Ed Cooper

PhD Student
University of Leeds, UK

Listening from the in-between

The influence of sound on homelessness as a liminal space

Abstract

With homelessness being prevalent across the United Kingdom and showing no sign of decreasing, it is imperative to better understand the experiences of individuals who fall into these difficult circumstances. A previously unexplored aspect of homelessness is engagement with sound. This article addresses this lacuna by investigating how the understanding of sonic space is related to individuals' experiences of homelessness. The article considers homelessness through the analytical lens of 'liminality'—a period when an individual or space has neither a former nor future identity, whilst simultaneously, paradoxically, possessing both (van Gennep, 1960). Taking a phenomenological approach, interviews were undertaken with residents of a halfway house in Leeds, UK, whose circumstances are between 'literal homelessness' and social housing. The study demonstrates the ways in which participants actively engage with sound and liminality in day-to-day life, regularly curating inhabited sonic environments which are often seen by members of 'mainstream' society as 'non-places'. A distinction is made between quietness and silence: whereas quietness offered the participants an escape, the prospect of silence—being left alone with one's thoughts—was often worrisome. Further differentiation is made between actively 'listening to' and 'hearing' (Oliveros, 2005) these individual sonic spaces—the participants' focus is positioned between external sonic stimuli and their own internal thoughts, highlighting a betweenness *of consciousness. Overall, the article finds that interactions with sound are key components of the liminal experience of homelessness.*

Introduction

Contemporary Western life is permeated by passageways. Roads, train tracks and alleyways are ubiquitous to the construction of urban environments. These 'non-places', areas that one passes through to reach a 'proper' place, are unavoidably experienced by those who occupy cities (Augé, 1995). Likewise, more abstractly, passageways of states, the process of changing one's identity, are a common occurrence within Western society. Graduation ceremonies, divorces, or even the experience itself of passing through non-places, are often productive in propelling an individual, a group, or an entire society into a new mode of being, both positive and negative. This liminality is ever-present and can be felt to different degrees at almost any moment (Thomassen, 2018)

Similarly omnipresent to the makeup of Western life is homelessness. It is difficult to imagine walking through a major British city centre without being aware of individuals panhandling or occupying passageways. Indeed, government statistics indicate that the issue has significantly worsened in the UK since 2010 with more 'rough sleepers' than ever before (Ministry of Housing, 2017). Many schemes exist at a national level, such as Crisis, to enable and encourage homeless individuals to

change their status and reintegrate into 'mainstream' society, yet the issue still prevails (Crisis, n.d.).

Sound is a previously underappreciated element of the homeless experience. Despite their significantly different circumstances compared to members of mainstream society, there is currently no research exploring the aural component of homeless individuals, resulting in an erasure of homeless voices in discourses around listening experiences and denying members of mainstream society a holistic understanding of homeless individuals' experiences. This article addresses this lacuna by viewing homelessness through the analytical lens of liminality to develop an understanding of homeless individuals' understanding of sonic space. I begin by exploring the themes of liminality, homelessness, and engagement with sonic environments which provides a critical foundation of a subsequent study. The findings suggest that homeless individuals organise their sonic environments in relation to their occupation of liminal spaces: this includes themes of quietness, boredom. and sonic memories. In short, individuals who find themselves in the liminal space of homelessness have an active engagement with their listening spaces.

Defining homelessness

Initially, it is important to define homelessness, a complex and somewhat nebulous expression. The term might simply refer to an individual who does not have permanent residence, for example, recent divorcees who are staying with their parents. However, the term is more frequently associated with those who are 'functionally' homeless: 'rough sleepers' who hazardously inhabit several dwellings simultaneously (McNaughton, 2008). Numerous authors, such as Bouchard (2010), have considered the nuances of homelessness by breaking it into subcategories. Arguably, the most predominant of these is McNaughton's (2008) four strand approach: 'absolute' homelessness, 'hidden' homelessness, homelessness as it is subjectively experienced, and homelessness as it relates to statutory definitions. Although these are fixed categories, her approach emphasises the fluidity between being a socially ostracised, functionally homeless individual and merely not having a permanent address. Other authors, such as Meanwell (2012), stipulate that whatever categorisation of homelessness is used, gender, race, and sexuality affect the experience of the individual. Common to these definitions is the theme of homelessness being understood—at least by structural and social forces—as a transition between points of stability. Homelessness is rarely the final destination, but rather a passageway to being a member of mainstream society.

