sidewalk. "Go on."

The client shakes the bag of food in front of Mike and continues to shout and tremor with tension.

"Alright look. Here." Mike grabs another soup and drops it in the bag. "There. Now, go on."

With uncertain footing the man swoons towards the sidewalk. Colliding with the women's queue as he goes. They shout at him and jump to avoid his falling progress. Making it to the sidewalk, he turns and raises his hand and calls angrily to the jeering women. They reply with, what it would appear to be, a choice selection of spirited insults. Finding his feet, he takes the carton of soup from the bag, raises it above his head, and throws it on the floor at his feet. The carton explodes sending soup up his trouser leg. The onlooking women all break into taunting laughter.

Mike looks on, frustrated. "Oh goddammit." Slapping his arms at his sides. Then to himself. "Why take it if you're going to do that?"

The man reels back, recovering from his throw and looks as if he is about charge the women. Pat steps forward. Pointing away and with a clear, raised voice she says. "No! Go on! Go!" There is a short pause as the man weighs up his options. He backs down, turns, and leaves in a jittery rage up the street.

"What a waste." Pat says, looking to the soup on the floor.

"Right?" Mike says. "I get that people have their bad nights, but if you don't want the food, don't take it!"

Discussion

In the above extract the team arrive to the Chinatown stop, arrange themselves as to hand out food, and interact directly with three people. Those people have waited in line, along with others, to receive (on the night described) a portion of food. As noted previously, 'queuing' is a practice which generates and makes detectable the 'client' category. As is seen in this extract, the encounters between the team members and those they meet, works out differently. The first man in line is denied an extra portion, the second engages in a short conversation, and the third causes a moment of tension and wastes a portion of soup. The interactions look different, in the language used, the duration, and the resulting service that is given from the team. For addressing the question of what these encounters mean for the situated definition of homelessness they are a first look at practical distinctions in outreach encounters with their clients. This fieldnote extract serves as an introduction to the notion that what a client can be, is ongoingly negotiated through the encounters between the team and those who are the stops. What is unseen in this section of fieldnotes, and what is to follow in the coming pages, is that the three different possible kinds of clients here, the different kinds of activities (done by team members and clients) are resources for category work to do with homelessness and need. The team's ability to infer characteristics of homelessness come to be displayed in similar encounters.

Arriving at the Chinatown stop, the outreach team are faced with the largest number of people waiting per stop of the evening's route. On most evenings the outreach team will serve upwards of two hundred people, as such, it can be the case that almost half of the evening's portions will be served at Chinatown, the third in a route of eight stops. The location of Chinatown within the route becomes significant, the stakes are high, if the stop is not managed properly the team run the risk of running out of food. Chinatown, with the large number of people, is a demanding stop on the team's available resources. The food, however, is not for anyone but for the homeless (this is the commonly cited purpose of the team). The team are faced with the sociological task of recognising amongst the crowd who is 'homeless' and who is not.

Via a kind of assessment work the team come to construct stops, locations, and clients as particular types. In the case of Chinatown there are some locationally bound features that result in the stop often being considered as a potentially problematic stop and some of the clients as problematic. They are difficult insomuch as do not easily match the team's work object; they do not all appear as homeless. With that being the case, the team negotiate the degree to which they provide a service for those who queue at Chinatown. Clients then, are not necessarily homeless. From a practical point of view, the outreach team do not only feed the homeless (a comment that appears later in this chapter) but routinely engage in situated sociological tasks regarding the noticing and assessment of characteristics (made visible in various ways).

In attending to the clients that are present, homeless or not, they orient their outreach practices to managing resources, which is related to what kind of client a person may be. The 'one time' rule seen in the extract is a result of this. At Chinatown, there is a large number of clients, the team cannot afford to give more than one portion to everyone. Still, there are clients who insist on more food, those who do not, and those who are appeased with another portion – the kind of interaction this produces is noticeable, such as with the third man in the above extract. The portions of food are a commodity used in the negotiation of orderliness at the stops. As seen in the extract, the team deal with trouble by giving the man another soup, to move him along. This is a risk for the team as they may experience difficultly when the rules are seen to be flexible for one, and others expect similar treatment (everyone will want more). This is in combination with the fact that the number of soups they carry is limited and there are several other stops, and more clients to see that evening.

Corman describes how paramedics come to associate locations in the city with different 'quality of patients' (2017: 617) and they further come to talk of the city in relation to these expectations and the correlated meaning for their professional practices of assessing patients. For example, a call to the city centre means a greater likelihood of 'high-risk clientele', whereas other areas may be associated with 'gerries' (senior citizens) each associated with a different type of call-out which can be good or bad. Similarly, the outreach workers come to associate Chinatown with a certain kind (and quality) of client, very few of which are really homeless, they connect with locationally characterised practices. In this case the 'one time' approach that is described in the extract is common. Due to the numbers and the kind of clients, the team will often establish before arriving that Chinatown is an 'only one' stop.

Scarcity of resources (amount of food, time, and conversation for giving information and getting to know clients) is widely implicated in the reasoning of the outreach team's treatment of clients at this stop. Talk of 'just not enough', 'I wish we had more time', and the issues that are faced due to a lack of shared language form part of the justification of treating this as an only one stop. They prepare in advance for what they expect to happen. Corman (2017) refers to this as 'prejudging work'. Similar to the paramedics, outreach workers are reliant on these expectations to make sense, ahead of time, of the kind of things that are likely to happen at this location.

Sacks (1972) provides a description of patrolling police officers' methods for inferring the probability of criminality that is useful for understanding outreach workers methods for judging relevant characteristics from appearances – such as homelessness or need or otherwise. He calls this an 'incongruity procedure' and discusses how it is that the police have methods to be able to recognise and justify approaching particular people or a particular person with a high probability of success for their professional purposes. In other words, how they know 'that one' is the one to follow, or approach, or let pass, and so on. The usefulness of looking at incongruity procedures is it makes visible some differences between a 'face-value', ordinary treatment of appearances and the treatment of appearances which may appear as attended to by specialists or by those who have worked to sensitise themselves to the conditions of a particular setting for a particular purpose. This is not to say 'ordinary' and 'specialist' (these are terms that Sacks uses) result in different conclusions, in fact, Sacks suggests that specialists' reasoning is often oriented to ordinary descriptions of plausibility.

Sacks' (1972) description of incongruity procedures is used as an analytic tool. I do not suggest that outreach workers and police officers behave the same way. In fact, outreach workers determinedly do not act like the police and treat the difference as a defining feature of their practice and ethos. Sacks uses the case of police officers navigating their route through the city, their 'beat', inferring from appearances the likelihood of criminality by sensitising themselves to the situation. Sacks describes a strategy by which a sense of what is established as normal for a situation (the usual occurrences of a particular neighbourhood, for example) allows the police officers to notice; one, what is abnormal, and two, what are the normal signs of criminality. Further to this, he provides a description of how it is that the verbalising of this reasoning (a police officer telling why they suspected someone, for example) makes observable the logic by which inferences are assembled. Using Sacks' description and outreach worker's own

incongruity procedures (which could also be read as a procedure for noticing incongruities), applying it to the case of Chinatown, this chapter shows how outreach workers and their clients (mutually) assemble homelessness and need (from a sensitivity to the situation, an established normality, and verbalised reasoning).

The suggestion that assembling categories is observable in practice and that the justification of the methods to do this are verbalised *in situ*, by members, is significant for purposes of this section (addressing preformed notions of homelessness and need) – and forms part of the justification for using Sacks' work here. Insomuch as, the correctness of the outreach worker's inference (whether a person is actually homeless or in need) is not determined by a professional status or pre-determined criteria, or indeed justified *to* these. It is justified by the observability and plausibility of these inferences being correct according to the appearances that are available in the situation. What is meant by this is that the outreach workers develop ways of seeing the situations they are in, they become able to see features that infer characteristics (like homelessness or need), when they act on these inferences (treat clients in various ways) they justify doing this in ways that anyone (ordinary persons not necessarily specialists) can agree are plausible. Put another way, whatever homelessness or need *is*, is happening and being referred to, in the interactions we can observe, and is potentially very different to what is being referred to elsewhere. The essential contribution of this approach to the sociological inquiry into outreach encounters, is that for the outreach workers the problem of locating homeless people or people in need, is not only a matter of finding people experiencing homeless or neediness. They are making observable the social resources by which homelessness and need are organised as a category, as an idea, for that occasion.

For the above extract above there are three noticeably different encounters between outreach workers and clients. The following section looks to unfold some of the more specific categories that emerge through and for these encounters.

Fieldnote Extract: Being 'Really Homeless'

Following the encounter with the drunk, soup-throwing man, the next few people in line all persist in trying to get more soup too.

"See." Mike says to Paul, having turned down two people's requests. "It we give one of them extra then they all want more."

The next man steps forward. "More soup?" He says politely.

"No. Sorry buddy. Only one." Mike replies.

The man looks at the broken carton left on the sidewalk. "Yes. More Soup. Yes."

"No. Just one." Mike shakes his head.

"Oh…OK." The man leaves disappointed.

Mike looks at Paul and shrugs. "See. Shouldna given that other guy more."

Paul is turning back and forth from the van, collecting milk and oranges and handing them out. He talks while he works. "Don't worry about it. They'd ask for more even if you hadn't given him anything. They always try it."

Mike nods. "Yeh but…you know how they get. Remember that time with the Christmas toys?"

"Oh god! Yes!" Paul puffs out his cheeks and lets out an exasperated breath.

The Christmas-toy story was something of a folktale amongst the volunteers. They told it to newcomers as a warning and often rehashed its moral. In its retelling, the team remembered why they do things as they do at Chinatown. On most holidays, the team arrange themed changes in the supplies they give. Candy at Halloween, Turkey sandwiches at Thanksgiving, and for Christmas they give presents to the children - at Chinatown there was usually a couple that wait in line with their parents. The story goes that as they were giving out the gifts (at the side door of the van away from the main point of food distribution) the Chinese people at the stop 'swamped' the van. When the team explained that they were only giving gifts to the children, those waiting (in English) all claimed to have children at home. The further explanation that only children who were present would be given anything

did not dissuade the group. In a kind of looting attempt, people pushed past the volunteers to grab what they could from within the van. During this moment the team's attempts to talk down the crowd were completely ignored. People were taking off with the gifts intended for the other children on the route. To protect their supplies, the team shut the doors on the crowd, they had to lock the doors to keep them out. The excited crowd started to bang on the panels and doors, shaking the vehicle with the team inside. They then drove away, leaving some people who were uninvolved in the protest, without a meal.

The memory of this occasion marks a change in how the team approach the Chinatown stop and those waiting there. Any 'extras' are dealt with considerable tact. The team keep a close eye on what is given out at the stop. Even so, something beyond their control is what is done with it once it is given.

A man steps forward, another Chinese man, he receives his portion from the team with a sweet smile. Having collected everything he can, he thanks them and turns to face the waiting line of people behind him. Removing the carton of soup from the bag and holding it up he calls out.
"Soup for Milk? Soup for milk?"
Pat sees this and looks annoyed. "Look at that." She says to Mike. "If you're trying to sell what you got as soon as you get it, then you don't really need it." Mike shrugs. The soup seller passes the next man in line who scoffs down at him as he passes. "Nothing but ignorance! Just take take take with you people."
The seller, perhaps not picking up on the hostility, looks at him. "Soup for orange?"
"Jesus fuck! No!" The reply is a spluttered, indignant cough. "I don't want a thing from you people. Fucking talk to me! Just goddamn ignorance!" The seller hurries on.

The man, now in front of the team, is older, bearded, wearing a long black overcoat. His name is Stan, a homeless veteran. He moves up to take his portion, shaking his head. To himself he says. "It's disgraceful." Then looking up to address Mike, who

is waiting with a portion of soup. "These people have no respect, y'know?" Mike raises his eyebrows. The old man latches his attention to Mike and continues. "Last week, when you guys left here, there must have been thirty or forty soups left on the street. If they can't barter them, they just leave them right there." He points to where a small group of people are gathering and swapping the items in their bags. Mike exhales. "Pfft...yep. We know." Pat and Paul have joined in listening and nod in shared concern. "It is annoying. If you're not going to eat it, then don't take it."

"That's right." Stan says. "Meanwhile there's people in this city who are starving. Really starving. I haven't eaten a meal in three days!"

"Ah man, here." Mike puts another carton in his bag.

"Thank you, brother. I appreciate that. It's…all…just…" It sounds like his voice is about to break. "It's not right, y'know?"

"I getcha." Mike replies. He looks like he is about to say something else, but he restrains himself.

Stan continues. "I've been coming here for years. Not all the time you understand? I got jobs sometimes. But back then, it was just me and couple of the other vets. All good guys, just out on their ass. Then the Asians showed up. First there was five, then there was ten, then a hundred! Goddamn ignorance!" He turns to glare at the line of waiting people behind him. Pat looks at Mike and widens her eyes. Mike smirks.

"I gotta go." Stan mutters, turning back. "God bless you all. Goodnight!"

"Yep, goodnight!" Mike waves him off.

Stan turns again just before leaving. He lifts a hand in the direction of the man who was waiting behind him and the last in the men's line. He calls to him. "See ya Teddy!"

"See ya Stan." Teddy calls back and steps up to the team and greets them cheerfully. "Good evening."

"Good evening." Mike, Pat and Paul respond in unison.

Of those waiting at the stop, Stan and Teddy are counted amongst the 'really homeless'. A few giveaway features set them apart. Heavily dressed, a couple of

coats and pairs of trousers. Sometimes they carry a shopping trolley or bags. Teddy's skin and lips are pale with cold. The outermost of his jackets is dark and unzipped, he clenches it shut with his elbows as he holds out his bag for the team to fill.

"Don't worry about that guy." He nods in the direction Stan left. "He just lets the crowds get to him. And he doesn't like the Orientals. Never has." He smiles as he talks and finishes with a loud cough which is omitted as a cloud of hot air. It travels towards Mikes face, who subtly dodges it.

"That's alright." Mike replies. "Here you go." He puts a soup in Teddy's bag.

"Thank you my man. Hey…" He briefly looks over his shoulder and angles his body so as to shield the conversation from any inquisitive eyes. "…you think you could get me another soup real quick?"

Mike nods him in closer. "Sure thing. Come in a bit." Secretively, he gives Teddy another soup. The exchange complete, they move back from each other. Teddy closes the bag. "Thank you, I appreciate that."

Mike winks. "No problem. We don't mind giving you guys a little extra if we can. Just don't let the others see."

"Of course." Teddy smiles. "God bless you."

"And you."

Teddy's departure is blocked by the women's queue. "Excuse me ladies." He says, making his way through the line. "Thank you. Konichiwa. Thank you."

Discussion

Following from the previous extract, this section begins with Mike and Paul dealing with the issue of having given the drunk and angry man an extra portion. From this it follows that they are continuing to manage the stock levels as described before, it is a practical problem that 'they all want more'. As it happens later in the extract, 'all wanting more' does not refer to everyone waiting at the stop, but to a category of client. Mike provides some context to their practice of

'only one' at Chinatown, the Christmas Story, which works into the kind of client they are referring to. The 'only one' rule applies primarily to the Chinese clients at Chinatown and these kinds of client are intentionally approached in way that considers past experiences. Following this is a case of a man bartering with their portion of soup and the assertion that this kind of client-bound practice infers 'not really needing' that portion. Teddy and Stan, two men assumed to be homeless – living on the streets and in shelters – receive a different treatment from the team. They get listened too and get more soup. Stan also provides some context to the stop, a short history of the change in clientele, with the flavour of racism added into it. Stan displays some discrimination towards the Asian people at the stop, describing the rapid increase in number, accuses them of 'ignorance', and differentiates them from the 'vets' (military veterans). The outreach team do a distinction also but not solely on racial grounds (it is racial in some way). It is the case that the team struggle with the clients who are Chinese at Chinatown. There are language barriers, and as becomes evident later, there are some differences in the way a free service is considered. Differences which are taken, by the team, as cultural in nature. What will be discussed here is how these characteristics are devices for doing categorization of these people as, firstly, not homeless, and secondly, challenges their status as clients.

Background expectancies

These are examples of different forms of category work being done by both team members and their clients regarding the kinds of clienthood that are available to see at this stop. The talk that occurs around the Christmas Story and the bartering, followed by the difference in treatment of some clients over others indicates that inferences made by the outreach workers, directly relate to the services that are made available for those clients. Further, that these differing forms of treatment are arranged to, what Sacks (1972) describes as 'a territory of normal appearances' constituting 'background expectancies'. Meaning, the outreach workers regularly orient their practices and talk to what they anticipate the situation to look like. The assessment of clients on any given evening is indexed by a territory of normal appearances which includes a kind of routine category work. This territory is spatial on the one hand and refers to the Chinatown Stop as a location, it is also considered in relation to time (the history of the behaviour of clients).

Here, there are examples of category work which brings people's status as a client into question (the bartering being an indication of really needing the service), and there is that which solidifies candidacy for clienthood (being one of the military veterans). This extends to the practical implication for these different types of clients.

The differences in the kinds of clients that appear through outreach encounters, can be considered with Hooper's (2003) constructs of abeyance and liminality. In this case, the outreach team do their own constructing work, looking to manage their practice in relation to a group who is not clearly in need of exactly the kinds of service they provide but not outside of it either. Hooper recalls his own struggles with identifying exactly who might or might not be homeless and describes the typical features that became the signatures of homelessness. Even then, he found that it was not a perfect method. There are, however, ways of noticing with lesser or higher degrees of accuracy. In this extract the team are making these methods observable. Hall (2017) shares a similar commentary of learning to see (the city) like an outreach worker, which also meant to see like a homeless person does in terms of signs of where it might be found. Or in this case, notice signs that it is not present. There are two moments in the extract that bring clienthood and a level of need into question.

Following the interaction with the drunk man is a justification of the team's method. Mike and Paul are confronted by people who having seen the extra soup being given, now trying to get an extra for themselves. "See. Shouldna given that other guy more.", Mike is identifying a mistake and incorporates it to re-establish the way the team do things at this stop. In doing this he orients to the shared background knowledge of this particular situation by referring to the Christmas story, demonstrating the plausibility and the importance of the 'one time' method and providing a cautionary tale as to what *could* happen if they do not do things this way. The Christmas story was often rehashed by the team to justify the fact that most of the Chinese people at Chinatown were only to be given one soup if there was any concern about the stocks levels that evening. The moral was that these kinds of clients, whist welcome to the one portion, will try to get more even if they do not need it. In this extract Teddy also provides the information that the Chinese people would leave the cartons of soup behind if they could not barter it for other items. It is thought by the team that the Chinese people valued the milk and oranges that were handed out (with the speculation that these could be used for traditional cooking) but that the soup was only used to trade for these things. Before moving to the case

here in which a man tries to barter with their portion of soup, the issue of stock is what is the concern here. Later, along the evening's route, there are those who are known to very much value the portions of soup. The wastefulness that is possible, and the unknown circumstances of many of the Chinese people contributes to the questioning of whether they count as clients in need of the team's services.

Extras come with a risk

One must learn how to see as an outreach worker sees in order to apply a procedure of noticing these features of client *as* the outreach workers do. 'One time' and 'only one' are expressions referring to both to actions (the giving of one portion) but also an expression which, used for the situated purposes of the outreach team's practice, encompasses a whole body of background knowledge. Meaning, these expressions are not only descriptions of what it is they are practically doing but included in the use of that specific expression is the demonstrated understanding of what it means for the outreach practice at the Chinatown Stop. It is indexical, referring to just this occasion and is not necessarily tacit, but accounted for.

The 'just thisness' (in the way referred to in the previous methodology chapter) elaborates how the team are sensitised to the situation, and further establishes a territory of normal appearances. Sacks (1972) describes how, for police officers, once a territory of normal appearances has been established, a notion of 'normal crime' may also be constructed. By this, Sacks is referring to those who are routinely engaged in illegal activities and being aware of the orientation of the police to such activities, they attempt to construct a front (Sacks draws on Goffman (1959)) so as they appear not as criminals but appear as a feature of the normal goings on of that situation. Sacks uses the example of organisers of criminal activities employing people who have a reason to be in a neighbourhood, such as mailmen.

