

In compliance with the
Canadian Privacy Legislation
some supporting forms
may have been removed from
this dissertation.

While these forms may be included
in the document page count,
their removal does not represent
any loss of content from the dissertation.

**Strangers Within Our Midst?
Panhandling, Identity and Community Conflict in Canada.**

**Jessica F. Leech
Department of Anthropology
McGill University, Montreal
July 2002**

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of the degree of M.A.**

© Jessica F. Leech 2002



National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

ISBN: 0-612-85865-0

Our file Notre référence

ISBN: 0-612-85865-0

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

Canada

Abstract

Across Canada, municipalities have been struggling to alleviate the poverty of increasing numbers of homeless people and panhandlers on city streets. Simultaneously, tensions have risen between these street people and the general public. This thesis is a narrative study of the current conflict between panhandlers and other community stakeholders in Calgary, Alberta. This study presents the diverse viewpoints and voices of people who panhandle, homeless people, the general public, the downtown business community, social service providers, city bureaucrats and police officers. This study examines how identity politics and broader social ideologies shape face-to-face street encounters and influence debates over public policy at an institutional level. The relationship between panhandlers and the public is typically one marked by social distance. The current approach to panhandlers involves treating them as “strangers within our midst.” This approach undermines their citizenship and heightens tensions within the community more so than would an approach that emphasizes their commonality with the larger society and their rights within civic space.

Résumé

À travers le Canada, les municipalités luttent pour diminuer la pauvreté du nombre grandissant de sans-abris et de mendiants dans les rues de la ville. Simultanément, les tensions entre les gens dans la rue et le public en général ont augmenté. Ce mémoire est une étude narrative du conflit actuel entre les mendiants et les gens de Calgary (Alberta) affectés par cette problématique. Cette étude présente les divers points de vue et voix des gens qui mendient, des sans-abris, du public en général, de la communauté du monde des affaires du centre-ville, des intervenants sociaux, des bureaucrates municipaux et des officiers de police. Cette recherche étudie de quelle manière les politiques sur l'identité et les idéologies sociales façonnent les affrontements directs dans les rues et influencent les débats concernant la politique publique à un niveau institutionnel. La relation entre les mendiants et le public est typiquement marquée par une distance sociale. L'approche courante envers les mendiants est de les traiter comme “des étrangers parmi nous.” Cette approche mine leur citoyenneté et accentue les tensions à l'intérieur de la communauté bien davantage qu'une approche qui soulignerait leurs qualités communes avec le reste de la société et leurs droits dans l'espace civique.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to extend my thanks to the members of the street community who opened up their lives and shared their insights with me. I still marvel at how generously you all gave of your time and your thoughts. Special thanks also goes to James and Jean-Marc. This work is a tribute to your willingness to share your experiences. I would also like to thank the social service providers, City bureaucrats, police, and members of the mainstream public, religious community and business community for sharing your thoughts and opinions. In particular, I would like to thank Carol at the City of Calgary for going beyond the call to help me in my research and for opening doors which might otherwise have remained closed to such a snoopy anthropologist.

I would like to thank my supervisor John Galaty for being a real source of encouragement and insight. I would also like to thank my committee members: Don Attwood for playing a great devil's advocate, Carmen Lambert for her sharp and concise suggestions, and Nadia Ferarra for her insight, enthusiasm and constant reminders that I am an integral part of the research I do.

Thanks goes to The Centre for Society, Technology and Development for making my fieldwork possible through their generous financial support. Also, I would like to thank McGill University for their financial support through the McGill Recruitment Scholarship. Additionally, I would like to thank Rose-Marie Stano for her ever-ingenuous navigational abilities and Cynthia Romanyk and Diane Mann for their assistance and support.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends in Calgary and Montreal for their friendship and moral support. In particular, I would like to thank my mother, for her ever-steady encouragement. Also, I would like to thank Reiko for inspiring me with her discipline and determination, and for being a true source of friendship and mirth. Finally, I would like to thank J.B. for his loving support and for reminding me that there are two sides to every argument with a balance to be struck somewhere in between.

This work is dedicated to the community of Calgary, and all of the good people who spoke frankly and honestly with me. As James, a panhandler and champion for the rights of street people told me, "I believe that if you're going to tell a story you tell is as it is, and if they can't accept it, change the channel. You don't have to sit there and listen to it if you don't want to hear it." I hope that I have done justice to the narratives my informants shared with me and that I have managed to "tell it as it is." Although the opinions shared may be difficult to hear, I hope that some will sit and listen.

Table of Contents

Abstract	
Résumé	
Acknowledgements	

PART I	1
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Mutually Strange: The Worlds of Street and Society	1
Inception: From Other to Stranger	6
Making the Strange Familiar: Notes from the Field	8
Chapter Two: Panhandling in a Community Context	24
Stigmatization and the Negotiation of Legitimacy	25
Homelessness and Panhandling as a Cultural and Moral Location	28
“Panhandlers” and “Panhandling”	33
Panhandlers in the Public Eye	40
Chapter Three: Panhandling as Identity and Experience	53
Panhandling as Street Work	53
Panhandling as Social Inclusion?	60
Panhandling as an Identity	66
The Ethics of Street People World	73
Helping and Protecting	73
Friendship and Trust	75
Failed Ethics and Security Risks	76
Options and Agency	78
“Heat-Draws” and “Aggressive” Panhandling	81
Honesty	83
Chapter Four: Presentation of Self in Everyday Street Life	86
The Dirtier the Better?	86
“Panhandling Repertoires”	91
Chapter Five: From Glances to Glares— Street Encounters	99
To See or Not to See	101
To Be or Not to Be	108
From “Non” to Worse	112

PART II	124
Chapter Six: The Rights of “Strangers”	124
In the Interests of Security and Peace	124
Universal Hospitality	126
Independence in Action	129
Social Services: An Overview	134
Substance Abuse Services	135
Low-cost Housing	137
Mental Health Services	139
A Street Critique	144
Chapter Seven: The Disorder of Panhandling	150
Aesthetic Disorder	151
Emotional Disorder	152
The Threat of Violent Disorder	155
Financial Disorder	159
Chapter Eight: Exploring Public Policy	163
Panhandlers as Misguided Wanderers:	164
Panhandlers as Social Adversaries	169
Anti-panhandling Legislation	170
The “Tools” of Enforcement	176
Surviving in the “Real World”	185
Panhandlers as Astute Entrepreneurs	191
Panhandlers as People	204
Chapter Nine: Conclusion	209
End Notes	220
References	228
Appendix A: Anti-Panhandling Bylaw	234
Appendix B: “Make Real Change” Handbill	236
Appendix C: Certificate of Ethical Acceptability	237

PART I

Chapter One: Introduction

I've been on the streets since I was 9; I'm 35 now. And I've said this in many meetings, there's like two worlds out there. You got society world and you got street people world. And society doesn't care enough for the street people. My biggest dream all my life is to see the two worlds reach out to each other and grab hold of each other's hands, and walk together like the good Lord wants instead of two different worlds.

James

Mutually Strange: The Worlds of Street and Society

In his book *Distant Suffering* Luc Boltanski (1999) explores the political and moral implications for those who observe images of suffering televised from distant lands but who, by virtue of the distance between themselves and those who suffer, are unable to act directly to affect the condition of the other. One need only turn on a World Vision fundraising special to view the wide eyed images of children living in poverty, and while watching, gauge one's own reactions to recognize the relevance of such a study. Closer to home, however, Boltanski takes pause to discuss how suffering is viewed when there is no distance, or obfuscating media, laying between the observer and the observed; where there is nothing to prevent the two from reaching out and grabbing hold of each others hands. He introduces the example of the Founding Fathers of the American Revolution, discussed by Hannah Arendt in *On Revolution* (1963), who he describes as "upset by slavery insofar as it conflicts with the demands of liberty but in whom one looks in vain for a word of pity for the condition of about one quarter of the American population existing under the yoke of necessity, absolute want and violence"(1999:5). In Boltanski's (1999:5) search for an explanation of this, he concludes,

In this, as in many other historical situations, the fortunate and the unfortunate can live in the same country without the former seeing the latter, either as the result of a kind of physical blindness arising from a subtle separation of the spaces within which they each move, that is of their social networks, or, and the two phenomenon are commonly found mixed together, due to a moral blindness, when the discrepancy between their respective conditions creates a

gulf that prevents the class of 'those who do not suffer' from forming an idea of the suffering of the unfortunate.

While I would hesitate to appropriate Boltanski's accusation of "blindness," he does highlight two key elements in the relationship between the "fortunate" and the "unfortunate": 1) the physical separation of their social networks, and 2) the gulf in comprehension created by the discrepancy between their respective conditions of living.¹ It is this physical and cognitive separation that Boltanski holds responsible for the failure of the "fortunate" to understand the suffering of the "unfortunate." A third element, proffered by Paul Farmer, goes even further in explaining this gulf as he reminds us "the poor are not only more likely to suffer, they are also more likely to have their suffering silenced"(1997:280). Within this context, despite common habitation in a singular city or state, physical and figurative distance breeds alienation and acts to transform those "unfortunate" people who live among us into strangers whose lives seem somehow unfamiliar.

These strangers, "strangers within our midst are, indeed, the strangest of all- not because they are so alien, but because they are so close to us" (Napier 1992:147). Even stranger, perhaps, because many of those who are today "unfortunate," living or working on the streets, were once our family members, neighbours, friends and coworkers. One man I spoke to panhandling on the street was living in a planter at the end of a parking lot, yet not long ago he lived in my quiet middle class neighbourhood and worked on the grounds crew at a private golf course, the same job which saw me through my first few years of university. At one moment in time, our lives were at least materially similar, yet today he is on the streets and I am not. When I first approached him on the street, he seemed unfamiliar to me, dirty and dishevelled, yet in speaking with him his strangeness was muted by all that we shared. As A. David Napier describes, these strangers "cannot be completely exotic, for, were they so, we could not recognize them" (1992:147). Just as we come to understand "normality" through understanding what it is to be "insane" (Napier 1992:150), so too do we come to understand who we are as individuals, as a community, through how we define those who are "strange." In that sense, as Napier argues, strangers act as "definers of culture"(1992:147). Through defining this "strangeness" and either celebrating, tolerating or condemning such difference, strangers

come to shape who we are as a culture. Perhaps even more so than “others,” the traditional subjects of anthropological investigation, the proximity of “strangers” challenges us to reflect on the peculiarity that people could be just like us, but not like us. As this thesis will demonstrate, this closeness may be at once a blessing, in signifying the potential for understanding, and a curse, in signifying the perceived threat posed by those who are simultaneously so much and so little like us.

Georg Simmel describes the stranger as one who is at once near and remote, an element of the group “whose membership within the group involves both being outside it and confronting it (1971:144). The problem posed by the unique position of strangers within the group is intensified when the physical distance between the two groups is collapsed while the social distance is maintained. Perhaps one of the best examples of such tension between the “fortunate” and “unfortunate” is found in the increasingly strained relationship between the general public and the “strangers” who ask for spare change on the street. Stephen Lankenau, in his work on panhandlers in Washington D.C., discusses how passers-by cast panhandlers in the role of “the stranger,” at once near and remote: “panhandlers resemble the stranger as they, as fellow human beings, stand in close proximity to pedestrians by virtue of asking for money along sidewalks or at subway stations, yet remain distant from these same individuals owing to certain stigmas” (1999a:185). As Lankenau describes, the stigmas of homelessness, poor hygiene, poor health, mental illness, race, gender, and presumed criminality all contribute to the perception of these panhandlers as socially remote, while their very presence on the street asking for change signals their physical nearness (1999a:185). Through such opposing tensions, strangers, as Simmel argues, remain outside the group while simultaneously confronting it.

Finding themselves without adequate housing or economic support, growing numbers of people have taken to dwelling in public spaces and pursuing economic activities on the streets. The result of this has been that the general public is no longer separated by a physical distance from those living in poverty and the two groups have increasingly have come into contact with one another. Yet, unlike the majority of very poor or homeless people who are observed by the general public while scavenging, “hanging around,” or sleeping in public spaces, panhandlers actually attempt to engage

passers-by in face-to-face communications. The result of these increased contacts does not appear to have been a collapse of the social distance between these two groups. Instead, the gap of incomprehension appears to have remained constant, if not grown, as the public struggles to conceive of how so many people could fall to such a position. These events have inspired a general discomfort, even a fear, of these multiplying strangers and an accompanying desire to pursue public policies that would re-establish the boundaries between the groups. While these policies range from providing services to assist these panhandlers in rejoining the mainstream world, to introducing legislation which restricts their use of public space and removes the panhandlers from public view, the desired result remains the same: to diffuse the tension posed by these strangers in our midst.

It is this polarized space of newly intensified interaction that forms the subject of this thesis. Specifically, this thesis will focus on the relationship between people who panhandle on the streets of Calgary, Alberta, and the general population of people who do not panhandle.² This thesis draws on interview data gathered from conversations with people who panhandle, members of the general public, downtown business owners and managers, social service providers, outreach workers, city employees, police services, members of the religious community, and a variety of people who do not panhandle but are homeless and/or pursue other income generating activities on the street (like street performing/busking or selling the local homeless newspaper *Street Talk*). Through the analysis of these interviews, this thesis will attempt to engage a cacophony of diverse voices in a unified discussion regarding the state of the community relationships engendered in both face-to-face street encounters and public policy debates.

Although the above discussion has characterized “the unfortunate” as strangers, the intention here is not to study these “strangers” in isolation. Instead, we must recognize that the status of stranger is, from the perspective of the “unfortunate,” likewise applicable to the “fortunate.” If I am a stranger to you, then you must be, in turn, a stranger to me. To be a stranger is to be mutually strange. However, the strangeness of the general public has seldom been a subject for study, while the lives of those living in poverty without housing or adequate income have long provided grist for the academic mill. In recognition of this critical observation I must agree with John Hutnyk in his claim

that, “the inquiry into narrative politics, and the exploration of narrative alternatives any such critique may generate, provide the context in which to begin to rescind the definitional prejudices and privileges of the production of meaning controlled in the hands, and texts, of a narrow minority” (1996:11). By focusing on both the action of face-to-face encounters and the narrative explanations given to these encounters by *all* of their participants, this thesis includes many “narrative alternatives” in order to capture the dialectic process by which meaning is negotiated, particularly in street interactions. The objective of this exercise will be to collapse the narrative distance between these two groups through presenting a dialogue which might occur, if the many parties involved could engage in frank discussion. For a brief moment, “society world” and “street people world” will be brought together by the academic contrivances of this thesis.

In such a highly charged emotional and moral arena, one must try to avoid an overly moralizing analysis. In reviewing the discourse surrounding both face-to-face street interactions and the legislative context within which such encounters occur, this thesis will identify how both panhandling and non-panhandling individuals come to see their actions, beliefs, and policies as uniquely legitimate. Despite holding conflicting versions of the others’ lives, each side largely preserves its own version of reality in the face of evidence to the contrary. This thesis will investigate how such competing versions are able to coexist. The concept of “legitimacy” will be explored insofar as it relates to legitimacy of the person, the legitimacy of ones actions, legitimacy as a citizen and possessor of rights, and, at the most basic level, legitimacy as a human being.

Drawing heavily on the theories of Erving Goffman (1959, 1963a, 1963b) and building on Stephen Lankenau’s (1999a and 1999b) symbolic interactionist study of panhandlers in Washington D.C., Part I of this thesis will explore how the narratives and activities of my informants are employed in the act of identity management. Specifically, in examining the narrative politics being played out in the relationship between panhandlers and members of the general public, Part I of this thesis will identify the discourses which dominate in their mutual negotiations of personal and social legitimacy. By focusing on face-to-face street encounters, this part will elucidate how social distance, social identity and (mis)perception contribute to the current conflict over panhandling in Calgary.

In Part II the institutional framework for these interactions will be explored. By reviewing the social services approach being taken in Calgary, this part will illustrate the service available and will explore how ideologies regarding panhandlers influence the provision of services. Also, this part will critique specific programs and legislative approaches taken in Calgary to deal with the conflict over panhandling.

This thesis argues that the current approach to the issue of panhandling treats panhandlers as “strangers within our midst.” By exacerbating the social distance between panhandlers and the public this approach undermines the panhandlers’ citizenship and heightens tensions within the community more so than would an approach that emphasizes their commonality with the larger society and their rights within civic space. This thesis contributes to the extant body of research on poverty, homelessness and marginalization by taking an inclusive approach to the study of community level conflict and by incorporating a broad range of narratives into a discussion of public policy regarding panhandling. Likewise, this thesis creates a cultural dialogue which transcends the social distance between the “fortunate” and the “unfortunate” and builds a bridge between the “two worlds.” In exploring this complex relationship, this thesis stands as a contemporary narrative of how one community is struggling to survive the challenge posed by “strangers within our midst.”

Inception: From Other to Stranger

My initial interest in doing research on panhandling sprang from a year I spent traveling through South Asia before entering graduate school. While people asking for spare change in the streets were not unfamiliar to me, nothing in my experience in Canada prepared me for the sad eyes of the children begging in India, for their plea, “one rupee, one rupee” followed by the heart rending pantomime of lifting imaginary rice to their empty mouths. I was unprepared for the lepers and their missing digits, for the people whose limbs were long ago whittled to near nothing by polio, for the hungry babies cradled in the bosoms of young mothers, and for the severity of the poverty of the average beggar. Few who visit places like India encounter such people without taking pause, and travelers’ discussions often grapple with the daily mental and physical assault of such encounters. People touching you, pulling on your clothes, standing in your path, obstructing your way with their ailing bodies- none of these actions are truly injurious,

and yet, for myself and others, they seemed to have had a disproportionate emotional impact.

At first, my interest was personal. What was the best way to deal with these daily requests? To give or not to give? What to give? How much to give? Was there really a begging Mafia? Were these children really maimed at birth to increase their profitability as beggars? And so what if they were? What then? Do I give to them and encourage more parents to maim their children, or not give to them and let them suffer for the actions of their parents? Much like Brackette F. Williams in her study of “begging” in New York and Tucson, rather than engaging in fieldwork to “discover the cultural sense of it all,” I was engaged in “homework” with the goal being to acquire “the right forms of information to select among deceptions” (1995:38). Being anthropologically minded, I have always been interested in the cultural sense of things, but in this particular instance, I needed specific information to determine what my own course of action should be.

I was not the only one asking these questions, as everyone around me seemed to be caught up in the same drama, and some of the responses were surprising. Some gave large sums of money anytime they were asked, reasoning, “what’s a hundred rupees to me? It’s just like buying a chocolate bar back home.” One woman had worked out an elaborate scale of bodily harm and what each ailment was worth: two missing legs gets 5 rupees, one missing leg gets three rupees, lepers get two rupees, people without any visible bodily distress get one rupee if they are lucky. Other people reasoned that these beggars were just too lazy to work and felt that they should not be given anything in the hopes that the lack of funds would inspire them to develop a work ethic. As I attempted to make up my own mind about the best action to take, I began to take an academic interest in this diversity of responses. Some struck me as bizarre. In Canada I have heard people time and time again say that the people panhandling should just get jobs, but somehow in the context of India the expectation that the people who beg could just as easily find a job seemed absurd. In truth, I had found that admonition questionable even when applied to the panhandlers in Canada. I began to realize that despite a rather radical change in context, many people seemed to have had enough room in their backpacks to bring along a whole set of biases regarding the lot of poor people, and the debate surrounding what to

do when encountering beggars provided a forum where many of those biases could be broadcast.

From there my interest evolved into a fascination with how such biases informed the choices people were making. My initial intention was to study this phenomenon, to study how travelers in India respond to people begging, and how ideas people carry with them regarding the nature of poverty in their own countries affect the choices people make while traveling. However, as I surveyed the existing literature in Canada, I discovered two things. First, there has been little written to date on how people in Canada, or the United States for that matter, perceive people who panhandle, or respond to their requests. Likewise, while there exists substantial research on people who are homeless, few studies actually differentiate people who panhandle as belonging to a different and possibly unique group within or outside the homeless street population.³ Second, despite the dearth of research regarding panhandlers and panhandling, there is considerable public interest in the politics of panhandling, as across Canada and the US municipalities have been struggling to deal with the growing number of people panhandling on their streets and with the multiplying complaints of citizens who are unhappy with their increasing pleas for spare change. Somehow, despite the absence of lepers and hoards of young street urchins, for many people in Canada the issue of panhandling has taken on a similar, if somewhat more subdued, sense of urgency. Clearly, before one can even begin to understand how travelers react to beggars in far away lands, one must comprehend how street people at home are perceived and treated. This thesis aims to address this gap in the literature regarding the relationship between the general public and panhandlers in Canada, thus shifting the focus from travelers among Indian beggars, or “strangers” among “others,” to Canadian pedestrians among Canadian panhandlers, or “strangers” among “us.”

Making the Strange Familiar: Notes from the Field

This shift in focus from “other” to “stranger” is a significant one as anthropologists have traditionally studied people who belong to cultures other than our own, while this study involves working within my own culture. In *Braving the Street: The Anthropology of Homelessness* (1999), Irene Glasser and Rae Bridgman present a comprehensive overview of the significant contributions anthropologists have made, both

“at home” and abroad, in the study of homelessness.⁴ Instead of reiterating their survey here, I wish to highlight their discussion of the methodological approach used in anthropology. Glasser and Bridgman argue that through conducting extended fieldwork, taking a holistic approach, and utilizing cross-cultural perspectives, anthropologists are able to create rich ethnographic accounts of social and cultural practices (1999:6). Their focus on understanding the “native” or emic point of view enables anthropologists to explore cultural behaviours and actions in a comprehensive way by taking seriously the meanings and interpretations different members of the society assign to these behaviours and actions (1999:6). By approaching the analysis of these accounts through a philosophy of cultural relativism, anthropologists seek to comprehend how those meanings and interpretations make sense within the culture, while they attempt to avoid passing moral judgments regarding their worth or validity (1999:6). The result of this methodological and interpretive process is a “thick description” (Ryle 1971 and Geertz 1973), or a rich narrative, which describes the complex interrelationships, events and meanings that form the fabric of life in a society.

As Glasser and Bridgeman demonstrate, anthropological studies provide a unique perspective on homeless issues and complement well the work done in other disciplines such as sociology, psychology and public health (1999:7). Although this thesis is not specifically a study of homelessness, by exploring the relationship between panhandlers and members of the wider community, the goal of this thesis is to provide a holistic account of the meanings and interpretations different people in Calgary attach to the experiences and interactions they have had in the course of panhandling, being panhandled, providing social services to panhandlers, attempting to regulate the activities of panhandlers or trying to run businesses in close proximity to people panhandling. By including the perspectives of many different stakeholders in this relationship, this thesis makes explicit the way the meanings and interpretations of different people act to reinforce or contradict one another. These narratives, and their analysis, appear herein as a “thick description” of the complex relationship between panhandlers and the wider community. The following section will describe the specific methodologies I employed in the process of creating this “thick” ethnographic account.

In preparing for my fieldwork in Calgary, I first carried out a small pilot project in which I interviewed four panhandlers and four pedestrians in Montreal. This pilot study greatly assisted in the process of refining a research methodology and in defining what issues in the relationship between panhandlers and pedestrians needed further exploration. As my fieldwork interest is primarily in looking at the current conflict over panhandling in Canada, I choose my hometown, Calgary, Alberta, as a research site because the city has recently been involved in several efforts to address the conflict over panhandling in the community.⁵

In the summer of 1994, the City of Calgary (1996) Social Services Department conducted a field study called *Panhandlers and Panhandling Activity (1994)* in order to explore the prevalence and nature of panhandling in Calgary, to provide a profile of people panhandling and to assess the relevance and suitability of programs aimed at panhandlers. Following this report, in May of 1996 the Calgary Downtown Association in co-operation with Calgary Urban Project Society (CUPS), EXIT Community Outreach and the City's Social and Community Development Department hired a panhandling outreach worker to operate in the downtown core during the spring and summer months. This program, which is still in place, has focused on reducing panhandling activity, decreasing the public perception of panhandling as a major downtown issue, and working to identify employment opportunities for panhandlers (White 1996:1). In March of 1999, the City of Calgary passed a bylaw (see Appendix A) to regulate the activity of panhandling throughout the city and to replace sections of previous bylaws that had restricted panhandling activities on selected pedestrian malls. Following the introduction of this new bylaw, and in conjunction with their panhandler outreach program, the Downtown Business Association and CUPS introduced an education campaign called "Make Real Change with your Spare Change" which encouraged citizens to donate money to local service organizations rather than to panhandlers (see Appendix B). This program also involved the panhandling outreach worker acting as a liaison with both the local business community and the general public to help them deal with problems encountered in relation to people panhandling. And finally, during my fieldwork period, the City of Calgary was considering a proposal to introduce a new bylaw requiring panhandlers to wear mandatory picture ID tags while engaging in panhandling activities.

This proposal proved to be quite controversial, and, hence, there was much media coverage and public discussion surrounding the issue of panhandling. While all of these municipal responses to the "problem" of panhandling will be discussed in further chapters, I introduce them here to demonstrate that the community of Calgary has been heavily involved in efforts to deal with what they perceive as a pressing problem in the downtown core. As a fieldwork site, Calgary provided an ideal setting to explore the conflict over panhandling at a time when the issue seemed salient to everyone from average pedestrians, to city bureaucrats to panhandlers themselves.