Liminality

Liminality was first developed through van Gennep's (1960) anthropological work in the early twentieth century. Highlighting the significance of transitions in any society, van Gennep described the middle stage in a rite of passage—the moment when an individual has neither a former nor future identity, whilst simultaneously, paradoxically, possessing both—as a liminal period. The term was left dormant until its English translation in 1960, sparking Victor Turner to develop and popularise van Gennep's work throughout the 1960s and define liminality as 'betwixt and between' (Turner, 1967). However, conversely to van Gennep, stemming from ideas rooted in the theatrics of 'social dramas', Turner stipulates that liminal experiences in modern society have been replaced by 'liminoid' moments which might not involve the 'negative' qualities associated with many liminal experiences, but offer a space where creativity and ambiguity reveal themselves in art and leisure, such as the chosen 'flow state' painters might find themselves in whilst creating their work.

Since the cornerstone writings on liminality by van Gennep and Turner, the term has been intermittently used in a range of disciplines, such as sociology, political theory, and performance studies. The most substantial piece of work in contemporary literature is, arguably, Thomassen's anthropological writing *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between* (2018), in which he argues that the term should be used to develop social and political theory, the not-yet thought. Indeed, Thomassen (2018) proposes that types of liminality exist by plotting subject—individual, group or society—against time spans of moment, period and epoch. These different strata of liminality interact with each other, resulting in a nuanced transition only achievable through intersection. Measuring the influence of this relationship is problematic, but a pertinent consideration when examining homelessness, for example, gauging the effect of society passing through a liminal moment, such as the UK's lockdown response to COVID-19, on an individual's transition from homeless to being a member of mainstream society.

Liminality is an umbrella term which describes the structural transition from one social state to another—the definition of the states and the passageway between them might not always be clear, but this nuance is where the productive power of liminality lies. This body of literature contains ideas that can be applied to discussions of homelessness as explored in the following section, using Thomassen's categories of individual, group and society to structure the investigation and provide a holistic view of homelessness.

Liminality and homelessness

As highlighted in van Gennep's original work, liminal experiences often concern only the individual and are highly personalised. Examples include bar mitzvahs for Jewish boys, divorces, or puberty. In addition to performing social functions, individuals' identities are momentarily ambiguous, before stabilising and resulting in transformation. This *betweenness* of identity is a core component of the homeless experience as many individuals feel that they are not part of mainstream society, but were previously and will be again in the future (McNaughton, 2008). This belief of change is noted by Skjoldager-Nielsen and Edelman (2014) who state that liminal periods are 'the social non-space in which transformation is expected and achieved' (p. 33). Similarly, homelessness is not usually understood as the definitive position for an individual, either by themselves or by the state, but as a temporary condition in which they will *transition* to becoming a member of mainstream society. Indeed, the significance of transition is emphasised by Thomassen (2018) as a way of differentiating liminal moments from marginality or liminoids, highlighting its appropriateness for understanding homelessness. Liminal moments are often not experienced by choice (unlike liminoids), but as periods that are fallen into or happen inadvertently, sometimes due to insufficient social support (Thomassen, 2018). *Very few* individuals choose to be homeless in the sense outlined in the previous section, as opposed to nomads, but these liminal moments are characteristically episodic and therefore not permanent (McNaughton, 2008). Indeed, even if members of this minority group believe they will remain or want to be permanently homeless, structural and social forces *expect* and attempt to facilitate some sort of transition, as evidenced by numerous homeless services in the UK, both in the form of charity and state-funded, returning to Skjoldager-Nielsen and Edelman's (2014) definition of liminality that includes an *expectation* of change. Importantly, then, understanding homelessness through the lens of liminality puts emphasis on social or structural factors, rather than only individual agencies.