Similarly, the outreach team orient their practices to maximise their ability to do their work successfully, to extend their own priorities over those with different ideas of what the stop, and the team, are for. The continual assessment of those they encounter is an aspect of this work-priority and the noticing (and light policing) of actions that do not match their own priorities is

an aspect of the way the team do outreach work at Chinatown. This becomes more obvious in following extracts, however, the response of the team members to the bartering that takes place is one way the team can infer a level, a severity, of need. Mike accounts for this; "If you're trying to sell what you got as soon as you get it, then you don't really need it.".

The outreach workers are not the only ones who have a problem with the bartering, and not the only ones who infer the quality of people's clienthood from these practices. Stan, the veteran, known to be really homeless by the team, also identifies the bartering and wastefulness as reason to see those who appear to do these things as a certain kind of client.

Stan and Teddy

Stan acts as a kind of informant to the team, letting them know what happens with the food when they are not around. This is not to say that team recruit him as an informant but that, in this situation, Stan takes it upon himself to do the informing. Goffman (1959: 159) describes an informant as someone offering up information, not for payment, but as an expression of friendship, trust, and regard for a shared purpose. "Last week, when you guys left here, there must have been thirty or forty soups left on the street. If they can't barter them, they just leave them right there." From this Stan makes a comparison, "Meanwhile there's people in this city who are starving. Really starving. I haven't eaten a meal in three days!". Stan makes similar inferences as the team; that the Chinese people at the stop are not firmly homeless or necessarily in need of the services being provided.

Stan receives an extra portion of food without directly asking for it. He goes on to offer his history of the stop, explaining how there used to be less people in attendance, all of which were military veterans, before the large numbers of Asian people began arriving to the stop. The history of the stop according to others, both clients and long-serving team members, would confirm this version of events to be mostly accurate. Moreover, Stan's continued clienthood has resulted in the team better getting to know him and his situation regarding his housing situation. Stan is known to be homeless. The same applies for Teddy. As described in the extract, Stan and Teddy look different to the other people at the stop, they look homeless. They

appear much like anyone might expect homeless people to appear. Their clienthood is certainly not brought into question and is confirmed with Stan. Mike gives him an extra portion, away from the eyes of the others, and lets Stan know that "we don't mind giving you guys extra". They are confirmed as somehow separate from the others, as recipients of an extra portion, and seemingly not posing the same risk to the harmony of the stop's organisation and smooth functioning.

Continuing briefly to examine the role of informants in this circumstance, Sacks (1972) picks up the role also as a means for showing how it is that police, rather than solely being oriented to the locating of individual criminals, use informants as a means of making the organisation of criminal activity observable. Sacks describes that, from this observability of the organisation of crime, police can orient their professional practices to an order. It is those who misunderstand, or do not adhere to that order that pose problems for relations between the two groups. Thus, those who cause the most trouble by either side are the novices, the neophytes, the rookies. The old hands are more like partners, their mutual understanding leading to minimised risk, even if on different sides of the law.

The circumstance that Sacks describes does not translate perfectly to the occasion being examined here. However, what can be taken from this is that in enforcing a rule (like the 'one time' rule at Chinatown) is done according to an understanding of the order attached to a category (rather than basing an understanding on an individual by individual basis). Simply put, at Chinatown, the team establish an understanding of how the Chinese people behave and organise their practice to address the implications of this (mitigating the risk of giving 'everyone more'). They do this via an ongoing method of inference making and, to some degree, the use of information offered by the likes of Stan. In addition to this, in understanding the order of this group, it is also possible to observe how Stan and Teddy are separated (in look and action) from that group. They observe the same order, claim to know the priorities of both categories and (if taking Sacks description in mind) act as the 'old hands', representing a minimal risk.

Fieldnote Extract: Incongruities/Bartering

The team move on to the women's line, all of whom are Chinese. Kiersten starts handing out the bags.

"Ni hoa." She greets as she goes.

"Ni hoa." They respond, some with surprise at hearing Kiersten speak Mandarin.

They rush forward once getting their bag, eager to begin. Mike, Pat, and Paul get to work serving the food. To speed things up and to avoid spillages the volunteers try to place the items directly into the women's bags. Many of the women will allow this for the milk and oranges but intercept the bread and soup, preferring to handle this themselves in preparation for bartering. As with the men's line, there are requests for further helpings. These are turned down in much the same way.

Paul hands a woman a piece of bread, a chunky white slice. She takes it hesitantly and examines it, evaluating it in a muffled voice, seemingly displeased. The supply of bread is kept in a large transparent bag, the woman scans the contents. Her eyes lands on a plain white bagel and she points.

"Bagel! Bagel!"

Paul replies. "No sorry. You've already got a piece."

She holds it out to give it back. Still pointing. "I want bagel." She speaks with an inflected tone.

"I can't take it back once you've held it." Paul replies shaking his head.

"Bagel!"

"No. Just one." Paul squeezes the top of the bread bag shut.

"Yes! Bagel!" She persists.

"No bagel! Ok? No bagel! Come on now, you've had your turn." Paul nods to the woman behind, who shoulder-shoves her way forward. Paul removes another white slice from the bag and leans forward to put it in the woman's bag. She shuts the bag before he can drop it in and recoils her hands.

"Bagel." She points.

“Yep right, Ok.” Paul grabs a bagel. She takes it, initially pleased before realising something.

“No onion!” She tries to hand it back.

Paul huffs. “No, come on now. I can’t get the exact piece for everyone can I?” He points at the bagel in her hand, and she tries to hang it onto his outstretched finger. He withdraws the finger before she can manage it. “You’ll have to have that one.”

“No onion! Here! This one.” She points to the plain bagel.

“No, you’ve got that one now.” Paul says, growing impatient.

She looks unhappy, places the bagel on top of the carton of soup and takes a place on the sidewalk, looking to barter the soup and bread.

“Ah really?” Paul, noticing this, says to Pat. “She doesn’t even want it.”

“They only like the plain ones. She’d keep one of those.” Pat replies. “If not, they’ll just trade them.”

Of the usual bread selection, the bagels were the best and the most popular. The bread was obtained through donations, so would vary from day to day. Some opportunism was understandable. Still, the consistent insistence from the women grated on some of the volunteers. They drew a line when they felt it became unreasonable. When this would happen, Mike would often say to a complaining client. “It’s still the best deal in town, it’s free.” Plain bagels had long been the prized choice for the Chinese women. If their request caught the volunteer at the right moment - before they removed their hand from the bread bag - they would be in with a good chance of getting their choice. But the timing had to be right. The team also knew there were those later on the route who liked the bagels too and would actually eat them, rather than use them to barter with. They would often save the bagels for later, keeping them out of sight at Chinatown. They were aware that here, those waiting for food were after the items that they could sell. The team were careful not to be too trusting, not easily fooled, or pushed around. And they learned to look out for a few practices some of the people had for trying to get more than what was on offer.

“Hey Mike!” Kiersten calls out as the queue of women is reaching its end.

Mike looks up. “Yep?”

Kiersten points to one of the women in line. “She’s already been, ok?”

“Gotcha.” Mike nods. The woman draws closer. She pulls out a crumpled bag from her pocket, it looks like one of the bags from a previous night. For collecting food from the team, bags were only good for the night on which they were handed out. Some of those at Chinatown would try to re-join the queue with an empty used bag and convince the volunteers it was their first time.

When she arrives to the front of the queue, Mike turns her away. “No, you’ve already been. It’s just the one time tonight.” She protests, but Mike isn’t ready to relent. “No, I saw you earlier, Ok?”

Kiersten is standing close by. Another woman comes over to join the back of the queue. She is wearing a large pink coat, the hood has a thick fur lining which is pulled over her face. Kiersten leans in to look at the woman’s face. “Heeey.” She squints. “I recognise you.” Her tone is playful. “You’ve already been, haven’t you?”

“No, I not been.” The woman answers with a sincere expression.

Mike is still talking down the first woman. “No, we’re not doing repeats tonight.”

Kiersten, to both women. “Only the one time. Nice try though guys. Maybe next time.”

The women look at each other for a moment before one of them breaks. “Oh Ok, haha! Maybe next time!” She laughs. “But maybe one more soup?”

‘No, no more soup.” Kiersten laughs too. “You can try it! But I remember faces, remember that.”

Both women leave. They head for a row of parked cars, lean down, and retrieve the full bags of food they had collected at an earlier point in the evening and had stashed behind the wheels.

“Repeaters man!” Mike says, looking on as the women leave.

“I know.” Kiersten shakes her head. “They think that if they put their hoods up that we won’t recognise them. But I always make a point of looking them in the eye when I give out the bags. Let them know that I’ve seen them.” She laughs and wags her finger. “Sorry. Not tonight ladies!”

Discussion

In the extract above some of the women display a preference for which types of bread they would like to receive. Depending on what they were given they would either keep the bread or use it to barter for other items. There is some annoyance from Paul when a woman who has just been particular about which piece she wanted, goes on to immediately try to trade it. The use of the food to barter with is one way in which the team distinguish between who might need their services and those who do not 'really' need it. The food they distribute is intended, ideally, to be consumed by the person they give it to, and firm clienthood is confirmed by that person needing, and eating, that food. Following this is the 'repeating' that occurs at Chinatown; people trying to obtain a second portion without the team knowing. There are varying degrees of sophistication to this practice. Some stash their first portion whilst in full view of the team and then pretend to ignore the volunteers when they refuse them another portion. These attempts fall on the unsuccessful end of the spectrum. The more artful 'repeaters' will go behind a car, stash their bag out of sight, turn their coat inside out, and put on a hat or a scarf. Disguised as a new person, they queue again. The team will often realise too late that this has happened, spotting the person retrieve their first portion from underneath a car or from behind a trashcan. The team look out for the 'usual suspects' - those who have been caught out once or twice too often. Kiersten polices the back of the line, fending off the handful of hopeful repeaters each night. She's been complimented on her ability to spot a repeater and describes her method as "Looking for the ones who are trying to be inconspicuous".

Although in the extract, the team playfully shrug off the attempts of the women to obtain extra portions, they remember the occasion in which it first became apparent that this was going on. It was on a particularly busy evening in the summer, several years ago. The team were low on volunteers. With the large crowd, they had their hands full trying keeping a good pace so as to serve everyone and move on to the later stops. They only had enough volunteers to handle the distribution at the back of the van, no one was keeping track of repeating. As they continued to hand out the food the queues seem to be never-ending and their stock started to run low. It was only when they paused to check the lines that they realised what was going on. They started to turn people away. When they did, they watched as the crowd went to pull stashed bags, three or four each, from underneath cars and other hiding places. The team went on to run out of

food before they could get around to the remaining stops. Again, the issue of running out of food was the practical implication, but this behaviour raises questions amongst the team relating to the motivations and ethics of the Chinese people at Chinatown.

The extract to follow contains the team's own accounting for the behaviour associated with the Chinese people at Chinatown, and further, the status of this group as 'clients' or not. However, before progressing from the previous to the next extract, it will be briefly outlined how it is that the issue of race might be considered (for the analyst and members themselves) in this case.

Within the extract there are examples of people's methods for trying to get more food, and in turn, the outreach worker's methods for noticing the repeating. Those who are caught repeating are not given the extra portion. Although the logic may follow that if these clients are attempting to get more food, it may indicate that they are in greater need than those who do not 'repeat'. The practice of disguising oneself to be served twice is distinct to the Chinese people at this stop; no others at any other stop do this. Race becomes relevant for the team's methods of noticing repeating. It is an activity bound to this locally assembled category of client, a category in part characterised by racial features. As has been described, this is a category posing a practical risk to the team's objectives and stock levels. The organisation of this stop is matched to the kind of clients that are found there, such as the 'one time' rule and the methods for noticing repeaters. The stop is organised for a category of client, and that category is only accomplishable at this stop. Both the practical organisation of the stop and the social organisation of the category (including the relevance of racial categories) are done so via 'background expectancies', the 'territory of normal appearances' which the team come to be sensitised to (Sacks, 1972). They consistently relate and refer to what they expect to be the case. Moreover, the expectancies are constructed and reaffirmed through their ongoing practice.

What this does not mean is that Chinese people at Chinatown cannot be homeless, or in need, or fit the professional purposes of the outreach team (as is evident in the following extract). It means that race, being seeable as Chinese, is relevant, uncomfortably so, for the category work implemented in the organisation of the Chinatown stop.

Fieldnote Extract: Van talk

Mike is driving, he pulls out into the traffic. Pat is in the passenger seat, the rest of the team are in the back. They start to remove the latex gloves and rub their hands together. The heating has been turned right up and the little cabin space starts to warm.

"They really don't let up do they?" Paul comments, looking over his shoulder and out of the back window, the last of the women are still bartering with one another.

"Nope." Pat replies, buckling her seatbelt. "They'll keep going until everything is locked away. Although, a couple of times they have tried to stop us closing the doors and tried to open them once they're closed."

"Pffftt, it's a bit crazy isn't it?" Paul sighs.

"Yeh, they don't know when to stop." Pat replies.

"Honestly now, do you think they are trying to take advantage?" Paul asks. Melanie and Kiersten respond simultaneously.

"Yes."

"No."

Kiersten goes on. "No, I don't think that. I think they have as much right to get food as anyone else does, and I do understand that they try to get as much as they can." She pauses, Paul is attentive and nods along. Kiersten continues. "I think the fact that they keep on turning up suggests that they must need it. You don't come out and stand around in the cold every night for some soup unless you're struggling in some way, right?"

"Yeh, I get that." Melanie responds. "But it's not fair that they keep on coming around again and again, pretending they haven't had anything. We've got the other stops to go to, and there are a lot of other people who need that food. They do know that. We've told them so many times."

"That's true." Kiersten nods. "I still don't think they're 'taking advantage'." Air quoting. "You know what I mean? I just think they are probably really struggling."

"Hmmm, yeh I get you." Melanie agrees.

Mike joins the conversation. “Kiersten, you think that even when they try to sell their soups as soon as they get them? Or leave them on the street and they end up in the trash? Feels like we’re providing them with a product when we’re supposed to be feeding the homeless. Although, they do go crazy for the milk and oranges. And the bagels.” Mike shrugs.

“They loooove the bagels!” Pat agrees, exaggerating a nod.

“Yeh, unless they’re onion!” Mike jokes. He talks as he drives. “But yeh, Kiersten, you are probably right that they’re having a tough time. I read an article about how they ship people in from China to work in the restaurant industry. Promise them a new life in America, but when they arrive, they have their passports taken off them and basically have no rights until they can get a certain status. They’re essentially slaves. So, I guess, they might not actually be homeless but it’s not as if they’re any better off.”

Melanie turns to Pat. “That was what that lawyer guy said, remember? The guy who came out with us one time?”

Pat is already nodding. “The same guy who reported us to Julio for being racist to the Chinese people.”

Kiersten looks surprised. “What?”

Pat explains. “He thought because we didn’t give them as much that we were racist.”

Melanie interjects. “Yep, he came along, told the story about the Chinese slaves, didn’t say anything else for the whole night, then reported us for being racist! Can you believe that? You can’t come on one night and start making accusations like that!”

“It’s not racism.” Pat says. “I do find the Chinese people difficult but I wish we could give them more. Just, logistically we can’t. Also, when we do have enough and have said ‘Ok, we have enough for one more’ they go crazy and try to take everything. It’s always a risk at that stop, there’s just not enough food to keep on going around. And we don’t have the time to stay that long, look.” She points at the clock on the dashboard. “We’re already late for the next stop. I really wish we could stay and talk to people. The people I have talked to there are usually really nice, but we’d be

there all night.' She stops as if to consider something. "I guess, looking at it, it could seem like we're being prejudiced."

"But it's not like we don't give anybody anything." Kiersten says. "Everybody gets something. We do what we can. But I agree, it would be nice to be able to take some time to get to know people more. I get to talk to some people when I give them their bags, like that little old Chinese man, he is so sweet! And he is actually homeless, I think."

"Yeh he is definitely homeless." Mike agrees. "But he's probably the only one we know for sure who is homeless, out of how many at that stop?"

Paul joins. "Yeh, not many. It's always better when you get to talk to people, but I'm not sure they all speak English, you know? Sometimes I wonder if that's the reason they don't seem to understand what we're doing."

"Oh no they understand, for sure." Pat says. "Most of them speak English, they just choose not to. They speak it when it suits them. And we used to ask June to translate for us, didn't we? Until they started ganging up on her for telling them they couldn't get anymore. I think they just try their luck, it's like a game to them, they even laugh when they get caught. But it does annoy me that they throw the soups away if they can't barter with them. It's like, come on guys."

"I really can't stand that." Mike says. "And when they're nasty about it. Like tonight wasn't so bad, but when Angry Grandma is there…oh boy! Watch out!"

Kiersten laughs. "Ah man yeh she is mean. Always pinching. I've started getting a bag ready for her before we arrive. It means that I can give it to her quick, because she's always at the front of the line, and then I send her away before she can do anything."

Mike is shaking his head, laughing. "She can be really nasty. I used to try to lighten it up a bit. I used to mess with them so bad when they would keep asking for more. Like, I would have already told them there's no more, they'd still be asking, so I'd say 'Oh ok then, here you go' then distract them and when they're not looking make it seem like I'd put the soup in the bag. When they realised, they'd be like 'Hey!' and I'd say." He points jokingly at an imaginary client. "Gotcha!". They always found that funny, well, I found it funny. If they're going to mess with me, then I'm going to

mess with them a little." A couple of the others laugh, but it stops as Mike continues more seriously. "The thing with Chinatown is crowd control. You know, you get your good and bad nights and there's always difficult people, at every stop there's at least one. But at Chinatown you just have to keep things moving. At minimum you could do it with two people, one serving and one on crowd control. If you don't keep an eye on them, they go crazy and take whatever they can."

Discussion

Above, the team are in the van after distributing food and a conversation occurs in which they account for some of the ways in which the stop is organised and how the people at the stop are considered. The time in the van immediately after a stop, any stop, is often an important aspect of the team's work in which they reflect on their own practices, any issues, and about clients. In this case, Paul poses the question of whether the Chinese people are 'taking advantage' of them. The responses from Kiersten and Melanie serve as interesting overviews of two ways in which the Chinese people are considered according to the ethical properties of their behaviour, and the degree of need they might have. Kiersten presents the case that they have 'as much right as anyone' to receive food and understands that they try to obtain as much as they can as "You don't come out and stand around in the cold every night for some soup unless you're struggling in some way". Melanie, although agreeing with this assessment, questions the motivation behind people trying to get more food for themselves, whilst knowing that there are others who also need it. Mike, in contributing to this discussion, questions Kiersten by making a distinction. He comments that when the Chinese people use the food they receive to barter with, it is as if the team are providing them with a "product" to sell, which is counter to what they are "supposed" to be doing, which is "feeding the homeless". Mike quickly backtracks on this, quoting some information that may be relevant for the situations of their Chinese clients and suggests that whilst "they might not actually be homeless but it's not as if they're any better off."

The discussion amongst the team positions the Chinese people as not homeless, and yet likely in need of their services. The way in which the encounters with the Chinese clients tends to go

creates some tension, not only for the practical task of distributing food, but for the formulation of the outreach task also. At Chinatown, to be known or seeable as homeless is to match a criterion for receiving care. The category of Chinese people/clients at Chinatown, however, is less obviously matching that criterion whilst equally not obviously falling outside of the conditions for the criteria; not homeless but not better off. In reference to Hopper's (2003) suggestion that homelessness is an elastic term, it can be suggested that here it is being extended to the purpose of an entry requirement. An 'entry' into a category of certain need. The Chinese clients as a category, rest on the edge of that requirement. The assessment work that might prove insightful for the discussion the outreach workers engage in, is made difficult by the complex conditions in which they encounter that group The lack of shared language skills, the number of people to serve, the time and resource pressures, and the team's need to move on to other stops and other clients; people whom they know, are 'homeless'.