As panhandlers in Calgary tend to frequent the downtown core, and as non-panhandling people are most likely to encounter panhandlers downtown, the site of field research was restricted to the downtown core and all interviewees lived in, worked in or frequented the downtown core. The fieldwork period in January-April 2001 lasted approximately three and a half months, over which I interviewed seventy-two people in meetings which ranged from short informal discussions, to informal afternoons spent chatting with panhandlers in action, to formal interviews which lasted roughly an hour. These interviews were divided according to the following approximate breakdown: panhandlers (twenty one, repeated contacts with six), vendors from the *Street Talk* newspaper initiative which is sold by homeless people and people in transition from homelessness (five, repeated contacts with one), street performers/ buskers (four), other homeless people who are not engaged in panhandling (three, repeated contacts with one), business owners/managers/ representatives of the downtown business association (eight), municipal social service providers/ bylaw services (four, repeated contacts with one), other social service providers (seven), police services (three), anti-poverty activists (two), members of the religious community (one), and "average" pedestrians (fourteen). Based on this broad cross section of interviewees, I gathered a wide variety of perceptions and representations from people with differing levels of contact and different stakes in the negotiated relationship between panhandlers and non-panhandling people.

Research participants were chosen using three basic techniques. First, most of the participants who were engaged in activities on the street (panhandlers, buskers, vendors, and other homeless people) were approached on the street and invited to participate in my research. In this sample I systematically included a variety of people based on age, gender,

ethnicity, mental and physical disability or illness and choice of panhandling location. Second, I used institutional web pages and other published materials to find names, numbers and e-mail addresses for key members of the business community and social service providers (e.g. working in health, mental health, outreach, the Aboriginal community and homeless shelters/agencies) whom I wished to contact. Thirdly, after I had made "cold" contacts with and interviewed the non-street participants, I used a "snowball" sampling method wherein I asked the interviewees to give me the names and contact information of other potential interviewees. At this point, I also arranged for permission to use their names in my initial contacts with these potential interviewees. Likewise, when looking for interviewees from the general public I used a "snowball" sampling method whereby I asked friends and acquaintances if they knew anyone who might be interested in speaking with me. After an interview with someone whom I had been referred to this way, I would, in turn, ask him or her if they knew anyone who might be interested in being interviewed. During this snowball phase, I attempted to gather contacts with potential interviewees of a wide variety of ages and social positions within the community. The end result of using this "snowball" method to contact members of the general public is a set of data which is slightly biased in favour of educated middle class individuals of varying ages, though some upper and "working" class individuals were included.

This snowball technique is not ideal in the sense that it inevitably leads the researcher through a chain of people connected with one another and who, in all likelihood, share certain elements of their worldview. As the starting points for many of these contacts were individuals whom I know personally, it stands to reason that this sample of the general public may be biased towards people who hold similar views to those I hold. However, based on the interview data collected it appears that, despite this sampling bias, the responses gathered vary substantially in content and perspective. While this thesis will attempt to bring these variations to light, it must be remembered that given the small sample size and the biases inherent in the sampling techniques used, the results of this research process are not statistically representative of the general population. Instead, these narratives are stories told to me, which I have woven together to give what I believe is a balanced and accurate picture. Although this study may not be definitive, its dominant themes and critical pauses are a representation of views and voices which are important to discussions of both community relations and public policy.

As the "street" participants in this research were approached on the street during winter and early spring from January-April 2001, and as there was a transit strike during most of that period which halted all public transit into the downtown core, I suspect that certain groups are over-represented/ underrepresented in this research. First of all, many people who panhandle are highly mobile and move to places with more temperate climates during the winter months, so these "transient" panhandlers were less likely to be present in Calgary during my fieldwork period and are almost certainly underrepresented. Similarly, due to the transit strike, both transient individuals and people who live outside of the downtown core are also likely to be underrepresented. This is particularly important because, without public transit, individuals who may have housing outside of the downtown core and who normally travel downtown to panhandle would have been unable to do so during those months. Therefore, the number of housed individuals who panhandle may also be underrepresented in this work. I would expect that this factor may account for the relative absence of youths downtown during my fieldwork, and, hence, their underrepresentation in my research. Despite my efforts to systematically include a variety of panhandlers in my sample, the number of middle-aged male homeless panhandlers who have been resident in Calgary on a mid-to-long term basis is likely over-represented in this research. Keeping these biases in mind, the views presented herein should not be taken as representative of those of the general street population. However, like the narratives of the non-panhandling public, the dominant themes and critical pauses in the discourse of the street participants are a representation of views and voices which are equally as important to discussions of community relations and public policy.

The final group I made contact with were the people involved at a municipal level in setting public policy and developing legislation to regulate panhandling in the community. In order to include the views of these municipal stakeholders, I attended and tape-recorded two public City Committee/Council meetings regarding the proposal to introduce ID tags for all people who panhandle. I also attended one closed meeting of the City committee involved in setting municipal policy regarding panhandling in the community. Hand-written notes were taken at this meeting. Additionally, I met with several members of this committee for more formal interviews.

Interviews with all participants were semi-structured using several different sets of open-ended interview questions, directed specifically at the different categories of interviewees. In the interests of preserving an informal atmosphere, and in accordance with the premise that the absence of structured questions provokes people to discuss the issues most salient to them, the interviews were permitted to meander on a semi-natural conversational course. In the interests of preserving the spoken richness of the original dialogue, whenever possible interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed. However, in order to preserve the informality of encounters on the street and to allay the suspicions of my informants, most of my interviews with the “street people” (panhandlers, buskers, vendors, other homeless individuals) were not tape-recorded. The dialogue from these interviews was recorded immediately following the interview in an attempt to preserve the narrative as exactly as possible. During interviews with the non-street participants, I referred infrequently to a sheet of interview questions, while I purposely kept the interviews with “street people” even more casual by memorizing the questions I wished to ask them and working them casually into conversation. This approach seemed to put both groups at ease. For example, two young panhandlers, Lesley and Jill commented, “That wasn’t at all what I expected. I thought you’d pull out a list of questions like ‘what did you think of the ID?’” “Yeah, that was more like a conversation.” Overall, this approach yielded a data set rich in detail and insight which broadly covers many areas of interest yet lacks in absolute consistency between interviews, as, inevitably, each interview took its own course.

In further efforts to preserve the informality of the interviews, the “street people” were not asked to fill out consent forms. Instead, I verbally explained the nature of my research and obtained verbal consent before an interview started. As people on the street were sometimes suspicious of my intentions (they thought I was a police officer, or that I was working for the city) and were often reluctant to reveal their given names (many use pseudonyms even amongst other street people), asking people to sign consent forms would have posed a major methodological problem. For this reason, they were not expected to provide written consent. However, all non-street interviewees were required to sign informed consent forms. All participants in this research, even those who go by “street names,” have been assigned pseudonyms in an effort to preserve their anonymity.

One problem in approaching panhandlers on the street was that inevitably I was interrupting their income-earning activities. Ethical guidelines demand that informants not be harmed in the course of participating in the research. Therefore I attempted to compensate for their loss of income by paying the informants a small sum of money: from \$1 to \$10 and occasionally a cup of coffee depending on the length and location of the interview. In order to avoid people taking part in the interview simply because they would be remunerated, I usually obtained their consent to be interviewed before I told them that I would be able to pay them a little something for their time. The negotiation of the payment proved to be an interesting process, as some informants were eager to get the money, while others were truly reluctant to take it. In the former cases, sometimes halfway through the interview the individual would ask to have the money, then, once it had been given, they would often continue to talk. In the latter cases, the people who were reluctant to take the payment expressed appreciation for it, but they wanted me to know that it really was not necessary as they were just happy to have someone to talk to who was interested in their lives. In these cases, the introduction of a payment into what felt like an informal conversation among acquaintances seemed to offend the panhandlers sensibilities. I found myself explaining that this was not really my *own* money that I was giving them, but instead, I was giving them money my university had provided me with to compensate them for whatever time they lost panhandling. Although still reluctant, nobody absolutely refused to take the money, but several did assure me that I could come back to speak with them anytime as they did not expect any payment.

Finally, a major part of my fieldwork was based on observation/ participant observation. In an effort to gain personal experience and a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse population of homeless people in the city, I stayed one night in a local homeless shelter. As the women's portion of the shelter was not full that night my presence was not detrimental in the sense that no one was turned away due to my taking up a bed. In order to be respectful to the residents, who have no privacy and no opportunity to close the doors of their homes to the intrusions of the outside world, I did not treat my shelter stay as fieldwork per se. I approached it more as "a day in the life" so that I could internalize what it might feel like for a person to spend a day "on the street." In addition to staying in the shelter, I also panhandled for an afternoon and evening.

Several of my street informants told me that I could never understand their lives unless I was to experience for myself “what it’s like out there.” I took their words seriously and, although I had some reservations about the ethics of posing as a street person, I also understood their belief that the only way I could truly understand was to feel the stigma attached to walking in their shoes. I must admit that such an experiment can yield only a perverted sense of what it is like to be a street person, as by virtue of not really being homeless, of not really being in need, of being able to go home at any time, I did not truly experience street life. Instead, I experienced what it is like for one of “us” to pretend to be one of “them.”

These efforts did, however, make me more aware of the embodied experience of inhabiting those spaces under the assumed identities of a person in the roles of “homeless” and “panhandler.” In the shelter, I was aware that people may not appreciate the intrusion of someone who was not truly homeless into their living space, so to avoid invading their privacy, I chose to refrain from speaking with people, apart from polite responses to questions asked of me. Also, I chose to treat whatever dialogue I could not help but overhear as inadmissible information. I was not there to study the experiences of other people staying in the shelter, and instead concentrated only on my own experience. In light of this personal experience I feel I gained a better understanding of the narratives of my informants regarding their experiences in local shelters.

Likewise, in my experience panhandling, I did not disclose to the public that I was not in fact a true panhandler. Before I tried panhandling I was wracked with worry that members of the public would question me by asking “What are *you* doing panhandling?” and I decided that I would have to explain that I was a student doing research. However, this concern proved to be laughable as people hardly even looked at me, let alone stopped to inquire about my activities. I did, however, disclose to the other street people I encountered that day that I was a student doing research. I chose my panhandling site strategically to be near Jean-Marc’s panhandling spot as we had become friends over the months I spent doing fieldwork. I chose this spot partly because I wanted to avoid territorial disputes with panhandlers that I did not already know and partly because I knew that the police were not likely to approach me in that particular spot as it is slightly outside of the central shopping area but still has substantial foot traffic. This location also

afforded me an opportunity to get advice and support from Jean-Marc and his friends and to listen to their impressions of my attempt to panhandle. In return, Jean-Marc was given the \$6.75 that I made while sitting on my own, in addition to the \$5.50 we made while sitting together. In total, for five hours of panhandling, approximately three of which I spent sitting on my own while he took a break, we made only \$12.25.

The day I tried to panhandle I dressed purposefully in old clothes dug from the bowels of my closet. I wore an old pair of jeans, stained with paint, dirt and oil, and an old hoodie over the top of my favourite shirt, a long sleeved cotton pullover with cuffs so frayed they were practically no longer attached to the sleeves. I put on some old sneakers with holes where the big toe fits and wore a beat-up old baseball cap, which doubled as change receptacle. I went out to the garden behind my house and rolled in the dirt, but it was dry and barely stuck at all. The effect was hardly one of impoverishment, but it was the best I could do. I found myself strangely trying to display the cuffs of my shirt, pulling them out beyond the slightly too short sleeves of the hoodie, unravelling the frayed threads for a more bedraggled effect. I felt unconvincing, stuck in a peculiar category, not quite a street kid, but not quite the profile of the older woman on the streets. The consensus among my older friends on the street was that I really was not dirty enough. Yet, in looking around, the street kids who were panhandling were not very dirty either. Based on a previous experience, I hoped that my appearance was sufficiently casual to warrant at least some donations.

This previous experience occurred one day as I sat out on the sidewalk chatting with Jean-Marc, wearing my everyday clothes: hiking boots, jeans, a t-shirt and a fake North Face jacket I acquired during my travels in China. A woman stopped in front of us to rummage through her purse and as she looked in her purse Jean-Marc made remarks about the weather, as I sat silently observing. The woman then bent down and purposefully placed a five-dollar bill in my hand, and one in Jean-Marc's hand. Somewhat stunned I thanked her, and as she walked away Jean-Marc and I looked at each other and started to laugh. As I stared at the money in my hand I wondered how she had made such a mistake. Yet, even other street people sometimes mistakenly thought that I was a new street person. From these observations it appears that although my general appearance does not normally lead people to assume that I am a "street person," my rare

association with people on the street was enough to suggest that I might, in fact, be a street person. That I was speaking to and sitting with street people in various street locations, while members of the mainstream public seldom engage in either of those activities, led both street people and the general public to conclude that I was a street person. Despite one shelter worker's warning that, as a "soft woman," untouched by the wear and tear of the streets, people would certainly recognize that I was not homeless, it appears that, more than my appearance, the context of my interactions with people influenced their perception that I was part of the street community. Interestingly, this example could also be taken as an illustration of the degree of social isolation experienced by people on the street. Rather than drawing what might seem an obvious conclusion (based on my hygiene, attire, and "softness"); that I was a member of the general public chatting with some street people, both pedestrians and street people concluded that I must be a street person myself.

However, it could also be that all of the parties who mistook me for a street person were wise enough to know that one does not need to look poor to be homeless. Over the several months I spent roaming through the downtown core I discovered many people, both homeless and housed, who perpetually inhabit the public space downtown. At first glance these people appeared to be workers out on breaks, or people from the suburbs out for an afternoon at the mall, but, even after seeing the same faces day after day, I was greatly surprised to arrive at the soup kitchen and the shelter to see those same faces. As I discovered, people who are homeless do not necessarily fit the stereotypical image of homelessness and many of them look like regular people, sporting no apparent visual signs of poverty or disadvantage. The night I stayed at the shelter, after a day spent trying to "look poor" while I was panhandling, I suddenly felt very awkward as I looked at the people around me and noticed how well dressed they were, how clean and tidy they managed to keep themselves despite living in the shelter. I found myself stuffing the frayed cuffs of my sleeves back under my sweatshirt and feeling slightly ashamed that I had so badly attempted to portray what was really a caricature of poverty. More than anything else, this fieldwork experience led me to truly question my own biases and the stereotypes contained in our cultural conceptions of poverty and homelessness.

The final element of participant observation in the field was to observe actual street interaction between panhandlers and non-panhandlers. Both qualitative and quantitative observations were made regarding how the two groups interact: how they approach each other, what body language they use, what kind of eye contact they make (or not), what they say to one another, and what, if anything, is exchanged. I used two basic methods to carry out these observations. Firstly, I sat out on the street in areas frequented by panhandlers and pedestrians and observed their interactions. This proved to be a good way to observe both the approaches taken by the panhandlers and the responses given by the pedestrians. Also, sitting out on the street observing was a good way to meet the population of predominantly Aboriginal people who panhandle by roving around through the streets asking for people to "help them out." During my street observations I was often approached by people who sat down beside me and proceeded to initiate conversations with me, from which point I was able to introduce myself, explain my research, and turn the conversation into an short interview. This was especially effective as this particular population of roving panhandlers was often, though not always, intoxicated and under normal circumstances I may not have recognized them as people panhandling (as they were highly mobile) or attempted to approach them due to their apparent intoxication.

Secondly, I spent many days just "hanging out" on the street with Jean-Marc, who became somewhat of a "key informant," and, through hanging out, meeting his friends and observing their interactions with the public I began to get a feel for the rhythms of street life. Jean-Marc was so central to my research process that once, when asked by one of his friends what "anthropology" was, Jean-Marc replied for me "it's the study of Jean-Marc!" Sitting out on the sidewalk while panning, many of Jean-Marc's friends would pass by with greetings and gentle taunts. Some would suggest pooling their money to get a beer, which one of them would go pick up at the liquor store down the street, then we would go up to the parking lot to take a break. These friends varied from long time buddies to short term acquaintances. Some of them Jean-Marc only knew by face and was unable to tell me their names. Many of them were Aboriginal while some were Euro-Canadian. Jean-Marc himself is part Aboriginal. Although this methodology may have skewed my view of the panhandling population by over-representing the type of people Jean-Marc had befriended (middle aged men who formerly worked doing manual labour/construction and who are

regular drinkers), it also enabled me to observe conversations in situ among the group of friends and to be included in a more intimate, less guarded, exchange of ideas regarding life on the streets. Thus, through spending time on the streets and meeting with people informally, I began to broaden my awareness of the lifestyle and perspective of some of those who spend their days on the streets.

My own negotiation of identity in this group is of interest as it enabled me to witness the way social ties are forged and stigmas are negotiated. For example, one day began with me, a twenty-five year old middle class Euro-Canadian woman wearing casual everyday clothing, arriving to talk to Jean-Marc who was sitting by himself on the sidewalk panhandling. Having met this way many times and spent many hours talking, Jean-Marc and I considered each other to be friends. When Nick, an Aboriginal panhandler, arrived it was the first time I had met him, although I had seen him earlier that day. When Nick and Jean-Marc decided to go share a beer, Nick was concerned about including me, "If you're too scared to come up to the parking lot with us then we can drink down here," to which I replied that Jean-Marc and I were friends and that I was not scared at all. When I told Nick that I was doing research he immediately began to tell me what he thought about the situation in Calgary. Later, when Frank, another Aboriginal panhandler, arrived in the parking lot and Jean-Marc introduced me by saying, "This is the one I told you about," Frank replied by singing gleefully, "She's one of us, she's one of us, a new street person." Jean-Marc quickly corrected him by saying, "No, she's the anthropologist." Although Frank immediately began telling me about his involvement with the City in looking at the panhandling issue, his attitude towards me changed to one of suspicion. In the space of thirty seconds I had gone from being embraced as a fellow street person, "one of us," to being questioned aggressively about my intentions and who had put me up to doing the research. When Ed, a Euro-Canadian panhandler, arrived later on, he commented that he had seen me around a lot lately, and he asked me if I was new on the streets. When I explained that I was a student doing research it jogged his memory and he recalled that a few weeks before I had talked to him on the street and narrowly escaped getting beat up by his "old lady" who was angry that he was talking to me when he had made her sit on the other side of the street to panhandle. Overall, the awareness that I was not a street person, but was a student interested in hearing what people on the street had

to say resulted in a reserved kind of acceptance. Had several people not mistaken me for a fellow street person, I might never have noticed the difference between the warm greeting I received when they thought I was a street person, and the friendly but more muted acceptance I received as a student.

That is, in all cases but one. Frank, the very individual who had embraced me as “one of us,” after a few beers, got increasingly agitated with me, stating, “The only way you’re going to know what it’s like is if you live it.” In aid of this he sent me to the corner to ask for cigarettes, so that I could experience first hand how hard it is to get people’s attention. Even after I got him a cigarette he was not happy. Nothing I said seemed to alter his suspicions of me, and in fact, he became more and more confrontational. He demanded of me, “Are you conning us or are you legit?” and, when I explained that I was not conning them and that I was legit, he asked again who I was doing this research for, convinced that someone else had put me up to it. Finally, as I was about to leave, I helped him to stand up from the sidewalk and as he wobbled to regain his balance he exclaimed, “You just touched a homeless person!” This simple statement illustrates well the dialectic tension between us, at once brought close through this touch and his earnest desire to share with me “what it’s like,” yet simultaneously distant, separated by the sense of stigma he bares and the resentment attached to it. It was as if by touching him, as a “homeless person,” I had transgressed some kind of barrier that had separated us from the moment he discovered that I was not a street person. Yet, even in that moment, it was not as if the barrier had disappeared. Rather, I had reached across it and momentarily come into contact with him, which he seemed to revel in, as if I had unwittingly infected myself with something he assumed I would find unpleasant. This reaction, which so aptly illustrated Frank’s feelings of alienation, also carried a certain sense of satisfaction, perhaps in the recognition that this barrier had been, and could be, breached.

After a fieldwork experience filled with friendliness and camaraderie, Frank’s words made me realize fully my peculiar status. While I had been embraced, befriended, and well liked, I was not to be “one of us.” I was, at least for Frank, to remain one of “them.” Wanting something, conning them, illegitimate in my interests, unsatisfactorily involving myself in lives that I could never hope to understand by virtue of never having lived them. And I must concede that Frank was correct. I am very much a part of the

"them." When I walk down the street and see people panhandling up ahead, my stomach tightens just a little. When I began this research I stood covertly watching Dan panhandle for a *very* long time before I got up enough nerve to approach him. The first time I saw James I was downright apprehensive of him standing there with his hair a mass of tangles bursting from beneath his baseball cap with spit flying excitedly from his grinning mouth as he spoke. In those moments of nervousness before I meet someone new on the street I am always reminded of the feeling's source, of the distance between us, of my place firmly entrenched among the "them." And yet, each time I approach someone and I begin speaking with him or her I am reminded of how close we truly are.

It is a strange thing in this world of pretence and distance to meet a stranger on the street and to find yourself carried away in conversation. It is even stranger to find that conversation winding its way through trials and sad memories. I have never met people in the "mainstream" world who so readily divulged intimate details of their lives to so utter a stranger. Sometimes the "stranger" is an ideal confessional (Simmel 1971:145), separated sufficiently from the life of the teller to give the exchange an air of anonymity. During several interviews tears were shed by the people I spoke to. The pain of loss surfaced in telling of children and wives they are no longer in contact with, friends and family who have died, and the mistakes they have made in life. Although I was a stranger, and, alas, one of "them," I feel that, for whatever reason, the people I spoke to opened themselves up in ways I never expected. The general consensus was that I was to be trusted. Apart from a few suspicious inquiries as to whether I was a "cop," most of the people I spoke to immediately accepted my intentions and no one I approached ever declined to speak to me or to be interviewed. According to Dan, he was able to tell me certain things, "Because I know you won't tell anyone. I can tell you're a good person. I can see it in your eyes. I'm an intelligent guy. I can tell good people from bad ones." Several other people I spoke to reiterated this observation. In a world where one's survival depends on how well you are able to distinguish threats, one's gut feelings about the person take on a whole new importance. Luckily, my youthful appearance, easy smile, joking manner, and perhaps even my gender, appears to have put people at ease. In the face of the distance between us, my willingness to listen and their willingness to speak was enough to bring

us closer to one another and to remind us that the barrier between us is preserved only with our consent.

Taken all together, this research methodology and the personal position I negotiated in the street community provided me with a good structure for gathering the perceptions and concerns of both panhandlers and other city residents resulting from their face-to-face interactions. The following presentation of these narratives must be seen within the methodological context discussed above. These methods, and my own ability to mediate between “the field” and its textualization, are the lenses through which the voices of all my informants are magnified. The result is, like life, an imperfect dialogue detailing a cacophony of competing viewpoints.

Chapter Two: Panhandling in a Community Context

Studies of homelessness and panhandling typically focus on studying homeless people or panhandlers, rather than focusing on the relationship between members of these groups and the wider community. Stephen Lankenau (1999a and 1999b), who carried out a symbolic interactionist study of panhandlers in Washington D.C., is an exception to this trend. In his study, he shifts the focus to how panhandlers interact with the wider public in street interactions. However, while his study includes observations of street interactions and narrative accounts given by panhandlers describing these interactions, he does not include narrative accounts given by members of the wider community. Likewise, while Ian Macintosh and Angus Erskine (1999) present narrative accounts of panhandling encounters from the perspective of department store staff in Edinburgh Scotland, they do not present narrative accounts given by panhandlers. This thesis seeks to bring together the narrative accounts of panhandlers, pedestrians and other stakeholders (social service providers, business managers/owners, police, etc.) in order to provide a holistic view of the complex relationship which exists between all of the community members involved.

The first step of this exploration will be to discuss the nature of face-to-face interaction at a theoretical level by reviewing Erving Goffman's (1959 and 1963a) theories of symbolic interaction and social stigma. In this chapter, particular attention will be paid to how stigmatizing labels place people in moral locations and influence how they are perceived in the community. Rather than taking the definition of panhandling for granted, this chapter will define panhandling from the perspective of members of the non-panhandling community, and will discuss which street level economic activities are considered to be panhandling. Also, this chapter will explore how the non-panhandling public perceives panhandlers and characterizes them according to these perceptions. This discussion will be placed in the context of ideologies regarding "work" and "choice" and will explore the role these ideologies play in determining the legitimacy of both the act of panhandling and the people who panhandle. Thus, this chapter will focus on understanding panhandling from the perspective of members of the non-panhandling public, while later chapters will shift this focus to the perspectives of the panhandlers themselves.

Stigmatization and the Negotiation of Legitimacy

According to Erving Goffman, any instance of face-to-face interaction carries with it a distinctive moral character which is governed by two basic principles: 1) “that any individual who possesses certain social characteristics has a moral right to expect that others will value and treat him in an appropriate way” and 2) “that an individual who implicitly or explicitly signifies that he has certain social characteristics ought in fact to be what he claims he is” (1959:13). The problem being, of course, that at any moment, “events may occur within the interaction which contradict, discredit, or otherwise throw doubt upon this projection” (1959:12). When this happens, not only will the claim that a person is who he/she says he/she is be brought into question, but their “moral right” to expect certain treatment may also be challenged.