Focusing in on individuals' engagements with liminality, Voegelin (1999) suggests the 'in-between' is pivotal to understanding consciousness. He argues that consciousness can be described as *metaxy*, a constant destabilisation of two perceptual structures apparent in all experiences: intentionality and luminosity (McMahon, 1999). In essence, one's attention flits between micro and macro phenomena, never quite reaching either, but constantly moving between them, causing a 'paradox of consciousness'. Although this understanding is not unique to homelessness, it is a liminal component that influences individuals' experiences. It is stipulated that the significantly high level of mental health issues across the homeless community may further this 'paradox of consciousness' and cause cognitive distress for individuals (McNaughton, 2008).

Liminality can also be experienced as a social group, for example at graduation ceremonies or in groups that live on the edge of 'normal structures of society'. In his writings on Christian pilgrimages, Turner (1969) suggests that the shared process of distancing themselves from 'normal' social structures, social roles, and identities cultivates an equality between participants. This paralleling of status results in a strong recognition of *communitas*, that is, feelings of social 'togetherness' or belonging. Mainstream social structures or roles are often not afforded to homeless individuals. Many are not eligible for aid—an individual is required to be 'legally homeless' to qualify for housing support in the UK, which generally does not consider the convergence of mental or physical wellbeing within the homeless experience (Shelter, n.d.).

Thomassen's final category of liminality states that entire societies may pass through liminal periods, such as, war, prolonged political instability, or natural disasters. Szakolczai (2000) argues that transitions defined as liminal may become extended to the point that society is subject to 'permanent liminality'. This sense of 'freezing' the transient is evident in many contemporary settings, such as the UK's lockdown response to COVID-19. Society-wide liminality not only affects individuals' phenomenological experiences, but also the built environment that they inhabit. Van Gennep (1960) conceptualises 'neutral zones' which he claims are spaces outside of normality and facilitated ritual passages. Activities that take place in these zones cannot be replicated in 'normal life' without undermining a sense of social stability, for example, battlefields in ancient Greek settlements. Developing this argument, Augé (1995) theorises 'non-places' and their functions within supermodernity. He describes airport terminals or motorway services as non-places, which one passes through only as a consequence of attempting to get from one 'proper' place to another. Engagement with these zones is therefore liminal. The homeless community's interaction with non-places is markedly dissimilar to that of members of the mainstream society. These passageways from one location to another that permeate Western cities become areas for homeless individuals to sleep or panhandle, for example. Place and non-place are not fixed categories, but relative to the individuals' experience of them.[1]

Through viewing homelessness as a liminal state, questions arise about individuals' interactions with sound. With regard to the personal, sound and music might be considered a 'technology of the self': sonic environments play an active role in (re) forming identities (DeNora, 2000). While the use of music/sound in identity work is a common aspect of all manner of musical engagements, the transient nature of homelessness gives rise to a consideration of engagement with sound and subsequent identity. MacDonald, Hargreaves, and Miell (2017) outline 'music in identities' (MII) which explores how individuals' engagement with music develops the Self. This process relies on regular, 'stable', or active engagement with music and sound that may

not be afforded to those living through liminality. It would be reasonable to suggest that due to the precariousness of possessions (McNaughton, 2008) such as personal listening devices, it is likely that homeless individuals' limited access to sonic media would result in a different relationship to sound than that of members of the mainstream society. Furthermore, given the frequent, usually involuntary, occupation or use of non-places across the homeless community, which have a notably different soundscape to 'places', the relationship between identity and sonic environment might be different to that of a member of mainstream society—Augé (1995) notes non-places' ability to strip individuals of their individuality, that is, the lack of distinguishable features provides no context for a person to establish an identity.