Pat accounts for these limitations, claiming they are logistical in nature. Her assertion is partially in response to a previous accusation of racism. She claims that the restrictions the team impose at Chinatown is not due to race but to the number of resources they have on offer in combination with category-expectancies; they do not have enough food and when they do have enough to give out more "they go crazy and try to take everything". The logistical scope of their work is a reason for their treatment of people at Chinatown, and there are apparent further barriers to an understanding of the ideal relationship between team members and those they serve. The team express that they would like to be able to take more time to talk to those at Chinatown, and that this would possibly help with the worker/client relationship, but that there is not enough time. Instead, as Mike summarises, the stop is about 'crowd control', and the management of stock levels and of the time it takes to serve the large number of people, overshadows the priority of getting to know them better. In this way the team both locate candidates for care, and also establish their own candidacy for providing that care and to what degree they provide it.

Conclusion

This chapter, the first of three findings chapters, has sought to show how outreach workers face problems in their work that are oriented to and, to some degree, resolved and understood through localised category-work. As has been explored here, the large group of Chinese people pose a logistical and social problem for the team; both the demand on their stock of food and the ambiguity of the status of this group as clients, as homeless, and as 'in need'. This group pose a potential threat to the practical accomplishing of the outreach task, and to the object of that task (feeding the homeless). The chapter has shown that, at this stop, being seeable as homeless is to meet a criterion by which the team infer a level of need and candidacy of their services. The Chinese people are seen to not quite meet this criterion, which is not to say that they do not qualify as another kind of client. The category of Chinese client at Chinatown is then assembled according to what the team expect to happen and by having those expectations reaffirmed through repeated encounters.

What has been addressed here is that Chinese people at the Chinatown stop are positioned on the periphery of what the team establish as their aim. Again, this is both practical/logistical and social. The team restrict the portion size available to the Chinese people and are restricted from developing a closer relationship with them as clients. A closer relationship that, as will be shown in following chapters, is considered an important element of the outreach practice. In the discussion of the observations here, this chapter has shown the practical accomplishment of making inferences and the doing of situated assessment work which constitutes actual outreach practices; practices requiring sensitivities to be developed. In describing these methods and considering the research objective of exploring homelessness as a category, the above pages show how 'homelessness' is achieved, and not achieved, through the outreach encounter. This stands counter to considering homelessness and clienthood as preformed notions and provides detail to the processes for establishing relevant interactional categories and actions (in comparison to Rowe's (1999) assumptions, for example).

Whilst the Chinatown stop is a complex case, with numerous elements working in concert with and in opposition to one another, and the team rarely in a stable mind about any of them, the above excerpts are instructive as to how outreach workers and those they encounter make sense

of homelessness for their own practical purposes. The contribution is both general and specific. General insomuch as the making of inferences and noticing of features related to issues of varying degrees of need and severity of poverty, is not unique to this situation. The suggestion that a close look at member's own methods for accomplishing these things may well be useful across a range of situations. The more specific contribution is the close look at just this case; what it means to be considered a client at the Chinatown stop. From this it is evident that some people are poised on the edge of care services due to particular behaviours and due to inference that are made according to those. In the following chapter, a case is presented in which being homeless is not a contested category, the clients are firmly considered as 'homeless' even if the word does not mean what it literally suggests. From these encounters it is possible to observe a different kind of category work, a different kind of care and service available (or made available), and different consequences for the work of the outreach team and for the treatment of their clients. From this, locating homeless is not the task at hand, rather the categorisation of, and practical dealing with, types of homeless is the concern.

Chapter 6: 'Our Guys'

Introduction

This chapter presents another stop on the team's route through downtown Manhattan. During the latter half of the route there are stops for which the initial assessment of those the team encounter as homeless or not, as clients, is less problematic. For the most part, the surety of clienthood and of homelessness is already set and has been for some time. With time, familiarity has been built, the team get to know better the clients and vice versa. So too, the organisation of the stop itself becomes familiar to those present and things tend to run smoothly at these locations. Less attention is required to assemble and manage the stop so as to maintain order, there are less clients waiting, and those clients who are there tend to know the way things are preferably organised. In comparison to those at Chinatown, the team are working with a different 'kind' of client, they are regulars, the team often referring to them as 'Our Guys'.

The contribution this chapter intends to make is to explore variations of what 'homelessness', once confirmed, might come to mean, the implications that has for the work of the team, and for the treatment available to clients. In terms of homelessness as a category, here is explored the category-work that occurs 'within' that broader category. As such, the actual use of the term 'homelessness' is not necessarily the focus here, but the terms and definitions which might further elaborate the relevant categories and circumstances used for doing outreach work. The discussion that follows is considered in relation to Hall's (2017) comments on how the perceptive (and spatial) practices of outreach workers are a means of both generating categories of need and simultaneously allow for the detection of those categories. In suggesting this, Hall is referring to those 'hard-to-reach' groups with that dual meaning; 'hard to reach' both geographically and in terms of gaining trust. In the following pages, trust and getting to know clients becomes an important feature of the kind of interactions that are observed. To demonstrate this building of trust and its implications for outreach practices, there is closer focus (at least, 'closer' relative to the previous chapter) on three people, three clients. The

intention in doing this is not to look to individuals per se, but to how individuality is implicated in category-work. In this way, the commentary that follows focusses on a practice which extends beyond individual encounters, but one which is well exemplified by them. To begin, the 'Our Guys' stop will be introduced.

The 'Our Guys' stop

With regularity comes issues, in fact, the regularity itself is an issue. Ideally, it is hoped that clients will not stay so for too long, that the services the team provide are only needed while the client gets back on their feet, gets inside somewhere, gets a job, gets clean, gets back on their medications etc. It is hoped that a person will move through (and out of) being a client and being a homeless person. There are plenty of those who manage to do this, sometimes within a matter of days. There is a first meeting, a little information is shared, a meal given, then in a short amount of time they are out of the picture. More often than not, the team have no way of telling what actually happens to those who they serve and don't see again. Once in a while, someone who was a client will return to the stop to let them know they are doing well, usually accompanied by much thanks. Such moments are relished by the team but are uncommon relative to the alternative. It is a recognised part of the outreach practice, it is often stated that "If we are doing our job right, then we shouldn't see them again.". Sometimes this is phrased more ultimately as "If we do our job right, then we won't have to do it at all.".

As a kind of mission statement, and often in reference to the notion of 'solving' homelessness, it is an objective of the outreach team's practice to put themselves out of a job. Clients who cease to be a concern signal a potential success and much of the team's work is oriented to achieving this, for their clients and for themselves. That is to say, although difficulties certainly emerge along the way, there are well-worn pathways out of homelessness (available social services, social housing, counselling, etc) and the team consistently direct their clients towards these services and hope that it is effective.

Exits

The kind of exit they try to mitigate against is the death of a client. The physical vulnerability experienced by many of the clients is an ever-present concern. Conditions of living outside or in a shelter are harsh and dangerous. The stakes involved in moving people out of the circumstances of homelessness can be high. These concerns are voiced regularly, the morbidity intermixed with the possibility of success. Mike would say, "Whenever someone stops turning up or you don't see them again obviously you hope it's because they've figured things out and got an apartment or something. But there's always that worry that something else has happened. So, you don't want to see people because it means they might, y'know, not be homeless anymore. But you also want to see people so you know they're still ok".

Clients, of course, do pass away of natural causes that are not directly linked to the conditions of their homelessness or precarious living situations. The fear for many of the team's clients are the dangers of the conditions which are directly linked to their living situation, exposure to the weather, and the exposure to violence. There are frequent reminders of this, including the four homeless men who became victims of a murderous rampage in Chinatown one night in October of 2019 (see Sandoval et al. 2019). This tension, between successfully directing a client out of homelessness and the lack of confirmation of this, is often interrupted by returns to the scene. Clients are in and out of the sight, and in and out of mind, finding and loosing stability in regular cycles. So it goes, there are three paradoxical states of concern that outreach workers project onto their clients: one, the concern that they are visible and visibly homelessness, two, being left to wonder what happened to them when they are no longer visible, and three, the concern when they *continue* to be visible and visibly still homeless.

Those clients who keep on returning, individuals who become an enduring part of the team's work, represent a particular kind of problem. Those perpetually caught within the homeless client category over long periods of time come to be known about in increasingly detailed ways by the team. They can come to be 'non-standard' cases (although 'non-standard' is not always an exceptional case) with the kind of treatment they receive becoming catered to their

individual circumstances. For such clients, the outreach encounter as an occasion for care provision, becomes an occasion within a set of occasions. The resources that the team use to inform their care practices develop, so too, the appearance and the boundaries of outreach work develop, negotiated for and through the occasion but relevant to an objective that spans across multiple occasions. It is still possible to observe the occurrences and recognise them as a single case of outreach practice being done; on any single evening the team are still observably doing outreach work in recognisable ways. However, the resources the team use are in reference to a series of other occurrences that have taken place in previous encounters (and in reference to encounters they expect to take place).

As previously mentioned, the discussion here pays attention to the methods by which outreach workers generate and detect categories for the practical purposes of their work, drawing on Hall's (2017) ethnographic work. In addition to Hall, the chapter here draws on the 'documentary method of interpretation' (Garfinkel, 1967). To briefly summarise, the 'documentary method' refers to 'treating an actual appearance as 'the document of', as 'pointing to', as 'standing on behalf of', a 'presupposed underlying pattern' (Garfinkel, 1967: 78). Moreover, an appearance is treated according to what is already known about that underlying pattern.

What is suggested in this chapter, is that outreach workers can presuppose that a person is homeless based on what they know about homelessness as a set of circumstances and in concert with the methods for noticing features of clients. A person, a client, now categorizable as homeless continues to be detectable as homeless to the team. In this way, the process of generating and detecting categories is evident. This process provides details about homeless people which adds to what is known about a presupposed underlying pattern (homelessness). The more they get to know their clients, the greater the possibilities for what an appearance might be a 'document of' or 'pointing to' in relation to their purpose of their work, and beyond it. The outreach team continually rework notions of homelessness as they go about their work. This chapter details how regular clients can provide the possibility for this to happen, and how the team's reach into their clients' lives is enabled through this. The gathering of details and information over time happens with individuals, which is not to say that the discussion here is oriented to individuals. Rather, the discussion looks to notice how individuality is implemented in the kind of category work that is observable here.

This chapter, in describing the outreach practices here (via fieldnotes and through sociological 'analytical' description) contributes to the overall discussion of the thesis. It follows from the Chinatown discussion insomuch as it builds on the observation that outreach workers orient their practice to noticing incongruous behaviours, making inferences (about who is homeless and who is in need) based on those observable features. This is a general sociological description of an interactional method as well as a description of outreach worker's specific practices. The chapter adds detail on both the general and specific aspects of interaction observed between outreach workers and their clients. Furthermore, the stop which is the subject of this chapter is observably different to Chinatown, the clients are a different kind of client. Those at Chinatown were not all firmly considered as homeless (only a few were) and the outreach team orient their practice to this problem. Whereas the clients at this stop are mostly thought of as homeless by the team, and their practice is oriented to a different aspect of their outreach work.

Rachael 'The Professor' and Thompson

Rachael, also known to the team as 'The Professor', was as much a familiar face as she was enigmatic. She was well known to all of those at one of the later stops, to the clients and the team. She had attended, according to one of the longer serving volunteers, for over twelve years. Always at the same stop, every day. In that time, she was unchanged in her appearance. She had always been 'older' although it would be impossible to tell for sure what her exact age was. She wore the same clothes throughout the seasons and weathers; a long, heavy, overcoat of the sort that for most would be only suitable for the colder months, a light scarf wrapped multiple times around her neck and face, often covering her mouth and nose, and a full brimmed purple felt hat. It was winter dress, only she wore it year-round. The parts of her left uncovered was her face (when not wrapped in the scarf) and her hands. Her face was slightly gaunt with a dark complexion and aged skin, a thin nose and bags under her eyes. Her hands were seized into a permanent claw, unable to fully extend. When receiving her portion of food, she would twist her hand so that she could hook the bag handle, or she would ask that the person serving her would slip the handle up onto her forearm and she would carry it this way.

If the Professor's attendance and attire were predictable, then so too was the conversation. "What I really need today is Milk because I won't be coming out tomorrow." Was the usual line. Although the team members would change depending on the day, so that who was serving today might not be serving tomorrow, they all knew by now that she would be there the next day making the same requests. However, they would oblige and give her a little more milk and some extra soup if there was enough to spare. The other reason she would often cite for needing extra portions, was so that she could deliver them to people she had seen sleeping on the streets or deliver to those who lived in her building who were unable to get to the stop. Again, the team would accommodate, and The Professor would often leave with two or three bags of food.

In this way Rachael - The Professor - would get a kind of special treatment. Most of the other clients would not be allowed, or trusted, to take enough food for several people every night. The general rule is that if the person is not at the stop, then they cannot have a meal. The reasoning is due to the team's worry that if people are allowed to take enough food for someone's family or friend that they do not know exists, they open themselves to be taken advantage of. The obvious issue would be that in serving an invisible client, there would not be enough food for those who are present at the stops. The Professor, however, and a few others across the downtown route, with time and familiarity, have come to be trusted, even if they are not wholly believed.

The less firm information about The Professor, relates to how she came to be given her nickname. Rachael, throughout the time that the team have known her, has given and continues to give varying versions of her own history. Her careers, places she had lived, events she has been involved in, and how she came to be in the situation she is in now, change on a regular basis. It is uncertain if any or all of these biographical details are false. The stories of her past follow a pattern but are rehashed, adjusted, or partially reorganised. The story of her professorship at New York University is the most common, and there reached a point in which all the team members had heard it at least once. Thus, 'The Professor' stuck as a nickname. Despite the reluctance of the team to accept the credibility of Rachael's origin stories, this didn't stop them from being curious about her past. And not only for curiosity's sake, but what the contrasting stories might indicate about what might be going on with Rachael. Of main concern, was her mental health.

With such characters and conversations, what is considered important from a care and service provision point of view, is not necessarily the content and its reliability, but being there to hear it. Much of the outreach work the team do involves a tension between sympathy, believability, and practicality. The team are constantly involved in interactions in which they suspect they are being lied to. Conversations and things they hear are treated as pieces of information, clues that when combined, allow explanations to be arrived at.

Fieldnote Extract: Rachael and Thompson

A summer's night and the air is thick with the heat that rises from the subway and settles in a haze on the sidewalk. In these conditions, most of those outside opted to live in near nakedness and spent their time fending off dehydration. The stop had been set up and organised with the heat in mind. While the queue of half-dressed clients waited, the team had arranged sandwiches instead of hot soup, plenty of bottled water, Mike had brought a cooler full of ice pops to try and give some relief from the heat. An already uncomfortable scene was added to by a tension amongst the clients.

Rachael, The Professor, was dressed as always, with her coat, scarf, and hat. Hanging around at the back of the line, she is averting her gaze from the other clients. Thompson, another regular at the stop is shouting something at her. The exact words are difficult to hear over the traffic and his back is turned away from the team. Thompson is a short man of Jamaican heritage. He wears long dreadlocks, usually tied up and covered under a hat, but not today. His accent is strong, he talks in short bursts which are difficult to make out and further masked by a combined smoky rasp and slurring from his drinking.

"Your mother is a…" A few words are caught as he swings around uncertainly on his feet. "You're a piece of shiiii….tttt." The final word drifts for a moment before he finishes it with a spit. Pat and Mike share a glance.

Thompson cuts the line so that he is right at the front. The client behind is about to protest but Mike raises his hand slightly and gives him a reassuring look and whispers "Don't worry about it." The client recedes and starts complaining to the person behind him. A bag is quickly put together for Thompson as he hovers and struggles to focus his gaze on what is in front of him.

"Shut up! Take it eaaaaaassssyyy! Rasta man! Ok then heeeaarrre we go!" The series of phrases are presented at full volume and aimed at no one in particular. "Hey man, where are ya from?" He says to Mike, speaking quieter now.

'New York, man."

"New York? Where's that?!" He throws his head back in exaggerated laughter. "Haha…funny man. Hey. Hey. What's the difference between America and Germany?"

"America and Germany?" Mike says, seeming to pay little attention.

"Yeh what's the difference?" Thompson leans forward, bending over a little and with an exaggerated expression of comical questioning, looks up at Mike.

"Pfffff…I dunno."

"Queen Elizabeth!" Thompson upon delivering the punchline, hops around on the spot doing a little dance and laughing to himself, triumphant.

"Ok then." Mike says. Not worrying about the nonsensical joke, he finishes making the bag and hands it to Thompson. "Good one. See you later Pal."

Thompson takes the bag with a satirical delicacy. "Ok good. Germany man. God bless you. Goodnight." He wanders off down the sidewalk, looking about the other clients, presumably for Rachael. She had manoeuvred out of his sight and was hiding behind a group of clients. Thompson turns on his heels and leaves.

Pat, continuing to serve the milk and bread, turns to Mike. "What was that guy shouting about?'

"I honestly have no idea." Mike speaks for those who are close by to hear and they all chuckle. Then, slightly more privately so that he is speaking to Pat and the client who was originally first in line, Mike says. "It's best to let him cut the line otherwise

he'll just cause trouble. Best just to get him out of the way." The client listening nods in agreement.

The team work through serving the remaining clients until, at the end of the line, Rachael steps forward.

"Hello mommy. Hello Pappy." She says to Pat and Mike.

"Hello. How are you tonight?" Pat replies, already starting to gather a few cartons of milk together.

"Well I was OK until that man stole a hundred dollars from me."

"Oh?"

"That's right. I had a hundred dollars in my pocket just here." She opens the top of a large pocket in her overcoat, revealing it to be empty. "And he was stood by me while we were all waiting for you to arrive just now. Then I realised that my money had gone! It could only have been him. No one else came near me."

"Oh dear." Pat says with a sympathetic tone.

"I'm sure it was him, he's always causing trouble and I know that he hates me. I'll call the police and I can bet they'll find my money in his pocket."

"Well ok…" Pat has finished putting her bag together and holds out the handle, which she keeps wide so that she can slip it onto Rachael's arm and avoid her damaged hands.

"Oh, thank you dear." Rachael arranges the bag on her arm. Mike and Pat, seeing there is no one else waiting, start to pack away the boxes and bags into the van. Rachael talks at them while they do this. "You know, in my younger days when I was working at NYU, I was a professor of art history, and I would arrange for me and my colleagues to feed the homeless too."

"Oh, would you?" Pat says before placing the box of oranges in the van. She has heard the story before.

"Yes dear, I would. But back then the homeless were, you know, more educated. More polite. Grateful. But these days they are just awful, terrible people some of them. You saw how that man spoke to me. Me, an old lady."

Mike and Pat finish packing up. Pat closes one of the van doors and whilst Mike places his hands on the other, ready to close it, he cannot. Rachael is standing close enough as to block the door from swinging shut. Mike stands by with his hand on the door and gives Kiersten, who is approaching, a knowing look.

Rachael is standing less than a step away from the volunteers. The smell of her unwashed overcoat is introduced to the odorous haze of the summer street. Hot garbage, exhaust fumes, and sweat, brew in the small space created behind the van. The discomfort beads on Mike's forehead. He has been telling everyone about how much he dreads the arrival of the heat for months. He checks his watch and looks about with only a partially concealed look of desperation. Rachael continues talking.
"You never know what's going to happen to you in this life. You are all good people but, trust me, you never know what's going to happen to you. Look at me, I used to give food to the homeless, and now, I'm on the other side."
"You're right. You can never know.' Pat agrees, nodding at Rachael.
Rachael looks like she is about to move away. Mike tightens his grip on the open door. But she turns back.
"Oh I forgot to tell you, I saw someone sleeping, over by the post office. You should send someone over there with some food."
"Oh ok, where were they?" Kiersten, now standing nearby, interjects.
"That's him there." Rachael points along the sidewalk to the next block over. "By the sign there."
"The sign with the lights?" Kiersten squints.
"Yes, that's it."
"That's a pile of trash I think."
"No that's him there by the sign."
"Yep, that's definitely a pile of trash, Rachael."
"No." She leans forward an inch, still looking. "Are you sure?"
"Yep, look now. That man is putting the trash out." A man steps out of the back door of a restaurant, onto the street, and throws a black bag onto the pile that Rachael and Kiersten are focussing on. Mike and Pat smirk at each other.