Goffman argues that people seek to present themselves using two basic methods: 1) verbal assertions (which are presumed to be easily manipulated), and 2) expressive behaviours like facial expressions and body language (which are presumed to be less easily controlled) (1959:7). As the inclination of individuals will typically be to present themselves in a favourable light, observers are likely to be attentive to what they witness, watching in particular for inconsistencies. Goffman claims that observers will “use what are considered to be the ungovernable aspects of his expressive behaviour as a check upon the validity of what is conveyed by the governable aspects” (1959:7). Yet, as the actor is likely to realize that these “ungovernable” aspects are being scrutinized, Goffman stresses that they may try to “exploit this very possibility” through manipulating this expressive behaviour, a move which, if observers are not already suspicious, could prove highly successful (1959:7-8). The end result of this process is a communicative symmetry that Goffman refers to as an “information game- a potentially infinite cycle of concealment, discovery, false revelation, and rediscovery” (1959:8). Of course, this process is highly complex, as all parties in a face-to-face interaction are at once “actors” and observers, each negotiating their own personal claims to legitimacy while scrutinizing the claims of the “other.”

This process is further complicated when one of the parties in the interaction is, regardless of their verbal and expressive behaviour, marked by what Goffman refers to as “stigma.” Goffman describes a person who is stigmatized as one who is “disqualified

from full social acceptance” (1963a:preface). Based on various imperfections, ranging from “physical deformities,” “blemishes of individual character,” and the “tribal stigma of race, nation and religion,” individuals are, or may be, discredited (1963a:4). However, unlike those who are mildly discredited through events which draw their presentation of self into question, those with a stigma are “deeply” discredited. In the most socially violent sense, Goffman claims, “we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human” (1963a:5). Thus, when interacting with a stigmatized individual, not only do we question the validity of the stigmatized individual’s presentation of self, but also, in a sense, we question their very humanity.

Although Goffman recognizes that stigmatized individuals often have a sense of being a “‘normal person’, a human being like anyone else” (1963a:7), he argues that the central feature of their lives is that, “those who have dealings with him fail to accord him the respect and regard which the uncontaminated aspects of his social identity have led him to anticipate extending, and have led him to anticipate receiving; he echoes this denial by finding that some of his own attributes warrant it” (1963a:8-9). According to this view, a stigmatized person’s expectations of esteem are tempered by the stigmatizing process through which his or her social identity is forged. Yet, there is a constant dissonance between those elements of identity which are stigmatizing, and those which are described as “uncontaminated.” While the individual may admit that elements of her identity warrant a stigmatized status, other elements lead her to feel like a normal person. The result, as I will demonstrate through my later discussion of people who panhandle, is a distinct tension between believing oneself to be a “normal person” and acknowledging that you do have certain qualities that often lead the general public to fail to accord you the respect due a “normal person.” This tension leads panhandling individuals to re-negotiate the legitimacy of who they are, or claim to be, and of how they approach the world through their choice of actions. In response, the general public must re-negotiate their position vis-à-vis the panhandlers by seeking to legitimate their perceptions of the people who panhandle, their actions towards them, and their inclusion/exclusion from the domain of social participation. This reflexive process of negotiating legitimacy is integral to understanding the social dynamics of the relationship between panhandlers and the public.

As this process is, in this instance, one that is often emotionally charged and laden with moral implications, the concept of “legitimacy” has been carefully chosen in an effort to avoid heavily moralizing debates regarding what is “right.” In this thesis, the concept of “legitimacy” will be used as a hedge on what is “right” or what is “moral,” closer in essence to what accords with a minimum level of acceptability. According to the *Nelson Canadian Dictionary* to be “legitimate” means 1) being in compliance with the law; lawful, 2) being in accordance with established or accepted patterns and standards, 3) based on logical reasoning; reasonable, and 4) authentic; genuine. It is in recognition of all of these layers of meaning that the term legitimate is used here. When someone works to demonstrate their legitimacy, they work to prove that they are genuine or authentic by acting in ways that, if others were to know their motivations, would appear reasonable, in accordance with established patterns and standards, and also within the margins of legality. In contrast, those who are deemed to be illegitimate are those who fail to demonstrate this authenticity by behaving in ways deemed unreasonable, counter to established patterns and standards, and, at the very least, bordering on illegality. Clearly, the process of negotiating such legitimacy is one which is complex, flexible, and highly subjective.

For example, imagine a situation in which a pedestrian is passing by someone panhandling and, when the panhandler asks the pedestrian for spare change, the pedestrian pretends that he or she did not see or hear the panhandler and proceeds down the street. Now, if one were to question the pedestrian as to whether her actions were “right” or “moral,” she might reply that she does not believe it is “right” or “moral” to ignore people in need as one *should* practice charitable giving. However, she may argue that her actions were legitimate because she doubted the authenticity of the panhandler’s claim to be in need, there is an established standard of behaviour wherein pedestrians routinely ignore panhandlers, she was in a hurry and had no spare change and therefore had a reasonable motivation for not giving a donation or acknowledging the panhandler, and it is within her legal rights to act in the manner she has chosen. In the pedestrian’s eyes, her actions are genuine and reasonable based on the information she had available to her, though they may not fully comply with her idealization of what is “moral” or “right.”

Of course, the legitimacy of these actions could be contested by the panhandler, who may defend his or her own legitimacy and challenge that of the pedestrian. The panhandler could rebut that in fact she does have a genuine need, that it is unreasonable to think that “being in a hurry” is a legitimate reason to ignore her request, that despite the established pattern of behaviour wherein the public routinely ignore people panhandling that it is the civic responsibility of all citizens to care for those who are less fortunate, and that it is illegitimate to allow a person to starve, particularly given the comparable wealth of the pedestrian to the panhandler. Clearly, if these two were to speak to one another, a raging debate could erupt out of their competing perceptions of legitimacy. Both sides work to affirm the legitimacy of their own actions and the legitimacy of the identity they are projecting on the other, while simultaneously challenging the legitimacy of the other. As new information is brought to light, this reflexive process may repeat itself again and again in an unending negotiation of both personal and social legitimacy.

Thus, for the purposes of this thesis, the concept of legitimacy will be used as a tool to clarify the processes by which people involved in daily face-to-face interactions between the panhandling and non-panhandling public justify their actions and manage their identities despite their often-competing perceptions of what is legitimate. In a sense, it is this struggle for legitimacy which informs the process of negotiation Goffman (1959) describes above. To rephrase his argument 1) any individual who is legitimate has a moral right to expect that others will treat him or her in an appropriate way and 2) any individual who signifies that he or she is legitimate ought to be who/what she says she is. In order to understand how the panhandlers and the non-panhandling public negotiate their relationships, one must first understand which attributes and actions are generally thought by each group to garner legitimacy. Through examining how each group delineates this legitimacy, the following chapters will demonstrate the complexity, inconsistency and ambiguity inherent in this process of negotiation.

Homelessness and Panhandling as a Cultural and Moral Location

In order to understand this process of negotiation one must first explore the labels used to describe, and dismiss, the people who engage in panhandling activity. Goffman

explains that in response to a stigmatized individual or group, we construct a “stigma-theory” which provides “an ideology to explain his inferiority and account for the danger he represents, sometimes rationalizing an animosity based on other differences, such as those of social class” (D. Riesman paraphrased in Goffman 1963a:5). Once this stigma theory is established, specific “stigma terms,” like “cripple” and “moron,” are employed to refer not only to the original flaw but also to connote numerous other imperfections (Goffman 1963a:5). Thus, although the “cripple” may merely have a lame leg, the term may also impute other qualities like weakness, stupidity, impotence and poor hygiene, which an individual may or may not actually possess. Despite an individual’s possession of many other “normal” qualities, the weight of such stigma labels often obscures those qualities from view.

Of particular relevance to this thesis is the class of people whom we have recently come to refer to as “the homeless.” Just as the debate has raged in anthropology regarding over-generalized characterizations of “the Nuer” and “the Samoans,” so too does debate rage over “the homeless.” Through a process of stigmatization, the term “the homeless” has been transformed from its original meaning- simply “people without homes”- into a label which carries greater implications as to who homeless people are and why they do not have homes. Based on her study of people who are persistently homeless in Manhattan, Joanne Passaro stresses that “homelessness is not simply an economic predicament, but a cultural and moral location- ‘homeless’ means much more than simply ‘houseless’” (1996:1). To describe somebody as “homeless,” therefore, is to not only categorize them on the basis of their housing status, but to paint them with the broad brush of all that term has come to signify culturally and morally. In essence, the word “homeless” brings forth images of people who are really caricatures of those without housing- the “bag lady” and the “drunken Indian”- with all of the connotations of ethnicity, poor hygiene, alcoholism, and mental illness those images carry with them. Such caricatures, however, totally obscure the reality that many “homeless” people are practically indistinguishable from any other member of the general public.

In a recent US study (Phelan, Link, Moore & Stueve 1997) conducted to assess the level of stigmatization attached to the label “homeless,” a vignette of a “poor” man was read to respondents in a telephone survey and the effects of four different variables were

assessed. In some cases the vignette stated that the man was homeless while in others it stated that he was housed, and in some cases it stated that he had entered a hospital for back pain while in others it stated that he had entered a mental hospital for treatment. The significant results of the study showed that in terms of indicators of social distance or stigma, the respondents reacted much more negatively towards the man when he was described as homeless than when he was described as housed (1997:332). Likewise, in terms of indicators of dangerousness, the respondents reacted much more negatively towards the man when he was described as mentally ill than when he was described as suffering from back pain (1997:332). In the case of the man who was described as homeless and mentally ill, the effects of both labels were constant, and the man was perceived as stigmatized *and* dangerous, but not more so than when those labels were examined individually (1997:332). This study is of particular interest here because it illustrates that based on labels alone the man described as homeless would be greatly stigmatized. According to the indicators used in this study, this means that people would be less willing to hire the man to do odd jobs, to have him live in their community, to have him as a close friend, or to have him work in the local school if he had the skills to do so (1997:330). The stigma of homelessness carries with it the threat of social distance and exclusion.⁶

Gerald Daly discusses the result of using such stigmatizing terminology to describe those without homes in his study *Homeless: Policies, Strategies and Lives on the Street* (1996). Daly confirms Goffman's (1963a) view that such terminology is not only stigmatizing but also dehumanizing, when he states "the common use of the term 'the homeless' instead of 'homeless persons' or 'people without houses' facilitates the distancing process. 'They' become an amorphous, remote, alien mass lacking individuality or even humanity. A sense of community is lost" (Daly 1996:8). Significantly, Daly draws our attention to the idea that the moment we use such terminology we not only diminish the humanity of the people we refer to, but we also instantaneously negate our sense of community. As part of the "us" becomes part of the "them," people who were formerly part of our community become, in essence, strangers within our community. This transformation carries with it serious implications for the

reckoning of rights within the community, rights of citizenship, and the mutual responsibilities such rights entail, as will be discussed in Part II of this thesis.

Of course, this process is nothing new, as homeless people have been variously labelled through history as vagrants, hobos, tramps, and bums, though over time those labels have held various meanings (cf. Caplow 1940). Similarly, throughout history, relations between housed and unhoused people have been far from ideal, while social policies towards poor people have been characterized by both compassion and intolerance. My intention here is not to recount legislative history or the history of social policy in relation to issues of poverty, as several other authors have approached this history with vigour.⁷ I wish, instead, to briefly contextualize this current moment in history. As Barbara Murphy outlines in *The Ugly Canadian: The Rise and Fall of a Caring Society* (1999:25), in the first years of the twentieth century Canadians held strongly to ideals of self-sufficiency and the belief that any assistance for poor people would provide only a disincentive to work. However, these ideals slowly changed when the post-World-War-I economic decline and the extreme hardship and large-scale unemployment suffered during the Depression necessitated social and economic reforms. From the introduction of emergency relief and investment in public works projects, to the eventual legislation of minimum wage and a maximum workweek, Unemployment Insurance, the Canada Pension Plan and the National Health Care System, the ideals of Canadians slowly evolved into an acceptance of the involvement of the state in social programs (1999:60-75). However, recent changes to public policy in Canada indicate a swing of the pendulum back towards pre-WWI sensibilities and a renewed inclination towards policies which favour self-sufficiency.⁸ This trend is particularly evident in the province of Alberta. According to *Extending the Alberta Advantage*, a “discussion guide” prepared by an MLA Committee to Review Low-Income Programs, “Albertans value independence. We prefer to make it on our own, without government support. If we need help we want a hand up, not a hand out” (2001:1). Although this report leaves out the oft repeated entreaties for people to “pull themselves up by their bootstraps” and to teach people to fish rather than feeding them fish, it aptly demonstrates a rhetorical appeal to the values Albertans are thought to share.

Parallel to this shift in policy and opinion, there has been a marked increase in the number of people who find themselves without adequate housing. According to “censuses” of homelessness in Calgary (which include individuals using shelters and services and individuals counted on the street), from May 1992 (447 homeless people) to May 2002 (1,737 homeless people) homelessness in the city has more than tripled (City of Calgary 2000a and 2002).⁹ Without question, the proportional rise in homelessness has far outstripped the rate of total population increase, based on Statistics Canada Census data, which saw the population of Calgary’s Census Metropolitan Area grow from 754,033 residents in 1991 to 951,395 in 2001 (Statistics Canada 2001 and 1996). A similar increase has been noted in the number of people who panhandle, as in 1996 from May to September Panhandling Outreach workers in Calgary counted 168 different individuals panhandling, while in 2000 that number had grown to 468 (White 1996 and the Calgary Urban Project Society 2000).

In the face of these increasing numbers, “panhandlers,” like “the homeless,” have found themselves occupying a marginalized cultural and moral location. As George Wilson (1991) has demonstrated in his study of low-income whites in Baltimore, even within a group of people who typically believe that both structural factors and individualistic factors are important in explaining poverty causation, an increase in the number of people panhandling may have an impact on how they weigh these factors.¹⁰ Wilson shows that the more his respondents encountered panhandlers, the more likely they were to see the poverty of the panhandlers “as a function of personal choice” (1991:16). Likewise, frequent contact with panhandlers led respondents to more “negative and unsympathetic attitudes towards their economic plight” (1991:16). From Wilson’s study it is clear that, more than simply engaging in an economic activity, panhandlers inhabit a cultural and moral location. If by their presence alone the public is able to draw conclusions regarding the cause of their poverty, the morality of this location is clear. Thus, as policies increasingly favour bootstrap ideologies, and as more and more people are displaced to the streets, the moral location of both “the homeless” and the “panhandlers” may become increasingly precarious. This is the context within which we must view community relations between the public, the government and the panhandlers in Calgary.

“Panhandlers” and “Panhandling”

While some research has been done on homelessness in Canada, little research has been done regarding the phenomenon of panhandling. The increasing number of panhandlers in Canada has garnered some media attention, yet in the literature on poverty and homelessness they are given only brief mention. Unlike the term “homeless,” which uniquely positions people according to housing status, the term “panhandler” refers primarily to the activity of “panhandling.” According to the *Nelson Canadian Dictionary*, the word “panhandle” means, “to approach strangers and beg for food or money.” Significantly, this definition specifies that the people panhandlers “beg” from are “strangers” indicating that the relationship is one marked by social distance.

Also significant is the use of the word “beg.” While the etymology of the word “beggar” is unclear (cf. Ribton-Turner 1887:470-471), it has long been used in the Great Britain, with similar sounding derivations found in many other European countries, to describe those who ask “strangers” for “alms” in the form of food or money. Yet, while the term “beggar” is still used in Great Britain (and by British expatriates), in Canada the term “beggar” has largely been replaced by the term “panhandler.” The term “panhandler” originated in America and, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it first appeared in print in 1897 to describe “able-bodied street beggars.” In *The Beggar* (1940), an early study of begging in the United States, Harlan Gilmore distinguishes “panhandlers” from “stationary beggars” and “ambulatory beggars.” According to Gilmore, “panhandlers” are those who approach pedestrians individually and ask for help using lines like “Could you spare a nickel for a cup of coffee?” or by walking beside the potential donor while recounting a lengthy hard luck story. In contrast, “stationary beggars” sit or stand on the street and use signs, an outstretched palm, brief spoken solicitations, or music to get the attention of passers-by, while “ambulatory beggars” walk slowly through the crowd similarly drawing attention but not addressing pedestrians individually (1940:55-61).

In contemporary Canadian usage people tend to describe all of these activities as “panhandling,” though some use the terms “panhandling” and “begging” interchangeably. However, these two terms may not be synonymous. As Trevor, a member of the business community, explained, “Panhandling is a more politically correct term, where as begging

has very negative connotations to it. It's a derogatory sort of a slam, slang type sort of saying...I guess it's the difference between saying an alcoholic and a drunk right?" Thus, in Canada, the choice people make between using the term "beggar" or "panhandler" may be one that is politically and morally charged.

In his book *Homelessness* Gerald Daly suggests that in Canada there may be less overlap between those who are homeless and those who panhandle than is often assumed, as "most homeless people do not panhandle regularly. In fact, most panhandlers are not homeless" (1996:131). Ian, an employee at a Calgary shelter, echoed this view: "there is not as close a connection as people might think between homelessness and panhandling. The connection has been one that's forced. The majority of panhandlers actually don't live in shelters like ours...very few that are homeless panhandle, and many who do panhandle are not homeless."

Their first observation, that most homeless people do not panhandle, appears to be confirmed by statistics collected in Calgary. The homeless population of Calgary, on the night of May 17 2000, was counted at 1,296 (City of Calgary 2000:3). In comparison, during the entire month of May 2000 the Panhandle Outreach Worker reported making only ninety-nine contacts with individual people panhandling (Calgary Urban Project Society 2000). While it would be misleading to compare these two numbers directly, as one is a snapshot count taken during the course of one evening, and the other is a count taken over the period of a month, they can give us a rough idea of what a small proportion of the homeless population might actually panhandle.¹¹

Their second observation, that "most" and "many" panhandlers are not homeless, was not confirmed by my field research in Calgary. While this may be true in other cities, out of twenty-one interviews with people who panhandle in Calgary, only two were living in housing at the time of the interview, and neither of them was panhandling regularly. Peter had his own apartment and panhandled occasionally to supplement his AISH (Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped) income, while James had recently moved into his girlfriend's apartment and continued to panhandle occasionally to supplement his income from doing odd jobs. Additionally, three Aboriginal panhandlers indicated that they were currently staying in a downtown shelter, but, in a pattern of migration common to members of the Aboriginal street community, they moved regularly between the city

and a reservation where they had access to housing. Similarly, one Aboriginal panhandler was visiting from a reserve and intended to stay at his sister's home while in Calgary. Therefore, out of twenty-one people I spoke to panhandling, only six stated that they had *any* access to housing other than temporary shelters. As the definition of homelessness has sometimes been expanded to include individuals who are literally homeless and individuals who are precariously or marginally housed (Rossi, Wright, Fisher & Willis 1987:1336), it seems that if we take marginality into account, only two of the people I spoke to panhandling could be said to have access to stable housing in the city.¹² Significantly, many of the other panhandling interviewees expressed a preference for "sleeping rough" (sleeping outside or squatting in parkades/ abandoned buildings) rather than staying in shelters, a factor which might contribute to the conclusion by shelter workers like Ian that they are in fact housed.

However, Calgary might well be a special case. Many low income workers in Calgary find it impossible to find housing due to factors including: a shortage of affordable housing (a one-bedroom apartment averages \$600, while a two-bedroom averages \$739); a low vacancy rate; government cut-backs to social services; shrinking real income; and discrimination (United Way 2000:12-13). Also contributing to the high cost of housing are rental regulations which allow landlords to set the rent at whatever amount they want, to raise the rent by whatever amount they want (depending on the lease, rent may be raised as often as every six months), and to demand a damage deposit equal to one months rent (*Residential Tenancies Act*). These barriers to the acquisition of affordable housing in Calgary have created a peculiar situation wherein 45% of the people currently staying in shelters are actually employed (United Way 2000:7). Given these housing barriers, it is not surprising to find that people in Calgary whose primary source of income is revenue from panhandling are unable to afford housing, while in other cities, where the barriers are not as great, people who panhandle may be more likely to be able to afford housing. Likewise, it is not surprising to find that it is necessary for some housed people who qualify to receive social benefits, the cash values of which have been reduced greatly since the early 1990's, to occasionally panhandle to supplement their income in order to help maintain their housing.¹³ Thus, while there are some housed people who panhandle to supplement their incomes from social benefits, for the most part

in Calgary there is a significant overlap between the panhandling community and the homeless community. This is not to suggest, however, that people who panhandle should be taken to represent the homeless population, nor that people who are homeless should be taken to represent the population of people who panhandle.

Rather than taking for granted that average people would agree with the standard dictionary definition presented above, the non-panhandling people I interviewed were asked to define the term "panhandling," and to describe who they would include under the descriptor "panhandler." While confirming that panhandling involves asking people for money, and that one who participates in such an activity would be considered a panhandler, there were considerable variations in people's responses regarding how the act was described and who was considered a panhandler.

Similar to Gilmore's (1940) definition of panhandlers as those who approach pedestrians individually, Sean, a downtown resident and worker, noted a difference between people who actively ask for money from passers-by, and people who sit and do not actively ask for money. While he considered both to be "panhandlers," he felt that those who sit passively are not "panhandling" him in the same way. By recognizing the distinction between "the noun and the verb," Sean differentiated between the singular status of "panhandler" and the different forms the activity of "panhandling" may take.

Carol, a municipal civil servant, also recognized this distinction when she defined three different types of panhandling. According to Carol, the first type, "passive panhandling," involves sitting on the street with a hat or sign out in front of you communicating "by device" that you are asking for donations. The second type, "active panhandling" involves the act of verbally asking or approaching someone for money. The third type, "aggressive panhandling," was also described by Hugh, a municipal civil servant, as "behaviour that is beyond simply a request," including: not taking "no" for an answer, following people, and asking them repeatedly for money. Despite the general application of the term "panhandler" to individuals taking part in any of the above actions, both members of the general public and officials from City Hall recognize many different styles employed in the act of "panhandling."

Parallel to this variety of approaches, the actual action performed by people panhandling was characterized in many different ways. According to Alex, a member of

the business community: “my definition of a panhandler is someone who is begging for money, they don’t actually have to ask for it, but you know, they either have their hat out or their hand out, or they’re asking people if he has, ‘Don’t you have any change?’ So they’re asking, they’re begging, they’re beggars.” Both “asking” and “begging” figure prominently in Alex’s characterization of panhandling activity. In contrast, Russell, a downtown worker, opted for the conventionally legal terminology of solicitation: “I guess I would consider a panhandler would be anyone who solicits money, change, whatever, from passers-by on the street.” Leah, a downtown student, explained that panhandlers are “anyone who has, I don’t know, a hat out or a box or a sign that indicates that they need support in some way.” In her definition, Leah shifts the focus from the act of “asking” for money (“begging” and “soliciting”) to emphasizing the “need” of the people who panhandle for “support.” Similarly, Emily, a social service provider emphasized that, “panhandling, to us, is people reduced to desperation, that they should have to give away their human dignity to ask for the *kindness of strangers* [spoken with a southern drawl].” By characterizing the act of panhandling as a process of giving away human dignity in return for kindness Emily highlights what she sees as a process of exchange driven by desperation. While each of these individuals recognize the basic framework of people asking for money, each emphasizes a different aspect of the act. “Asking,” “begging,” “soliciting,” “needing,” and giving away “human dignity to ask for the kindness of strangers” all share the same referent: panhandling. Yet, each characterization is expressed in a unique and meaningful way. Varying perspectives transform the simple act of panhandling into an action which carries with it many possible layers of meaning, and, as these examples demonstrate, we cannot assume that we share a common notion of those meanings.

The impact of such positionality is particularly apparent when we examine how service providers describe the people who panhandle. For those who are involved in the social service industry, the act of panhandling is commonly discussed in reference to the context and practicalities of people’s lives. Service providers are in a unique position by virtue of their specialized knowledge, and also by virtue of their ability to act directly on the lives of the people who use their services. When discussing panhandling, Jennifer, a social service provider who works with street kids, focused on what panhandling signifies

in the process of entering the street life, “panhandling is a real first step to this whole street life you know, and I see often people will graduate into the, I think, harder ways to make a living. I don’t know about harder, hard core, let’s say. I mean prostitution compared to panhandling is a lot more hard core in the amount of abuse that you put up with.” To Jennifer, the act of panhandling involves more than simply asking for money on the street, it marks a possible first stage in the cycle of street life.

Similarly, Emily, another service provider, discussed panhandling in reference to the many ways that it gets incorporated into street life when she described a variety of different approaches to panhandling. These included approaching panhandling as a “career”: “There are definitely people who see that as a very viable career and that’s their choice of lifestyle. They’re, chronic is not the word, it’s their career choice. That’s what they want to do.” She also described “poor panhandlers” who panhandle “out of abject poverty and desperation,” “addicted panhandlers” who panhandle to support their alcohol or drug addiction and “transient panhandlers” who she explained are “just trying to have mobility around the city, back out to their reserves or whatever. Its very, its a very here and now kind of panhandling. Look, ‘I need to catch the bus’, or ‘I need to do this’, ‘I need something to eat’, whatever, it’s not sustained panhandling.”