Living through liminal states is often emotionally distressing: mental health issues across the homeless community are frequent and often complex (McNaughton, 2008). There are numerous analytical lenses for considering the relationship between sonic phenomena and emotions, a topic which is too extensive to be comprehensively covered here.[2] Juslin and Laukka (2004) suggest that the social context of musical listening is often overlooked when considering its emotional powers. The authors show how music is regularly used to alter emotions and conjure memories within everyday, social scenarios. Zillmann's 'Mood Management Theory' (1988) broadens these ideas beyond music to posit that engagement with 'messages', which include any sonic media, affects individuals' mood states and subsequent behaviour. Given the limited control that members of the homeless community are afforded over their lives and therefore soundscape, this line of thought raises questions of how sound might cultivate or dismantle emotions within this frequently distressing liminal period.

In sum, the homeless experience is permeated with different strata of liminality, displaying how the phenomenon is an issue of social/political factors and consequently identity. Individuals' personal identities are perched between who they once were and who they will become: being 'a homeless person' is not final, but a transition. Homeless individuals find themselves bound together by these personal experiences of liminality and are often distant from structures of mainstream society. Therefore, the community interacts with broader societal phenomena, such as non-places, in an atypical manner, further exacerbating the liminal nature of the homelessness. These factors intensify the frequently difficult emotional component of homelessness, heightening mental health issues. Therefore, I suggest that homeless individuals' interaction with sound might not be the same as that of a member of mainstream society, and therefore worthy of inquiry.

To be clear, in understanding homelessness as a liminal experience, I do not intend to reproduce biopolitical notions that homeless individuals should 'move on' from public places, nor am I placing the responsibility on the individual. Rather, this lens of the in-between is a fruitful manner of understanding the position of home-

lessness, from which, I hope, support might be (better) developed and distributed by social services to those who want and require it, and who have been previously let down.

Case study: 'St. Mark's House'

The intersection of homelessness and liminality has been used to design a study which explores homeless individuals' experiences of sonic spaces. It aimed to uncover the engagement with sound in everyday life, how sound interacts with homeless individuals' identities, and how sonic engagement interacts with (expected) progression from this liminal period. Four participants from a halfway house for individuals with alcohol problems and an experienced member of staff—who is a former musician—were interviewed, all of whom are male.[3] The organisation is based in Leeds, UK, and has been anonymised to 'St. Mark's House'. Its function is to reintegrate individuals who have experienced homelessness into mainstream society. This is achieved through providing semi-independent living and opportunities to engage with practices that are 'normal' to mainstream society: residents lived in self-contained flats with a bedroom and kitchenette, and many of them volunteered through schemes arranged by St. Mark's House. There were curfews, only utility bills to pay, and alcohol consumption was monitored, but they lived, by and large, independently. Participants were asked about homeless individuals' day-to-day interactions with sound: for example, acoustic phenomena that pleased or irritated them and how this made them feel. This was expanded to discussing experience of locations, their daily routines, and contextualising their reactions against other issues in their lives.[4]

Halfway house

Ahead of the discussion below, it is helpful to acknowledge that the very nature of St. Mark's House is intentionally liminal: its purpose is to be a passageway from homelessness into some form of social housing. It places individuals into a state in which their identity is ambiguous as they are not homeless in the 'literal' sense of being rough sleepers, but they remain 'functionally' homeless in that they do not have a permanent address, and most of the residents are not integrated into mainstream society (they are not employed, they have a curfew, etc.). As argued above, if the holistic experience of homelessness can be understood as liminal, the setup of the halfway house serves as a prime example of Thomassen's (2018) notion of multiple strata of liminality intersecting and resulting in confusion and ambiguity.

Indeed, the participants appreciated the liminal nature of St. Mark's House, with one participant noting how he feels excluded, even shunned, from mainstream

society, and consequently is aligning himself with Skjoldager-Nielsen and Edel-man's (2014) characterisation of liminal periods as being cut off by 'spatial and/or temporal barriers' (p. 33). This was concisely summarised by one participant when he stated '[St. Mark's House is] a stepping stone; that's all it is'.