"Oh yes. You are right. Well, I was sure I saw someone sleeping over there." Rachael insists.

Kiersten reassures her. "Ok, well, I'll go and have a look and see if I can find anybody ok?"

"Yes, please do dear. I'd hate for him to go hungry."

"No problem we'll take care of it. We'll make sure they get something."

"Oh god bless you. Such a wonderful girl." She rests a hand on Kiersten's arm. Looking to Mike and Pat. "Isn't she a wonderful girl?"

"She's the best." Pat confirms.

"Oh stop it. We're just doing what we do." Kiersten prepares a bag to take over to the post office.

"Well it's more than most people do." Rachael turns and steps from behind the van onto the sidewalk. "Ok I must go my dears. Goodbye Mommy. God bless you. Bye bye."

The team wave goodbye as Rachael disappears around a corner.

"I still don't know why she calls me Mommy." Pats says.

"Yeh, it's a bit weird." Mike turns to Kiersten. "Hey Kiersten! You going to give that pile of trash some food?"

"Haha, she's funny. She was pointing at it, and I thought, am I missing something here? But nope, it's definitely a pile of trash."

Mike laughs. "She has some funny moments. Are you going over there? I gotta get behind the AC before I melt."

"Yeh I'll go and see if anyone is over there."

Kiersten takes two bags of food towards the post office while Mike and the other volunteers retreat to the van and put on the air conditioning. Once the cold air is circulating a conversation starts.

"What was with the angry guy Mike?" Melanie asks.

Mike responds. "Oh yeh, he just started ranting about something. I think Rachael had accused him of stealing from her or something and he was upset about it. But with that guy you can't get a word in anyway. When he starts talking I just nod and

say 'uhuh, uhuh I get ya'. Make it seem like you're somewhat in agreement with him, then try and move him on like 'man I got stuff to do, nice to see you, bye bye.'"

"Yeh I know what you mean." Melanie says.

Pat, sitting in the back seat, leans into the middle and talks to Mike and Melanie in the front. "And Rachael is into all sorts of conspiracy stuff anyway."

"What kind of conspiracy stuff?" Melanie asks.

"Nothing too serious. Just that people are stealing from her, following her, watching her, trying to get into her apartment. But she always accuses that same guy, and obviously, he gets upset about it. I mean, she's nice to us and happy to talk, but I know the others have trouble with her."

"That's it. I think they live in the same building because that one time, remember?" Mike prompts Pat with a nod.

"Oh yeh, with the hat?"

"Yeh when he wasn't wearing his hat and she didn't 'recognise him'." Mike makes quotations with his fingers. "She told security to kick him out and even called the police, I think. She thought he was trespassing. Anyway, he took it as a racist thing and boy, he was not happy about it." Mike shakes his head. "And you know, I kind of sympathise because she is irritating… But then, also he is really irritable. No wonder they don't get on."

Pat takes over. "I was talking to Gail, you know, who comes out on Mondays and Thursdays?'

"I know her." Melanie answers.

"Well, Gail knows Rachael from BRC on 25th Street which is a shelter for the mentally ill right?"

"Oh really?"

"And this was a while ago. But she said that even then Rachael told everyone all her different origin stories, about being a doctor, and her family being very wealthy, and so on. Gail thinks that what might have happened is that her family disowned her, because, you know, she's so crazy." Pat gives a pained look and Melanie, a little gasp. Pat continues. "I think there could be some truth there, even though her stories are always changing. One day she's a doctor, then a professor at NYU, then

charity work, you know? But, she does sound like she has some formal education. And you know, you can be smart and crazy. Like that guy from, what's the film? With Russell Crowe?

"A beautiful mind." Mike answers almost immediately.

"Yeh. A beautiful mind. He was schizophrenic too wasn't he?"

"You think Rachael is schizophrenic?" Melanie asks.

"That's what Gail thinks, and she works in therapy."

Mike now comments. "But you know, she seems lucid. She not going around talking goobledigoop the whole time."

Pat responds. "Totally. There's that kind of crazy, like, thinking you're Jesus Christ crazy. And then there's Rachael. You know, it's not the same thing."

Melanie nods and adds. "There was this guy I used to work with on the uptown route before, he went Jesus-crazy. And they called 928, you know? For an intervention to take him to the hospital. And he went in and they got him on his meds and got assisted housing. And you know what? Now he's doing great. I even talked to him afterwards and asked him "Do you remember yourself from before?" And he nodded and said 'yes', he did remember. It was all real to him while it was happening."

The group sat nodding in silence for a second. Kiersten returning from the post office breaks the quiet.

"Hey. Was anybody over there?" Mike asks.

"Yeh, a couple of guys in that doorway. One of them was asleep so I left some food with his friend."

"Ah good. We were just talking about Rachael tonight."

"Oh yeh, she stuck around for a little while tonight didn't she. I saw you suffering Mike."

"Yeh. I was so sweaty and just wanted to get going. But oh well, it's good to hear her out. Pat was just saying that Gail thinks she might be schizophrenic."

"I guess that would make sense. She's always making up stories and there's a lot of different kinds of schizophrenia, right?" Kiersten buckles her seatbelt. "Actually, I was talking to Mary. Who does Tuesdays and Fridays. She's been doing the

downtown route since it started, so like, fifteen years or something. She said that Rachael never used to talk. No one here did. She was saying that the guys at this stop, it took them a long time to open up. But look at it now, they don't stop talking!"

Pat nods. "It takes years, right? You can't just ask all of those questions."

"Absolutely." Kiersten agrees.

"Oh my god!" Melanie says loudly, checking her phone.

"What's wrong?" Mike asks.

"There's a manhole fire at Penn Station. Apparently a car's on fire."

"Well that's going to fuck things up at that stop!" Mike sighs. "Let's get going, see if we can't get around the traffic."

Discussion

In the above extract, the description focuses on two people whom the team interact with. Both have been attending the stop for some time, Rachael longer than Thompson, and the team have expectations and methods for dealing with each of these clients' characteristics. Thompson is often treated with some caution; he is prone to cause a scene. Rachael is a long-term client with lots of history with the team. The long duration of her clienthood has led to the team providing a bespoke kind of service, but also produces questions about why she may have failed to move out of the need for their services. One of the problems that regular clients can come to have is each other. Thompson and Rachael have a history of irritating and upsetting each other that has become increasingly personal and includes some form of racism. The team, as an approach, do not try to become overly involved in personal disputes between clients. Here, however, the team can theorise about why the dispute is ongoing. They have access to a list of events and characteristics from which they can infer the reasons for these two people not getting along (Rachael being irritating, and Thompson being irritable). So too, they theorise to some extent about why these clients continue to attend at the stop, and require their services, and further, why they might require a catered kind of care.

Frontstage and backstage

Within this extract, and similar to the previous chapter's fieldnotes, there are noticeable moments in which what happens at a stop looks different. There is a moment in which the team are directly interacting with their clients, followed by a point in which the clients have left, and the team talk amongst themselves. Goffman (1959) talks of 'regions' in which noticeably different kinds of interaction are typically taking place. Goffman uses the example of a hotel restaurant; a 'frontstage', the restaurant itself in which staff interact with customers, and a 'backstage', in which only staff members are usually found. The kind of talk that happens in these different regions appears differently. This is perhaps a useful way to view the different regions that are produced at a stop and during the outreach encounter. No so much distinguishable by the difference in actual space (although the inside of the van is a 'team only' space) but by the presence of the clients.

The purpose for considering this is that there may be some region-bound talk and activities related to the category work with which the team organise and make sense of their practices. The actual encounter with clients allows for the noticing of features of clients, and the team orient their practice to the features which the team already know to exist (noticing Thompson is irate and moving him on quickly, in the case above). The 'backstage', away from the clients, the team are able to share their observations and discuss these (talking about Rachael as a possible schizophrenic, for example). The 'frontstage' is also not an appropriate space for certain talk, nicknames for example. The nickname 'The Professor" is only ever used when not in front of clients, and especially not in front of Rachael herself. So too with 'Angry Grandma', and 'Cat-Piss-Jan' – a client who gives the team guava flavoured hard candy that smells as her nickname suggests when eaten. It is often 'backstage' that the team are able to account for, discuss, and make sense of their own observations and actions.

Thompson

During the encounter with Thompson, Mike is well-prepared for his unorthodox approach to receiving a portion of food. The incoherent statements and apparent jokes are taken as demonstrating a little weirdness, but also that Thompson is a client to be dealt with in a certain way. Mike accounts for his method of interacting with Thompson, initially stating that "It's best to let him cut the line otherwise he'll just cause trouble. Best just to get him out of the way". Later he provides a more detailed description, "…with that guy you can't get a word in anyway. When he starts talking, I just nod and say 'uhuh, uhuh I get ya'. Make it seem like you're somewhat in agreement with him, then try and move him on like 'man I got stuff to do, nice to see you, bye bye'". Here it can be suggested that Mike is drawing upon a set of normative features, although, exactly when and how these features had been documented is not clearly stated. However, that Mike has accumulated some evidence for this being the case is apparent. The evidence Mike presents for knowing Thompson is a client to be moved on both elaborates the observable features and is elaborated by them; Thompson's behaviour is taken a reason for moving him on and moving him on establishes his behaviour as justifying this approach.

Mike's approach to the kind of interactions he anticipates having with Thompson is a practical one. His description of the method is geared towards these anticipations; seeing as Thompson doesn't make much sense, it is best to nod along and get him out of the way, so he doesn't cause trouble. The team make sense of Thompson's character when they rehash the story of Rachael 'not recognising' him (quotations as the team believed this to be a biased explanation of the events, as told by Rachael) and how the history of the two clients - "she is irritating… But then, also he is really irritable. No wonder they don't get on." – is registered as a possible explanation for the ongoing tension between the two and the tension on that evening.

Whilst Thompson is a client with some known issues (his mental state, his drug and alcohol use, his sporadic and sometime aggressive behaviour) that can be used as a possible explanation for his homelessness and his continued clienthood. On the evening in the extract, the team do not seemingly attend to these features beyond the usual portion of food. However, his behaviour is taken as justifying the treatment of being "Best just to get him out of the way". Thompson's behaviour on this particular night is taken as an elaboration of a set of problematic possibilities. His talk and behaviour makes little sense in and of itself, however, the team (Mike in particular)

takes this a document of an underlying pattern of troublesome behaviour, with which they have become acquainted and know how to handle. Moreover, Thompson's behaviour is not taken as a serious cause for concern by the team. He is often vague and incoherent, rude to others, and known to dislike Rachael. He is also known to live indoors (a shared apartment in a nearby building). Through the familiarity the team have with Thompson's situation and the kind of client he is, they are able to make decisions like just moving him along that impact their approach in the moment but that are indexed by a set of occasions.

Rachael

In the case of Rachael, the team infer details not only about her character, but of a possible condition (schizophrenia). Further, the inferences made and the consequences of this, is described in terms of how they might explain her behaviour on any given evening and over a longer period of time. By this it is meant that the team take the way Rachael appears to be good enough grounds for inferring she has some kind of mental health issue. They discuss Rachael's possible schizophrenia as a suggested diagnosis by another outreach worker (Gail) who has professional experience in this field. There is a colloquial description *"…smart and crazy. Like that guy from, what's the film? With Russell Crowe?"* and "…thinking you're Jesus Christ crazy. And then there's Rachael. You know, it's not the same thing". A diagnosis related to their own observations, rather than an institutional definition. Goffman (1986: 43) offers a description of how certain characteristics that individuals display can be taken as 'symbols' which convey social information (a badge in a lapel indicating membership to a club) and can be taken as 'status symbols'. As an extension of this, Goffman suggests that it is also possible to observe 'stigma symbols' in which certain characteristics indicate the membership of stigmatised category. The team are often offered stories from clients of how they have failed to charm life in their favour. With Rachael, she offers multiple versions of this, creating a pattern of unreliable information. This pattern is taken to indicate, as a possible symbol, a document of, being a schizophrenic and being recognisable as such in a particular way.

Schizophrenia as a 'sense making device'

In Rachael's case, schizophrenia is made relevant as a device for making sense of her behaviour and character. Investigating the possibilities of what behaviours might be an indication of, is an important element of the team's practices. Identifying and theorising about behaviours makes the extent of client's circumstances seeable (via inference) even if they do not 'actually' know what the case might be. This is not to say, however, the outreach team are simply guessing, but the theorising they do is based in a history of documenting behaviours specifically related to the kind of encounters they expect to have during their work. The inferring of possible realities is done on both an occasion-by-occasion basis, and those occasions (one evening to the next) inform subsequent encounters. In the extract above, for example, the content of the conversation with Rachael (the unreliable origin stories) is taken as an explanation for a possible fact (Sacks, 1992: 113. See Lecture 14 'The Inference making machine') – that she is schizophrenic. Further to this, they are basing these tentative conclusions on multiple and repeated interactions with her in which features are noticed and elaborated upon. The team account for this extended process, both in relation to Rachael as a client, and to how they expect their practice to go; "…It takes years, right? You can't just ask all of those questions".

Each encounter between the team and their clients, documents and extends the underlying problem (Garfinkel, 1967: 92). The problem is elaborated in its features with each exchange, progressively leading towards an answer, a course of action, and a formulation of how it is possible to help that client. The underlying problem can relate to both a specific client and to the objectives of the outreach practice more broadly. With Thompson and Rachael, the underlying problem is individualised, and the fact that there is an individual underlying problem is taken to inform the expectations the team have of their work. The significance of this is twofold. Firstly, in relation to the observed details of the outreach practice; it is possible to notice the methods that outreach workers have for interacting with a range of clients with differing conditions, often of a personal and complex nature (referring to the documentary method of interpretation (Garfinkel, 1967), the making of inferences (Sacks, 1992), and the noticing of symbolic features of stigmatic categories such as 'being schizophrenic' (Goffman, 1986)). Second, it goes some way to describe how the social resources available to outreach

workers are continually elaborated through and for their work. The result of this is that the scope of their care work is ever-expanding, both in terms of their reasoning and ability to infer information from observations (abilities to notice features of clients) and the abilities to act on that reasoning (knowing when to move along a client quickly and when to hear them out, for example). This culminates in an established understanding of how to do outreach properly in a way which considers a dynamic process of sense making. The team account for this when talking about the changes through time regarding the clients at the stop. Quoting a long time volunteer, Kiersten says; "She said that Rachael never used to talk. No one here did. She was saying that the guys at this stop, it took them a long time to open up. But look at it now, they don't stop talking!"

The approach from the outreach team here is similar to what Rowe (1999: 51) describes as 'working partnerships' between outreach workers and their regular clients. The approach involves the acceptance of a gradual move out of homelessness for a client (particularly one with a mental health condition) who might be wary or otherwise not willing to get involved with other services (Rowe is referring to a wariness of mental health services). The outreach workers avoid any kind of forceful approach to getting clients, homeless people, into other services or programs, avoiding the 'fast game' and adopting a different pace which aligns with the client's willingness to engage with those services.

There is a dilemma for the team when considering an approach to take with these kinds of clients. As noted previously, the ideal situation of their work is to move their clients out of homelessness as quickly as possible. However, with certain clients this is not necessarily the best approach to take. Instead, the team accept that the work they are able to do in providing a service for these clients is going to span over a longer period of time. In doing this, as we have observed in the case of Rachael, the team are able to establish explanations of why she may be one of these kinds of clients, and simultaneously, the extent to which they are able to help her. How this appears, how their care practices come to look, is by humouring her need to point out other clients, trusting her with extra bags for those they cannot know exist for sure, and not challenge her mixed origin stories. Rowe (1999: 63) describes the outreach workers he observed as 'contingency experts in pursuing the reluctant and the wary. For this, flexibility and a good eye are key". In the case of Rachael, this includes a collective memory and shared experience, hearsay, and the negotiation of the boundaries of their practice.

Summary

For some clients, the extent of the time in which they need the team's service is short or made shorter by the efforts of the team as well as their own. However, for those people who remain clients for longer and become better known, in more detail, to the team, the kind of client they are seeable as, changes. In the discussion here, the features of Rachael's and Thompson's clienthood are explored by both the team themselves and subsequently available to the analyst. If only keeping to the fieldnotes presented, it is possible to see how the team are engaged in a process of documenting the features of the clients they encounter and build upon previous encounters and a collection of knowledge, shared amongst outreach workers, to make sense of the behaviour of clients. Taking a broader ethnographic approach, the stop which includes Rachael and Thompson was often considered as a priority by the team. The stop was occupied by a number of clients who the team knew well and were keen to make sure they were properly provided for. Furthermore, 'Our Guys' were often referred to as 'really homeless' even though, as with Rachael and Thompson, that did not necessarily mean they were sleeping outside. Being 'really homeless' in this case referred to the fact that the team knew individual client's circumstances. They knew the extent of their difficulties, not just with housing but with health concerns, various addictions, as well as social troubles.

The documentary method of interpretation used in the preceding pages, highlights how the category of client and homeless is subject to the changing resources that the team access for assembling those categories. They are not static but continually reformulated in both a single occasion and over a longer period of time. This emphasises Hopper's suggestion that homelessness is an elastic term – for professional sociologists and for outreach workers also – it is developed into specific forms for the purposes of outreach worker's practical tasks. The details of these practical tasks feed into a formulation of the social problem more broadly (of what homelessness *can* look like), and to categories of clients, but into categories of work also. The team formulate their work according to the long-term nature of their task. They are not only providing meals and doing crowd control (like at Chinatown), at this stop they are 'getting people to open up'. This represents a different category of work, enabled through the interactional and category-based work that is observable with Rachael and Thompson.

The discussion here returns to the concepts presented in the literature review, of Hopper's (2003) 'Elastic' notion of homelessness, and for Hall's (2017) comments on how homelessness is generated and detected via the outreach practice. The 'documentary method of interpretation' as an analytical tool and description of a method, is a useful means of showing how outreach work is developed over time, and how expertise is enacted within an occasion. That is, developed in practical terms, as members of the team improve on their abilities to do their work more efficiently and draw upon a greater pool of experiences. However, it is also a useful way of showing how, for those same practitioners, a definition of homelessness does not stay stable for so long and contains multiple other categories. Or, moreover, that a definition is only stable for the occasion in which it is used as a resource for sense making. The continually shifting possibilities of what a client, and a homeless person, might mean practically, necessitates a flexible approach to those notions as a social problem. It is worth clarifying that this does not suggest that outreach workers can 'see through' appearances to an underlying reality. Rather, through the *process* of seeing (continuing to notice features of their clients) they are coming to terms with, elaborating, and extending, the situations which they purport to 'know' (the nature of homelessness, or that a client is schizophrenic, for example). What this suggests is that for the team, homelessness, and the nature of their work, is unelaborated in specific or exhaustive detail. Rather, it is through this process of elaboration that definitions are made relevant for their practice, this includes localised category-work as a method for making sense.

As observed at Chinatown, the uses of homelessness can be based on logistical grounds and the need to complete a practical task in the moment. With Rachael and Thompson, this is also the case, but in combination with a formulating of the scope of the team's services. They can provide a portion of food, but with time and familiarity, they can begin to understand a client's situation, their specific experience, and cater their care practice to match this, as is seen in the following extract.

Fieldnote Extract: Catering care to client's needs (Andy)

Mike is the designated driver of the downtown route - he has spent the majority of his time with the organisation as a driver. He volunteers on an evening in which the other team members are not comfortable driving in Manhattan's traffic. He pulls the van out into a clear lane of traffic and accelerates quickly. A crate of oranges in the back is thrown out of position and falls in front of a box of soups. He remembers a time when there was no need to rush to stay on schedule. "We have to get to our guys at the next stop" He explains. "There's so many at the early stops now that we're almost always late. We should be ok though, we're not too far behind." He cuts in front of a taxi, takes a left onto a street and joins the next avenue. "I hate when we're so late that they think no one is coming. Breaks my heart to think of them standing around getting hungry. Before, we've arrived and everyone has gone, then we hear about it later when they ask where we were."