Rather than focusing on the different approaches that people who panhandle use to perform the act, Emily emphasizes the perspectives of the people who panhandle and describes the role that panhandling plays in the life of a person who engages in it. In describing the different types of panhandling she simultaneously draws upon what motivates the act, and on what place it takes in their lives. As her particular interest lies in the Aboriginal population, she draws special attention to the fact that there are few Aboriginal “career panhandlers,” some “poor” Aboriginal panhandlers, many “addicted” Aboriginal panhandlers, while most Aboriginal panhandlers are “transient.”¹⁴

In contrast, rather than focusing on what panhandling means in the life of the panhandler, and by extension, what effects that has on how a service provider may assist an individual, people from professions outside of the social services tended to focus more on the impact the act of asking had on their own personal lives. As Arthur, a downtown student, explained, panhandlers are, “just the people that stand on the streets all the time and ask for money or spare change or, I don’t know, hassle you for whatever.” Arthur’s

use of the phrase “hassle you” places him directly in the description by implying that he feels imposed upon by the act. In a like manner, while Trevor, a member of the business community, differentiates between two main categories of panhandling activity, he stresses the personalized impact of the “aggressive” variety:

The actual act itself I guess would be somebody approaching somebody and it can be aggressive or non-aggressive as well, right? You have those who basically have stepped back, they’re not obstructing the street, and nicely asking for money. Whereas, there are a certain percentage, and unfortunately those are the ones that give panhandling a bad name, who are much more aggressive and will say, you know, ‘give me some money!’ and if you say no, or you ignore them, they’ll yell and scream at you and so forth.

Trevor locates himself in this definition by discussing the bodily approach of the panhandler and the interchange between the aggressive panhandler and the panhandled. As these two examples illustrate, for many people panhandlers and the act of panhandling cannot, and should not, be described separately from their own embodied experiences of encountering such people. By themselves, panhandlers may exist, but it is in relation to others, the “panhandled,” that their act comes to be defined. Through these embodied experiences, the “panhandled” and the “panhandlers” become inextricably linked, the result of which is often a strongly emotional reaction to, and opinion of, those who engage in panhandling.

Finally, in addition to being considered in terms of its style, its connotations, its role in the life of the panhandler, and its role in the life of the “panhandled,” “panhandling” must also be viewed in relation to its legal position within the community. According to Calgary Bylaw Number 3M99 “‘panhandling’ means the personal, verbal and direct solicitation by a person of gratuitous donations of money, food or goods of any kind from any member of the public, but, does not include a solicitation allowed or authorized pursuant to the *Charitable Fundraising Act*, S.A. 1995 c. 4.5.” While the City has defined panhandling as an act of “solicitation,” it recognizes that, in and of itself, the act is not illegal and is protected under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* as “expression” (City of Calgary 2001:3). Based on this recognition, panhandling is an activity that, within the scope of the city’s powers, may be regulated but not prohibited. In consultation with Calgary panhandlers, the city has recognized panhandling as a “non-

traditional means of earning a living, by independent self-support without burdening social services” (City of Calgary 2001:3). Although some take issue with the proposition that the age-old practice of panhandling could be considered a “non-traditional” activity, the fact remains that the City does recognize that panhandling is an activity that is unlikely to vanish anytime soon.

Panhandlers in the Public Eye

The question remains, however, of *who* exactly is considered to be a panhandler. In their study of identity work among homeless people in Austin, Texas, David Snow and Leon Anderson (1987) discuss the concept of “social identity” in reference to street people. According to Snow and Anderson, social identity refers to “the identities attributed or imputed to others in an attempt to place or situate them as social objects” (1987:1347). These social identities are not self-designations, but are imposed by other people on the basis of information gleaned from behaviour, appearance, and the spatial/temporal context of certain actions (1987:1347). Based on this definition, the following section will discuss how members of the non-panhandling public distinguish which individuals on the street are assigned the social identity of a “panhandler,” and which are not.

As described above, the City distinguishes between people who panhandle passively, actively and aggressively, but they also distinguish people who panhandle from people who “busk” or “buskers” (street performers and street musicians), and people who are vendors (who sell the Street Talk newspaper, flowers, etc.). For each of these three groups, the city has a different set of regulations and, for the buskers and vendors, the city provides official permits and licenses respectively. However, when I asked members of the general public to explain which types of people they would consider to be “panhandlers,” these categories seemed to be less firmly defined.¹⁵

A few people I spoke with stated that they see all of these groups as being very similar. For example, while Maria, a social service provider, acknowledged that buskers “offer you something in return for asking for your money,” squeegee kids offer a “service,” Street Talk vendors take a “different angle to panhandling,” and that a “true panhandler is someone who just asks you for money,” she still considers the people who practice any of the above activities to be panhandlers, because all of them are asking for

money. In contrast, most people I spoke to felt that these differences were significant enough to demarcate one group from another.

A downtown worker named Nancy explained the main reason for this distinction to me: “A panhandler, to me, is someone that asks for money, not necessarily in return for anything. When these people are out there performing, they’re giving a service to the public so, therefore, I don’t consider that panhandling, they’re actually working for their money.” Based on the observation that people who perform on the street, or people who sell the Street Talk newspaper, are providing a “service” or “working,” as opposed to simply asking for money, most people I spoke to do not consider “buskers” and “vendors” to be “panhandlers.” In fact, many people used these three terms to differentiate between these different groups of people. This differentiation hinged on the perception that those who were busking or vending were “doing something” or “working” while those who panhandled were not. As Doug, another downtown worker, put it, “you know, they’re actually doing something for the money rather than just holding out their hand,” or as Nancy stated above, “they’re actually working for their money.”

In addition to “doing something” for their money, several members of the general public noted a difference in approach between the buskers and the panhandlers. As Russell, a downtown worker, described, “I think they’re different because in that case they [buskers] are, they’re not aggressive about stopping people to ask for money, so they’ll be playing an instrument with their guitar case out in front of them and you can throw money in or not throw money in.” Trevor, a member of the business community, similarly explained the difference between panhandlers and buskers, “they [buskers] are not asking for money, and that’s the big difference, right? The hat’s there, you have the option of watching, you have the option of throwing money into that hat. So to me... it’s a job for them, as a busker, and I have a lot of respect for the buskers.” Trevor went on to explain that he views buskers as “legit.” The respect and legitimacy that Trevor extends to those who busk seems to originate from the recognition that not only are they providing a service, in essence performing a “job,” but they are also doing so in a non-invasive way. Significantly, both Russell and Trevor present the view that people that give to buskers reach into their pockets of their own volition (despite the implicit request

of the hat or guitar case), while giving to panhandlers would be a response to their more “aggressive” requests.

These examples highlight the great attention given by the general public to the question of whether or not an individual is offering a service in exchange for donations, in essence performing a “job,” and to the perception that those who provide a service present an “option” to donate, while those who *ask* seem to place the public under duress. These two factors appear to be intimately tied to whether or not the general public considers the actions of an individual to be legitimate or illegitimate. Within the context of face-to-face encounters, members of the general public are faced with making quick judgments regarding the identity of the individuals they meet and the legitimacy of both the claims the individuals make and the many courses of action available to the members of the general public. In her work on the relationship between panhandlers and commuters in New York City and Tucson Arizona, Brackette F. Williams (1995) addresses this issue when she states that in “encountering those who seek our spare change, we try to judge the varied personae and spiels intended to evoke and play on our sympathies and empathies. We constantly juggle a range of ideological precepts that we have learned to believe define and, at least situationally, help us to distinguish a *desire to labor for a profit* from a *desire to profit from our labor*” (1995:35, my emphasis). Under this view, the differentiation between those who offer a service and those who do not is one way of identifying which individuals have a “*desire to labor for a profit*” and which individuals “*desire to profit from our labor*.” Additionally, the less intrusive approach of the buskers and vendors may reinforce this differentiation as the buskers and vendors labour (perform and vend), and hence display their *desire* to labour, regardless of whether or not a donation is given. Conversely, as the panhandlers’ activities are typically not perceived as labour, their direct requests for money display a *desire to profit* without displaying an accompanying *desire to labour*, and hence lead people to believe that they wish to “*profit from our labour*.”¹⁶ Generally speaking, people expressed a preference for the former approach, that of the buskers and vendors, over the latter approach of those who panhandle. While there seemed to be no question that vendors and buskers were involved in legitimate activities and that people felt that donating money to them was a

legitimate response if one felt so inclined, the question of the panhandler's legitimacy was much more complex.

The complexity of this question of legitimacy may be illustrated by reviewing the full range of narratives presented by both members of the general public and the social service community. The discourse regarding the question of work and the perception that panhandlers are trying to "*profit from our labor*" varied between two opposite poles. Sean, a downtown resident and worker, presented the following perception of people panhandling:

Maybe it's the new millennium way of living off the fat of the land. Out of everybody else's fat because nobody knows how to hunt or gather anymore, so let's hunt down victims and gather their money. It bugs me. It really offends me. Panhandlers in general actually offend me. I feel it's an invasion of my space...I think there are more productive ways to make a living; even if you don't have any skills there are better ways to do it.

This statement highlights the perception that panhandlers are attempting to live off the accumulated fat, or resources, of the general public, while they fail to support themselves and to be productive members of the community. The statement also highlights the emotional nature of the reaction that members of the general public may have if they perceive that panhandlers are "hunting" them down in an effort to "gather" their money. Sean's characterization of the panhandled as "victims," and his claim that panhandling offends him as an invasion of his space illustrate the degree to which a perceived "*desire to profit from our labor*" on the part of those who panhandle can inspire the panhandled to feel attacked and exploited.

Many other members of the general public expressed similar, though somewhat less dramatic, views. For example, Doug provided the following explanation of why he does not have a high opinion of those who panhandle,

I work hard at what I do and I have a work ethic, and I think if you want money then you should work for it, not just stand on the street and beg. I mean, I guess that is a form of working, but to me it's not physical, it's not using your brain, it's just trying to be a bum...somebody who doesn't work and just lives off the largess of the community at large and really doesn't contribute.

While Doug admits that panhandling may be a “form of working,” he clearly does not see it as being legitimate work and instead characterizes panhandlers as “bums” who are not demonstrating the requisite “*desire to labor for a profit*.” Doug reinforces the idea that panhandlers are trying to “*profit from our labor*” when he states that they are “living off the largess of the community” while not simultaneously making a contribution. In light of the above observations, both Sean and Doug stated that they seldom give donations to panhandlers, while neither expressed the same hesitation in giving to buskers or vendors. In demonstrating a *desire to labor*, vendors and buskers may avoid the negative perception that they are attempting to profit from the labor of other people without contributing something in return. In contrast, the failure of the panhandlers to communicate their own *desire to labor* may result in panhandlers being viewed negatively, as “bums,” or, as Sean refers to them, as an “urban blight.”

David Wagner explores the importance of the “work ethic” in popular consciousness in his work *Checkerboard Square: Culture and Resistance in a Homeless Community* (1993). According to Wagner, historically paupers and beggars were stigmatized by their “presumed failure to abide by the work ethic” (1993:11). Seen in the past as “vicious,” and “indolent,” they are characterized today as “lazy” and “dependent” and “feeding at the public trough” all due to their perceived failure to subscribe to the dominant ideology which celebrates work (1993:11). This is a grave transgression, or perceived transgression, as the “commitment to the work ethic seems hegemonic among political, social, and academic leaders of all political orientations” (Wagner 1993:11). Hence, a failure to adhere to a conventional work ethic is tantamount to subverting the very foundations of our social and political milieu.

As Wagner elaborates, “the concept of work is often supported not because it has been rewarding or pleasurable but because- like a tribe enforcing an arduous initiation rite- workers believe that since they have endured it, everyone else should suffer as well” (Wagner 1993:13). While there is no question that the hegemony of the work ethic also has its functional corollaries, the often-harsh enforcement of adherence to that ethic stands as evidence of the social and emotional significance attached to the ethic itself. Herbert Gans discusses how the subversion of this ethic is perceived as a very real threat to the economic and social order as “It is almost as if everyone feared that if better-paid

workers copied the jobless poor and stopped performing unpleasant work the economy would immediately come to a grinding halt”(1995:87). Based on such fears, as Wagner indicates, working and being a “productive member of society” have come to be defined as a rite of initiation necessary for full membership within the community.

In *The Social Contract* (1994) Jean-Jacques Rousseau writes that if we imagine our society as a human body, the “body politic,” it becomes apparent that the dysfunction of any part may lead to the death of the whole. Thus, the “general will” of the body politic, or of the people who form it, will tend towards the “conservation and preservation of the whole”(1994:67). In the interests of such preservation, Rousseau argues that the inclinations of individuals may be subsumed beneath the requirements of the whole. In a similar vein, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1952) argues that in the process of satisfying one’s individual interests one may inadvertently work in the interests of the whole. Due to a specialized division of labour, each individual is not able to produce all they require to meet their needs and, as a result, people are dependent on the production of one another. As Hegel explains, “each man in earning, producing, and enjoying on his account is *eo ipso* producing and earning for the enjoyment of everyone else” (1952:130). Under this view, even though “subjective self-seeking” may motivate an individual to produce and earn, the result is “a contribution to the satisfaction of the needs of everyone else” (1952:129). To fail to contribute, then, may threaten the ability of others to meet their own needs. As the narratives presented by Sean and Doug above illustrate, the failure to work is seen as not only a failure to display a work ethic and to earn one’s money, but also a failure to contribute to the community, and in essence, a failure to earn one’s membership in the community. That such an omission is grave enough to transform an individual from a productive member of society into a “bum” or an “urban blight” demonstrates the power the work ethic holds in the popular consciousness and its perceived importance to the body politic.

Part of the frustration of the general public with seeing people panhandling springs from the belief that there are many unexplored opportunities available for people who panhandle to “earn” their money by likewise providing services or by gaining mainstream employment. Common were responses like the following provided by a downtown resident and worker named Kelly:

I would rather give money to somebody if they were on the street playing guitar, or doing something, but just someone that's standing there asking for change, no. Like, do something then. Knock on a door, say "Hey can I shovel your walk?" You know, there's lots of ways that you could try to earn money and there's lots of ways, lots of other jobs you could get even with no experience, if you're illiterate, whatever, you can do something. But these people aren't even making that effort.

As Kelly's narrative shows, she has a stated preference for giving money to those who do "something," while simultaneously assuming that "doing something" is a plausible option for most, if not all, people. Although Kelly recognizes that people panhandling may be illiterate or inexperienced, she does not believe these are valid excuses for unemployment as all that is required is the initiative to knock on doors and offer needed services. Thus, she characterizes those who fail to "do something" as failing to make the "effort" necessary to capitalize on these opportunities.

In a similar vein, another downtown worker named Warren viewed giving any money to panhandlers to be a form of inappropriate encouragement.

I don't want to encourage them to think that that's an acceptable income, method of income, unless there's something really wrong with the person. I think everyone who is able bodied, and he certainly can stand up, I mean, he's there at 6:30 in the morning and if he is willing to get up that early, this particular person, if he's willing to get up this early to go beg on the streets, he should be able to be conscientious enough to go find a job somewhere and pull in a decent living. So, I guess I don't feel a lot of pity for that person.

While Warren admits that panhandling might be acceptable if there was something "really wrong" with a person, he feels it is an unacceptable activity for the "able bodied." Yet, Warren perceives the very ability to panhandle, to wake up in the morning and to stand up, as evidence that a person is "able bodied" enough to be working. Due to this belief, Warren finds himself unable to feel pity for the people who panhandle while he is able to feel pity for those who demonstrate their desire to work and their desire to earn a "decent" living busking, vending, or even squeegeeing. Warren feels that giving the panhandler donations would be to encourage an activity he finds indecent or

“unacceptable.” By withholding a donation, Warren communicates his disapproval of the panhandler’s activities and works to discourage their solicitations.

There are three significant assumptions carried in these examples. The first is the assumption that everyone *must* work. As discussed above, working and being a productive member of society are taken as prerequisites to full community membership. While some people (young children, seniors, and those with physical and mental illnesses or disabilities) are excluded from these expectations, most people are expected to make a productive contribution to the society whether through working for a wage or through other non-economic activities such as child rearing and volunteer work. As full membership in the community is also a prerequisite to accessing the rights such membership entails, in failing to fulfill one’s productive responsibility one risks failing to gain access to one’s full rights. Although theoretically the rights of all people are entrenched in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, in practice, the ability to access those rights may be tacitly connected to how effectively one fulfills one’s responsibilities.

This leads us to the second assumption carried in the examples above, which is that panhandlers *could* be working. Inherent in this assumption are a range of societal beliefs premised on a fundamental belief in equality. Entrenched in the *Charter* is the right of all Canadian citizens to equality before and under the law. Although economic condition is not mentioned specifically in the *Charter* as an invalid basis for discrimination, it is generally accepted that there should exist an “equality of opportunity” wherein all people, regardless of race, colour religion, sex or mental/physical disability, should have access to equal opportunities. However, this equality of opportunity does not guarantee an “equality of result” as it is up to each individual to capitalize on his or her opportunities, and, through hard work and perseverance, to create his or her own success. To fail to do so is, in essence, to sabotage one’s own equality in a way that suggests that that one does not deserve anything other than what one gets. As Herbert Gans explains, “The ideology of undeservingness holds that if people were without the moral and other deficiencies that make them poor, there might be no poverty; and if the jobless were not lazy there would be virtually no unemployment” (1995:91). The assumption that people who are panhandling *could* be

working, but have failed to seize upon the opportunities available to them, reinforces the perception that they are where they are by their own volition, and that it is their failure, rather than a failure of the society, which perpetuates the existence of poverty.

This brings us to the third assumption carried in the examples above. It is assumed that because people who panhandle *could* be working, they have *chosen* not to work, and instead have *chosen* to panhandle. In Warren's words, "It's a life that they choose to do, for whatever reason. So I think that they, this is like mountain climbing. If they choose to do that, then it's a risk that they have to take." Although Warren believed that these risks include being at the mercy of an unkind public, getting robbed and getting beat up, he felt that in choosing to panhandle instead of work, panhandlers were also choosing to take those risks. Thus, the perception that panhandlers *choose* to panhandle led Warren to conclude that they were ultimately responsible for accepting the consequences of their actions, no matter how brutal those consequences were. Similarly, the perception that when panhandlers *choose* to panhandle they are also *choosing* not to work reinforces the perception that they are engaging in an activity that, by contravening the norm, is inherently illegitimate.

Other people I spoke to introduced the idea that while some panhandlers may choose to not to work, others find themselves unable to attain or maintain employment in the mainstream. When asked about his encounters with panhandlers, Arthur, a downtown student, elaborated on the theme that the people panhandling should be "doing something" while he conceded that this may not be possible for all individuals.

I usually think to myself, go get a job, because, I mean, they could...Nowadays there are a lot of old ones. I mean, it's kind of hard for them to get a job, but you see maybe twenty-year-old kids that are just sitting there trying to get money or whatever. I mean, they could do a lot better than that.

Arthur presented the commonly held belief that the people who panhandle, particularly the younger ones, *could* get jobs but do not because they are "too lazy." Yet, he also recognized that in some cases people "actually can't" get work because they are "old" or due to "the situations that they've been through." Even though he states that in the latter cases panhandling may be "the only way to get an income" for those who cannot work, this recognition did not alter his belief that his own money is "hard earned" and that

giving them money will only encourage them to “sit there all the time.” This is significant as, even with no other source of income, he felt that those who are not able to get work should not be encouraged, by the granting of donations, to panhandle. Such a view reinforces the idea that panhandling, no matter who does it or why they do it, is an inherently illegitimate act.

A more legitimizing view was expressed by Alana, a downtown resident and worker, who stated that panhandling could be seen as a form of work which was arrived at only after people found themselves unable to work in conventional jobs due to a wide variety of barriers. When I asked her why she thinks people panhandle Alana explained her perception of the situation:

Why? Well it's a method of employment for them. I mean, I guess you could see it as employment really, that's how they make their living. I mean, I knew one guy who froze one of his legs. Anyway, he sort of summed it up... they just either don't have the skill sets that are needed anymore for employment, or they just can't keep employment. I'm sure there are a variety of issues that they've probably dealt with, maybe, they probably have past histories of abuse, and past histories of maybe anger management. You know I mean probably a whole bunch of reasons why they're unable to keep a regular type of position. And so because of that they're forced to rely on people.

While Alana stated that panhandling is a “method of employment,” she acknowledged that some people who take up panhandling do so because they are unable to attain or maintain conventional employment for a variety of reasons. Significantly, she later explained that, because it is difficult to collect EI or welfare for any length of time, people who cannot attain employment may have to turn to panhandling and are, in essence, “forced to rely on people” and their donations. However, she also felt that some people have “chosen to drop out of society” and the structured environment of work. Alana simultaneously recognized that constraints like mental and physical illness, lack of skill sets, histories of abuse and anger management issues may get in the way of some people getting mainstream employment, while others simply “choose” not to work. This observation illustrates a certain tension between those factors that constrain and limit the choices available to an individual, and the ability of individuals to exercise agency in their own lives. Given the diversity of the population of people who panhandle, and the

diversity of constraints encompassed by their lives and experiences, Alana identifies one of the primary sources of concern among members of the general public: the inability to identify whether or not a particular individual has “chosen” to live on the streets, or has been driven there by circumstances beyond their control. As the public often has little information to go on when encountering a panhandler in the street, it seems that this inability to determine the true reason someone is panhandling is a source of ambivalence as without this information it is difficult to determine a satisfactory course of action for how to respond to a panhandler’s requests for change.

However, there were some people who rejected entirely the idea that panhandlers every truly “choose” to panhandle on the streets. A social service provider named Audrey explained to me, “panhandling offends me to my core. Not a panhandler, but the fact that as a society we could create, force people to beg. I just have a huge issue with that, because you are not born a beggar. You are not born a panhandler. Circumstances make you. I watch the way people treat panhandlers. Nobody chooses that life.” While Audrey shares Sean’s feeling of being deeply offended by panhandling, the origin of her disgust lies not with the panhandler, but with how we as a society have allowed a situation to arise in which people are “forced” to beg. This position was reiterated by Emily, another service provider, who raised the question of why people were panhandling in the first place,

Even the guy that says this is a legitimate business for me as a career choice. I say bullshit. You tell me you wanted to live in poverty all your life, you want to be down begging on the street, if you had had other options? You’re making the best of the situation perhaps but would this be your choice? ...The panhandler, or the homeless person, that was not their birth plan.

Both Audrey and Emily presented the view that rather than panhandlers themselves being illegitimate, it is society and the structure of inequality wherein people at the margins are denied viable “options” which must be looked upon as illegitimate. Both women stressed that people do not “choose” to panhandle in the sense that nobody aspires from birth to become a panhandler. Thus, while panhandlers may be making the best of a bad situation, from their perspective it is the bad situation itself that is the issue rather than the panhandling. In fact, Audrey went so far as to assert that panhandling is “a

very legitimate economic act.” In contrast to those who feel that panhandling activities are illegitimate because panhandlers “choose” to panhandle, Audrey feels that panhandling activities are legitimate, perhaps because she believes they have no choice but to panhandle. While this perspective reinforces the importance of the role that personal and structural factors play in leading people to panhandle, it also draws into question the ability of panhandlers to exert agency in their own lives.

As these narratives illustrate, there is no singular shared perception of the social category of people referred to as panhandlers. While some people feel that panhandlers actively subvert the work ethic by failing to attain conventional employment or to capitalize on the opportunities available to all, others feel that panhandlers are constrained by both the opportunities available and their own personal inabilities. While some believe that panhandlers exercise a measure of choice in directing the course of their lives towards panhandling, others are sceptical that anyone, who had better options, would actually “choose” to panhandle. It appears that in determining whether panhandlers or their activities are legitimate, the concept of choice plays an important part. If someone “chooses” not to work and instead to panhandle, then their activities may be largely perceived as illegitimate, whereas if someone does not choose, and instead is bound by personal or structural constraints, then their activities may be largely perceived as legitimate. For those who see panhandling as employment or an economic act, this legitimacy is garnered through their demonstration of a *desire to labour for a profit*, while for those who see panhandling as the opposite of “working,” this illegitimacy is garnered through their demonstration of a *desire to profit from our labour*. To complicate things even further, a single person may simultaneously believe that some panhandlers “choose” to panhandle while others do not and that some panhandlers are legitimate while others are not. As such people often have little information available to determine which panhandlers are legitimate and which are not, the resulting attitude is often one of ambivalence.

What is clear from all of the above responses is that, true to Simmel’s (1971) conception of the stranger, “the panhandler” is at once outside, peripheral, and marginal to the wider society, while their very presence confronts, and divides, that wider community. This confrontation is visceral enough to lead both Audrey and Sean to

declare that they are deeply offended by panhandling. At the same time, the issue of panhandling is divisive enough to force these two people to the opposite ends of two highly emotionally charged poles, at one end sympathetic to the personal and structural factors which are believed to constrain the choices available to people at the margins, and at the other, outraged by the failure of those same people to become productive citizens and to capitalize on what are believed to be the opportunities available to all. Further, even more visceral and divisive is the internal conflict confronted when a single person is torn between these two polarities.

Chapter Three: Panhandling as Identity and Experience

As the previous chapter describes, from the perspective of the non-panhandling public there is no consensus regarding who panhandlers are or why they panhandle. Considering the diversity of the population of people who panhandle it seems appropriate that there should be no consensus. However, this lack of consensus is also indicative of a lack of knowledge on the part of the general public. This chapter seeks to broaden that knowledge through a discussion of how the people who panhandle define their activities and how they construct their own personal identities. Through an exploration of the panhandler's narratives, this chapter illustrates that conventional accounts of panhandling as solely economic have underestimated the significance panhandling plays in the social lives of those who engage in it. Not only does panhandling provide an opportunity for panhandlers to make money, it also enables them to make contact with members of the general public and other street people, to build networks of friendships and to create a sense of community amongst those who are often excluded from social acceptance by the wider community.