Homeless individuals are often aware of the preconceptions that members of mainstream society may have about them. As Kidd (2009) notes, the stigmatisation surrounding youth homelessness creates vicious cycles of poor self-image and influences mental health. Indeed, similar patterns of stigmatisation and its effects were common across St. Mark's House, with residents 'hiding' from society and becoming progressively less integrated with mainstream communities—rather they fell further into the liminal state, finding themselves between several identities, with numerous participants expressing feelings of not currently feeling like 'anybody'.

Quietness

Immediately apparent as one steps onto the premises of St. Mark's House is its quietness. There were very rarely any loud sounds and those that might occur—residents arguing with staff or cars loudly revving as they drive past, for example—were met with discomfort by the residents and staff. This auditory scarcity continued into the participants' individual living spaces. The background noise that is a crucial component of the organisation of their environment was always at a low volume; televisions and radios never intruded.

An explanation for this sonic environment comes from an understanding of quietness as an indicator of safety. As might be expected, the experience of homelessness prior to the participants' time at St. Mark's House was often characterised by feeling 'out of control', as one participant put it, as if they had very limited agency over their lives, with external sources, such as toxic relationships with family members or romantic partners, directing their choices (Fitzpatrick, Kemp, and Klinker, 2000). The halfway house is an escape from the social constraints that led them there and offers a sense of autonomy, as stated by a participant:

> I like it quiet. I like being on me own. [...] There's nobody telling me what to do. I can go to bed when I want and get up when I want.

Understanding liminality as a multi-layered concept, in which individual strands may interact with or even contradict each other, the quietness afforded to the residents during their time at St. Mark's House can be understood as an offer of a transient sense of stability within an overarching narrative of change and betweenness.

It is crucial to highlight a distinction between quietness and silence. In this context, silence is understood as a soundscape lacking any 'clear', intentionally produced sound: low-level ambient sounds of an environment constitute silence in this

case. On the other hand, quietness offered the residents an escape and a chance to moderate their emotions: the prospect of silence was often actively feared. Without sonic activity, the residents' minds were left to wander and, as a result of traumatic past experiences, often took some to unpleasant mental places that they were unprepared for. As one participant remarks: 'there's too much time to think here, mate.'

Intriguingly, the residents' relationship to silence had a contradictory nature to it. All the participants firmly stated that they enjoyed being by themselves and were 'easy-going' about whatever life may present them with: one participant described himself as 'happy-go-lucky', for example. However, the details of their daily routine and frequent desire for (healthy) connection to family members would suggest that, actually, the residents found it challenging to be alone, unattended, and subsequently in a quiet place for extended periods of time. This paradoxical nature was best expressed by one participant who confidently stated 'I'm not a people person. People think I am, but I'm not', despite expressing how much he looked forward to socialising with his family. This facet was ubiquitous to the ex-homeless participants, but the degree to which it influenced their identity varied across the individuals.

The sense of autonomy within the identity that the residents sought to present was, arguably, the most significant feature when considering their personal soundscapes. When one's life has been defined by perpetual, but seemingly pointless transition, the curation of a sonic environment can be a valuable tool in expressing one's autonomy, as Szarecki (2017) suggests in his analysis of the use of phone apps that play ambient sounds of other locations to cultivate one's individual creative capacity. For example, one participant spoke about the importance of having his own space and feeling irritated if someone turned his television off. Indeed, this might be investigated further by extending Bull's idea of an 'auditory bubble'—in this case, wearing headphones to create an isolated listening experience and detach from one's environment (Bull, 2006). A similar situation occurred with respect to the maintenance of background noise within the residents' flats as a type of 'auditory cocooning' from the outside world and the negative associations that it may bring with it. Given the previously stated lack of control over their lives that the participants commented on, it would be reasonable to hypothesise that this cocooning was a demarcation of auditory territory, a further attempt to express autonomy and, even, protect oneself (Dibben & Haake, 2013).

Boredom

All residents stated that boredom was a key component of their experiences at St. Mark's House. Across his interview, one participant repeatedly reiterated the goalless nature of his time at the halfway house, for example:

> I'm lonely and I am fucking bored. [...] I just don't feel like I've got a life anymore. [...]
> I'm not living, mate—I'm just existing.