The latter stops are often talked about as a priority of the route. It is a concern that there will not be enough supplies to feed those waiting, and the amount of food is closely rationed to avoid this. Timing is also an issue. The earlier stops becoming so busy that too much time is spent serving clients there rather than later on. When they are late, the team apologise to the waiting clients, citing the traffic as the cause of their delay. As long as they are not too late, it is not much of an issue.

Mike pulls the van into the usual space alongside the sidewalk, ten minutes over schedule. "See, not that bad… Glad I put my foot down though!" One of the clients is seen leaning up against the wall of a covered doorway. He is standing in a waiting pose. His weight is on one foot with the other crossed over the front, he is holding a dog-eared magazine at chest-height and unmoving, raises his eyes to look away from the pages and towards the street. Seeing the van, he closes the magazine and stores it under his arm before joining the growing queue. He is a regular, one of what Mike has referred to as 'our guys'. His name is Andy, he would not usually

talk much with the team, despite having attended the stop every night for years and collecting food (apart from the bread, which he says is too dry). Andy used to attend the stop with his friend, and another regular, Bill and Bill's little dog. They would wait together, queue together, and leave in the same direction. Bill was always keen on leading a friendly conversation, and his dog was a hit with the team; some nights they would come prepared with dog food. They would always ask how he was doing and dote over him a little. Andy would stand nearby, present for the goings on but saying little.

Three weeks previous to this particular evening, Bill had suffered a heart attack in the lobby of his building and had been declared deceased before reaching the hospital. No one was totally sure of what had become of the little dog. Andy continued to attend the stop, and when the team had asked about Bill, he let them know what had happened. They offered heartfelt condolences and let the other volunteers know.

Andy has a stern, stoic demeanour, exacerbated by his quietness. The few times he is heard talking to other clients usually involves him telling them to leave him alone. The other regulars tend to respect his preferred lonesomeness. The team are friendly with him but not overly inquiring. Following Bill's death, they would make a point of asking him how he is doing and whether he needs anything. He always tells them he is fine but thanks them for the offer. Once or twice, and only when the weather is dry, he will linger after receiving his food and talk to Kiersten for a few minutes. Kiersten passes on the details of the conversation to the rest of the team when in the van later, "He said that he has a place but it's in the same building as Bill was. I don't know if that's an issue for him, he didn't say anything. But it sounds like he's just looking for work at the moment. Although, he kept saying about not wanting to be around anybody, so that must make things difficult. He's obviously got something against people, we can see that by how he is with the others. Maybe he's just kind of reclusive?"

Andy is watched, kept an eye on, looked out for, by the team. He does not require any immediate or drastic intervention, he has a place to stay, he turns up every night, he is mostly sober and polite, and he is avowedly trying to become self-sufficient. But the team are aware that he may need a little extra attention following the death of his friend, Bill. Having gotten to know him over time, appreciating that Bill and he were close, perhaps even the only person that he was close to, they consider how to respond to him during their time at the stop. The first thing they consider is arriving to the stops as close to the set time as possible and with plenty of food. With the food and the usual business of the stop comes a watchfulness, an attention paid in addition to what is usually given.

Mike, when seeing Andy step forward in the line to get his food, would greet him by name.

"Hey Andy, how you doing? Everything ok?"

"Hey. Yeh I'm ok. Thanks."

"Good to hear. Here you go." Mike hands him the bag with an extra soup and milk already in it - what Andy always asked for. "You need anything else?"

"No thank you. Thanks. God bless you."

"Hey ok no problem. See you next time."

"Yeh see you."

A short-lived interaction. Later in the van, Andy was discussed.

"He still seems pretty down don't you think?" Pat commented

"I guess the initial grief is always the worst. I mean, he's usually quiet but you can tell he's struggling. But I'm sure with time he'll settle. I don't think he's doing too bad, I did see him chatting to another client tonight."

"Oh, that's good. I didn't see him tonight because Rachael wouldn't stop talking to me." Melanie adds. "But it must have been a shock for him, loosing Bill like that."

These conversations would continue for weeks, with daily updates and reflections on the interactions the team have with Andy. Information would be passed around,

repeated, and told to other outreach workers. Those who go out on the same route but on different nights. Looking to notice if there is something working on him.

…..

One night, a few weeks after Bill's death, the team had arrived at the stop. They had arrived on time, with plenty of food including some extras. They had the usual soup, bread, milk, and oranges. Added to this were some packaged sandwiches and cakes donated by an office that had over-ordered for a meeting. The clients were happy with the selection. On this night, Mike had to park so that the van partially blocked a lane of traffic. The normal spot which is supposed to be clear, due to its proximity to a fire-hydrant, had been taken by a number of private taxis ‑ all of which were black Chevrolet Suburbans. Mike and Pat were handing out food at the back of the van, taking a little longer with each client to allow them to pick out one of the sandwiches and choose a cake. Melanie and Kiersten were giving bags to the clients in the queue, which - due to the van protruding into the road ‑ surrounded one of the Suburbans.

Raised voices were heard. Reporting on the initial encounter later, Kiersten described the scene. "The Uber guy told me to, he said 'Hey lady, move your people out the road.'" She imitated a low voice. "So, I told him that I'm not telling anyone to go anywhere and he'd have to wait. So, he said that he had to take a fare and I should make everybody move. I told him that it was his own fault for parking in front of a fire hydrant, which is illegal. And he'd just have to be patient. Then I started to ignore him, and I heard him call me a bitch."

What happened next was heard by everyone. Andy, hearing what the driver had said, stepped out of the line and walked towards the driver's window. "Shut the fuck up you motherfucker! Why don't you step down from the car and say that again you motherfucker! You cocksucker! Get the fuck outta here!" Andy was gesturing with his hands, standing inches away from the window (which had been

wound up three-quarters of the way) and glaring into it as he paced on the spot. His face reddening. “Fuck you”. He spits and turns back towards the queue.

The attention of the team, the clients, and some of the passing pedestrians, is directed towards the scene. Andy goes to re-join the queue, those waiting there step back to allow him a space to take his original place. An angry voice is heard from the car. Andy reels around with arms outstretched and strides towards the car again. His voice almost hoarse with anger, it cuts through the sounds of the street. “You fucking piece of shit! Don’t you talk to her like that!” He slams his hand on the hood of the car.

Kiersten approaches and puts a careful hand on Andy’s shoulder, her back to the offending gap in the car window. “It’s OK, don’t worry, don’t worry. Just leave it.” His face is red and his eyes are raw, his jaw clenched.

“He shouldn’t speak to you like that.”

“I know, I know. But it’s ok. It’s not worth it. He’s just an asshole.” She has her arm around him, leading him back to the queue of onlooking clients.

The Suburban reverses back with a jolt but is blocked by another, identical, car. Its wheels turn towards the street and the queue of clients. It accelerates suddenly and stops just as quickly, rocking on the spot, the horn sounds. The clients who were in its path had flinched out of the way. Apart from one. A tall, dreadlocked man, unphased by the scene. He slowly turns his head to give the car an unimpressed look. “Unfuckingbelievable.” He says and takes one step forward with the moving line (which is still being served from the van).

Again, a voice comes from the car. “How about you move your people from the road, bitch!” The comment is aimed at Kiersten.

Andy interjects. “How about you get outta the car and I put you in the fucking ground!” This time Andy gets a chorus of support from the surrounding clients.

“Kick his ass.”

“Yeh get the fuck outta here, asshole!”

The car pulls out with the engine revving hard and tyres screeching. It misses the clients, who continue to shout insults, and jumps forward into the street. It accelerates a few meters before hitting the brakes and slowing to a crawl, caught in the Manhattan evening traffic. The dreadlocked man repeats. "Unfuckingbelievable."

The scene lasted less than two minutes, Andy spends the next ten apologising profusely for his outburst. Kiersten reassures him again and again. The tension dies down gradually, and the clients take it in turns to congratulate him on his show of backbone, assuring him that "someone had to tell that jackass." Andy thanks them with an embarrassed nod and a few mumbled words before turning back to Kiersten. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. He just shouldn't treat you like that. You're out here helping all these people. He shouldn't say that stuff."

Kiersten gives Mike a few discreet hand signals and nods, mouthing some words, indicating for him to arrange a bag of food for Andy while she takes him aside. Mike registers this and, leaving Pat to continue serving the rest of the queue, prepares a bag with extra soups and the extra sandwiches and cakes. Kiersten takes the bag from Mike and passes it to Andy. They stand out of earshot of those congregating around the van and talk for a while. Andy can be seen shedding a tear. Pat, in between serving people, glances over to the unfolding conversation. "Aww, I hope he's alright. Did you give him the cakes Mike?"
"Yeh, I put a couple in there for him. That's something at least isn't it?"
"Yeh."
The conversation ends between Kiersten and Andy with a hug and a wave goodbye. Andy has dried his eyes by now and walks up the sidewalk, merging into a procession of pedestrians. Kiersten joins the rest of the team as they finish serving the remaining clients. Mike closes the van doors and turns to face the rest of the team who have gathered together. They look to Kiersten for an explanation.
"What happened there then?" Pat asks. Kiersten runs through the events with the taxi driver in dramatic detail. The team shake their heads and raise their eyebrows

in surprise. She arrives to the part in which her and Andy had the private conversation on the sidewalk.

"He's just really cut up about Bill."

Melanie sighs. "Oh no…"

Kiersten continues. "Yeh, he's living in the same building where he died, and has to walk through the lobby where, it turns out, it was Andy who found him first."

"Oh that's terrible…" Pat holds her hand to her mouth.

"He said that now, we're the only people who talk to him and are actually nice to him. That's why he got so angry with the taxi."

"Well that's why we're here isn't it?" Pat adds through a sympathetic smile. "I just wish we could spend more time with them."

There is a round of nods.

"Though…" Mike has a smirk on his face. "…he was pretty mad. I don't think we're that nice are we?"

The atmosphere of sympathy and pity is broken as everyone laughs. Mike carries on. "And, I'm sure the Uber driver would have something else to say." The laughter increases. "He must have shit himself when he saw Andy coming for him."

The team have formed a circle behind the van, which is still protruding into the lane of traffic. As they stand in the street, all laughing, they attract the confused looks of passers-by and people peer out of their cars to observe the odd scene.

The laughter dies down. "Come on then let's get going." Mike says between sighs and the team return to claim their places in the van.

Melanie, putting on her seatbelt, asks. "That Uber driver though. What was his problem? I mean, you can see that we're trying to feed the homeless here right? He can't wait five minutes so that hungry people can get a meal?"

Pat replies. "Yeh I know. But y'know…this city is full of assholes like that."

Discussion

The following section discusses how it is that the team make sense of the events detailed in this extract. Focussing on how the outreach team select categories to use in responding to the confrontation between Andy and the taxi driver. Further, how categories are offered by other members of the scene (the taxi driver identifying 'your people', for example). The categories used are those which are available to the team members and clients *as* a developed feature of their ongoing encounters (referring again here to the documentary method of interpretation) and further, become essential resources for their continued practice. In the case here, this involves caring for Andy as he grieves his friend Bill.

There is conflict, an offensive utterance on the part of the taxi driver, which escalates to the point in which Andy is swearing and acting aggressively towards a taxi driver, and towards his car. For this occasion, the fact that it is Andy doing the threatening becomes important for the way in which the team treat the event. The reasoning which emerges after the moment of conflict ends, and Andy begins a cooling off stage, is a mutual inferencing of (moral) characteristics by both the outreach workers and Andy, allowing this occasion to be understood not as an act of violence, but as a response to circumstances and the relationship made through the outreach team's work. In sum, it is the case that due to the familiarity between the team and Andy, they are able to see the situation in this way. For the outreach practice, seeing the situation in this way becomes important for the continuation of that practice (caring for Andy).

The following few pages extend the discussion of the previous section with Rachael and Thompson; the documentary method of interpretation enables practice-specific inferences to be made in order to make sense of situations. Behaviour (even violent behaviour) can be seen as a 'document of' something, of an underlying problem or a characteristic. The ability to see these problems as characteristics and make inferences accurately, whilst accomplished in the moment, is informed through the team's ongoing practice and accumulated experience. The contribution of this example of outreach work in action is firstly, according to the overall purpose of this chapter, to show how it is that outreach workers interact with clients who are known, firmly established as, homeless and as objects of the team's work. The elaboration of the documentary method of interpretation (as a sociological description of what is observed) is a method the team have for getting to know their clients in more depth. Secondly, Andy might be referred to according to Hall's (2017) notion of 'hard-to-reach'. Here, Andy is not

geographically hard-to-reach, he turns up to the stop almost every evening. However, Andy is hard-to-reach in that other way, he is untrusting, reserved in the information he makes available, and unwilling to readily engage with the team beyond the usual services.

A catered form of care

Andy is one of 'Our Guys' for the team and, similar to the case of Rachael, it is possible to observe how this kind of client becomes recognisable. The team have had a long time to get know him and use the information that is repeatedly and increasingly available to them to make inferences about his character, his situation, and further, about the kind of care practices which might be suitable for assisting him with his circumstances. They anticipate how encounters with Andy will likely go and this too becomes a resource from which inferences about his situation can be made.

Andy does not trust people, on the occasions in which he talks to other clients he tends to be telling people to leave him alone. The team had come to know him through Bill's friendly nature, he was often referred to as 'Bill's Friend'. The concern for Andy specifically, escalated following Bill's death. Having known that the two of them were close, the team inferred from the circumstances (and the growing level of detail about the circumstances of Bill's death) that Andy might need a greater level of attention. The way this looked, was making sure to ask him if he was doing ok, making sure he got the portion he liked, and asking tentative questions. This approach resonates with the methods the team talk about in the previous extract; "you can't just ask all those questions". Even with this tentative approach, the collection of relevant information for interpreting the events detailed in the above extract, was done in a matter of weeks, rather than years.

This kind of attention, because of knowing (to a certain degree) that something specific is likely a problem for the client, is the kind of outreach practice which makes 'Our Guys' recognisable as a category. 'Our guys' are talked about as individuals, which is not necessarily to say that they are only treated as individuals, but that individuality is a feature of the categorization-work being done. To be an 'Our Guys' client, is to have one's individual circumstances invoked as relevant for the kind of treatment offered. Similar to the case of Rachael, this highlights the

ongoing and adaptive way in which the outreach team are able to deliver their services and how it observably shapes the appearances and boundaries of their work. Which allows, in this case, the conflict with a taxi driver to be seen as a document of his current difficulties. In addition to this, the taxi driver recognising the line of people as 'your people', as somehow belonging or responsible to the team, goes some way in displaying how the clients are recognisable *as* clients in this circumstance.

Andy's confrontation with the Taxi driver is not taken as a document of his difficulties via inference alone. That is, Andy has his own methods of interpretation and makes his own inferences about the team which form part of an account for his confrontation; "He just shouldn't treat you like that. You're out here helping all these people. He shouldn't say that stuff". Andy, in this situation, is inferring something of the characteristic of the team (of Kiersten in particular); that helping people (and him) means they are the kind of people that should not be talked to in the way the taxi driver talks to them. Further, following the confrontation and talking to Kiersten privately, "He said that now, we're the only people who talk to him and are actually nice to him. That's why he got so angry with the taxi". There are some justifications given for his behaviour. The attention that has been paid to Andy on the part of the team (being nice to him) is given, by Andy, as a justification for defending a team member. Whilst there is this spoken-about justification following the scene, during the confrontation it appears that Andy is somehow in the right, or at least justified in his outburst. The assembly of the chorus of support for Andy (from the other clients), the description of the Taxi driver as an 'asshole', alongside Kiersten's attempts to deescalate the conflict by personally cooling Andy down, neutralises the potential negative interpretation of Andy's aggression. Those viewing the scene, see it as a moment to support Andy. That is, those who are present in the occasion, viewing as members of the scene, take this to be the case.

As it is, there is a client who fits the category of 'Our Guys' and is being treated as such by the team. The team saw Andy as getting close to something. Or at least, suspected that it was possible that something other than needing a meal could require attention due to the culmination of a few factors (Bill's death, Andy's solitude). They begin to enact a kind of approach to him as a client that attends to this observation. That he has been treated this way makes it possible so that when it happens that Andy threatens the taxi driver, it is taken as significant that it is *Andy* who is doing the threatening. Significant insomuch as 'threatening' becomes 'defending' and rationalised as such by what the team know about him.

A category bound activity

For the team, the correct selection of categories is essential for how they make sense of the occurrence. Andy, a client well-known to the team for being quiet, polite, and having just lost a close friend, responds threateningly to a taxi driver who insults Kiersten (a person he identifies as someone trying to help him and others). Sacks (1992: 584) describes how we might notice how it is that categories are properly selected by members through the shared understanding of the use of the category. The 'use' referring to an activity which may be seen as a 'category-bound-activity'; an activity which is category-bound to a category (an action seen as acting *like* an 'X'). Sacks notes that positioned categories are those that hold a position amongst a range of categories that are part of a collection. For the case we are dealing with, it could be said that there are differently positioned categories amongst a range of possibilities for the collection we could call 'Our Guys'. For example, Thompson being moved along quickly, Rachael as someone to take a light touch with, and Andy as someone who needs calming down after losing his temper. They are all the 'Our Guys' type of client, but are 'difficult', 'talkative', 'struggling' and so on. What can be the case is that there is an activity that is bound to some positioned category in the collection (one of 'Our Guys' acting difficult, for example). Sacks suggests that if that activity is bound to 'lower' or 'higher' positioned categories within the collection, this can be a cause for degradation or praise (these are not to be taken literally). Thompson's strange and confusing conversation, for example, is positioned as 'difficult' and cause for moving him along – a kind of degradation. Andy's defence of Kiersten, however, is positioned positively and becomes cause for praise.

The occasion provides for the occurrence of an activity which is category-bound to that category. That the team have a history with Andy, they know his circumstances and have put measures in place to help him with this (he is one of 'Our Guys'), when the taxi driver insults one of the team members and Andy responds as he does, this activity is taken as category-bound to a category (the defence of Kiersten because she shouldn't be talked to in that way because she is out here helping people). The activity has what Sacks calls, 'programmatic relevance' which refers to the concept Andy produces for accounting for the event which is "You're out here helping people, he shouldn't talk to you like that". Meaning, the activity is

attached to a rule; do not talk to Kiersten, a person who is helping other people, in the way the driver does.

To say Andy's aggression (as well as Thompson's erratic talk and Rachael's confused sense of personal history) is an activity 'category-bound' to a category, is, for the purposes here, to describe how it might be the team are able to make sense of the specific occasion. However, these details, occurring moment-to-moment, are considered in the context of the continued outreach practice with reference to a 'documentary method of interpretation'. The intention here is to combine these observations to show how meanings and understandings (of clients, their behaviour, and their problems) are arranged for the practical purposes of outreach work both in the moment and over time, and further, the way in which these things might mutually inform each other. Garfinkel (1967: 100) describes this as a description of how members of society can, in their own terms, decide the adequacy of how the problem is formulated, and thus, the adequacy of the solution.

Here then, is the contribution of this chapter to the discussion of homelessness as a category. In the preceding pages, it has been discussed how those people, firmly decided upon as homeless by the team, as in need of their services and attention, come to be treated and understood by the team. How this *kind* of homelessness is understood. This appears in different ways; the cases of Thompson, Rachael, and Andy, demonstrate how the services available to different clients are catered to how their circumstances are understood. The methods of sense-making, however, are more general, including the documenting of observable features, the accumulation of information over time and yet reacted to in the moment. This contributes to a wider understanding of the problem of homelessness for the team; it can last years, they have to tread carefully with some people, and the consequences of homelessness can not only appear differently but be experienced in varying degrees of intensity. People, clients, move through stages of need and stages of requiring attention, homelessness being 'elastic', is not just as a term for describing a group of people, or a range of features, but as the experience of someone already describable as homeless.

Conclusion

This chapter has detailed and discussed encounters between the outreach team and a group of clients who are considered firmly as homeless. Those clients described here, do not have their clienthood brought into question in the same way as those at the Chinatown stop. Rather, the commentary here is showing how, first, a different kind of categorisation work is enacted by the team as a part of their outreach practice. Second, the details of that categorisation-work produce different kinds of relationships between the team members and their clients. The focus of the preceding pages is the role familiarity plays in outreach work, described as a 'documentary method of interpretation'. With time and familiarity, the team can infer in greater detail and accuracy, the problems their clients may be facing, even if those problems are not entirely, or straightforwardly, visible. The ability to notice features of their clients as 'documents of', as 'pointing to', a possible underlying problem, allows the team members to act in an appropriate manner with difficult clients, with potentially schizophrenic clients, and with clients who show aggression.