Panhandling as Street Work

Outside of work in the mainstream economy, work which many homeless people engage in full time, part time, and seasonally, street people have a number of alternative revenue-generating activities they may rely on to varying degrees.¹⁷ While mainstream people may find some of these activities problematic, James reminds us that they must be viewed in the context of a survival imperative:

I know what it's like out there for street people. And I know what it's like out there for the panhandlers. They're both the same person, except they do different jobs so to speak...panhandlers are part of the street family. We're all one. It's like a job. It's like, these guys do a job every day. Street handlers are street people doing their job. Other street people might sell drugs, that's their job. You know, whatever it takes to survive, go for it.

According to James, panhandling is a job, more or less equivalent to any other work that street people do to survive. Rather than highlighting the differences between panhandlers and other members of the "street family," James emphasizes their commonality and stresses that "street people" and "panhandlers" are both "the same person," separated

only by their means of survival. Having lived on and off the streets from age nine to thirty-five, James has experience in the world of doing what is necessary to survive. James admits that in the past his efforts to survive included selling drugs, while today he combines working odd jobs with occasional panhandling.

David Wagner, in *Checkerboard Square*, his ethnography of homelessness in “North City” (a medium sized New England city), challenges the traditional discourse surrounding homelessness which focuses on portraying homeless people as vulnerable and dependent, worthy of sympathy, but socially disorganized, disaffiliated and disempowered (1993:6). As Wagner explains, “the poor well realize the limitations of mobility and respectability low wage work can provide and that it is an ideological construct of both conservatives and liberals that the poor should be morally obligated to accept any and all work, whatever the terms” (1993:92). In response to the poor work opportunities available to them, Wagner argues that “lower class people *do* exercise some compensatory forms of control over their lives by refusing certain jobs and authority arrangements, by developing alternative forms of income that have a degree of control (from collecting bottles to doing casual day labour), and by eking out relief” (1993:93).

In reference to the experiences of my street informants Calgary, Wagner’s argument that “the poor” realize the limitations of low wage work and reject the work on that basis seems somewhat overstated. In contrast, many of the people I spoke to claimed to be *unable* to work at the moment due to mental illness or injuries. Also, many of my informants were struggling with substance abuse problems, which either made them unable or unwilling to engage in work or to get work at that particular time. As several of my informants lived on reserves, their employment opportunities would have been fairly limited by the geographical location and isolation of their homes. Finally, some reported that due to their homelessness, and in particular the lack of an address, it was difficult to gain employment. Overall, there was not a strong discourse among my informants condemning the inadequate working opportunities available to them, although some did complain that they had been mistreated while employed or had been laid off.¹⁸

What seems more relevant in Wagner’s argument is that he recognizes that despite the things which constrain people from engaging in mainstream work, they are able to develop or take part in alternative income-generating activities which often enable them

to have a degree of control over their work, their schedule, and their level of income. These alternative income-generating activities challenge the dominant ideology that “work,” in its conventional sense, or dependence on the state (for those who are unable to work), are the only acceptable means to maintain oneself. Panhandling, and other unconventional modes of generating income, may be seen as such alternative means. These activities not only enable survival, but often afford the individual a measure of autonomy and enable individuals to exert some agency in their lives. This is particularly evident when we look at how people on the street choose among the alternative income-generating activities available to them.

The “street job” options which my informants discussed included: panhandling, drug dealing, bottle picking, selling Street Talk, busking, casual labour (cash day jobs), selling handicrafts, selling art work, and petty crime.¹⁹ Individuals may choose to focus on one of these activities, or, as in James’ case, they may combine several of these activities. When street people are choosing among the various alternative income-generating activities they have available to them, many preferences, aptitudes, benefits and constraints are weighed against one another.

One basis for making such decisions was discussed by a Street Talk vendor named Sarah, “The panhandlers give us trouble. At least we’re doing something worthwhile. I come in the morning sometimes and there’s someone here on my corner, but I tell them to move on, this is a vendor corner...The panhandlers, what are they doing for society, eh? At least we’re trying to do something worthwhile.” Echoing the discourse of the general public discussed above, Sarah’s statement highlights a sentiment, which was presented by several buskers and Street Talk vendors, that it is better to “do something” than to “do nothing.” A preference for “doing something” played a role in Sarah’s decision to vend Street Talk rather than to panhandle.

In contrast, when I asked the people I met panhandling why they were not selling the Street Talk paper, the most common response was that they could make more money panhandling. As Dan put it, “Those guys, I ask them what they’re making selling those stupid papers and they say ‘nothin’. I make way more than them. Sometimes when I get a bunch of pennies I go by and give them some.” While the vendors I spoke to were sceptical that the panhandlers actually made more money, several of the panhandlers I

spoke to expressed the view that panhandling was more lucrative, and therefore a more attractive option.

However, one must not assume that in choosing to panhandle a person felt that he or she was expressing a preference for “doing nothing.” For example, when I asked Stuart if he ever ate at the soup kitchen he explained, “No, I’m too stubborn for that. Those people at the soup kitchens, they’re not working, they’re not out here doing this, talking to people, but me, I just can’t work right now [*due to his recent surgery*] so I have to come out here with my hat.” As Stuart intimates, he considers panhandling to be work, though not in his preferred occupation (construction), and while others choose not to “work” and to eat at the soup kitchens, Stuart stresses that he is “doing something” to support himself.

Just as Stuart’s recent surgery prevented him from working his usual job in construction, other people I spoke to described how their ill health had influenced their decisions to panhandle rather than to pursue other options. For example, Eric described to me how he used to “pick bottles”: “I was picking bottles then. I could make \$30 to \$40 in about 6 hours picking bottles. I used to do a section up in Bowness. I would take the bus up there, go through the alleys collecting the bottles, take them to the depot, then come back.” When I asked him why he switched from bottle picking to panhandling he explained,

I couldn’t haul the bottles any more... and by the time I went all the way up to Bowness it was only worth it if I did the whole route. Hauling 400 or so bottles gets heavy...my back is crushed, my upper and lower back are both crushed. My leg is numb from my hip to my knee and my shoulder is bad. I pinched the nerves when I was picking bottles. I aggravated it and it was asleep for a few months.

Due to the injuries he sustained while working in construction, and their subsequent aggravation while he was picking bottles, Eric found the lighter work of panhandling was his only viable option while he was without housing and drinking regularly. At the time of the interview he had successfully completed a drug and alcohol treatment program and was set to receive his second AISH benefit cheque (the first paid for his treatment). With the arrival of this cheque, Eric was hoping to get an apartment and to start a small-scale

handicraft business. However, he anticipated that despite his new benefits he would be “short” some months, particularly after he paid his damage deposit and first month’s rent, and he acknowledged that he would have to continue to panhandle for some time.

Peter, another person who was supplementing a benefit income from AISH by panhandling, described himself as “manic” and stated that due to his “condition” he was unable to get a job as once an employer discovered he was manic he would inevitably get fired. His most recent employment had been doing odd jobs for a woman, but once she found out he was manic she never called him for work again. Although he was collecting AISH, near the end of the month his money would run out and he would come out to panhandle for a day or two. As Peter explained, “I don’t like to do this, though. I don’t like to come out panhandling. I’m on AISH, but I get \$850 and \$520 of that goes to rent, so then I have \$100 to cover expenses, but then there’s food and shampoo and things.” Unable to attain even casual work, and in need of money only a few days a month, panhandling provided Peter with a flexible source of income.

In contrast to those who did panhandle, several people I spoke with stated that they were unable to panhandle. Bill, a busker of questionable talent, who was supplementing his SFI income by busking, explained that although he does not make a lot of money busking, and he thinks that the panhandlers make a lot more than he does, when he tried panhandling he could not do it. He said: “I’m not that good with the people. I take it too personally when they ignore me, I didn’t make much money.” Not only was it difficult for Bill to manage his relationship with the public, his inability to negotiate this relationship resulted in a low level of success in panhandling. As Bill’s example demonstrates, although panhandling is commonly seen by people on the street as a good way to make money, this may not be true for all people who try their hand at panhandling. Bill reported that his best day busking he made \$20, though he usually makes closer to \$3 or \$4 in “coffee money.” Meanwhile, he reported that he “didn’t make much” panhandling which leaves us to speculate that he truly did not make much if it was less than what he makes busking on even his best day.

Similarly, David explained to me, “I panned one morning. I took my hat and held it out and I couldn’t believe the looks I got. They were like, “you don’t belong here.” For David, the looks and public censure were enough to make panhandling a less attractive

option. David had a work-related injury that had caused him to lose his job of 18 years and to be classified as “temporarily disabled” (a designation which prevented him from receiving AISH benefits). Much of the work available to him was too painful (including using computers), but he was able to find light work cleaning up the street on the pedestrian mall. Although he enjoyed being able to work outside and having some flexibility in his hours, this job was seasonal and only part time during the winter, so he was unable to afford an apartment and was unable to qualify to receive EI at the time.

In other cases, the dirty looks and public censure aroused by panhandling activity inspired a less constructive reaction on the part of the person panhandling. For example, Matthew, who preferred a combination of working and petty crime to panhandling, explained his choice for me:

I can't panhandle. I just get so angry at people when they are rude to me, I just want to beat them up, so I don't pan, I just don't have the courage or whatever to do it...I work, I've got a job down at the automotive spring makers...I just have too much pride to ask people for money. I'm embarrassed doing it. I'd rather rob them. I would, I'd rather just take it than ask them for it. You see all around here, all these buildings? I've likely broken into every washing machine downtown. That's what I just served 22 months for. It only takes me about 2 minutes to break into a machine and you get about \$140 per machine, all in loonies, so it's good money.

For Matthew, “pride” prevents him from asking for money and also from being able to accept poor treatment at the hands of the public. In what may appear to be an odd twist of logic, Matthew states that he would rather rob people than ask for their money. Although he later explained that he has never actually robbed a person (as in a mugging), he has had difficulties controlling his anger while panhandling,

I just can't take what people say. This one day this guy said, “Hey you, stupid drunken Indian, why don't you get a job?” and I just stood up and said, “Have a nice day,” and I had to run away. I ran for five blocks just to get away from him because I was going to beat the crap out of him.

Although, in this instance, Matthew illustrates an admirable ability to manage his emotions, unable to overcome his feelings of anger in situations such as these he has recognized that panhandling is not a viable option for him.

As Lankenau discusses in his study of panhandlers in Washington D.C., in the face of recent anti-panhandling legislation which prohibits threatening or aggressive actions by panhandlers, panhandlers must learn to control or “manage” their emotions when faced with rejection or humiliation (1999b:290). Those, like Matthew, who struggle to control their emotions, may face consequences (tickets or jail time) for reacting to pedestrians in aggressive ways, or they may do as Matthew has done, and find alternative means of generating income. Unfortunately, in some cases, these alternative means may actually be less publicly desirable than panhandling. As Matthew indicates, the alternatives he has explored include working *and* breaking into washing machines.

In a similar vein, some people on the street (like James) may see panhandling and drug dealing as more or less equivalent income-generating options. While several interviewees alluded to being involved in drug dealing activities in the past, no one admitted that they were currently dealing drugs. This was possibly due to suspicions that I was really a police officer, as several informants asked me directly, “Are you a cop?” However, my own guess is that, as most of the people I was speaking to were engaged in panhandling when I approached them, it is unlikely that they were simultaneously dealing drugs. The people I observed dealing drugs did not appear to be engaged in panhandling while they were dealing, and I would speculate that drug dealers might avoid panhandling activity as it could potentially attract police attention and provide the police with a justification to approach them. The fact remains, however, that dealing drugs is one alternative to panhandling for generating an income on the street.

One should not assume, based on these examples, that *all* street people would consider theft or drug dealing to be an option. When Mark discovered that, with only photocopies of his ID (his actual ID was stolen while staying in a shelter), no bank account, and no employment history for the past five years, he was unable to collect any benefits from social services, he asked, “What am I supposed to do? Beg, borrow or steal? Well, I’m no thief!” I had similar conversations with several people who echoed Mark’s feeling that these were the only three options available to them at the time, and none of them seemed to consider theft as a serious option. Also, as many of the people I spoke to were estranged from their families and old friends, borrowing was not usually considered an option. And, apart from a few people who mentioned being involved in the

drug trade in the past, no one I spoke to suggested that becoming a drug dealer was an option. Thus, in the minds of many of my informants, outside of theft and borrowing, “begging” was seen as the *only* option available to them after being turned away from social services.²⁰

All of the above examples provide insight into how people on the street “choose” among the various income generating activities available to them. While individuals have differing views on what counts as “work” or “doing something,” they also have different aptitudes and physical abilities which influence what options they consider feasible. While some people prefer to “do something” by selling newspapers, others prefer to “do something” by panhandling. Although some people would rather be working in conventional labour, doing day labour jobs or even picking bottles, their physical and mental conditions often limit their options substantially. While successful panhandling requires good emotion management skills, it is also the least physically demanding of the possible street job options (apart, perhaps, from drug dealing). Due to its limited physical demands, and its temporal flexibility, panhandling provides individuals who are receiving social benefits like AISH and SFI an opportunity to diversify their incomes by engaging in an activity that generates undeclared income and is therefore not a threat to their benefits. Panhandling may also provide a greater income than is available through other street job options, like busking, vending *Street Talk* and bottle picking, depending on the talents and physical abilities of the individual. From these few examples it is evident that there are several income-generating options outside of mainstream employment available to people on the street, and that people actively choose among these options by weighing their own abilities and the benefits of each option. This is not to say that street people have *many* options, or that they are not constrained in which options they pursue, but to demonstrate that street people are able to take part in alternative income-generating activities which often enable them to exercise a degree of control over their lives and livelihoods.

Panhandling as Social Inclusion?

In addition to the practical factors which motivated people to panhandle rather than pursuing other income-generating activities, other aspects of panhandling were valued by those who engaged in it. Of course, money is the primary motivation for those

who panhandle, but when people described to me why they chose to panhandle, many stated that they enjoyed meeting people and appreciated friendships they had found on the streets. As Mark explained:

I pan for the money, and I've met a lot of people out here, and I have time to think and reflect...I sit on my corner because of the friends that I have. My mom, she's a good woman- told me to get a job that makes me happy. So, I'm happy...I don't see anything as permanent- I see things as cyclical. I don't see doing this in the future- I won't pan for the rest of my life. It's been almost a year. I think I'll be quitting by the time they bring in the permits. When it gets warm I'll go to detox and then get a job right away, get busy.

When Mark said, "I sit on my corner because of the friends that I have," he stressed that, in addition to his interest in making money, one of his motivations to panhandle was the social contact it provided. In talking to Mark about these friendships it became clear that while many of his friends were fellow street people, he had also gotten to know a few members of the general public, his "regulars," and several of the people who run local businesses. Despite the stigma attached to being homeless and to publicly asking for money, Mark's panhandling has led him to forge relationships with people from the mainstream, and Mark values these relationships greatly.²¹ Stephen Lankenau (1999b:311) argues that when higher status "regulars" stop to talk to panhandlers on the street, they "confer legitimacy" on the panhandler by treating him or her with respect and familiarity. While Lankenau emphasizes that these relationships are status enhancing, he also recognizes that they may validate one's sense of self and lessen feelings of shame and loneliness (1999b:310-313). For Mark, his corner marks the centre of a social network through which he is connected to the social world. While sitting out day after day has given him valuable time to "think and reflect" it has also given him an opportunity to make contact with a social world he would like to rejoin. As the confluence of events which led him to the street included the death of his mother, his wife leaving him and taking their daughter with her, losing his job, paying child support out of his social assistance payments, becoming a heroine addict, and finally losing his housing, Mark has many emotionally charged things to work through before he feels he will be ready to return to the life he left.

The complexity of Mark's situation is illustrated well by his experience attempting to make the transition into full time work while still living on the street and taking drugs. Significantly, Mark stated that he would prefer to be working in a conventional job but he found his transition into a mainstream job difficult because he could not have a shower and he was wearing the same clothes for weeks, so he felt he was inappropriately dirty to be working with "clean" people. This led him to skip dinner at the shelter so he could wash his clothes, and he was unable to get a brown bag lunch to take to work as there was a waiting list to get into the shelter that offered the bagged lunches, so it was difficult to get enough to eat. Also, he did not have a bank account for his employer to deposit his paycheque and he was unable to get one as his ID had been stolen. After he started working, he had to wait two weeks to receive his first paycheque and during that period he became "dope sick" as he had no money to buy morphine. Finally, unable to work, he checked into detox and did not contact his employer as he felt he could not reveal that he was a drug addict. Once out of detox, Mark quit his job before they could fire him. Conscious of the stigma of being both homeless and a drug addict, Mark was uncomfortable in the work place, unable to be forthright with his employer about his circumstances, and due to the physical constraints of drug dependence, he was also physically unable to sustain himself within the institutionalized structure of the working world. Although this experience demonstrated that before Mark can return to work he must go through detox/treatment, at the time of the interview he was not emotionally ready to take that step. In choosing to panhandle, Mark was engaging in an activity he enjoyed, which he viewed as a temporary endeavour to pay for both his food and his drug habit, and which provided him with an opportunity to meet people, to make friends, and to think about his life.

For others, like Eric, panhandling provided not only an income, but also an escape from the tedium of the "homeless" life:

I'm tired of sitting around the [drop-in centre] listening to people complain and watching TV. After about a day or two that gets real old. That's why I'm out here. I mean, this is boring but at least you meet new people everyday. People stop and talk, like you today. I'd like to be working, but I can only make \$100-\$200 working when I'm on AISH and even that they take away, so what's the point of working.²² They do have a work program at the [centre]

that pays cash at the end of the day, but I can't do that work [*due to a work related injury*]. I can hardly sit out here. I have to get up every half hour or so and take a walk.

For people living on the street, there is a lot of time to kill during the day before they can return to the shelter at night. While the city has several drop-in centres, the boredom of hanging around day after day with other street people is sometimes seen as intolerable. As Eric was unable to work most day jobs due to a serious injury, and was also reluctant to work conventional jobs because he believed that any money he made would be clawed back from his newly acquired AISH benefits, panhandling provided Eric with an opportunity to get outside and interact with people from the general public while making some money. In the battle against boredom, panhandling provided Eric not only with a respite from the tedium of homeless life, but also a way to unofficially supplement income from his social benefits.

The fact that Eric had recently stopped drinking and found himself cut off from his usual social network likely contributed to this sense of boredom, as drinking is one way people living on the street find to pass this time. As he explained to me,

Yeah, pretty much everyone I know out here either drinks or does drugs. Ever since I got back from [the alcohol and drug treatment centre] they're always trying to get me to go drinking with them. I got in a big fight this morning with my friend because I wouldn't leave here to go drinking. He finally just took off but he was mad. Everyone I know in Calgary lives downtown, these people walking by are the closest I come to normal people. I wouldn't even know how to meet people. I've never been a goody two-shoes so I wouldn't even know where to start.

Eric further explained that his problem with alcohol abuse did not start until he became homeless. As Eric described it, while he was drinking and panhandling, he was able to take part in the social life of the street. However, when he stopped drinking he found himself excluded from that social life, while he felt that he was unprepared to enter the social world of the "normal people" who walk by him while he panhandles. His comments suggest that panhandling provides Eric with an important social outlet through which he can "meet new people," and, in particular, new "normal people." Thus,

panhandling enables Eric to supplement his income, to overcome the boredom of the streets, and to make valued social contact with the general public.

In contrast to Eric, who found life on the street to be boring, James stressed that the thing he loves about living on the street is that you never know what your day will bring. As James stated above, he views panhandling as a job. Panhandling also enables James to maintain his street lifestyle:

Like I said, I've been on these streets mostly all my life. This is my home, that's my lifestyle and I love it because it's a challenge every day and it's a different experience everyday. Its like all right, OK, what's going to happen today? OK, it's boring as all hell today. Oh, tomorrow's Thursday. OK, let's try Thursday. All right, there's a fight around the corner, let's go see who's going to win this spat. Oh, hat a nice right shot he got, he's out cold. OK, what's going to happen down the next two blocks down here? Let's go find out. Go down there, I might run into a nice person or something like that. Like this is what I mean, you never know. Street life is an exciting life. Like people say how can you stand not working, this and that and everything else, I say I do work, I do get the odd jobs here and there, but I love the head rush you get off the streets, it's like taking a car so to speak and knowing your life is in that car's hands while you're doing a thousand miles an hour around a race track. Living out on the streets is the same risk, your the race car, you're on the track, and you never know what that day's going to bring.

While many people on the street and from the general public attempt to avoid the possibility of a figurative wreck, James embraces this lifestyle as the only one he has ever known.

Similar to Mark and Eric, James also stressed that he valued the friendships he had made on the street. However, Mark and Eric had each only spent a year or two on the street and stated that they valued meeting both fellow street people and people from the general public. In contrast, James had spent his life the street and stated that he valued his friendships with street people while he emphasized his disappointment with and alienation from the general public. According to James, while his childhood family was abusive, and while "society" fails time and time again to deliver him a modicum of respect, other street people provide what the others have failed to deliver. After so many years, James had grown to see these friendships in the idiom of family:

I hate calling them my street people. I call them my family. I've got someone I call uncle, I've got someone called auntie, I've got two or three sets of mom and dads out there, so to speak. And I know when I've had enough of society, I know where I can go to get the peace, joy and happiness and respect they don't give us, and it's from them. There's not a day goes by, even a simple hi makes me feel good from someone.

In an environment where interdependency may be integral to one's survival, James has found people he can rely on, while he has simultaneously become alienated from "society world." Street life has been normalized for him in a way that makes him reluctant to turn his back on the lifestyle he has lived. Panhandling enables him to maintain that lifestyle. Although James had no problems with alcohol or drug abuse, and he did work "odd jobs," a lack of education, and some psychological/ developmental problems posed a barrier to his finding long-term employment. In the face of these obstacles, James intended to continue panhandling to supplement his income and to stay connected to street life, even though he had recently moved into an apartment.

The above examples exemplify some of the positive aspects of panhandling from the perspective of those who panhandle. Being "on the street" can be an isolating experience, but panhandling provides people with an opportunity to make money and to make social contact with the general public and other street people. The fact that panhandling enables individuals to make contact with the general public outside of the structures of mainstream work was a factor appreciated primarily by those who were wary of street life, by those who intended to return to mainstream life in the near future, by those who had not been on the street for a long time, and by those who simply wished to be friendly with people in the wider community. However, panhandling also plays an important role in how friendships are formed and maintained amongst the community of street people. Panhandling places individuals on the street, where the action is, and provides the flexibility needed to be able to wander around and enjoy the excitement of street life. While these relationships will be discussed in later sections of this thesis, it is important here to note that particularly for those, like James, who have been on the street for a long time, panhandling becomes part of a street lifestyle that is integral to maintaining one's sense of social connection and one's sense of "family." In contrast to

the perception of the general public that people panhandle solely for the financial benefits, by providing access to social contact with both the general public and with other street people, panhandling may actually function to include street people, to a certain degree, in a social life which would otherwise be closed to them.

Panhandling as an Identity

The above discussion regarding the range of “street job” options available to people on the street, the ways they go about choosing which options to pursue, and the positive role panhandling may play in facilitating social contact with both the general public and other street people all bring us to the question of how the people who panhandle conceptualize and negotiate their own roles and identities. In their study of identity work among homeless people in Austin, Texas, David Snow and Leon Anderson argue that the efforts homeless people make to negotiate their identities may enable “those situated on the margins or at the bottom to retain a sense of self and thus their humanity” (1987:1364-1365). As people who are often without families, conventional jobs or material assets, street people may find themselves cut off from the standard roles and connections which form the foundations of identity for many people in the mainstream. However, despite these circumstances, Snow and Anderson demonstrate that street people are able to create and embrace alternative roles and associations which are employed in building their “personal identities,” or the “meanings attributed to the self by the actor” (1987:1347). The following section will discuss how the street people I spoke with defined and negotiated their personal identities.

In some cases, a variety of roles or “street jobs” were engaged in by an individual person, as in the case of James who would work an odd job one day and panhandle the next. When an individual engaged in several different jobs, there would be a variety of roles available to align his or her identity with. For example, Hank identified himself as a Street Talk vendor but when I asked him about his relationship with the people who panhandle he expressed his general irritation and stated, “Yeah, I just tell them to move on, or if they won’t, I just set up next to them. I’ve got regulars so they give to me not to them, then eventually they’ll move on. Today I had my hat out, if people don’t want to buy a paper they can give me donations, and the cops were right there, but they didn’t say anything.” Although Hank did not consider himself to be a panhandler, he did combine

putting his hat out for donations with selling the paper. The observation that the police did not interfere with this diversification appears to confirm his status as a vendor, holder of a vendor permit, which enables him to stand undisturbed in areas that are informally off limits to full-fledged panhandlers. Similarly, Ken, whom I first met busking with a harmonica, and who identified himself as a busker, at other times put his harmonica away and panhandled with his hat out in his hand.

As Hank and Ken illustrate, while people who would identify themselves as “vendors” or “buskers” may also engage in what are more commonly considered to be panhandling activities, engaging in such activities does not necessitate the individual to assume the identity of a “panhandler.” In fact, buskers and vendors typically presented a negative view of panhandlers, and strongly asserted an identity apart from that of the panhandlers. An example of this occurred when I approached Sam, a busker who was just packing up his instrument after an afternoon of busking. I explained to him that I was doing research regarding people who panhandle and their relationship with the community, to which he replied angrily, “I am *not* a panhandler!” After explaining that I understood that he was a busker, and that I was interested in hearing about what kind of experiences he had had with panhandlers he replied, “Those people are just lazy bums. I don’t have any sympathy for them at all. I think there ought to be a law against panhandling. It’s just another way of stealing from people who work hard for their money.” Thus, although some members of the general public see buskers and panhandlers as similar, Sam amplifies the view expressed by many members of the general public that panhandling is not “work” and that panhandlers are trying to *profit from the labour* of others. In expressing this view, he reinforces the sentiment that buskers differ fundamentally from panhandlers.