This sentiment of being isolated and purposeless was shared across all residents and is not unusual for other forms of homelessness either (McNaughton, 2008). However, the very fact that they were in a halfway house, which requires some degree of personal choice and functions as a propulsion into mainstream society, indicates that there was an expected transition out of homelessness, rather than this desultory state being a permanent political exclusion.

Engagements with sound were frequently used to relieve the boredom and structure the residents' days. The use of background noise in their individual flats was clearly noticeable to an observer and a prominent feature of their experiences at St. Mark's House. This included having the television or radio on at a low volume. One participant stated:

> I've turned the TV off because you've come, so we'd have silence, and we wouldn't have background noise. But I'm not missing the background noise because I'm talking. But as soon as you go, I'm gonna turn the telly back on, or I'm going to go for a walk.

The participant's statement indicates that he uses background noise as a way of occupying himself, which relieves the boredom, a product of being in the halfway house. Indeed, Bull (2005) notes that the arrangement of one's sonic environment can be used to 'personalise' one's sense of duration and consequently create a narrative within an urban space. The same can be said for the residents of St. Mark's House: their use of background noise is an attempt to manipulate the personal passage of time in order to relieve the boredom intertwined with their situation and, one might posit, an attempt to alleviate loneliness resulting from the experience of occupying St. Mark's House (Rasmussen, 2008).

Although the participants were preoccupied with background noise and became anxious when it was not present, they were not actively 'listening' to the ambient sounds, but rather just 'hearing' them (Oliveros, 2012). The content of the sounds, whether it be daytime TV or an album that was dear to them, was irrelevant to the use of sound in quelling the boredom and, ultimately, nulling any potentially challenging emotions that might spontaneously arise. This apathy towards sonic preference is demonstrated by one participant when he states: 'I just listen to music if there's nowt on TV.'

This observation reveals a further layer of liminality within the residents' experiences of St. Mark's House. They create a scenario of personal betweenness within their private lives: the residents' attention is positioned between external sonic stimuli and their own internal thoughts, seemingly without ever homing in on

one or the other. This betweenness of consciousness is not exclusive to the home-less experience: Voegelin (1999) theorises that this metaxy (a constant alteration of focus from the micro to macro) is how everyone navigates experiences. However, intentionally cultivating this perceptual ambiguity as a response to challenging mental scenarios is symptomatic of stressful experiences, such as that of St. Mark's House and, it might be hypothesised, the experience of homelessness more broadly.

The previous quotation mentions walking, which all participants did at least once a day. Several residents had a lot to note about the sonic experience of being outside and in public areas in contrast to St. Mark's House. Participants spoke about eavesdropping on strangers' conversations, traffic, and birds in the park—sounds that would be not be prominent, if possible to hear at all, within their flats. The difference in the soundscapes between their living abodes and the local area was used to structure their daily routine. The creation of sufficiently contrasting expe-riences aided the alleviation of the residents' boredom.

Despite these two understandings of sonic place being used to structure their days, the walks that the residents undertook were seemingly directionless—they were not walking *to* anywhere, but were simply out to walk for the sake of walk-ing. Indeed, this lack of discernible goal, fluctuation, and movement within a fixed state has parallels with other liminal experiences. In a sense, the residents struc-ture their days using different forms of liminality. There is a somewhat paradoxical element to this relationship with liminality: transitory experiences were used to structure the duration of the day which is nested in a broader narrative of limi-nality. This builds on Thomassen's notion that multiple liminal experiences which occur simultaneously can create a situation in which the transitions interact with each other and distract from each other's function.

Sonic memories

As has been reiterated throughout this article, whilst inhabiting a liminal state, the day-to-day experiences such as those of the residents of St. Mark's House were often traumatic and emotionally taxing. They no longer related to their previous identity, but had not yet developed the next, leading to an uncertainty that is understand-ably difficult to manage. To combat this, memories associated with or driven by sound were frequently used by the residents to maintain opinions, establish tastes, and subsequently cultivate a developing identity (MacDonald, Hargreaves, and Miell, 2017).