It has been discussed how the appropriate selection of categories (for interpreting a situation) becomes an important practice for the team in making sense of clients who are 'Our Guys'. This group of clients, who have so far not moved out of the category of 'homeless person', who have continued to require the team's services over a number of years, represent a different kind of task than those clients at Chinatown. The outreach practice is not so much concerned with noticing the constituent features of a homeless person, but of interpreting how a documented set of features (observed over time) might be useful for explanations of the duration of their ongoing need and of their clienthood.

This group of clients is considered as a priority for the team, as demanding of more time and attention – the collecting of information takes time. Although these kinds of clients may experience conditions which the team themselves are unable to help with (treating mental illness for example), helping these clients is still considered within the scope of their work. They make themselves available, they make further resources available also (information about further programs, for example). As the team continue to get to know these clients, it is often the case that the scope of their work extends also, such as getting a client to open up enough to be

able to recommend a shelter, or rehab programs, or a councillor. The following chapter details a case in which the limit of that scope is reached.

Chapter 7: Danny

Introduction

The third and final findings chapter here, both exemplifies and expands upon the previous two. It contains details of what outreach workers talk about when discussing some rules for their work, such as not calling the police, or giving preferential treatment – to some extent an expansion of the previous chapter. It also identifies a boundary, a border even, reached with a particular client in which the usefulness of the team's practice is challenged. The following is a case in which the perceived need of a client is beyond that which the team are able to provide. The team's response becomes the focus, and the implications evident for both the service provided to a client, and in relation to the consideration of definitional work within homeless outreach practices. In addition to the details of how a client might be beyond the reach of the team, is the limitations of the client's abilities to help themselves. In the case to follow, there is a client who might be materially capable of ending his own homelessness but does not pursue that as an option. As such, this chapter explores further the nature of what hard-to-reach might mean for providing care for homeless clients. The work done by the team to try and help this person includes much of the same principles as have appeared in the previous chapters, of detection of features and characteristics, and the generation of categories as a way of making sense.

The discussion here seeks to capitalise, to some extent, on the previous chapters' focus on the methods for seeing (noticing incongruities and the documentary method of interpretation). These descriptions of outreach worker's methods attend to both a sociological (the interactional methods) and the practical (the actual accomplishment of a task) elements of the team's abilities to find, assess, and care for their clients. Much of the same work is evident in the observations which follow. In this chapter, however, the discussion is less oriented to the description of specific interactional methods (although these are continually relevant) and more towards an emphasis on 'seeing' as an essential method and defining characteristic of the outreach practice, and further, of the definitional problem that the team is so often faced with. Thus, the discussion

is directed to that definitional problem. To attend to this, the commentary returns to the three core contributions of literature review (Hall, 2017., Hopper, 2003., and Rowe, 1999) and to the considerations of the methodological chapter. The intention being, to lead towards some concluding remarks, in reference to the position this study takes in a terrain of similar studies, and simultaneously, in concert with fieldwork observations.

Regarding fieldwork observations, this is the third case; another stop, and a different client than has been presented already. At Chinatown, the discussion demonstrated how many people are being categorised as not candidates for a level of service, due to not being really homeless. At the 'Our Guys' stop, the discussion showed clients who were, and had been for some time, categorised as homeless, and the specific categories than clients are observable as with the continuation of the outreach worker and client relationship. This chapter looks at a person, a single person, who is considered homeless on the one hand, but on the other, the categorisation of homeless becomes an insufficient description for the purposes of providing a required level of service. In short, the person is too homeless, too complicated, and too hard-to-reach, for the team to be able to work with effectively.

Fieldnote Extract: Principles of Practice

Another humid summer evening, a Tuesday. The heat has not relented for weeks and the team are grateful for the new vans with working AC. In the old vans it was broken and only blew the air in from outside whether it was hot or cold. This provided some air flow which would not have been so bad if it did not mean that a pipe beneath the footwell started to heat up, increasing the overall temperature and reducing the mood.

It is the final stop of the route. The last of the sunlight reflects off the top of mirrored buildings, but darkness is settling in down on the sidewalk. The heat remains. The queue of people has died down, but the team wait a few minutes more

to look out for 'stragglers'. This evening, the team is not made up of the usual members. There are two new volunteers, Martha and Henry, colleagues, copywriters, who heard of the program from a friend and have tagged along to see what they make of it. The other volunteer, Jane, has experience with the program but not with the downtown route. She is usually uptown, but due to a last-minute change of personnel, has swapped. Then myself, the most familiar of the group with the downtown route on this particular evening.

Food stocks were low, and Jane had been conscious of running out. The usual donations had not turned up for some reason, so a careful rationing throughout the evening had taken place. Jane, impressively, had very accurately predicted the number of clients likely to be out. It was early in the month, some people would have had their welfare checks recently, reducing the total numbers. Which were the busiest stops? Chinatown? No hanging around afterwards but moving straight on to the next stop. Only one of everything for everybody, no exceptions tonight. And only those who are at the stops can have a bag, we will not be wandering around looking for people. As it worked out, the team are waiting at the last stop, having just served the final person in the queue, with four sandwiches left, a couple of cartons of milk, and a few spare oranges; a good result.

Timing was on Jane's mind. This too had to be as close to the schedule as possible. She had assigned each person a task at each stop (agreed upon before arriving), explaining the details carefully to the two new members. Each stop was arranged to maximise efficiency; where to stand, what to say, how to deliver the food to the clients. She was strict with this. The other time saving technique was Jane's driving. Being a lifelong New Yorker and learning to drive on Manhattan's streets, she was confident, terrifyingly so - for the recently initiated at least. The driving between stops involved a heavy-footed approach to the accelerator and equal enthusiasm on the brakes, further accompanied by a continual strongly worded commentary of the other road users. The strong-arm tactics of taxi drivers were no match to Jane's "You can't be a push-over" style of lane changing. The journey between stops also

included her successfully hassling a police officer, who was redirecting traffic, to open a closed street. Her argument of "We got homeless people to feed here! Read the sign!" (referring to the sign on the side of the van) had been a convincing one. Now, the sense of urgency had paid off. We were waiting at the last stop with time to spare.

A clatter of sound came from behind the team. Danny is approaching from across the street. He is of average height, light haired, wearing only slacks and sneakers, his torso is bare. The unclothed upper half of his body reveals bad scarring on both his shoulders, the cause of which is not obvious, a kind of burn perhaps. The rest of his skin is blotched, bruised, and dirty. There are visible track marks on his arms some of which are fresh and raw. Despite the general state of uncleanliness his face is clean shaven, his face and hair appear to be washed creating a sharp contrast between his head and rest of his body. He looks younger, but not exactly youthful. Number of years aside, nothing like youth tends to last long where living outside and a taste for chemicals are combined.

The sound that accompanies him is from two shopping carts, one he pushes in front and the other he pulls behind. The first contains stacks of cardboard, some blankets, newspapers, and a black backpack - his bedding and personal possessions. In the other cart there is an unconscious woman. She has on jean shorts and a black tank-top, her legs and arms are splayed over the sides of the shopping cart. Her head, positioned at the non-handle end, rests on a rolled-up sweater draped over the metal edge. As Danny pulls this strange caravan across the uneven street, the woman's head bumps and flops around. Her eyes remain closed for the journey. Her thin arms and legs, similar to Danny, are dirty, bruised, and patched with red swellings, also tracked and scarred.

Danny brings the carts to a stop behind the van. He arranges them on a level part of the street and carefully lifts his hands off the handles, slowly releasing them, testing if the cart will stay put. The female occupant of the cart attempts to lift her

head. She looks around, one eye remaining closed, the other only half open. The partially concealed eye rolls forward and back, failing to get a steady focus on the surroundings. The eye closes, her head drops back onto the sweater shaking the whole cart. She is in the midst of an opiate high. Danny turns to face the waiting, slightly perplexed group of volunteers who have watched in silence - and shared concerned looks - as he, and his passed-out companion, approached.

"Good evening! Thank you all so much for coming out tonight. Could I please get some food for me and my friend please?" He speaks both with the confidence of someone who is accustomed to receiving good service and with a theatrical flair, as if he was delivering a monologue to a captive audience.

Jane responds, matching his confidence. "Yes, of course. Would you like milk and oranges?"

"Whatever you can spare would be wonderful. Thank you." Danny bows his head in thanks.

"No problem. We'll see what we can do." Jane looks and nods towards the woman in the cart who is now taking slow, rattling breaths. "And your friend, is she OK?" The question is suggestive in its tone. Danny looks over his shoulder to the cart, which just at that moment starts to roll back into the street and towards the stream of traffic. He leaps to grab the handle, pulling it back and rearranging it next to the sidewalk. The woman remains thanatoid. Danny, returning to face Jane's question, has a change of demeanour. His initial confidence physically sinks. "She's not feeling well. She hasn't been well at all recently." He speaks now with a feverish vitality. Hunched over, he moves in small sporadic jolts and speaks with an exaggerated, intense sincerity. "The last few days have been bad for her… so…you know…I'm…nursing her. Nursing her back to health."

"Nursing her?" Jane queries.

"Yes, well she has her problems…lots of issues actually. And she's taken a dive recently. We all have our problems, don't we? There's always something in all our lives, right? You understand?"

"Sure, sure." Jane reluctantly agrees. She is slowly packing a bag whilst listening to the odd explanation.

“Exactly, you know what I mean.” Danny continues. “She’ll be fine soon. She’ll be OK.” He nods compulsively for a few seconds before centring his head. He looks intently at Jane’s hands whilst she prepares the food. His gaze fixates, unwavering. He licks his lips loudly.

A noise comes from the cart. A partially muted and dusty ‘Hey’. The woman in the cart - whom Martha and Henry have been watching closely whilst Danny and Jane spoke - lifts her head with a slow, strained motion, and looks with heavy eyes (both eyes this time) at Danny. Her vascular face does not produce a discernible expression. Her motor functioning is not totally within her own control. The effort it takes for this small movement is clear to see. She holds her gaze and makes a guttural moan. Unable to hold her head for long, the tension in the neck releases, letting her head fall, harshly impacting the cart. Henry flinches at the sound and goes to help her, but Danny has already reacted and is at her side. He lifts her head with one hand and rearranges the sweater with the other. From the other cart he retrieves a jacket, which he lays over her like a blanket. She shuffles awkwardly, restricted by the cart and her condition. She seems to settle a little.

The team are watching with increasing concern. Henry and Martha have stepped closer to look on as Danny tucks the jacket around his semi-conscious companion. There is a tension between them as Danny realises he is being so closing observed. Both are aware of their proximity to each other, yet, they say nothing and do not communicate overtly with one another. Danny breaks the standoff by addressing Jane. “Hey, do you think we could get a little extra food in there.” Glancing at the bag. “Just to make sure we have enough. I don’t know when I’ll next be able to get a meal.”

“Yes, that’s fine.” Jane answers. “I’ve put enough for both of you in there. You’ll make sure she gets it right?” She holds out the bag and Danny takes it.

“Yes, yes, of course I will.” He says. “She’ll be very grateful.”

“Have you got any water?” Jane asks. “She’s going to need it.”

“You’re right. But no, I don’t. Do you guys have any?”

"We're all out for tonight sorry." Jane says.
"Oh ok." Danny turns back around to tend to the woman. Henry and Martha resume their overwatch. I speak to Jane quietly.
"Do we have any NARCAN in the van?" I ask. "She's looking pretty bad."
"I was thinking the same thing." Jane answers. "But we don't have any, I checked earlier. She's going to need something though. You saw her eyes, right?"
"Yep, I mean, she's wasted."
"Maybe some sugar will wake her up?"
"I could go and get her a soda or something to drink?" I suggest.
"Yes, that's a good idea. Let's do that and just keep an eye on her."
I head in the direction of a nearby fast-food restaurant. Danny, having apparently overheard the conversation between Jane and myself, turns to me as I go to leave. "Thank you sir, God bless you. Thank you."
I smile at him. "It's OK. I'll be back in a moment." He returns the smile, puts his hands together in prayer, and bows his head at me.

Returning from the restaurant, holding a large soda with lots of ice, I see Danny talking to Jane. He is close in, gesticulating with his hands as he talks. Jane is stood, nodding, her back arched slightly, holding her ground as Danny's siege on her personal space progresses a millimetre at a time. Seeing me, Danny breaks away.
"Thank you, sir. Thank you." I pass him the cup and he delivers it to the woman. He props it amongst a crease in the jacket that is over her, directing the straw to her mouth. Moving only her head, it takes a couple of tries for her to get to the straw. Once she has it, she takes long draws from it, drinking fast. "Thank you so much for the soda. You are very kind." He reaches out his hand to shake mine. I am still wearing the latex gloves from handling food earlier in the evening. There is a brief moment in which he notices this. He shrugs and takes my hand all the same, shaking it firmly. I look down for a moment. The creases of his skin are defined by dirt. Deep beneath his fingernails are dark layers of sediment. On one finger the knuckle has split. The wet, unhealed cut stands out in bright, raw contrast to rest of his stained skin. Looking up, being closer now, I see that his face is in a similar

condition, only appearing clean previously due to the distance and in relation to his torso. His chest and arms are covered by a mottled layer of grime, oil, and stains; all the signs of living away from the means of maintaining one's personal hygiene. It creates the effect that he is darker than he really is.

Danny looks away towards the van and scans its contents. "Hey, do you guys have any clothes with you today?"
"Not today I'm afraid." Jane responds. "But I can give you a leaflet with some information on where you can get some."
Danny looks disappointed. "Is it one of those little fold-out ones?"
"Yeh, that's right. One of these." Jane produces a leaflet from her pocket and starts unfolding it.
"I've had one of those before." Danny says, craning his neck to look at the piece of paper. "I've lost mine though."
"Well, I'll give you this one, don't worry." Jane points to the section entitled 'Clothing'. "The Bowery Mission, you know it?"
"Yeh, I know the Bowery." Danny answers. "I'm not signing in there though. No way I'm going back in there."
"You don't need to sign in. This is a just a drop in for the clothes. You won't be able to get anything tonight but maybe in the morning."
Danny doesn't look convinced. "Hmmm ok." He concentrates on the leaflet and nods to himself.

In the background the woman in the cart seems to be coming around. She rearranges herself awkwardly in the cart, pushing her body up with her shoulders. Having drunk all the liquid in the soda cup she has moved on to the ice. She removes the lid and tips a couple of cubes into her mouth and sucks on them. Harry and Martha are still watching over her from the distance of a couple of paces. They share whispers and looks. She does not return any of their interest. Instead, she sighs loudly and groans. "Heeeeyyy!" She prolongs the word, impatient to be noticed

by Danny. "Come on, where are we? Lets get the fuck outta here!" Danny keeps his back turned. "Hey!" She shouts this time.

"Ok, Ok." Danny says. He goes to her and places the full bag of food on her reclined stomach. "We're going soon. Ok?"

"Now" She snaps.

Danny turns to face the team. "Thank you all for your help tonight." He reaches out to take the leaflet from Jane. She extends her arm and gives it to him. He turns to me. "And thank you again for the soda." He now, returning to his theatrical stance, gives a full bow to the team. "You know, it can be so hard to get ahead out here. But thank you for coming."

"Well, we hope it helps." Jane responds.

"It certainly does help…but…" His tone sobers, his expression darkens, instantly turning his demeanour to gloom. "Remember…it's the hope that kills you." He says. The change of tone and the comment is jarring and slightly ridiculous.

"Maybe." Jane smiles dryly.

"I've been out here for so long now" He returns to more authentic tone, deviating from the fatalism "…and…she's got her problems you know… and… sometimes people are good…" He is drifting from concentration, seemingly distracted by a thought. He suddenly snaps back into focus. "Thank you all!" He spins around and hurriedly collects the carts, pushing them towards the street. A car speeds past within inches of the woman's cart.

Henry flinches again. "Jesus Christ!" He places his hand on his heart and turns around.

"Go safe." Jane calls out.

"God bless you. Goodnight." Danny waves and crosses the street.

Having watched and waited in quiet until Danny is out of sight, the team retake their places in the van. There is a collective exhale.

"Well." Says Martha. "That wasn't nice, was it?"

Henry replies. "Nope, she was fucked up."

"That was heroin, right?" Martha asks.

"Yeh for sure." Henry answers. "That or fentanyl."

"I don't think it was fentanyl." Jane interjects. "She probably would have been worse if it was."

"Hmmm… yeh maybe." Henry agrees.

Jane continues. "I didn't trust him at all. I didn't exactly get a good person vibe from him." The others nod in agreement. "And what did he mean by 'nursing her'? Does that mean he's feeding her drugs? Something doesn't add up there." She pauses for thought and turns the engine over, then adjusts the AC. "You know what? I think he's keeping her. And I don't like to think what he's keeping her for."

"Really? Do you think so?" Martha asks. "What are we supposed to do in that kind of situation? I felt like we could have done something more…should we have called an ambulance or the cops or something? I mean, that girl was in bad shape. And who knows what he is doing with her."

Jane is already shaking her head. "No, we don't call the cops on clients. Not unless they're being violent or threatening or something like that. We could have given her NARCAN, but we didn't have any. We're only supposed to give them what we have in the van. We shouldn't really have bought that soda. We're not supposed to give preferential treatment. The best we can do in those situations is let Julio know what happened. Then he can pass around the information. Let the others know. Then we can keep an eye on them. We're not here to judge or interfere or anything. Not unless they want us to."

…..

Some weeks pass with no further sign of Danny. Julio, on hearing of the woman in the shopping cart, was unsurprised. "Oh yeh, we know about that. He usually comes to the centre for food but occasionally we see him out and about. The girl is with him sometimes, sometimes not. They've been on and off for a couple of months now." He passes word for the teams to look out for her if they show up again. However, no one has sees either Danny or the girl for weeks.

Discussion

In the extract above is an example, at first, of much the same activity that is seen in the extracts of previous of chapters in terms of the routine work done by outreach workers. The concerns of keeping time and managing the stock levels are present here as well as in other occasions. In the occasion described above there are two new volunteers, an experienced worker, and myself (this is the only extract in which it is relevant to include myself in the data presented). There can be a high turnover of volunteer workers and so it is often the case that staff members, along with experienced and regular volunteer workers, will be required to provide instruction to those present. This is evident here, as Jane goes about clearly delegating tasks and explaining some of the rules of the work (these are returned to shortly). These instructions prove to be valuable ethnographic materials, not only for the ethnographer being inducted into the practice oneself, but as natural accounts of the practice, and here, of the boundaries of that practice - this is the purpose for examining this extract. Danny is a person who is often outside of team's ability to provide care, and yet, they attempt to negotiate a kind of service where possible. As a point of clarification (and repetition), in this extract we see what can be done with a client *like* Danny (talking with categories rather than individuals).

Visible features

As has been discussed in previous chapters, the work of noticing incongruities based on observable features and the subsequent use of repeat encounters to reliably make inferences about clients, is evident here. However, Jane (the experienced outreach worker in this scenario) had not met Danny before. This is a first encounter (a first for myself also, but not the last). Danny's appearance, visibly someone who has not been maintaining personal physical hygiene (he is visibly dirty), and he is a drug user (he has obvious track marks and is, perhaps not as obviously, inebriated). Furthermore, the fact he is pushing a shopping cart containing an

unconscious, or barely conscious woman, makes him something of an unusual case, a curiosity, and a cause for concern. Certainly, different from those described in the extracts previously discussed. As is the focus of this chapter, Danny presents not only as someone who is homeless (in a literal sense alongside the ways this category may be 'operationalised' for the outreach teams) but someone who is at (or displays features of) an extreme end of homelessness, and at the limit of the team's practical capabilities.