The buskers and vendors also reflect an awareness that they are in direct competition with the panhandlers. This competition is heightened by the fact that while both buskers and vendors hold permits, which enable them to pedal their music and newspapers, and, hence, possess legitimacy within the community, panhandlers have no similar claim to legitimacy. Although the general public may not be aware of this distinction, the buskers, vendors and panhandlers are acutely aware of it, and engage in daily struggles to stake out their territory and assert proprietary boundaries on the street.

While vendors and buskers believe that they should have primacy over panhandlers due to their permitted status, panhandlers do not necessarily agree, and while panhandlers battle with buskers and vendors, they also battle amongst each other. Even vendors and buskers occasionally have disagreements over territory, each one's claim buttressed by a flimsy paper permit. The power dynamics bound up in the distinct status identity of each individual are complex and complicated further by the warring influences of the institutionalized division of space (through the permits and the bureaucracy of the City Bylaw Office, the Calgary Downtown Association, the CUPS office, and police policy), versus the might of the informal division of territory (through alliances with a particular "street family" or friends one may call on when one needs help, and through the different drug dealing territories). While the conflict over the use of public space will be discussed further in Part II of this thesis, it is important here to recognize that "street jobs" are at once attached to power structures, moral ideologies, and both institutionalized and informal divisions of space. These factors greatly influence the lines along which individuals on the street will align themselves in terms of expressing their personal identities.

However, even for those who engage solely in panhandling, it cannot be taken for granted that one's personal identity is rooted in being a "panhandler." The first "panhandler" I approached during my field research in Calgary was a man named Dan who stood out on a corner asking passers-by if they could "spare some change for something to eat?" I had seen Dan many times on the same corner asking for change, and, as he was friendly and receptive when I stopped to talk with him on the corner, I introduced myself as a student doing research on panhandlers and their relationship with the rest of the community. I asked if he would like to talk to me about his own experiences, he agreed, and we headed to McDonalds to warm up. Although Dan was only 42, he insisted that he was an old man and mused that he would look significantly younger if he shaved off his beard. Over coffee Dan spoke of his life history and with pride explained, "I'm an educated man, I'm intelligent. I worked at the Children's Hospital in orthotics and prosthetics for five years until the provincial cut backs when I lost my job. I have a picture of me shaking hands with Peter Lougheed!" Dan repeatedly emphasized what a great guitar player he is, how he once toured with a band, and how he

used to be very successful with women. Dan used to have four apartments, five leather biker jackets, a wife and kids, but, as he explained, "I lost them all." Recently, Dan was injured in a traffic accident, resulting in a broken arm, leg and hip replacement surgery. Despite these injuries and the admission that he is an alcoholic, Dan asserted that he intends to work again when he's all healed up.

When I asked Dan about panhandling, he seemed uncomfortable. He glanced around a bit nervously at the other people sitting in the restaurant, he changed the subject, and told me again what a great guitar player he is. Every time I referred to him as a "panhandler," or to what he does as "panhandling," he deftly changed the subject, telling me the same jokes over and over, or re-emphasizing the successful life he led in the past. I, unfortunately, was slow to realize that he was systematically deflecting my questions. At first I thought he must be having trouble focusing on what I was saying; it did not occur to me that I might be drawing undesired attention to his panhandling activities in the semi-anonymous setting of the McDonalds or that I might simply be asking my questions the wrong way. Judging from what I had seen, a man standing on the street corner day after day asking for change, there was no question in my mind that he was a "panhandler." Yet, at no time in our conversation did he explicitly refer to himself as a "panhandler." Instead, he asserted, "I never wanted to panhandle. I used to think those guys were idiots, but I need the money." Throughout our conversation Dan emphasized that he "knows a lot of people here" and that "I have friends who say, hey Dan, if you ever need any help you call us," but when I asked him if he was friends with other panhandlers, he told me, "no, not really, I stay away from those guys, they know not to mess with me." When I asked him where he was staying he told me, "at the DI [*an acronym for a local shelter*]" then he added with derision, that he preferred staying with friends rather than staying at "the Destitute Inn." After the interview, as I looked back over my notes and thought about our discussion I realized that while, to me, Dan appeared to be "a panhandler," to himself, Dan is simply a man made old before his time, intelligent, educated, an excellent guitar player, who is lucky to be alive after being in an accident, and who, while temporarily out of work, has taken up asking for spare change to make a bit of money. He does not seem to consider himself to be a true "panhandler," and instead, emphasizes that he wants nothing to do with other people who panhandle.

From Dan's perspective, the activity of "panhandling" and the status of being a "panhandler," are not as closely associated as one might have assumed.

Dan provides a good example of what Snow and Anderson refer to as "distancing." "When individuals have to enact roles, associate with others, or utilize institutions that imply social identities inconsistent with their actual or desired self-conceptions, they may attempt to distance themselves from those roles, associations, and institutions" (1987:1348).²³ First, in distancing himself from other panhandlers Dan engages in what Snow and Anderson call "associational distancing," through which he draws distinctions between himself and those he does not wish to be associated with. Likewise, in distancing himself from his role as a panhandler, Dan engages in what Snow and Anderson refer to as "role distancing" through which he fosters an "impression of a lack of commitment or attachment to a particular role in order to deny the virtual self implied" (1987:1350). And finally, in distancing himself from the shelter where he was staying by assigning it a derisive nickname, Dan engages in what Snow and Anderson refer to as "institutional distancing" through which he derogates the very agency that provides him with a place to sleep (1987:1352). Through all of these forms of distancing, Dan was able to maintain an identity that preserved the dignity and pride that he had held before he became jobless and homeless. As Dan was estranged (and possibly divorced) from his wife, unable to see his young daughter, out of contact with his older son, and as all of his grandparents, his mother, his uncle, and three of his best friends had died all in one year, Dan was cut off from many of the associational contacts on which he could build his identity. Likewise, as Dan had lost his job and no longer played with a band he could no longer draw on those roles as the primary source of his identity.

Instead, Dan emphasized that he was educated, intelligent, "real" (he liked to "tell it like it is"), a good guitar player, a funny guy who liked to laugh, and that he had many friends who could help him out. He also emphasized that although he "likes [his] beer," he was in control of his drinking and could take it or leave it. What seemed important in his presentation was that even though there were moments when some element of the story he was telling would contradict the positive identity he was putting forth (like when he told me that he was an alcoholic and that "alcohol is bad"), he would not allow these elements to overwhelm the positive overall picture he was presenting. Thus, at least in his

presentation to me, Dan defined and negotiated his identity by distancing himself from his “street” roles, associations and institutions in order to present an image based on those qualities he valued most in himself. Significantly, the things he valued were primarily personal characteristics that were not tied directly to his role as a “panhandler.” Even in the process of panhandling he sought to showcase these personal characteristics by drawing passers-by into conversation, telling them jokes and keeping the conversation on the light side. The first time I met Dan I commented that it was cold out that day, implying that he must be cold, and he replied, “Well, don’t tell other people your problems because most don’t give a shit and the rest are glad.” Though this remark seems laden with meaning, he said it with a shrug, a smile, and a flippant manner that suggested that he was somehow unaffected by the bitter cold and all of the problems his panhandling role implied.

Even those who belong to a social network of friends who panhandle may not see themselves as “panhandlers.” When I asked Jean-Marc what he did before he started panhandling, he replied, “I’m a roofer. I work for [Renold’s]. I’ve been working there for years. I’m just waiting to go back to work now, waiting for them to go back on line. I get paid \$11/hour, my best week I worked 60 hours.” Although Jean-Marc had been living on the streets and panhandling for two or three years, he spoke of himself as a “roofer” in the present tense. Like several people I talked to, he saw his present circumstances as temporary, and talked about going back to work as if it were impending. As Jean-Marc presented it, the picture I was seeing, of him sitting on the street accepting donations, was not who he was, it was simply something he was doing to fill some time and make some extra cash. While he described his panhandling activity as “work” using phrases like, “well, time to get back to work,” he also spoke of going “back to work” when he spoke of returning to his previous employment as a roofer. There was a certain dualism in the way Jean-Marc perceived his working activities, a dualism best described as a recognition that panhandling was an income-generating activity he engaged in, but not an activity he considered to be his occupation. Even the way he described the method by which he panhandled made it sound as if he was not really panhandling: “Well, I just sit here. The police have decided to leave me alone, I don’t know why. I just sit here and say hello to people, and they say hello back, (*he lowers his voice*) and some give me a bit of money,

(*he smiles*), that's the most important thing. Thus, much like Dan, Jean-Marc engages in panhandling but distances himself from his role as a “panhandler.”

However, Jean-Marc did not distance himself from other panhandlers. In fact, as I discussed in the “Making the Strange Familiar” section of Chapter One, Jean-Marc had a vast network of friends, all of whom were street people and most of whom panhandled. In contrast to Dan, Jean-Marc embraced the associations he had with other street people and panhandlers. As Snow and Anderson describe, such “associational embracement” involves a personal identity which makes “reference to oneself as a friend or as an individual who acknowledges the norm of reciprocity and who thus takes his social relationship seriously” (1987:1356). As Jean-Marc repeatedly told me, “All these people out here, I know all of them, we’re like one big bunch. We watch each other’s backs... We help each other out.” Jean-Marc embraced these relationships and expressed pride taking part in such reciprocal relations of protection and sharing. Yet, at the same time, Jean-Marc distanced himself from the “helping” institutions, as he preferred sleeping outside to sleeping in a shelter, and he commented to me that he did not eat in the soup kitchen because, “I don’t want to make myself sick, the food they serve there is crap!” Thus, the identity Jean-Marc put forward was one that simultaneously distanced himself from his role as a “panhandler” and from the social service institutions, while he embraced his associations with other street people. Through these negotiations, Jean-Marc was able to maintain an identity founded on his being independent, a “good guy,” capable of doing many jobs, and someone who had lots of street friends and a good relationship with the general public.

In their study, Snow and Anderson (1987) suggest that the longer an individual is on the street, the more likely they are to embrace both their street roles and their street associations. This argument seems to be borne out by comparing the statements of both Dan and Jean-Marc to the discussion of James’ narratives in the previous section. Where both Dan and Jean-Marc distance themselves from their role as a “panhandler,” James embraces that same role. James refers to himself as a panhandler and as a street person, and he uses these terms almost interchangeably, as he explains, they’re “both the same person, except they do different jobs so to speak... panhandlers are part of the street family. We’re all one.” Also, James takes his associational embracement a step further

than Jean-Marc by referring to his fellow street people as his “family,” and to the world they inhabit as “street people world.” As James has spent roughly 26 years on and off the streets, while Dan and Jean-Marc have each only spent a few years on the street, James’ embracement of both his associations and his roles concurs with Snow and Anderson’s hypothesis. In contrast, when people have been on the street for a shorter period of time, instead of embracing their associations with the “street world,” they may still attempt to reinforce their associations with “society world” instead. As Mark and Eric exemplified in the previous section, and Dan in this section, some people who panhandle may emphasize their associations with the general public instead of, or in addition to, their associations with other street people. Yet, like James, the longer they are on the street, the more likely they are to lose their sense of connection with “society world” and to find themselves building an identity around their street roles and associations. The stigma attached to these roles and associations becomes an obstacle to be circumvented by subverting the negative social identities engendered by these roles and replacing them with positive personal identities.

The Ethics of Street People World

Helping and Protecting

Part of the process of building positive identities around one’s street roles and street associations is to find positive ways of defining and negotiating those roles and associations. As mentioned in the previous section, Snow and Anderson discuss one way of embracing one’s street associations which is to define oneself as a friend to others on the street and to demonstrate one’s dedication to the norm of reciprocity among street people (1987:1356). This reciprocity typically involves both sharing limited resources like cigarettes and alcohol, and also acting as a protector or defender of one’s friends on the street (1987:1356). As Snow and Anderson point out, while they seldom observed protective behaviours being carried out, the verbal avowal of such offers of protection functioned not only to cement ties between individuals, but also to “say something concrete about the claimant’s desired identity as a dependable trustworthy friend” (1987:1357). Such claims figured prominently in my fieldwork, as many of the people I spoke to said that they had many friends on the street, and that they would “watch each other’s backs” and “help each other out.” In fact, on several occasions, my street

informants made offers of protection to me. For example, at the end of our interview, after I had finally convinced Dan to accept his informant's fee, he said to me, "No really, not just 'cause you gave me this, but if you ever need help you just call me." Likewise, when a group of us sat in the parking lot drinking, I was always offered a swig of beer, whether or not I had contributed any funds to its purchase.

My street informants often took it upon themselves to give me what Ed called "the real story." While part of this "real story" involved educating me about the difficulties of living on the streets, another important element of it consisted of educating me about the ethics of living on the street and being part of the street community. Several times while I was talking to people who were panhandling on the street, they saw a fellow street person passing by and they yelled out a greeting to him or her or asked if he or she had an extra cigarette. After this other street person had passed by, I would be given an explanation like the one provided to me by Ed:

Did you see that? That guy was another street person. I don't even know him, but I asked him if I could buy a cigarette off him for a quarter and he wouldn't even take the quarter, he just gave it to me. See, we help each other out. That's what it's like on the street.

In Ed's narrative, although the man passing by was a "stranger," he was willing to help Ed due to their common membership within the street community. It was clear that Ed took pride in being a member of this community, which, in contrast to his description of the mainstream public, values helping even those who are "strangers."²⁴

I was not the only one whom Ed sought to educate regarding the ethic of "helping each other out." One afternoon as a group of us sat in the parking lot drinking, Ed got in an argument with another panhandler, Nick, because Ed would not let Nick drink his beer (Nick was already sharing a beer with Frank). Instead of sharing his beer with Nick, Ed said, "No, I'm going up to drink with Stuart, he's sitting up there, he's got no beer, and all he's got is pennies. That's what we do out here man, we help each other out. If you don't like it, tough!" Ed seemed to be asserting that Stuart was a friend who was having a hard time, and that he intended to share with him because he was alone and in need, while Nick was conversely not alone, already had a beer of his own and was violating the ethic of sharing by being too greedy. Ed's statement directly challenged Nick's behaviour and

reinforced the ethic of sharing in a way that was at once an assertion of a positive “helping” identity and a lesson in the values of the street community.

Friendship and Trust

However, at the same time that Ed was educating Nick regarding the ethics of sharing, he was also delivering a statement regarding Nick’s membership within the gathered group. Nick was the only person involved in my research who exhibited violent, disruptive and offensive behaviour which ranged from punching and destroying wooden fence boards to standing on top of a statue exclaiming to the passing public, “Kiss my ass, suck my cock.” The day we sat in the parking lot the others treated him like an interloper. In addition to Ed’s reprimand regarding how street people should help each other out, Frank chided Nick for asking me rude questions, Frank eyed him suspiciously when he went to purchase a beer for them to share (he feared he would run away with the money), and Frank suggested getting rid of him, “Why don’t you tell him to go get something, get rid of him and then we can do the real study.” Frank explained to me that, “He’s not one of us. We’re all friends but he doesn’t hang out with us. He’s a snuffer, we’re different.” Nick had explained earlier that he sniffs solvents, specifically lacquer, but he added that, “I have to stop that stuff- it makes me crazy. It does, it drives me insane, it really messes with my head.” This statement seemed to borne out by his erratic behaviour. As Frank’s comment indicates, the fact that Nick was a snuffer while the rest of the group were primarily drinkers demarcated a difference between them. As well, the others in the group did not appreciate the aggressive and disrespectful behaviours Nick exhibited. During the course of the afternoon, both Frank and Ed employed identity talk, like Frank’s statement that Nick was not “one of us,” to differentiate themselves from Nick. While everyone else in Jean-Marc’s group agreed that they were friends and that they watched each other’s backs, Nick seemed to be unaware that he was not really welcome in the group. This failure to belong seemed to hinge on his aggressiveness, his preference for snuffing over drinking, and the general lack of trust that the group had towards him.

The importance of trust within the street community was best described by James. Embedded in his friendships with people on the street James has grown to expect what most would agree to be standard qualities of commitment:

And that's even on the streets. And that's what you call among family and friends, *trust*. And that's a big word out there on that street. There's four main ones, there's respect, love, honesty, trust. Those are framed, four of the main ones out there. And if you can't have that, well I dare you to come out on the street.

In James' statement he dares those who do not have these four key qualities to come out on the street. In James' stories about street life, the defence of his honour on the streets figured prominently. When he told me about the time a woman on the street accused him of sexually assaulting her, the importance of maintaining one's respect on the streets became evident. Here James describes his relief at the response of the woman's boyfriend's best friend to the woman's accusation: "He goes, that lying two faced 'b', and this was coming from her boyfriend's best friend. So I was like, he believes me over her. Yeah! So at least my butt will be safe, not 6 feet under, because we take, when a girl accuses someone like that we take it very seriously among the family. But we check it out first to make sure." James made it clear that the accusation of the woman not only threatened his relationships with the other members of his street family, it also threatened his life, as he was sure to face some form of retribution from her boyfriend or father who were also on the streets. In this context, James demonstrates how one's social networks and one's very life can potentially be destroyed by a failure to earn or maintain the trust and respect of the other members of the street community.

Failed Ethics and Security Risks

This emphasis on trust, respect, honesty and love takes on another dimension in the identity talk of people on the streets. As Philippe Bourgois writes, "the oppositional identities of street culture are both a triumphant rejection of social marginalization and a defensive- in some cases terrorized- denial of vulnerability" (1995:158). One way of rejecting social marginalization is to emphasize the disjuncture between the qualities that street people hold dear and those the general public demonstrate. For example, James recounted the following conversation with a member of the general public which took place in an elevator, "I said to him, 'when we're out on the street, it's based on love, kindness, and respect, those three things'. I says, 'you guys don't even show that, all you're worried about it the damn almighty dollar, and you don't care who you have to walk over to get it.'" By construing love, kindness and respect as the domain of street

people, James constructs an oppositional identity which works to counter social marginalization by actually venerating street people in relation to the general public. However, the flip side of James' admonition is the defensive denial of vulnerability it carries with it.

People on the street have a vested interest in maintaining a code of ethics based on qualities like respect, honesty, and trust. The failure of some street people to embody these qualities raises significant security concerns for people who live on the streets with little to protect them from those who cannot be trusted. People who live on the streets live their lives exposed with little privacy or security. Sleeping in parks, in doorways, in alleys, under bridges, and even squatting in abandoned buildings or parkades one never achieves the same level of protection afforded by a room with a locked door. Even sleeping at a shelter provides little protection as the sleeping arrangements often involve sleeping on floor mats which are anywhere from two inches to a foot apart from each other, where fights may erupt at any moment, and where bathrooms are undeclared danger zones. In contrast to those who portrayed street people as a network of friends who would help and protect each other, Leon explained

People think that us homeless people are all one big happy family. Well, they're wrong, it's dog eat dog. If a guy wants a bag to put his stuff in and he sees yours and wants it, he'll take it and throw your stuff out and keep the bag for his stuff. If I'm sleeping and a guy sees my wallet sticking out of my pocket do you think he'll think twice before taking it? No. People steal your stuff all the time. That's why I like to sleep outside when it's warm.

The picture Leon paints highlights the vulnerability of people who are without housing, and illustrates the kind of threats that street people must seek to avert through creating networks of friends to protect them, and by maintaining a code of ethics which discourages such predation.

The true dangers of such predation are illustrated in a story Jean-Marc told me of the best day of panhandling he ever had. It was the 22nd of December and he had made \$150 in one day of panhandling. Later that same day,

There was this Indian guy by himself. I saw him and I'm a nice guy, I talk to everyone, and I'm generous. So I go and I get a beer and I share it with him, then I take him to where I sleep-- by the

donut place there, the parkade, and we wait outside and I tell him to watch- when someone comes out, we're going in. So we went in and I showed him my spot. And I got him a sleeping bag, and I got myself one, and I went to sleep. Then when I was sleeping, this guy kicked me in my head, knocked out all my teeth and broke my jaw.

While Jean-Marc attempted to share his limited resources with this other street person, he also opened himself up to the possibility of being preyed upon. As result of his beating, Jean-Marc had a metal plate in his jaw and could not feel his jaw or the few teeth he has left. The aesthetic effect was comical, as the lack of teeth and the propensity to drool combined with Jean-Marc's friendly demeanour and easy smile to create a toothless grin contagious in its mirth. But, when I spoke to Jean-Marc of the beating the smile disappeared for a moment as he explained, "If I ever see that guy again he's going to get it... All these people out here, I know all of them, we're like one big bunch, we watch each other's backs...I've got a lot of friends." I met one of Jean-Marc's friends who confirmed that he was on the lookout for whoever did this to Jean-Marc. As Jean-Marc and his friends had been unable to find this man they speculated that, fearing retribution, he must have left Calgary after he robbed Jean-Marc. In this sense, while Jean-Marc's network of friendships failed to protect him from the initial attack, both the talk of friendship and the promises of protection act to deny his apparent vulnerability and to reinforce his sense of security. Surrounding oneself with a network of friends upon whom one may depend is integral to survival on the street, while ensuring that those friends adhere to a shared code of ethics is both a step towards defining a positive personal identity and towards securing a real and imagined measure of security in an insecure world.

Options and Agency

Another element of the identity politics surrounding panhandling is the need not only to negotiate one's personal identity, but also to negotiate one's social identity, or the identity ascribed to people who panhandle by those who do not. As the relationship between the general public and the people who panhandle is one characterized by social distance and a lack of mutual understanding, it is likely impossible for people who panhandle to approach their identity negotiations with the general public the same way

they do with other street people. As the following example demonstrates, when James attempted to earn the trust and respect of the mainstream public by extending the ethic of kindness, friendship and “helping each other out” to them as well, his attempts to engage the public often fell short of overcoming the distance between the two groups:

I do it every day. I help people out. I'll ask, “Hey ma'am, would you like some help with your bags?” Something like that. Sure, I get people running the other way scared shitless of me because I asked if they wanted a hand, and that's what I call, hey man, I'm just being friendly, you don't have to be scared. Sure, I may look like the scariest son of a gun that ever walked the face of the earth, but I got a heart of gold if you give me a chance, all I ask is just don't get me wrong.

As this example illustrates, the simple extension of offers of kindness and assistance on an individual basis may not be enough to overcome suspicion and fear from members of the general public. James was well aware of the problems posed by the negative view the public had of the panhandlers, and significantly, he also recognized that some of this fear and suspicion was warranted.

Sure there's the odd street person that gives others, the rest of us, bad names too. Don't get me wrong, like the old saying is, there's always one rotten apple in a barrel. Actually, in this case there could be a few, but I lost count after three, so I'll say a few for now. I look at it this way, those are the ones I want to get rid of.

This statement shows how James is concerned with the actions of other street people, and how he sees that their actions, “give the rest of us bad names.” Far from being unconcerned about each other's actions, or revelling in the dishonesties and ruses of their colleagues, most of the people I spoke to were very concerned about how the actions of other street people reflected on themselves and the way it influenced how the public constructed their social identity.

One major concern voiced by several panhandlers echoed the concern of the general public that some of the people who were panhandling did not need to be panhandling and had other options available to them. As James explained,

There's a total of about, actual panhandlers that have no choice to do it for a living, it's around 34-32, 34 probably, that have no choice of doing it. The rest out there is just to grab a fast buck for a quick high and a quick drunk, which I don't agree with. Like a lot

of these panhandlers, people don't realize [*he points to a man walking by*], that it could be let's say, this gentleman that's just leaving's kid down here on a Friday night just to grab a few quick bucks so he can get stoned. They don't realize that. That half of these, I'll admit half of these panhandlers are people's kids that come from a good home, nice home, a yard, a dog, the whole ball of wax, but they're down here because mom and dad won't give them any money. "Ah, why don't we just go downtown and panhandle?" Boom, instant free beer and free drugs. And that's what ticks me off is right there, right there. That's why I like to straighten those suckers out if I can, and start beating their butts all the way back home, because that's what gives us a bad name.

Significant in James's statement is his emphasis that some panhandlers "have no choice" but to panhandle for a living. Similar to the view of many members of the general public, James states that the people he considers to be legitimate in their panhandling are those who have no other options. He singles out kids who panhandle for alcohol and drug money and who come from "good homes" as being illegitimate panhandlers. However, his concern with them seems to lie more in their giving the other street people a bad name than it does in repudiating their actions. Although James no longer uses alcohol or drugs, many of James's panhandling friends are frequent users. In talking of his past use or their present use James does not express any disapproval of alcohol and drug use in principle, or in the act of panhandling to get money to support one's habits. What he does take issue with is the idea that kids from good homes would come to panhandle and in so doing, affect how the general public looks at other people on the street. If people who do not genuinely need the money or people who have other options available to them panhandle and their fraud is discovered, or if they misbehave while panhandling, then the fallout will affect all people on the street. James says that in order to protect the street community from the negative effects related to these panhandlers, he likes to "beat their butts" back home, in essence, asserting his own legitimacy and negating theirs.