The idolisation of musical artists was apparent across three of the four residents. One participant recounted at length the time he met the singer from the band The Beautiful South, Paul Heaton, and was asked to be a roadie; another participant's room was littered with Bob Marley paraphernalia; and a third participant spoke

proudly about his extensive collection of George Michael records and the vast number of his concerts he had attended. When probed about what it was precisely that they enjoyed about these artists, there was no consistent answer. Instead, what became apparent was that the physical proximity of having met, or even just physically seen, a celebrity was a memory that was still important to the residents as it offered a sense of self-worth, allowed them to accrue perceived social status, and feel like 'somebody'. This is reflected in Kidd and Shahar's (2010) work which outlines that minimal self-esteem is a common experience throughout homelessness, often due to the stigma surrounding the social position.

This importance of memories associated with sound continued onto a personal, even intimate, level. As part of the interviews, the residents were asked if they had any strong memories relating to sound. If clarification was required, examples were given of sounds of childhood homes, family members' voices, or sounds at other places of residence prior to living at St. Mark's House. Without fail, all of the participants recalled the sound of their primary caregiver's voice from their childhood. This was their mother with the exception of one participant who cited his grandparents as his primary caregivers. They spoke fondly about these key female figures in their lives and could recount the timbral inflections of their voices and, on occasion, the delivery of pertinent phrases. This demonstrated the use of memories associated with sound, not just to forge a new or recall an old identity from within a liminal period, but also offering a sense of connection or intimacy, as noted by Jakubowski and Ghosh (2019). Indeed, this tendency is not exclusive to the homeless community (Street, 2016), but the context of using memories within a liminal stage of life, when relationships and intimacies are frequently complex, clouded, or transitioning, should be noted.

Conclusion

This article has explored the understanding of sonic spaces in the experiences of homeless individuals, viewed through the analytical lens of liminality. The goal of the article has been achieved through a critical assemblage of anthropological literature and by interviewing individuals with lived experience of homelessness who currently inhabit a halfway house. While this is purely a case study, I suggest that homeless individuals have an active engagement with both sound and liminality. They regularly curate sonic environments which are sometimes understood as non-places by members of mainstream society. These auditory territories were quiet, as opposed to silent, and offered homeless individuals relief from boredom and anxiety through perceived temporal manipulation and the evocation of memories. At points, the individuals positioned their aural focus between external sonic stimuli and their own internal thoughts, highlighting a liminal space for consciousness.

The individuals also used memories associated with sound to address emotional and identity issues symptomatic of liminal periods. Using liminality as an analytical lens to view homeless individuals' engagement with sound uncovers a complex and often contradictory aesthetic dimension to these individuals' lives.

Further research might consider *how* individuals' engagement with sound interacts with the expectation of progression out of the liminal phase of homelessness. This could be achieved through a longitudinal study, encompassing multiple forms of homelessness and mapping individuals' engagements with sound against their transition out of (and possibly back into) homelessness. This might render a more nuanced understanding of how liminality is felt and its effects on resources, such as housing or financial independence. Indeed, it may even shed light of other forms of liminality in non-homeless individuals' lives.

Overall, sound and liminality have a demonstrable impact on the experience of homelessness. This article should be viewed as a starting point for further research into the engagement with the arts in the lives of homeless individuals: evidently, it is equally as active and important as for members of mainstream society.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1   See also John Tomlinson's *Globalization and Culture* (1999) in which he discusses how the non-places of the elites are often places for the non-elites. For example, airports are transitional non-places for the elite, but places of work for cleaners.

2   For a broad review of the domain from an interdisciplinary perspective, see Juslin & Sloboda (2011).

3   A 'halfway house' is an abode where an individual can temporarily stay whilst resolving an issue preventing the individual from living independently.

4   The study received Ethical Approval from the University of Leeds' Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Cultures Ethics Committee. The potential vulnerability of the participants was acknowledged throughout the data collection process. Two interviews were undertaken with each participant. Interviewees were informed that their participation was voluntary, interviews could be terminated at any time, and they could withdraw their participation without giving any reason.