The interaction between Jane and Danny is characterised by Jane's questions about the condition of the woman in the cart and the (what is later described as) untrustworthy responses from Danny. That is, Jane is unconvinced that she is receiving the whole story from Danny, she is left to infer from appearance and his responses, about what is going on between Danny and the woman. The expression 'nursing' is taken as an interpretive problem for Jane as she attempts to theorise about what that means. The meaning behind this expression is taken as something else; as 'keeping' her. The sort of localised interpretative work being done here can be paired with the discussions of previous chapters referring to the inference making processes that are part of the everyday practice of outreach work and the methods for noticing incongruities. We drawn again on Sacks' (1992) description of how members of society have their own 'incongruity procedures' for noticing that which is out of place, and out of place in relation to their view on the scene. It is possible to comment that Danny's visible characteristics and the interaction with Jane, lead to producing him (referring to the relevant categorisation) as a kind of candidate for suspicion (from Jane's point of view). It is not difficult to see why this might be the case. Danny's noticeable characteristics are quite dramatic - he is very dirty, obviously unreliable, highly likely engaged in drug taking, and is pushing another person, an unconscious woman moreover, in a shopping cart - make Jane's interpretation a recognisable one, and recognisably justified. These features are collected to produce the justifiability of suspicion (as counter to the features being in some way *inherently* 'suspicious'), as is seen in the team's conversation and review of the interaction once they are back in the van.

Rules of practice

These comments are made with Rowe's (1999) analysis in mind. His approach, on encountering (what he determined as) odd behaviour, was to leap into theorisation, based in personal speculation, about a possible conundrum that the client was presenting. Rowe bases this on the notion that people bring a set of preestablished symbols to any interaction, which they then use to present meaning. To recall, this involved Rowe himself, acting as an ethnographer, struggling to interpret what "You asked the question, you already know the answer" meant, as a response to what he assumed to be an unawkward question.

Instead of reading this scene as an example of misaligned use of symbols for everyday interactions (as Rowe did), we see how instead the confusion in produced through the interaction. Which features are noticed as significant for making these assessments (generating categories) and then how they are dealt with practically, in both an interactional sense and, in this case, according to the organisational procedures by which the team attempt to follow. In this way, if continuing to explore this in connection to Rowe's work, it is necessary to step back from his theoretical discussions and remain with his descriptions of outreach work. Keeping with Rowe's descriptions (of practices and principles of outreach work) he provides some useful tools for looking at the team's interactions with a client who is considered to be a complex case. Rowe's 'Crossing the border' (1999) is oriented to a concern with care practices for 'mentally-ill' homeless clients and, moreover, how that category might be confused with other kinds of poverty and circumstances; with fatigue from surviving on the street, or the effects of drugs and alcohol, for example. Rowe's work is made up of his observed cases of these kinds of situations, he suggests (1999: 76), as a principle of attending to complex clients, is the implementation of two 'instrumental rules of outreach'. These rules are: to know your resources, and to have compassion. Rowe claims that the outreach worker represents, to their homeless clients, an ally against bureaucracy. These rules, the management of resources and compassion, that are included in the negotiations between workers and clients, are geared towards humanitarian values and 'successful' conclusions for their work. Those being, housing the homeless and addressing the various issues that clients may be facing. Something resembling these rules of practice appear in the extract.

Jane provides an explanation for the treatment offered to Danny following his leaving the outreach van. The explanation is in response to one of the new volunteers asking if there is anything more they can do (apart from ask questions and hand out some food and information). The suggestion from the inexperienced volunteer, is to involve other emergency services or the police to which the response from Jane is "no, we don't call the cops on clients". The hard distinction drawn between outreach workers and the police - a distinction made *by* outreach workers - is a clear set boundary for this outreach practice. This rule, however, is one maintained by this specific outreach organisation, there are other organisations who do involve, or are in partnership with, the police. Jane is acting according to the organisational rules that the team follow, the logic of which is to maintain trust between team members and their clients (clients can be assured that any information they might offer will not lead to police involvement). Jane provides the details of the boundaries of their outreach work and of the service which they make available to clients:

> "No we don't call the cops on clients. Not unless they're being violent or threatening or something like that. We could have given her NARCAN, but we didn't have any. We're only supposed to give them what we have in the van. We shouldn't really have bought that soda. We're not supposed to give preferential treatment. The best we can do in those situations is let Julio know what happened. Then he can pass around the information. Let the others know. Then we can keep an eye on them. We're not here to judge or interfere or anything. Not unless they want us to."

These rules are both practical (giving people only what is in the van) and ethical (not calling the cops or giving preferential treatment) and they amount a description of the best practice in 'those situations' (this is a category of situation, not only in reference to Danny as an individual - what to do in 'these kinds of situations' includes, but is not confined to, the scene described). Further, the rules that Jane offers are similar to those which Rowe presents (managing resources and having compassion). Jane expands on the rules; the best practice here is to make visible the conditions they have observed, to themselves and to other members of the organisation. They pass information to others, so they too know what to look for and continue to 'keep an eye on them'. The description for this method is, to some extent, a description of their own practical documentary method of interpretation.

In discussing Danny as an 'extreme' case of homelessness, and the team's response to him, their responses are still that of service provider to a client, even if Danny's needs extend beyond the scope of the team's ability to provide care for him. They do not call the cops because he is a client, they should not have given him the soda for the same reasons. That they are treating him this way establishes him, to an extent, as a client, and their response is one *as* outreach workers. Which is simply to state, that although a client proves to be difficult or present needs which are beyond the team's available services, it is not to say they stop acting like outreach workers. The team assemble an interactional method for dealing with the limitations of their services or methods for providing care. The team see Danny as likely untrustworthy, potentially exploiting a vulnerable woman; inferences they make from the observable features. However, their response is dealt with in relation to their relevant work category - as outreach workers. The methods for seeing; noticing incongruities, making inferences, documenting details, and repeating encounters moves not away from, but in turn with an organisationally defined way of doing outreach. The methods for seeing are used to attend not only to the clients themselves, but to an ethics of practicing outreach work and of an approach to what it means to provide care. Such care involves both negotiating what can be done for a client, and what cannot, or should not, be done also.

Methods for seeing

These observations of outreach practice, the noticing of features, of different degrees of extreme behaviour, and characteristics of the clients they encounter, can be discussed in connection with Hall and Hopper's observations of how outreach work is characterised by noticing of 'signs' (Hall, 2017) and 'signatures' (Hopper, 2003). How the details accompanying both the terrain in which they move and the people they encounter are used as resources for locating, seeing, and attending to those who could be in need of the services they aim to provide. In the case of Danny, the signs and signatures, his physical appearance, his disconnected and elusive conversation, the fact he has an unconscious woman in the cart, point the outreach team to see him as a type of client and to acknowledge that in these 'extreme' cases, their abilities to act *as* outreach workers is limited. In fact, intentionally limiting the extent to which they engage with this person is the best policy, for now at least. They limit their direct interaction but set up a

remote engagement with the person as a case of extreme behaviour. An effort is begun to 'keep an eye on' him, to pool the capability to 'see' what happens next. The signs and signatures are logged and made available to detect and monitor this case as time goes on. 'Seeing' as both Hall and Hopper similarly argue, remains the key method for both detecting and generating these categories of need and categories of client.

As will be seen in the following extract, the case of Danny is one for which methods for seeing (detecting, generating, and operationalising categories) becomes both the resources for enabling an ongoing type of care to be made available to Danny, and how the team are able to realise the parameters of their own care-work. The following extract gives some detail about what such 'detecting' work can entail over time, what 'keeping an eye' might appear as, and the resulting approach to providing a service to a client with complex needs.

Fieldnote Extract: Worst Case

Danny turned up one night. He lingered on the opposite side of the street, waiting for the queue to die down. Gail had spotted him early on and guessed at his intentions. "He'll wait until everyone else is gone, then he'll come over and talk to me, just watch. He does this when he wants to complain about something but doesn't want the others to hear."

Gail works for the organisation's drop-in centres during the day and also comes out on the routes a few times a week. The drop-in centres, like the outreach vans, serve food and supplies but also provide a counselling service. Clients can arrange to meet with people like Gail - who have undergone some training or have qualifications related to counselling, therapy etc - and discuss their situations. Much of this service is intended to assist those with mental illnesses and chemical reliance, including those who are taking prescribed medication and need help

managing this. The counsellors also advocate for housing and arrange further services on behalf of their clients. It is through this process that Gail had come to get to know Danny well.

This evening Danny is alone. He has his backpack on and his cart by his side, but the woman from before is nowhere to be seen. As the other clients leave, Danny approaches Gail.

"Hello Danny." She says.

"Hey."

"How are you tonight?" Gail asks.

"You know what? Not good. Not good at all. I'm bad. Bad bad bad." There is distress in his tone. He has propped the cart up against the sidewalk, he keeps his backpack on for now. Gail looks unsurprised at Danny's comment and leans against one of the van doors; settling in for what is about to come.

"The motherfuckers!" Danny begins, building intensity. "Those motherfuckers took four hundred dollars from my backpack. All I did was leave my cart outside a store for less than thirty seconds and they fucking stole it!" He is pacing back and forth while he talks. Without breaking the repetitive movement, he swings his backpack off his shoulders and dumps it next to the cart. "I mean, how did they know where I keep my money?" He pauses, leans in towards Gail. "I know how…they are watching me. I'm sure they're following me. The goddamn F.B.Fucking.I. You know how I know? I did this. Look." He assumes a perfect upright posture - a stark difference to his hunched seething - and takes a breath in preparation for a demonstration. "I was walking along like this." He mimes pushing his cart as he walks down the sidewalk. He has a serene expression as he exaggerates looking around. "I left my cart right here." He stops outside a McDonalds restaurant. "I put my backpack on top." He places the invisible backpack on top of the imaginary cart. His actual cart and backpack are only a few paces away. Mike, who joins Gail in the audience, looks at the real cart and backpack then to the position of the imaginary one. He looks to be assessing the accuracy of the performance. He shrugs.

Danny continues. “Then I went into the store like this…” He opens the glass door to the restaurant and enters. The shop front is transparent. As the door closes behind him, Danny’s voice becomes inaudible. He seems unaware of this fact. From outside on the street the team can see him continuing to narrate his own performance. He joins the queue at the counter and waits as if to order something. As he has presumably just told the surrounding customers what it is that he is doing, a few of them turn to look in his direction, observing him as he talks to himself. He waits in line for a few seconds before turning to exit the restaurant. As he opens the door to step onto the sidewalk, his voice fades back in. “…came back out like this and bang!” He points with both hands to the where the imaginary cart and backpack have been waiting. “It was gone! That’s how long I was away for and the motherfuckers stole my money! Now…” He uses a questioning, conspiratorial, tone. “How did they know it was in my backpack? Why didn’t they take the whole cart? How…how…did they know exactly which pocket it was in?” Looking at Gail, he clenches his jaw and raises his eyebrows. The look of someone waiting for an answer whilst knowing it would not arrive. Gail can only offer a sympathetic look. There is a momentary silence. Danny dramatically throws both his hands in the air just as a pedestrian is passing. The man, acting from reflex, quickly takes a wide berth around Danny. “And!’ Danny yells hands still raised, not acknowledging the man. “Somebody stole my shoes! Somebody stole my shoes while I was sleeping!” He brings his hands down slowly, reaching out in front of him and bringing the thumb and forefinger together on each hand. “Who does that? What kind of person steals someone’s shoes while they’re sleeping on the sidewalk?” His hands drop to his side and he slumps, defeated.

“Well Danny. I’m really sorry that happened to you.” Gail says.

“Yeh…thanks.” Danny is now hunched over again, his theatrical rigor gone. “I had to ask my mother for money.” From his pocket he produces a thick roll of notes and holds it up for Gail to see.

“You shouldn’t flash that around Danny! Someone will see.” Gail gestures for him to lower his hand. He returns the money to his pocket. “Look.” Gail says. “How about you come by the drop-in centre on Wednesday ok?”

"On Wednesday?"

"Yes, that's right."

"Ok I will. On Wednesday. Does that mean we're going to go out on a date on Tuesday?" Danny asks, suddenly hopeful.

Gail, unimpressed, explains slowly. "No, I'm not going to go out with you on Tuesday. Just come to the centre on Wednesday."

Danny exaggerates a look of disappointment. "Ah man. Ok. I guess I'll see you on Wednesday."

"Ok good." Gail replies. "Goodbye Danny."

"Bye." Danny shoulders his backpack and pushes his cart into the street. It is half-lit by the glow of shop fronts, neon signs, and the lights from office windows. Danny walks out alone into the middle of the tarmac. There's no traffic moving. He stops, arches his back, summons a deep breath, and howls into the night.

The team is looking on. Gail shakes her head and speaks as Danny draws his call to a close. "He has to be one of the worst mental cases I've ever seen." A car turns a corner, shining headlights at Danny. He stops howling and hurries off the street, disappearing into the shadows of some scaffolding. "Did you see the roll of cash he had?" Gail continues. "It was like this." She makes a circle with her thumbs and forefingers.

"Yeh that was a fat stack." Mike answers. "He's got to be careful acting like that. If the wrong person saw that…"

The team returns to the van. Gail picks up on Mike's comment. "Yes, I'm sure he's going to get into some real trouble, the way he acts."

"Have you known him long?" Mike asks.

"Through the drop-in, yes. He always asks me out. He says he's into older women." She laughs. "Thanks for that Danny!" Mike laughs too. Gail caries on. "I did know about him before that. He used to live on the Upper East Side with his grandmother, so I knew him from the Central Park stop. That's how I first met him and… it's all quite tragic really. At first, he got kicked out by his grandmother, for whatever

reason. I think it's best not to ask." She looks at Mike and raises her eyebrows. "I know that his father banned him from seeing her."

"Really?" Mike says.

"Uhuh. But then, the grandmother died, and his father sold the apartment on the Upper East Side and Danny refused to believe it. He kept on trying to get back into the building to see her. Then, eventually, after everybody telling him that she had died, he changed his story and said that he still had his stuff in the apartment and he needed to get it back. After a while, the super banned him from the building and put up signs, you know, saying 'If you see this man, don't let him in' kinda thing." Gail pauses for breath. "As it turned out, he was in fact, stalking a woman who lived there. An older lady. And she got a restraining order on him and the police were involved for a while."

"This guy!" Mike says, shaking his head in disbelief.

"I know, it gets better." Gail continues. "He once got me to call this lady! He told me that she was his psychiatrist, but it turned out to be her. Unbelievable. He said to me that he wanted to arrange an 'appointment', but what he meant was for them to meet so he could harass her. Obviously, when I realised that is what was going on, I didn't do that. But now, I had her number and we spoke a little and it was her that told me all about what had happened. She also told me that he was forty-two. He had been telling me he was thirty-four. When I asked him about that he got really upset. He actually disappeared for months and months. When he finally showed up again he said he was just embarrassed, but I don't know about that."

"Did you ever ask him about the girl that Julio talked about?" Mike asks.

"Oh yeh, I asked him about that. You know what he said?" She waits for Mike to respond.

"What?"

"I got needs" She gives a look of disgust.

"Ah man really?" Mike says. "He was just using her then?"

"Yeh apparently, but he said that she ran off. Probably for the best. But then who knows what really happened." Gail exhales, frustrated. "The thing is, you saw all the money he had, right? He could definitely get inside somewhere if he wanted. His

family would support him as well, no question. But this is a guy who thinks there's a chip in his tooth that lets people listen to his thoughts and put voices in his head. Imagine having that and then combined with the drugs. He's got all that going on and he's walking around the streets."

Mike interjects. "Why won't he go inside if he's got all that money?"

Gail shrugs. "He doesn't want to. Or doesn't want the responsibility. Also, if you owned a building would you let a guy like that live in it?"

"Yeh that's a good point." Pat leans over from the back seat. "He's really a liability to himself."

"Exactly." Gail agrees. "His paranoia is really serious. I'm not sure how far you can go with someone like that. There is only so much you can do for people, right?"

Mike nods, he is looking out of the window, scanning the street. "It's a painstakingly slow process. And a lot of people, because of their situation, just drop off the map. It takes a long time to get there with most people. But a guy like that…I think you just need to keep showing up."

Discussion

This extract details an interaction primarily between Gail and Danny. Dissimilar to the previous extract - in which the team members were unfamiliar with Danny - Gail knows who she is dealing with, has worked with Danny as part of her extended participation in the organisation's programs. The outreach encounter, whilst limited in its possibilities for care, extends itself through a connection to an organisation of care (and care of different kinds). In this way, the methods for addressing the complex and dynamic needs of clients, often involves the identification of a practical limitation of scope and a (re)directing of the client to other services. The identification of limitations becomes a kind of method for care provision, a step within a process of service provision. In achieving this, clients may be variably categorised as more details are collected about their circumstances. It is here that the discussion of category-work laid out in the previous chapters is implemented in the commentary. However, whereas in previous chapters the sociological description of interactional methods has been introduced,

this section builds upon those descriptions in leading to a concluding statement on the status of such methods for the possibility of outreach work being achievable. Furthermore, this explores the kind of contribution offered through the exploration of the cases presented and the interactional methods looked at. This includes both practical and conceptual elements (drawing on those three core contributions from the literature review chapter and on methodological principles previously presented).

In the case above Gail makes a prediction about Danny's behaviour, he has something to complain about and he will wait until the other clients have gone to express it. Danny delivers a re-enactment of an occasion; a theft in which he claims to have had four hundred dollars taken from him. The story Danny offers includes his suspicions that the F.B.I is following him. Further, he reveals he is carrying a significant amount of money on his person. He is distressed, upset about the theft and on this particular evening he is also alone, the woman in the cart is no longer with him. Once Danny finishes with his performance, Gail organises to see him again, not on the street by the outreach van, but at the 'drop-in centre'. The meeting is intended to catch up with Danny, Gail is a qualified councillor and would use this session to establish Danny's current condition; where he is staying, the extent of his drug use, and the state of his mental health conditions.

Danny leaves the stop having agreed to meet Gail the following Wednesday. She then tells the other team members the story of Danny's past, in some way as an explanation of how she has come to view Danny as one of 'the worst mental cases'. Danny's story consists of a selection of disturbing and strange details. The team identify how, as Pat puts it, Danny is 'a liability to himself'; despite his money it is unlikely anyone would let him into their building, he has serious problems with drugs, and his paranoia is also serious. Available solutions to his most clearly seen problems are sparse and difficult to organise. Gail questions how far the team can go to help someone like Danny, stating there is a limit to the amount of help you can offer, as an outreach worker. Mike offers the suggestion that for "a guy like that…I think you just need to keep showing up." Once more, it is important to note the use of categorisation here, 'a guy like that'. Danny is referred to consistently as a *type* of client, not solely as an individual. Hence, the applicability of taking this case, of Danny, as an example of a type of the client with which the team encounter.

In continuing with the case of those like Danny, the discussion here returns to the three core contributions of the literature review chapter; the existing studies which informed the topic and method of this project. The reasoning for this return is to revisit, briefly, the line of questioning those studies attend to, and the kind of fieldwork conducted to explore those questions (of the nature of homelessness, the stability of definitions, and the nature of the care available for those who come to be seen as homeless). Those questions guided the formulation of this study and assembled the research objectives in pursuing the fieldwork which is now being discussed. This study is a continuation of those research interests. Each of the findings chapters in which observations have been presented, have attended to these questions in varying ways, despite the large proportion of the analysis being focused on the interactional methods used by outreach workers and others to accomplish the outreach encounter and accomplish categories of need and homelessness. Those closely examined 'accomplishments' are done taking the proposed methodological approach seriously; of not considering understandings as preformed but looking to how they are produced *in situ*. These have been organised to follow the details, processes, and challenges of clients and outreach workers as they establish entry into the category of homelessness (Chinatown), care provided within that category (Our Guys), and, in this chapter, the breach of that category. These organising notions have been both conceptual and focused on the practices of outreach workers and the encounters with their clients. Danny, as an example of a type of client, is used here as an exit from what is considered homelessness (in so much as he is 'too homelessness' for the team to provide for). What is meant by this, is that in attending to how the team make sense of a client with complex needs, the solutions for which are outside of their immediate capabilities *as* outreach workers, it positions a methodological problem in formulating a stable notion of 'homelessness' (this in reference to the arguments presented in the methodological chapter).