Also, the perception that some of the young people panhandling could be at home with their parents inspired a certain scorn regarding their failure to recognize the true nature of street life, and to internalize what that street life means to those who truly do not have other options. As Lesley, who had lived on the streets for four years (since she was twelve), explained to me, "Being out here is no fun. You've got your twinkies who come

out here cause they think it's cool and fun but it's not." When I asked her what a twinkie was she said, "They're people from the suburbs who run away for the summer and come hang out downtown, then they go back home when it starts to get cold." Her disdain for the twinkies was evident and when I asked her if she ever had problems with the older street people she told the following story, "The other day I was with my friend and he was throwing pennies at this old bum under the bridge. I got mad at him and told him to stop. I know what it's like. He doesn't know. I told him, 'man, you're home-grown, you don't understand', but I know what it's like." Lesley had been kicked out of her wealthy mother's home because Lesley did not get along with her mother's new husband, and, no longer welcome there, she had no home to return to. Although she had lived for a short time in a car with her father, who was also homeless, she had been on the streets for four years. As she illustrates in the story of her friend throwing pennies, the fact that he was "home-grown," implying that he had had a stable home, distanced him from understanding what it is like for those who find their home at the underside of a bridge, and those who feel they have little choice in living their lives on the street.

"Heat-Draws" and "Aggressive" Panhandling

Ben, who was concerned that twinkies were "heat-draws," echoed a similarly dim view of twinkies. According to Ben, "they draw the attention of the cops" because "they just do things in really obvious ways and they don't know anything." Thus, hanging around with twinkies increases the risk that police will be more likely to take notice of them. While Ben did not elaborate on what exactly the twinkies do to attract attention, he did tell me that he was trying to keep a low profile, as there was an outstanding warrant out for him because he had breached his probation after being caught with two grams of marijuana. Thus, the lack of street knowledge on the part of the twinkies posed a real threat to Ben and his ability to avoid contact with the police.

Another concern voiced by people panhandling was that in addition to the constant threat of undesired police attention, they were concerned about how the poor behaviours of other panhandlers reflected on their own panhandling activities. Eric discussed this concern in relation to the behaviour of his friend Chad:

Chad is the one who got mad at me because I wouldn't go drinking with him. He came by this morning and when I wouldn't go with

him he was yelling and getting pushy with the people, so I told him to move to the other side of the street. Him acting like that really makes me look bad. And it would likely be OK, but if the guy in there (*the store beside his corner*) saw him acting that way then he likely wouldn't let me pan here. This is pretty much the only spot I can pan in so I can't let him wreck it for me. He's one that gets aggressive with people once he's been drinking, and he's halfway there now. See [*he motions to Chad who is talking to a man on the corner, standing very close to him swaying and pressing his face towards the man*]. He's got a lot of lines. He tells people that he just needs 35 cents for the phone, or 75 cents for the bus. I don't know how he can do that. I just couldn't lie to people's faces like that. I just say "hi," or "how's it going." I always just needed the money to support my addiction.

From Eric's statement one gets a feel for the stake he has in Chad's behaviour. Not only does Chad's drunken demeanour and aggressive solicitation affect how passers-by will see Eric, it is also a potential threat to Eric's panhandling territory. As Eric was under the mistaken impression that Calgary's current anti-panhandling legislation requires that people panhandle at least ten metres away from the C-Train tracks, bus stops, parking lots, and doorways he took great pains to walk all along the street and to find what he claimed was the *only* spot on the mall where he could legally panhandle.²⁵ Then, he had made arrangements with the woman who sold Street Talk on the same corner to split the use of the space, with her selling the paper in the mornings and him panhandling in the afternoons. Over time, he had established that this corner was "his spot," and although when he was not present others could use "his" corner, once he arrived others were expected to leave. Additionally, the man from the shop on that same corner had talked to Eric and said that he had seen Eric panhandle and, since he did not bother anyone, the man said it was "OK with him" if Eric panhandled on that corner. After going to great lengths to establish a space where he could panhandle, Eric was well aware that if the man in the shop decided to phone the police to complain about Chad then all of Eric's efforts would be for naught. In an effort to reduce the risk to himself Eric asked Chad to cross the street to put some distance between them and (hopefully) reduce the guilt by association. For both Ben and Eric, the ignorant or aggressive behaviours of the other panhandlers pose significant security and impression management concerns.

Honesty

Also of note in Eric's statement is his concern with honesty. With Chad asking passers-by for change for the telephone or the bus Eric felt that Chad was lying to people, as the money Chad raises is not used for those ends. Eric stressed that, although before he went to treatment he had been panhandling to support his addiction, he opted to simply greet people rather than asking for money and specifying a use for it. In Eric's view, his actions have been honest, while Chad's use of "lines" to convince people to give him money strikes Eric as dishonest.

Mark raised a similar concern with honesty as I sat outside talking to him and another man who had been panhandling close by approached us. After the man walked away, Mark explained to me why he had behaved rudely towards him,

I'm an honest guy and I just think, tell the truth or don't say anything. Like he has this sign saying, in three points, 1) the doctor made a mistake, 2) I'm not mentally capable. But then I talk to him and he's like an encyclopaedia, he knows so much stuff. So, he's not stupid. It's a lie, and I don't think he should lie. Like, look at my sign, 'homeless, please help' that's true, I am homeless, staying in shelters, and I ask for 'help', not money, I'll take food or whatever. But him, I just don't trust anything he says.

As Mark feels strongly about telling the truth, his impression of the other panhandler's dishonesty leads him to distrust him. In talking to Mark it became clear that while people on the street have little in terms of material possessions, status, or the other trappings of mainstream life, they do have their "word." Throughout my conversations with him he emphasized that he had a good reputation and would always keep his word. This was particularly important to him as it related to his intravenous drug use because when he was short of cash the people he bought his drugs from would give him drugs as they knew his "word is good." While he told me frankly about his drug use, he did mention that he would not tell the "customers" (or passers-by) and he explained that his reason for this was that, "people just don't understand."

Mark explained that what people fail to understand is that, "Morphine is just as important for me as food. I can't function without it. I get dope sick and then I can't even eat. If I'm sick and you put a piece of pizza in front of me it's no good because I can't eat it anyway." Mark told me several stories about times he had tried to quit and times he was

unable to get the drugs he needed. The withdrawal he described was painful and incapacitating. While he does not set out to deceive passers-by by claiming that he needs money for food or shelter, he also does not sabotage the possibility of donations by blatantly asking for money to support his drug habit. He uses a printed sign that asks for “help,” and passers-by are left to draw their own conclusions about what he needs the money for. Through using this approach, Mark is able to maintain his personal identity as an honest guy whose “word is good,” while managing his social identity in a way that he feels does not compromise his integrity, but also presents him in a positive light despite his drug use.

As all of these examples demonstrate, the ethics of street people enable them to make positive statements about their personal identities and to manage the image they present to the public. While these statements may counteract the social marginalization experienced by the people who panhandle, they also work to deny the vulnerability of those on the streets. By asserting a code of street ethics, and working to coerce or educate others into adhering to that code, the people who panhandle work to create a secure and positive social environment. While this code is sometimes broken in practice, the verbal assertions of its tenets serve as one important element in their negotiations of both their personal and social identities.

While the non-panhandling public often sees panhandlers according to simplistic stereotypes, this chapter shows the diversity and complexity of the population of people who panhandle. As these narratives illustrate, there is a complex relationship between panhandling, work, choice and the structural/ personal factors that limit the abilities of, and opportunities available to, panhandlers. While they might not have a lot to choose from, panhandlers do exercise agency in weighing the options available to them against other less attractive possibilities. While some panhandlers consider what they do to be “work,” others view panhandling as an income generating activity that is not truly an occupation. Much like the non-panhandling public, many panhandlers believe in the importance of work and desire to return to the mainstream work force. Unfortunately, many of those are people who are unable to get employment due to health problems including work related injuries, mental illness and substance abuse and who find themselves unable to access adequate social benefits. For those who express a desire to

work, but find themselves panhandling, the resulting tension is enough to bring of deep feelings of shame. Despite Mark's claim to "happy" panhandling, he later told me how ashamed he was, "My daughter, how could I let her seem me like this? A failure." As he asked me this question, he broke down in tears. Thus, despite emphasizing the positive aspects of his street life, Mark also felt that he was a failure. Herein lies the complexity. Moment by moment panhandlers must find a way to negotiate their identities while preserving a positive sense of self. However, this is difficult to accomplish given the stigma attached to panhandling the fact that many panhandlers do not believe that panhandling is a legitimate activity in the sense of being an equivalent to mainstream work. While some people who panhandle deal with this by distancing themselves from their roles as panhandlers or from their associations with street people, others embrace their associations with street people and build positive identities around a system of ethics and a code of behaviour. As James tells us at the beginning of this chapter, street people do whatever it takes to survive. While James was referring to the street jobs people do to physically survive while on the streets, it appears that panhandlers also engage in an elaborate negotiation of identity in order to preserve their sense of self.

Chapter Four: Presentation of Self in Everyday Street Life

People panhandling not only have to manage their personal identities, they must also manage their social identities. The financial success of a panhandler is largely dependent on how successfully he or she manages his or her presentation of self (Goffman 1959) for the general public. The following chapter will discuss how panhandlers approach presenting themselves to the public in order to garner donations, how successful these approaches are in the eyes of the public, and how the panhandlers manage these presentations in ways which enable them to maintain a positive sense of personal identity.

The Dirtier the Better?

One aspect of this identity management centres on the physical image people present to the public. Several people I spoke to panhandling said that although they preferred to be clean, living on the streets makes it difficult to stay clean. When Mark spoke to me about the time he tried to hold down a job while living on the streets he told me, “It was too hard, I wasn’t stable. I couldn’t have a shower. I was wearing the same clothes for weeks. I could smell myself. I’m a clean person; my mom brought me up to be clean. She used to make me shower twice a day. That’s what I’d be doing now if I had a place.” In Mark’s case, being dirty and smelly was one reason he felt uncomfortable at his job as he felt out of place among the cleaner workers. Similarly, several other people I spoke to panhandling mentioned that they would like to shave off their facial hair, and that they would look more attractive and younger without it, but that living on the street or in a shelter made it too difficult to maintain that level of hygiene. In essence, the conditions of street living led many people to feel dirty and unattractive and afforded them, short of making a great effort, little choice in what kind of physical image they were able to present to the public. Thus, despite the awareness that their poor hygiene was a stigma to bear, several people I spoke to panhandling felt that there was little they could do about it.²⁶

Conversely, when I told Jean-Marc that I wanted to try panhandling and I asked him for some advice, he told me that I was too clean and that I had to look a little scruffier, that I needed to “roll around in the dirt” a little bit first. Jean-Marc himself was

so dirty that, as my fieldwork progressed and the weather got hotter and hotter and he persisted in wearing his snow pants all day in the sun, he became almost unbearably pungent. He was fully aware of his dirtiness and he mentioned several times that he would like to go to detox for a break from the streets, and that if he did he could have a nice shower and slip into a clean pair of pyjamas while they washed his clothes. He talked of getting clean with relish, and mentioned that it had been three weeks since he had a shower, but still he was reluctant to go because he realized, "I'll be too clean- too clean to pan and I won't make any money." This statement, in addition to his advice to me to make myself dirtier, suggests that he was consciously using his dirty appearance to manage the impression he delivered to the public. Although he preferred to be clean, he recognized a direct relationship between his dirtiness and how much money he was able to make, and this relationship must have been significant if it was enough to prevent him from washing despite his clear desire to be clean.

Similarly, Lesley, a teenage panhandler, told me, "If I go sit down beside someone who looks worse than me then nobody is going to give money to me. It's like people expect you to have no clothes on or something. Look at this, my clothes are full of holes (*she shows me the cuffs of her sweater held on by safety pins*), I don't even have a jacket. While Lesley recognizes that there are other people on the street who look much worse than she does, she expresses frustration with the general public who seem to be unable to recognize how in need she truly is even though she is not naked or filthy. In Lesley's case, she must struggle to compete with people like Jean-Marc who more successfully present the image of the "down and out" panhandler. However, Lesley did not seem to be prepared to go to the same lengths that Jean-Marc did to present such an image.

Another panhandler named Frank provided a possible explanation for this difference in approach. When I spoke to Frank about my desire to try panhandling he explained that I was too clean to panhandle. He said, "If you went and sat out there to pan you wouldn't make anything. People wouldn't be convinced. Well maybe you'd make something 'cause you're a girl. It's easier for girls." After some conversation between Frank and Nick over whether they would need to make me up with dirt and makeup, Frank declared, "Maybe if she just put on a smile and looked pretty she could do it." Talking to Lesley and Jill seemed to confirm this prediction. Although both girls were

relatively clean, the “young girl” image enabled them to make anywhere from \$8/hr on an average day, \$15/hr Fridays after work, and \$35-50/ ½ hr outside of bars on Friday and Saturday night. In contrast, the men I spoke to panhandling reported making anywhere between \$4 and \$50 for an average “day” of panhandling. While not all of them specified how many hours a day they panhandled, based on my observations I would say that most spend between four and eight hours a day actually panhandling. Apart from the days right before Christmas, none reported being able to make as much \$35-50/ ½ hour at any time of day or in any special location. Based on my interviews and observations, even on “good days” most men make less than the \$8/hr the girls reported making on an “average day.” The importance of this observation is two fold: 1) that young women appear to make more than older men, and 2) that despite appearing young and clean, these woman were able to make at least as much money as the older men, and hence, are able to maintain a higher level of hygiene than the men without foregoing income.

The above observations regarding cleanliness and presentation of self are even more revealing when viewed in reference to what members of the general public had to say about the appearance of people who panhandle. In their brief encounters with panhandlers, pedestrians often use the physical appearance of the panhandlers as a check upon the validity of the verbal claims the panhandlers make. Yet, as the panhandlers make clear above, they realize that these aspects are being scrutinized, and true to Goffman’s prediction, they try to “exploit this very possibility” through manipulating their appearance (1959:7-8). Martin, a downtown worker, described the dissonance between the image portrayed by people on the street and their actual material circumstances:

Sometimes you see them with a cell phone, and I say, “what?” You’re asking *me* for money and you’ve got a cell phone? But then I thought, that’s their home right, that’s their phone. I guess that’s a kind of stigma attached to these people. If you have a cell phone, you’ve obviously got money right? ... It’s a stigma attached to them. And you see a person begging for food or money and it’s like, that no good person.

In Martin’s narrative, he notes that if a person panhandling has visible markers of wealth, in this instance a cell phone, he might feel incredulous when asked for money. However,

as he points out, the street is their home, and his judgement that they are a “no good person” would be in response to the stigma they carry, rather than an accurate assessment of their actions.

A concern with these visible markers of wealth was particularly evident when people talked about the expensive looking apparel worn by street kids. Sean, a downtown worker, discussed this in relation to why there are so few street kids panhandling in the winter compared with the summer,

I don't know where they go in the wintertime. Maybe the young kids go back to their mom and dad and say, “Well, I'll just go back and stay here.” I mean, these kids are clearly not street people. You know? They have \$100 sneakers on their feet, they have expensive coats on, they're wearing Tommy Hilfiger jeans, for Pete's sake! They have more money than I do. It's a gas for them. It's some kind of trip.

To Sean, the expensive clothes, and the virtual disappearance of the street kids during the winter is taken as evidence that these are not kids in need, but instead, are simply kids looking to entertain themselves.

Jack, a local business owner, presented a similar sentiment:

Anytime you see young people with different coloured hair, and tattoos and those things, those kids may have a chosen lifestyle but they have been not accepted by society yet. Now I've spoken to a couple of them, I say hello to them, you know, they respond, some of them I find are very intelligent, and they come from very good families and I wonder, why are they doing that? My feeling is, I think it is a sign of protest towards the society. And maybe they are trying to express themselves; maybe they are choosing the wrong way. And I'm prone to define them as panhandlers too because they are begging.

Based on their appearance, Jack concludes that street kids dressed as punks have “chosen” their lifestyle, rather than arrived at it out of a real need. Yet, even more than signifying that they have chosen their lifestyle, Jack feels that their appearance signifies a protest against society and its values. While Jack did not condemn this protest, he did feel that the young punks were choosing the wrong way to express themselves.

In the above examples, Sean and Martin present their suspicions regarding the actual need and presumed affluence of panhandlers who fail to present visible markers of

poverty. Jack focuses on the link between the appearance of people panhandling and what motivates them to panhandle, in this case, a desire to protest against society by adopting an alternative lifestyle. Significantly, all used appearance to determine the level of need or the amount of choice an individual had in engaging in panhandling activities. As many members of the general public must make decisions about whether to donate to panhandlers, and they often have only appearances to go on, it is important to recognize the link in people's minds between the physical appearance of the panhandlers, their presumed "need" or lack thereof, and the possession of agency they are ascribed based on that appearance.

However, while the dirtier panhandler may attract more sympathy or donations based on their apparent need, they also run the risk of being so dirty that they inspire fear or disgust. As Sean told me:

I would say basically 99% of the natives that I know, or know of, or have seen are all your typical quote un-quote drunk Indians. Most of them I meet are drunk and they're just a waste of oxygen on a lot of them. That's pretty harsh but it's true. I mean, you either clean yourself up or just do the world a favour and stop eating up my resources, you know? Because they're harsh, like they're really really harsh, and dirty.

As Sean's statement demonstrates, the perception of people who panhandle as "harsh" and "dirty," and "native" or "Indian" contributes to his impression that they are also abusing alcohol. In this particular case, Sean's disgust with these "drunk Indians" leads him to declare that they are a "waste of oxygen." From Sean's perspective, in the case of this particular sub-section of the panhandling community, being dirty was not an indicator of need and instead stood as an indicator of substance abuse and a signifier of illegitimacy.

In contrast, Sean once gave money to a panhandler who "didn't look like any sort of person, they didn't look like a granola type, or a young punk, or a drunken Indian or anything like that, they just looked like normal everyday person who was clearly living on the street and not having a very good time of life." In this case, the fact that the panhandler looked like a "normal person," as opposed to fitting into a stereotypical category, led Sean to "feel for him." As Sean described, the man was, "like me, literally."

Here Sean hits on a significant aspect of the panhandler's presentation of appearance: pedestrians are more likely to identify with panhandlers who seem less "strange" to them. Although panhandlers may be like "strangers," even within this group of strangers there are degrees of strangeness. As the narratives of Jack and Sean illustrate, young punks and Aboriginal people might seem stranger than other people on the street. Likewise, the dirtier and more intoxicated a panhandler is, the stranger they might seem to a clean and sober public. Thus, the appearance of panhandlers signifies more than just the genuineness of their need, it determines how "strange" they are. The way panhandlers present themselves influences the ability of the public to identify with them, to empathize with them, and to see their own reflection in the faces of those on the street.

As the above narratives demonstrate, panhandlers may face "countervailing demands from different audiences" which lead them to manipulate the "signs and symbols" available to them (Lankenau 1999b: 290). While some pedestrians believe that visible markers of wealth indicate a lack of need on the part of the panhandler, others find themselves unable to identify with people who truly appear dirty and destitute. The panhandlers must attempt to present themselves in the most advantageous way, but this may vary depending on the age, gender and ethnicity of the panhandler, and on the perspective of the pedestrians they make their appeal to. The key, perhaps, is to minimize the "strangeness" of one's appearance while maximizing one's appearance of need in order to inspire the greatest levels of empathy. However, appearance is only one of many tools available to panhandlers in this game of identity management.

"Panhandling Repertoires"

In addition to their presentation of appearance, people panhandling must develop a way to approach or communicate their desire for donations to the general public. Stephen Lankenau (1999a) argues that to overcome the tendency of the general public to pass by panhandlers as if they do not exist, panhandlers attempt to engage passers-by through the use of dramaturgical techniques he refers to as "panhandling repertoires." By using Goffman's (1959, 1963b) concept of dramaturgical interactionism, Lankenau arrives at five different "repertoires" which he claims panhandlers use "to attenuate strangeness or awaken pedestrians from their blasé condition" (1999a:190). These five repertoires include: 1) the entertainer who offers music [vocal or instrumental] or humour

[jokes and “lines”], 2) the greeter who says “hello” or “good morning,” offers a personalized greeting, or pays compliments in an attempt to be cordial and show deference, 3) the servicer who supplies a kind of service [like help finding a parking spot or hailing a cab], 4) the storyteller who tells a sympathetic or sad tale, and 5) the aggressor who uses fear and intimidation (1999a:190). While Lankenau focuses primarily on how panhandlers use these approaches to maximize their income through presenting a certain persona to the public, I would add that one’s choice of approach also relates to how one wants to see oneself. During the face-to-face encounter, the “approach” taken by the person panhandling is not only a presentation of oneself to the public, but also constitutes an opportunity to assert one’s personal identity and its ideological corollaries.

As previously addressed in reference to the ethics of panhandling, Mark’s case demonstrates the dual purpose served by panhandling approaches. Mark stated that his approach was an honest one because his sign simply read “homeless, please help” and did not specify that he wanted money or what that money would be used for. As Mark told me, “I just use signs and ignore the world, if people want to give, great. It doesn’t matter how much they give, it’s really the thought. I try to be polite, to thank people, it really doesn’t matter what they give, a few pennies, it’s the thought that matters.” Mark’s approach is a passive one through which he offers people an opportunity to donate money or food, but he does not actively solicit donations. While part of this approach may fit with what Lankenau (1999a) calls the “storyteller” repertoire wherein a panhandler uses silence (accompanied by cups and hats), signs, lines, and hard luck stories to communicate their need and evoke sympathy, Mark emphasizes that his goal is not to make people feel sorry for him,

I don’t like to say anything to make people almost tear up. I don’t want to make people feel bad for me. I don’t ask for anything. On my sign I just say, “please help,” however you can. I don’t like it when people try to make me feel bad for them. We all have bad things in our lives and good things; you don’t have to go telling people about the bad things. When people do that it makes me not like them.

According to Mark, rather than looking for sympathy, he has purposely chosen his passive approach in an effort to avoid burdening the public with the bad things that have

happened in his life. As he explains, when people try to make him feel bad for them, it makes him dislike them, so he endeavours to not inspire the same feelings on the part of the public. The paradox of Mark's position is that, to a certain extent, garnering donations from the public is dependent upon eliciting their sympathy, while maintaining one's dignity is dependent upon not being pitied. In order to negotiate this seeming contradiction, Mark has chosen a panhandling repertoire that enables him to distance himself from the act by removing himself from direct verbal communication, by revealing little information about his circumstances, and by de-emphasizing the importance of the donations themselves in a way which reduces the slight of failing to receive donations. Through using this method, Mark is able to maintain his sense of pride and dignity while simultaneously carrying out his role as a panhandler.

Most of the panhandlers I encountered used the storyteller repertoire by delivering variations of the line "spare some change?" including: "Could you help me out with a bit of change?" "Spare some change for something to eat?" "Do you have some change so that I could get a coffee?" and "Could you spare 40 cents?" By specifying a particular item to be purchased with the spare change, the person panhandling works to evoke understanding regarding their inability to purchase small items like coffee or food and to dispel the suspicion that the money they are given is used to purchase alcohol or drugs. As Jeff, an Aboriginal man who panhandled by walking up to pedestrians sitting or standing still on the street, explained to me, "I say I want some change for some food or for the bus, or some of them I tell the truth- it's for drinking." This is not to imply, however, that all people who specify that the money will be spent on food, coffee, or transit tickets are being dishonest. Most of the people I spoke with reported spending at least a portion of their donations on both food and coffee, while a few indicated that they did not spend any of their money on drugs or alcohol. Also, although most of the people I spoke to smoked cigarettes, very few actually spent money on purchasing cigarettes and instead would "pick butts." "Picking butts" involved gathering partially smoked cigarettes from the pavement and from outdoor ashtrays. These butts would either be smoked in the state they were found in, or the tobacco was removed and consolidated in roll-your-owns.

A more elaborate version of the storyteller repertoire was exemplified by Rick who approached me and told me the following story:

I'm lost. I'm from Edmonton. I was talking to that transit guy and he was saying if I want to get to forest lawn, my sister is in forest lawn, I have to take the C-train. I will just get to the point. I don't have any money. I just need \$2 for the train. Do you think you could help me out?

When I explained to him that I was doing research looking at the relationship between people who panhandle and the general public he explained, "Oh, I don't do this all the time, I just need \$2 for the train. I'm honest." While I have no reason to doubt the story he told me, Rick's approach does exemplify that of a storyteller with a hard luck story. The audience, as in this case, is not able to verify the facts delivered in the story. While on the one hand, such a story may evoke understanding and inspire generosity based on the ability of the audience to relate to being stuck somewhere without bus fare, the elaborate nature of the story may raise suspicions as there is more potentially false information than is present in the standard "spare some change" line. In such cases, the audience may rely on non-verbal information like appearance or race to decide whether the story is true or false. Also, as Rick requested a greater sum of money than is usual (\$2 compared with "spare change"), he raised his odds of a big pay off while simultaneously increasing the risk of being perceived as dishonest.

If Rick was as honest as he claimed, this encounter exemplifies a little recognized portion of the panhandling population for whom panhandling is done on a situational basis in order to get specific sums of money for a desired end. Rick did not see himself as a "panhandler" and, instead, thought of "panhandlers" as people who would ask for money all the time and who may use dishonest stories to elicit funds. Like an average pedestrian who asks someone passing by if they could lend him or her a quarter for the phone, Rick did not see his act of soliciting change for the bus as "panhandling" per se. However, in the eyes of a suspicious public, who may depend on appearance to determine who is a panhandler and who is not, this Aboriginal man with a shabby appearance would most likely be considered a panhandler. While this ambiguity between the perceptions of the public and the panhandlers themselves may cause some confusion in face-to-face encounters, it could also complicate the process of determining who counts as a

“panhandler” for the purposes of applying the kinds of regulations and legislation explored in Part II of this thesis.