In the following paragraphs, the commentary seeks to capitalise on those descriptions of accomplishments, of the interactional methods - making passing reference rather than an in-depth focus - and relate the material here to the three core contributions: On Hopper's 'Abeyance and Liminality', Hall's 'Hard-to-reach' clients, and Rowe's 'Borders'. The intention is, in bringing the findings element of this study to a close, to return to the questions which initially guided the fieldwork, firmly connecting the findings of this study to the commentary of those researchers, solidifying the contribution of this study. First, to Hopper's abeyance and liminality.

Abeyance and Liminality in Action

In discussing these constructs in the literature review, they were used to describe how a definition is difficult to accurately, or exhaustively, settle upon; a problematising of the category homeless used to direct focus to a field of enquiry. With Danny (and those 'like' Danny), abeyance and liminality can be used as a more direct description of what is available to see. Perhaps starting, this time, with liminality. Danny is 'betwixt and between' many things, physical health, mental health, and a position within a system of care provision. To recall, Hopper talks of the suspended sense of normalcy (the defining feature of liminality) becoming extended, not just measured in time spent outside of a sense of normalcy but a distance from it. Hopper (2003: 20) comments, "the tug of broken ties and forgone appointments weakens, the becalmed voyager finds a substitute normalcy taking shape." For Danny, he is certainly 'off course' (to extend that voyager metaphor) as far a sense normalcy is concerned. With Gail's retelling of Danny's past, she shows how that sense of normalcy is substituted for a series of concerning events characterised by 'broken ties'. Further, in their comments about what can be done for a client like Danny, knowing how far off a person is, is a first step in determining next actions. Linked to this, we see the (localised) processes of abeyance becoming evident also, to recall (Hopper, 2003: 19); "Note how abeyance subtly reframes the scandal of homelessness. Contrary to the moral calculus of advocates, the decisive issue becomes not whether homelessness will be "solved" but how; not whether adequate resources will be devoted to this problem, but how what counts as "adequate" will be determined". For the team, the adequacy of their own ability to address Danny's liminal position is exactly what is in question, they are working out how to approach this problem, and which resources will be necessary to do so, and whether this falls within their jurisdiction as outreach workers.

In doing this, an issue familiar to Hopper becomes evident. Hopper describes how a common complaint of the service providers and outreach workers would be that a consistent response from those on the street would be to reject the available assistance in favour of continuing on the street, on their own terms. This choice, and rejection of service, was commonly attributed to the impaired judgement of would-be clients. As Hopper (2003: 114) phrases it, "it was alleged that pathology trumped need". This comment is paired with the question of whether an observed psychiatric disorder is a sufficient explanation for homelessness. With Danny, although the state of his mental health is certainly a serious concern for the team, Gail already

knows what she is looking at, she has documented a history of Danny's behaviour and recites it as a description of just the kind of client that he may be. In this way, Hopper's commentary regarding the signatures of homelessness is relevant (and moves the discussion towards Hall's work also); that the outreach team look out for the signs of the presence of their work object, homelessness, and psychiatric disorder is one such associated signature. Here, Danny's performance of the theft, the indications of his paranoia, and the difficulty of his interactions are signs, and confirmations of this (to Gail), leading to the arranging of a follow-up session in the form of a meeting at the drop-in centre.

'Hard-to-Reach' beyond the encounter

The noticing of the signs and signatures of homelessness is continued with Hall's (2017) discussion of outreach workers necessarily needing to know not just where, but *how,* to look. This knowing speaks to both the places (knowing where to look) and their clients; outreach workers must know the city and how to find the object of their work, and to do this as to match their interests and available services. To reiterate Hall's point on defining homelessness, any definition must come hand in hand with where you find it, as any notion of what homelessness is must occur somewhere. This applies temporally also, as even if homelessness is found it might be just a matter of time before it is lost again - for Danny this is a continuing issue given his sporadic attendance at the stops. What Hall's comments achieve in this case, is to orient the focus of the analysis to the encounter itself, in its local details. However, what has been observed is the team have identified the problem (Danny's condition) as outside of their immediate capabilities to help. The problem (conceptually) is outside of, and beyond, the possibilities within the encounter.

The search for homelessness (as a definition and referring to the homeless themselves) takes outreach workers to the margins (socially and geographically) where homelessness can be understood as existing along a 'border' of inequality and visible difference (referring to Rowe, 1999 here). If considering the encounter with Danny as one which occurs along a border of difference, then what might be said of the interaction is, for the team, they identify Danny is out of reach, too far 'over the border' to access with what they have to hand. This is, again, a

conceptualising of the scene; in the extract Danny is available geographically, he arranges to meet with Gail (extending the 'reach' of the available service), Danny has money (material poverty might not be the nature of his 'border'), and Gail's experience with him enables a kind of knowing and expectation of the dangers of engaging with Danny. What is being referred to in talking of borders is more akin to 'getting through' to a client; providing a level of care that might help the client change their circumstance. In the case of Danny, it is this kind of border which is difficult to cross. How close to get to, or how far to stay from, clients' lives, is a continuing negotiation of material resources, familiarity, and capabilities. This negotiation of care is enacted via the methods such as those described in this thesis, of outreach worker's incongruity procedures, and their methods for documenting relevant details, which can be summarised as 'methods for seeing' - seeing people, and seeing them as categories (of need). To return to a much-used phrase throughout this project; the character of homelessness is enabled by its visibility. Also, the ways in which that visibility allows categories of need to be seen and attended to is significant - visibility allows for both the generating of the category and for its detection.

The situated nature of what is visible, detectable, and able to be generated is important. Comparing the first extract in this chapter - in which a group of volunteer outreach workers encounter Danny and his shopping carts without knowing who he is or his background - to the second extract in which Gail accurately guesses what Danny will do in the encounter and has an explanation for his behaviours based on documented features. It is the case that the signatures of homelessness (the work object) are detectable in different ways, using different methods. Even though the person is the same in both extracts, and the approach to service provision has similarities (continuing to 'keep an eye' on him), the category work is different in its level of subtly and extent of its detail. In the first extract, Jane sees the encounter as a case of meeting a suspicious person, Danny is categorizable as untrustworthy, and she questions the nature of what 'nursing' the woman might be. From Gail's story we can derive that Danny certainly is untrustworthy, deceptive, likely was keeping the woman for sex. In addition to these details, however, it is learnt that Danny is characterised, as a client, as someone who is hard-to-reach, or even unreachable. There are both obvious and more subtle signs of the condition clients might be experiencing, invisible to some, but identifiable to others; through experience, through inference, and through the collaboration of services available.

This discussion - which has teetered between the specific and the general - including the combination of abeyance and liminality, visibility in encounters, and attending to those at the 'borders' of society leads to this; that the notion of visibility enabling the detecting and generating of categories, of homelessness and of categories of need, is not a linear process (of detection *then* generating) but a method which intertwines looking, detecting, and generating of categories throughout changeable places, times, and encounters. The encounter is at the heart of outreach worker's ability to *produce* (via their interactional methods) the 'problem' of homelessness, considered always via a situation (it 'must occur somewhere' as Hall (2017) states, even if that occurrence determines the problem as beyond the possibilities of the encounter). This suggestion is not only to affirm that the problem must occur somewhere, but must occur *somehow*. Defining homelessness, the categories of client, conventions for looking, and the practice of outreach work, becomes a matter of method.

Assembling the homeless self

To briefly return to Rowe (1999), he describes the outreach encounter as occurring along a 'symbolic border' of difference, one which represents the mental placing of homeless people as apart from 'us'. Drawn out by the stigmata of homelessness, their observable features, bad luck, disabilities, and from 'our' pity, disgust, and fears. The crossing of this border is done through the negotiation of a pathway towards and through the available services that are on offer. So too, it involves the interchange of a self, a homeless self, or identity, is considered along with the possibility of a housed self and the changes and responsibilities that this might entail. Rowe suggests it is the outreach worker's job to engage in both these kinds of exchanges in such a way as to maximise successful border crossings.

Rowe is not incorrect in his descriptions of outreach work. For clients like Danny, the border which Rowe works with is certainly being negotiated (or an attempt at negotiation) within the encounters which are observed. Moreover, Rowe's questions of institutional mobility, asking how far workers, care professionals, and volunteers, should be expected to go along or beyond the border, in order to rescue homeless people, is a valid one - such work objectives are clearly evident in the extracts presented in all the findings chapters here. What Rowe misses is the

importance of how those differences (symbolic or not) are produced within the encounters he tries to examine, rather than assuming these categories are there to be found. That assumption, in part, is what the approach of this study has sought to remedy; to show the methods by which what is considered 'a homeless self' is established in outreach workers encounters, and to describe the methods for doing this kind of identity work. Moreover, as the case of Danny demonstrates, assuming that the features of what homelessness might be as 'there to be found' proves to limit the parameters of what is considered when looking at outreach practice. Danny is a paradox of impoverishment, having the material means to end his own homelessness and yet unable, or unwilling, to do so. Whilst it may be the case that outreach workers describe this behaviour as a kind of 'mental' difference, or the result of enacting a homeless self, for the sociologist and the ethnographer, what is observable is the interactional method for assembling a recognisable description of a circumstance, and of a self.

Conclusion

In concluding this final findings chapter, the contribution here has been oriented to discuss how the observations and the descriptions of border-work, cases for reaching hard-to-reach clients, and subtle signatures of homelessness which outreach workers notice, can be understood as a matter of methods for seeing - applicable to both the members of society and the ethnographer. The case of Danny is presented as exemplifying the need for a flexible approach to the subject, object of inquiry, and study of what can be termed 'homelessness'. He is unstable as a subject of interest, constantly changing, seemingly contradictory, both visible in the extremity of his behaviour followed by being invisible in his absence. The approach of the team is one of 'needing to be there for people like that'; being there through the 'painstakingly slow process'.

This chapter has made a purposeful return to the three core contributions of the literature review in discussion of the case of Danny, moreover, of clients 'like' Danny. It has sought to bring the ideas explored in the previous two findings chapter regarding incongruities and documenting details to show how homelessness, for the team, is a notion considered to exist both within and beyond the encounter they share with their homeless clients. It has been argued

here that this brings focus, for the sociologist, to the methods for producing the problem of homelessness to the situation, even if the solution to the problem is conceived of as existing beyond the outreach encounter itself. This directs attention back to the methodological, ontological, and epistemological discussions brought about in the methods chapters. That the methods of members for producing knowledge are essential to providing a clear and accurate idea of what a 'social problem' might be within the scenes observed. If considered a question of how to define homelessness, this approach seeks to reformulate the parameters of the phenomena, locating how homelessness is locally topicalised by members of society for each other and definitions become relevant for an occasion.

The methods for discovering homelessness - detecting and generating categories via noticing incongruities, documenting details, and continuing to 'keep an eye' on clients - become the same as the methods for producing the phenomena; being a member of the outreach team and competently using those methods. This represents the shift in focus this methods chapter promotes, one which sees members of society not necessarily as experts in the culture of which they are a part, but as fellow enquirers into it. It is these methods for enquiry which are considered the substantive contribution in presenting the case above. In each circumstance, be it deciding who is homeless or not at Chinatown, attending to long-established homeless clients, or determining how best to deal with a complicated 'extreme' case such as Danny, the outreach team assemble methods for enquiring into the features and the lives of those they encounter. They rediscover and define the homelessness with each encounter, make it reportable to each other, and develop competency in their practice; they make homelessness observable.

Chapter 8: Conclusion to thesis

The objective of this thesis has been to address the topic of homelessness. This has been approached in three, interlinked, ways. Firstly, looking to the ethnographic literature on homelessness, identifying main themes and highlighting the prevalent difficulty of defining homelessness. Secondly, addressing how one might study this topic in its lack of certain, or exhaustive, definition. Thirdly, through the actual observation of an outreach team as they encounter, define, and attend to the needs of those who become categorizable as homeless people. The difficulty in defining homelessness has been attached to the practical task of deciding who falls into this category, looking to the interactional methods people have for generating and detecting that category. This has been accomplished by observing, and becoming a member of, an outreach team in downtown Manhattan. Further, this thesis has shown the implications of this kind of 'definitional-work', both for the daily practices of outreach workers, and the consequences for the kind of care made available to people, clients, to the homeless.

The contribution offered in the preceding pages has been modest and limited, necessarily, by scope, the experience level of the researcher, and by time, funding, and other practical barriers. Even so, some ambitious tasks have been undertaken, both intellectual and practical. The 'respecification' of the sociological program (as detailed in the methods chapter) accounts for a serious exploration and critique of sociologically informed ethnographic work, intended to challenge the function and validity of theoretical explanations of social phenomena, and position this study as one which takes the reflexive process seriously. Such a reflexive process poses the possibility, the danger even, of getting lost in just those theoretical musings; in ontological speculations. As a response to this, this thesis has directed those discussions to actual observed cases (the practical ambition of this study), of occasions of outreach practice, applying those ontological concerns to actual cases of interaction, of encounters between one outreach team and those they meet along their route through the city.

The introduction to this thesis stated that the contribution starts where it means to finish, that the focus was directed towards the trouble of defining homelessness, the methods for constructing a definition, and the methods for seeing that definition in practice. This is evident

in the chapters presented. New information has been introduced as the study has progressed, building upon, and referring to work already done. However, it stands that the commentary on the work of outreach as enabled, as made possible, by everyday methods for assembling meanings for others to observe, is the continuing characteristic of the contribution. The apparent elusive nature of homelessness, as projected onto people, onto theorising, and onto solving a social problem, has been redirected to these everyday methods. Each occasion presented, displays the local competencies of the members of society for sense-making, for negotiating, discovering, and defining, these elusive subjects in and through the occasions in which they are found (and made available *for* finding). Here in, and as has been repeated throughout, is where this study sits as a contribution to the sociological literature on homelessness and outreach. Focussing and expanding upon those three core contributions (Hopper, Hall, and Rowe) the descriptions and discussions here have explored ethnographically, and shown empirically, how an understanding of homelessness is assembled *in situ*, and the methods outreach workers have for doing this.

Firstly, the case of the Chinatown stop. There are numerous features of the encounters which could be discussed. Sociologically, it is of continuous interest, and increasing complexity. Deciding how to approach this case, and what to focus on, was a difficult decision. Despite the various elements at play at Chinatown (of gender, race, and degrees of poverty) the significant difficulty faced by the outreach team was the negotiation of who counted as a legitimate candidate for the services they had to offer. Here, homelessness was used as a kind of entry requirement for accessing a level of service (everyone still had access to a minimum service, the 'one time' rule). The sociological description of this case was in reference to the description of a method, the outreach team's incongruity procedure. An everyday, mundane, method for seeing incongruous behaviour, that is, incongruous in relation to the team's work priorities. This method for seeing the level of need, the candidacy, of their clients, materialises practically in the managing of stock levels, not giving too much away, and the 'policing' of client's attempts to access more portions. Amongst the large crowd, the 'really' homeless clients are identified and treated accordingly. Further to this, the team discuss their perspectives on the client's not being necessarily homeless but still in need of their services, and what this represents for the limitations their practice, logistically and in terms of the quality of care available to these *types* of clients.

The second findings chapter details the stop in which a group of clients, whom the team refer to as 'Our Guys', are found. The 'type' of client found at this stop is distinctive in the differences with Chinatown. They are identified as firmly homeless, and much of the description in this chapter shows how this categorisation is done, repeatedly, and how that repetition allows a multi-layered categorisation to do be done also. The clients are not just homeless but have specific needs and circumstances which the team know about and respond to. The familiarity, beyond the point of candidacy for services, leads to a catered kind of care being made available. This is described as a 'documentary method of interpretation'. With time and familiarity, the team can infer in greater detail and accuracy, the problems their clients may be facing, even if those problems are not straightforwardly visible. The ability to notice features of their clients as 'documents of' as 'pointing to' possible underlying problems, allows the team members to act in an appropriate manner with complex and difficult clients, as well as with potentially schizophrenic clients. At this stop, the outreach practice becomes less concerned with issues of stock but of seeing and responding to homelessness as an ongoing and multifaceted issue faced by their clients. Within this, homelessness, as a word in use and as a description for the condition of the client's circumstances becomes specific, less important as a general notion and more of a gloss for experiences of poverty, addiction, and mental illness, which work alongside housing or living conditions. The chapter points to the importance of trust and relationships being built between outreach workers and their clients, as a means of seeing the degree and nature of need. For the practice itself this has the implication of extending the time scale in which a successful outreach encounter might take place - possibly requiring years of care and attention.

The final findings chapter reviews the case of Danny, a person who displays a number of difficult behaviours and complex needs. The chapter, as a whole, capitalises on the previous discussions of methods for doing outreach work and looks to bring the observations back to the core contributions from the literature review, and to solidify the methodological contribution. It does this by presenting a case (Danny as a client) in which the team are pushed to the boundaries of what is possible for them to do as outreach workers. There are multiple elements which add to the discussions within this thesis. First, are the details of the rules of practice for the outreach team, the lines which they will, or will not, cross. This presents some principles for their practice and points to the existing ethos of their work. Secondly, the discussion shows how the care made available for clients like Danny, necessarily breach the scope of an individual team and traverse across and range of services and organisational resources. The

notion explored here is that the extent of the circumstances that are associated with homelessness extend beyond the 'reach' of an individual service, of the outreach team. Thirdly, and in relation to the second point here, is the explanation that even when homelessness, as a perceived problem, extends beyond the encounter, it is always assembled within an occasion, a situation, and an interaction. This allows the revisiting of the essential contribution of this thesis, albeit a modest one. Put plainly, the contribution asserts that to study, to detect and generate homelessness as a category of need - a sociologically blurry and elastic term - one must look, at least in part, to the methods for assembling that category as it happens *in situ*.

As noted in the 'Introduction to findings' chapter, there were observations left unexplored for this thesis – a practical limiting of scope is responsible. However, it is worth repeating that whilst the main focus of this thesis has been outreach worker's situated methods for assembling categories, they are not the only group to do so in the situations described. The question of the category work done by the recipients of care remains. If this study were to point to further investigation it would be in this direction. The scenes described in the previous chapters account for a small part of wide system of care provision and services, a more extensive exploration of this system, and of the other sides of that 'border', would undoubtedly strengthen and further inform the contribution here.

The relevancy of this contribution has been twofold. Firstly, in relation to the consistent issue faced by researchers of this topic of accurately defining homelessness. And second, in providing an account of actual cases of definition work as it is done by practitioners, providing a reference for those interested in outreach work and street-based care work. The definitional difficulty has continued through history, across disciplines, and further, across the *development* of disciplines and the ethnographic method. As the literature review chapter details (referring to the case Rowe's (1999) 'Crossing the Border') there is the danger of producing a theoretically informed account of practices, imposing assumed details onto observations, thus diluting the phenomena, rather than noticing the constituent features of interactions.

The chapters offered here have been, to some extent, a response to this 'danger' and misrepresentation. Instead, this thesis discussed how a misrepresentation can be identified in existing studies and in methodological terms, and has presented original research that has adjusted its focus to take these factors into account. In this way, the study here has expanded on the existing research into this area, including a detailed look at different types of

homelessness and how this might shape service provision. The detailing of types, and the interactional methods for assembling them, also provide a subject of broader sociological interest, not only confined to the study of outreach and homelessness. In its specifics, however, the study has provided further cases of outreach work for consideration, highlighting significant features, challenges, resources, and barriers to success within outreach work. The methodological approach adopted represents a fine tuning of the ways in which the topic of homelessness might be addressed ethnographically. The result is a modest contribution to a long-standing topic of interest for ethnographic research and for sociological enquiry. Although modest, this thesis has achieved its aims; to explore how homelessness is understood, defined and categorised, and attended to within the outreach encounter, by outreach workers themselves. Cases have been presented which show how this is accomplished, a methodological discussion has described how the research was achieved, and a literature review has positioned this study within a tradition and terrain of research.

A final word would be, that homelessness, and care for the homeless, is a changeable process in which adaptability and flexibility are key elements for understanding. However, as the outreach team themselves assert, one needs to turn up consistently and keep an eye out, if you are to understand homelessness – advice which applies both to those wishing to provide care and for ethnographers alike.

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