While the “entertainers,” or street performers, I spoke with have been treated as buskers for the purposes of this thesis (due to the distinctions drawn by the panhandlers, non-panhandlers and the city bureaucracy), following Lankenau (1999a) some panhandlers might also be called “entertainers” due to the use of humour in their approach. For example, one day I observed two young men panhandling on the mall who employed several “lines” designed to receive a laugh the best of which included, “Race you for a dollar, \$5 and I let you win” and “Spare some change to get my grandma out of the pawn shop.” These boisterous comments worked to grab the attention of passers-by and while I watched the young men received a few laughs and a few donations. Yet, this was not a common approach. Similarly, I did not observe any people who would fit into Lankenau’s category of the “servicer.” The relative lack of people panhandling with elaborate stories, entertaining performances or performing services may be because, compared to many US cities, and even other Canadian cities, at least during the slow winter months when I did my research, there were few people panhandling in Calgary and, therefore, the competition for the attention of the public was not very fierce.

Finally, “greeting” (Lankenau 1999a) was a tactic employed by many of the people I spoke to. As Eric explained, “I just say hi, how are ya doin? I don’t ask for change. I have my hat out in front of me so you’d have to be blind not to know I want change.” For Eric, the hat and the greeting implicitly communicated his request without him having to put it into words. In the same vein, when I told Ed that I was doing research on people who panhandle and their relationship with the community he explained, “Well I just say hi to people, ask them how they are doing. I don’t ask them for anything, but if they want to give me something, I appreciate it.” The emphasis of his statement fell on, “*I just say hi*” and “I don’t *ask* them for anything,” which he said as if he wanted to make sure I had it straight that he did not actually *ask*. Like Eric, Ed preferred to greet people and to passively accept donations, and the way they both described their approach indicated that they preferred this more indirect method of panhandling. It was as if by not asking directly, both were able to preserve a certain distance from the act itself. Significantly, Eric and Ed were both middle-aged men who

presented the view that their current condition was short-term or temporary and they expressed a desire to return to mainstream life.

As my own experience panhandling one afternoon demonstrated, the reactions of passers-by to my friendly greetings were much warmer than the reactions of people when I asked directly for change. When I simply said “hi” or “good afternoon” roughly half of the people passing by acknowledged me in some way, either by eye contact, slight smiles, or occasionally, a returned greeting. However, when I asked directly for change, those reactions became much more negative. People who initially looked at me would look away, fewer people acknowledged me, and I got far more dirty looks. In one case, I asked a man passing by if he could spare some change, and as he did not quite hear me, he said an affable “pardon?” Then, when I repeated my request, he shot me a glance that communicated his annoyance, as if I had inconvenienced him greatly, and he walked away without another word. In part, because of these unfriendly reactions, I found it was much easier to simply greet the passers-by. Also, although most people who gave me donations had the money in their hands before I made any appeal, people were more likely to check their pockets for change or to give small donations when I greeted them than when I asked for change directly. Significantly, I found that in addressing men wearing suits, who were the least likely to respond to my friendly greetings, when I used a more deferential approach by saying “Hello, Sir”, they were more likely to respond positively. Although this approach felt slightly unnatural and demeaning, it did yield a few small donations and garnered tight-lipped smiles and head nods.

I also found that, apart from the more deferential greetings, saying hello to passers-by came naturally to me as greeting strangers is a regular part of my life in the city, whether greeting salesclerks in stores or people out walking their dogs in my neighbourhood. In contrast, asking for spare change felt uncomfortable, unfamiliar, and oddly exposing. It is rare that I have had to ask strangers for anything, save perhaps for directions or the time. At times when I have really needed help, like when my car has broken down, strangers have always stopped to offer their assistance. So, to *ask* strangers for spare change was to depart significantly from the regular discourse of daily life, and to personalize a type of interaction that under other circumstances would be strictly impersonal. Communicating a generic greeting is impersonal in a way that asking for

direct assistance and exposing ones need of assistance simply cannot be. It is little wonder then that some people I spoke to favoured the passive approach of using signs and hats, or an approach in which they simply said “hi.” Of course, this was no guarantee of a positive response.

In contrast to the definitions of panhandling given by the dictionary and the mainstream public, those emphasizing the action of “asking,” “begging” and “soliciting,” many of the panhandlers themselves de-emphasized the importance of verbal requests, preferring instead to focus on the action of just saying “hi.” From the perspective of these panhandlers, the response of the passers-by receives a greater emphasis than their act of asking, either implicitly or explicitly, for money or other donations. Yet, despite the perception of the general public that the people panhandling care primarily about receiving money, none of the panhandlers I talked to seemed very concerned with the amount of money that people were willing to give. In fact, several echoed Ed above in expressing the idea that whatever people wanted to give would be appreciated. As Jean-Marc told me, “I’m just nice to everybody. I like what I do, and I need it.” After he said this Jean-Marc put his hand up in a peace sign and said “hi” to a man walking by and after the man said “hi” back Jean-Marc turned to me and happily said, “See?” Other times when I sat beside Jean-Marc while he was panhandling and a passer-by would say hi in response to his friendly greeting he would turn to me and say excitedly, “See that! I love it when I get a response.” Even though on these occasions no money had changed hands, Jean-Marc viewed these interchanges positively, and seemed truly happy with a verbal, rather than monetary, response. Just as Lankenau hypothesizes, Jean-Marc wishes to disrupt the blasé attitude of the general public and to avoid receiving “nonperson treatment”(Goffman 1963b). As Jean-Marc alludes, being “nice to everybody” is one way of overcoming such treatment, and also a way of reinforcing ones own identity as a “nice guy.” The result is a balance between engaging the public and inspiring them to donate, and avoiding direct requests that express one’s vulnerability and need.

As these examples demonstrate, the presentation of appearance and the panhandling repertoires used by panhandlers in their interactions with the public serve the dual purpose of eliciting financial donations and social recognition. These presentations are very important as the public relies on the information embedded in them to determine

whether the panhandler is legitimate or not. To a large degree, they must satisfy the demands of the public for displays of need and deference, while trying not to appear so needy they seem too strange, or so “normal” they do not seem needy enough.

Additionally, in these interactions the panhandler must balance the competing demands of different members of the public while negotiating these relationships in a way that does not do damage to their personal identity.

Chapter Five: From Glances to Glares– Street Encounters

The panhandler's presentations of self mark the first communicative act in a chain of actions and reactions that form a face-to-face encounter between panhandlers and the general public on the street. For example, from the perspective of the public, in employing the greeter approach, the panhandler eases the tension of the encounter, as passers-by are not put on the spot by a direct request for funds. Similar to how Trevor, a member of the business community, described the non-invasive approach of the buskers, in the case of the greeter, "you have the option of throwing money into that hat." In offering a greeting to the passers-by, the reciprocal correlative is simply a returned greeting, not an actual donation, but the greeting does grab the passer-by's attention and, more so than a sign or a hat, personalizes the interaction in a way designed to inspire donations. Yet, unlike when someone ignores a direct request for money, the people who ignore a friendly greeting are, in a communicative sense, more directly excluding an individual from social participation in the community. While people may ignore a request for donations because they do not want to part with their money, or they have nothing to give, the basis for ignoring a friendly greeting is much more personal. As my own experience demonstrated, people who in my own everyday life would be unlikely to refuse to greet me, if only with a perplexed nod, and who would be even less likely to ignore me completely, did so without hesitation when they believed that I was a panhandler. It was fascinating to observe the reactions of passers-by to my greetings, as these ranged from earnestly friendly responses, to peculiar contorted attempts at smiles that actually looked more like wincing, and, finally, to outright attempts to pretend they did not hear or see me. These, of course, were particularly fascinating to observe because for the first time I was on the receiving end of reactions I had so often delivered. In particular, I know what it is like to focus my eyes straight ahead, to fix them unnaturally on some distant point in order to obscure my peripheral vision and to concentrating on holding them steady, resisting the instinctual glance as the panhandler asks, "spare some change?" Yet, totally unfamiliar to me was the feeling of speaking to people, extending a friendly greeting, only to have my words fall on deaf ears, to feel, for the first time in my life, totally invisible. While there is little question in my mind that, like myself, most members of the public are unaware of how their actions affect the people asking them for

change, the question remains, what motivates the public to expend this energy in denying greetings and glances, and what do they communicate by doing so? In this chapter I will attempt to illustrate both sides of this street exchange in an effort to illustrate the emotional and social tensions of such exchanges.

In order to describe the communicative relationship which exists between two parties who are (usually) unknown to one another, Goffman (1963b:84) introduces the concepts of “civil inattention,” “nonperson treatment” and “face engagements.” Goffman describes “civil inattention” as an exchange within which, “one gives to another enough visual notice to demonstrate that one appreciates that the other is present (and that one admits openly to having seen him), while at the next moment withdrawing one’s attention from him so as to express that he does not constitute a target of special curiosity or design.” This is considered by Goffman to be the “proper” kind of treatment for most interactions, and it is this stance that most people take towards one another when passing on the street. Goffman (1963b:89) refers to cases where people openly and directly engage each other in a focused communication, or a “single mutual activity” such as small talk or formal discussion, as “face engagements” or “encounters.” This type of interaction seems to occur between people who are known to one another or people who are unknown to one another but have a shared status or experience some other stimulus, for example buyer-seller exchange with a street vendor, which provides a justification for participants to dispense with their typical stance of “civil inattention.” Finally, Goffman states “it is also possible for one person to treat others as if they were not there at all, as objects not worthy of a glance, let alone close scrutiny” (1963b:83-84). This last form of interaction is what Goffman calls “nonperson treatment,” and he says we may observe this form of interaction most clearly in how people treat “children, servants, Negroes, and mental patients” (1963b:84). According to Lankenau, the biggest problem facing people who panhandle is this “nonperson treatment” (1999a:184). In contrast, from the perspective of the public, the biggest problems facing them are the attempts of panhandlers to enter into uninvited “face engagements.” In order to explore both sides of these communicative encounters, I questioned both the panhandlers and the non-panhandlers about their face-to-face encounters with each other. The following chapter

explores the responses of both the non-panhandling public and the panhandlers themselves.

To See or Not to See

When I spoke to members of the mainstream public about their encounters with people panhandling on the street, I would ask them to tell me about specific encounters they had had, and then I would ask them to elaborate on those encounters: how they would approach the panhandler on the street, whether they would make eye-contact, and what, if anything, was exchanged in the encounter (words, smiles, nods, apologies, money). The responses I received detailed forms of interaction that fall into all three of Goffman's (1963b) categories of interaction.

Warren, a downtown worker, provided me with the following description of how he approaches people on the street:

I'll see them from further on away and then I just, I won't try to make eye contact, I just keep on walking usually...I guess I just don't want to talk to them, literally. I mean, I'm on my way to work and just walk by and get through it. Once in a while I do talk to one of the vendors of the street-wise thing, I just say hi to him or nod my head when I walk by. At least he's standing there and I see him a lot. This other fella, he's there and he's not. He's kind of weird so I tend to avoid him.

Warren's description details how he responds to different people on the street in a variety of ways. While he willingly enters into a "face engagement" by saying hello or nodding at one of the Street Talk vendors, he does not say hello to the panhandler he frequently sees because he perceives him as "weird." As Warren explained, "I gave him something once a long time ago and then he just, I mean, he's back there all the time so I tend to just ignore him now." As Warren implies, both the weirdness of the individual and his repeated contacts with him have led him to extend nonperson treatment to that particular panhandler. In contrast, Warren's repeated contacts with the Street Talk vendor have had the reverse effect. This description makes clear that Warren has made a conscious decision to ignore the panhandler while he chooses not to ignore the Street Talk vendor. Far from operating at an unconscious level, Warren spots panhandlers from far away and then attempts to pass by them without making eye contact. Additionally, the fact that he typically encounters people panhandling on his way to work seems to contribute to his

desire to avoid talking to them. He sees himself as engaged in a purposeful activity when he walks down the street, and his engagement in that activity seems to preclude extraneous communicative acts with miscellaneous panhandlers as he wants to “just walk by and get through it.” The easiest way to “get through it” is to avoid all communication and to deliver “nonperson treatment.”

Doug, a downtown worker, expressed the view that while he has given money to people busking, he has never given money to people panhandling and therefore has not had any “experiences” with panhandlers:

I don't think I've had really any experiences per se, other than to basically ignore them. I don't usually have any spare change because when I come downtown I bring my lunch, I don't spend any money so all I've got is bills, and they're not getting 20 bucks! I have thrown a loonie or whatever into, not a panhandler's hand, but a busker's hand if you will, or into their guitar box. I can honestly say I have never given a nickel to a panhandler. And I've found the best way is you don't make eye contact and just walk right by. There's lots of agencies and I contribute to things like the United Way and other agencies that can look after these folks. I work hard for my money; I don't just give it away.

Doug presented himself as a man who is careful with his money; he has worked hard for it, and therefore he will only spend it in ways he deems appropriate. He felt that rather than donating money to people on the street, social agencies should “look after these folks,” and through his donations to such organizations he felt that he contributed to this process. As Doug does not intend to donate money to the panhandlers, he explains that the “best approach” is to avoid eye contact and ignore them. Underlying Doug's statement is the assumption that panhandling is fundamentally an economic act rather than a communicative act and that if one is not going to engage in the economics of the act it is unnecessary to engage in the communicative aspects. Russell, a downtown worker, elaborated on this view when he stated, “I just walk by. There's no point in me engaging in a conversation with them, you're either going to give them money or you're not.” Thus, both Russell and Doug saw panhandling as primarily an economic act, and as neither of them was prepared to make donations, they saw no reason to make eye contact or engage in conversation.

When I spoke to Kate, a downtown resident, she explained that her response to people panhandling varied substantially with her mood and with how great a hurry she was in. These responses varied from giving donations, to having casual or extended conversations, to passing by without looking. As she explained, "I don't know what it is but sometimes I feel I just don't have time, so just leave me alone. I mean, I don't say that, but I say I'm sorry." While at times if Kate does not have money or does not want to stop she will apologize with a quick "sorry," at other times she takes a different approach:

I will try not to look, you know. But that's what I mean, depending on the mood I'm in... I'll sort of like, avoid somebody asking me. You know, I figure if you look at somebody as you go by and they want you to give them money they're going to say, "have you got any spare change?" Whereas if you sort of keep walking and you don't look at them, you know, like you don't look at anybody, you just sort of keep going, then they're less likely to stop you, I think.

Kate uses the nonperson treatment as a way to avoid drawing attention to herself and to dissuade panhandlers from speaking to her. In Kate's view, looking at an individual who is panhandling opens the lines of communication and increases the likelihood that the panhandler will make a direct request. Yet, Kate also states that she does not look at the panhandlers in the same way she does not look at "anybody," implying that she views the act of not looking at panhandlers in the same way she views her typical interactions with all other people on the street. Her approach to these panhandlers may actually be closer to what Goffman calls "civil inattention" rather than "nonperson treatment.

However, when I asked Kate what she would do if the panhandler asked her for change despite her attempt to discourage their solicitation, she explained:

Well I'll look up and say sorry or whatever. Or, I mean sometimes even in shops you know, you go into a shop and you're looking at things and somebody says hi how are you today? And you've got no idea whether they are talking to you or somebody who's just come into the shop, so sometimes in a case like that, if I don't want to say "I'm fine thank you, how are you?" I just keep looking at the clothes and pretend that I really didn't hear. But I mean, it's not anything to do with them being street people, it's just sort of the mood I'm in, because I don't know about you, but sometimes I just sort of think I want to put my head down, my glasses on, and just sort of keep going.

In this response, Kate introduces the observation that she employs “nonperson treatment” as a way to block out undesired verbal communications. Similar to the way she might ignore a salesclerk, Kate implies that she uses the same tactic with people who are panhandling, not because of their status as street people, but because at times she is not in the “mood” to engage with them. Thus, despite their direct solicitation of her, and her knowledge that they are directly soliciting her, she may “pretend” she did not hear them. On busy streets, with crowds of people walking along the sidewalks, this tactic would be easily employed as one could quite convincingly “pretend” that you did not hear the panhandler’s request or that you mistakenly thought they were talking to somebody else. As Goffman describes, “an individual who wants to control others’ access to him and the information he receives may avoid looking toward the person who is seeking him out” (1963b:94). By avoiding eye contact, Kate controls the lines of communication in a way that prevents her from having to admit that she has received the message being delivered by the person soliciting her. Unlike practicing “civil inattention” wherein one does admit openly to having seen the person by delivering a casual glance, this mode of “nonperson treatment” negates the idea that one has seen the other.

Interestingly, in Kate’s application of this approach, she feels that she is indirectly communicating her desire to avoid the communication in a way which is not a direct slight, and could be interpreted by the person panhandling as simply a failure to hear his or her requests or to recognize that she was being addressed directly. As Kate does not wish to behave in a way that will be construed as rude, when she is not in the mood to talk, the communicative ambiguity of this nonperson treatment seems to satisfy her communicative demands. In the context of urban life, often typified by the “psychic overload” (Milgram 1996) people experience encountering countless “others” in the course of carrying out their daily activities, the extension of nonperson treatment to panhandlers may exemplify one way people attempt to deal with the communicative and emotional strain of urban life.

Others, like Alana, a downtown worker and resident, expressed the view that although they wished to make eye contact with the people panhandling, they did not feel that this was the best approach in all cases:

I always usually make eye contact with them and I'm not too fearful of them, it's just when they're in a group, or I also too feel a little sometimes threatened if they're mentally challenged. There are quite a few mentally challenged people on the street, which I know is typical just because we don't have the institutions anymore. You know, psychiatric wards and stuff are basically null to nil in Alberta now so there's lots of mentally challenged people on the street so they, I think just because you're not ever sure of their reaction, how they're going to, I mean I've been flipped the bird, I've been... you're just unsure that they're, especially being pregnant now, I'm a little more cautious with my body. But If I've seen them around and stuff and I know what they're kind of like and they've approached me before then it doesn't matter, I'll just say sorry.

Alana's response varies according to her familiarity with certain panhandlers, her perception of certain individuals as "mentally challenged" and her perception of panhandling groups as threatening. Based on her experiences with panhandlers, she feels it is difficult to predict how individuals will react, and though she states she is not fearful, at times she feels "unsure." However, as she develops a familiarity with individual panhandlers she feels more comfortable in her interactions with them and is more likely to engage them in a communicative "encounter" by saying "sorry," or to approach them from a stance of "civil inattention" by making eye contact. In contrast, she may avoid those who are unfamiliar by using "nonperson treatment." Significantly, the "strangeness" of the panhandlers is mitigated by repeated contacts with them. As encounters on city streets are typically occur between strangers (Milgram 1996), Alana demonstrates that contact with specific panhandlers may reduce the degree of "strangeness" they are thought to embody, enabling them to pass from being unfamiliar "strangers" to becoming familiar "strangers".

The flip side of those who choose to systematically extend nonperson treatment to people panhandling, or those who participate in "face engagements" on a selective basis, are those who make a concerted effort to always engage with panhandlers. Nancy, a downtown worker, presented the following view:

I don't always give them money, I don't always say no, but I'm never rude to them. I just say, "I'm sorry I don't have any," and I just keep going. I always respond, I always respond. Yeah, I feel bad for some of them, like I said, not so much for the kids, but the

older people, like even a few people in their mid to late twenties or early thirties. I feel bad for those people.

Unlike Doug and Russell above, Nancy feels that even if she is not giving money to the people panhandling she should respond to them. Significantly, Nancy emphasizes that because she feels “bad for” the people panhandling she responds to them with politeness. In the context of the policies of non-involvement and deficient civility thought to characterize urban life (Milgram 1996), Nancy appears to subvert these inclinations by making a concerted effort to extend civilities to this particular group of people.

A similar response was given by Audrey, a social service provider, who vehemently insisted that, rather than treating people panhandling as nonpersons, she felt a responsibility to always treat them as fellow human beings:

I try to be human. I just try to engage. It depends what day you get me, but it's an uncomfortable thing. You know, it hits, it is the absolute manifestation of poverty, I think. And so you can try to ignore it all you want, but if you have any kind of social conscience and you don't chalk it up to “oh you lazy...” you know, like everyone does, “get a job.” If you truly don't chalk it up to that then I think you wrestle with it every time you see someone... I just try very hard to not make them feel invisible. So whether or not I'm going to say yes to them, it's with a certain amount of you are a fellow human being response... So for me it more about just trying to, its about respect and dignity, just trying as hard as I can to give a little dignity back to somebody who I don't think gets a whole bunch of it.

Rather than focusing on the economic aspect of her relationship with the people panhandling Audrey stresses the social aspect of the street interaction. Despite being an “introvert”, Audrey attempts to avoid treating the panhandlers as invisible, and instead, focuses on the way her treatment of the people panhandling can contribute to their sense of dignity and respect. While she recognizes that encountering people on the street is a difficult and emotional process, she feels strongly that people with a “social conscience” will be unable to ignore this manifestation of poverty, and, instead, will “wrestle with it” every time it is encountered. Thus, Audrey places the encounter between panhandler and panhandled within a discourse which finds its focus outside of the actual face-to-face interaction and within a wider discussion of social politics.

The above examples demonstrate a variety of approaches used by the mainstream public to approach their encounters with people panhandling. Rather than focusing on whether or not donations are given, this section has largely concentrated on the communicative aspects of the encounter. Doug and Russell demonstrate the consistent application of “nonperson treatment” to those who panhandle, based on the view panhandling is primarily an economic act and that no communicative reply is required if no donation is to be given. By responding this way, Doug and Russell send the message that as they do not consider panhandling to be an acceptable source of income, individuals who panhandle do not warrant social recognition. Similarly, Warren’s narrative shows that when someone feels that a panhandler’s activities are illegitimate, even repeated contact with a panhandler may not lead a pedestrian to grant him or her any form of social recognition. Under these circumstances, repeated contacts may lead the pedestrian to respond more negatively, as Warren illustrates by initially giving the panhandler a donation and, at later contact, choosing to ignore the panhandler.

Kate and Alana’s narratives demonstrate that the variability of one’s mood and one’s security concerns regarding different people who panhandle may also result in one person delivering a large range of responses from “nonperson treatment” to positive “face engagements.” By responding this way, they demonstrate ambivalence towards panhandlers and their propensity to disturb one’s privacy or to react in unpredictable ways. However, as Alana illustrates, this ambivalence may be overcome through repeated contacts, as the more familiar a panhandler becomes, the less concern their presence engenders. And finally, by making a conscious effort to engage this particular group in positive face engagements, Nancy and Audrey strive never to be rude and to recognize that people panhandling are humans who deserve to be treated in a dignified manner. By responding this way, they attempt to communicate that, although the panhandlers are poor and on the street, their status does not negate their deservingness of respect and social recognition. These face-to-face encounters are at once simple urban interactions, and transactions of deeper social meanings regarding a range of values related to work, independence, privacy, safety, and human dignity. While the public is aware of what motivates these transactions of meaning, we must turn to the responses of the panhandlers to understand how these interactions are interpreted.

To Be or Not to Be

While the general public may have legitimate reasons for choosing to approach their encounters with panhandlers the way they do, they also typically have little knowledge of how those encounters are perceived by people panhandling. Obviously, people panhandling have an economic interest in attempting to engage passers-by in some form of communication. By drawing passers-by into a communicative exchange, people panhandling increase the chance that this communication will transform itself into the granting of donations. As discussed above, people panhandling develop both an image and a repertoire that is designed to grab the attention of the disinterested public in a bid to inspire donations. However, to characterize their solicitations as purely economic would be to misconstrue the experiential aspects of such street encounters. In carrying out what are largely economic roles, no person is ever fully separated from their sense of themselves as a social being. While servants may accept that part of their institutionalized role is to blend into the background while conducting their duties, there is no similar institutionalized role for people who panhandle. Although some members of the general public might prefer that panhandlers resign themselves to such a role, the very nature of their activity requires them to be noticed, otherwise, it is unlikely that they will receive donations. In a sense, the act of panhandling is designed to force passers-by to “wrestle with” the image the panhandlers present. Yet, in addition to the economic necessity of garnering attention, the people who panhandle also have a personal need for social recognition. The following discussion will demonstrate how these dual needs are negotiated in their encounters with the general public. In particular, this discussion will focus on interactions in which social recognition is withheld, or the attention given is negative, as those who panhandle deemed these the most problematic.

When I spoke to Lesley and Jill about their experiences panhandling we had the following conversation:

Jessica: So how are the people when you're panning?

Jill: Most just walk by and pretend like they don't see you.

Lesley: Yeah, it's no fun being invisible.

Jill: Except that good looking suit stopped and gave us \$4.

Lesley: Yeah, that was weird. Usually the suits just walk right by and ignore you.

Jill: Sometimes I yell after them, thanks for nothing bitch or asshole! Or I ask them if they speak English.

Lesley: And sometimes they yell back, like that woman who took forever to think of how to respond- she finally said "My pleasure!" They don't even nod, but I can see why people act like they don't see you. It's like any other business, like Subway or whatever. Unless you want what they are selling you just walk right by. I just say, "Have a good day" to everybody, it's just a reflex.

Jill: Sometimes if you're polite to people they'll come back and give you something.

As this discussion shows, the delivery of nonperson treatment makes Lesley and Jill feel invisible, yet both are aware that the public only pretends not to see them. As Jill describes, sometimes her reaction to this treatment is to yell an insult at the offending pedestrian, or to ask if they speak English. In asking if they speak English Jill makes a pointed comment regarding the pedestrian's failure to appropriately acknowledge her direct verbal solicitation. As Lesley indicates, sometimes their pointed comments prompt the pedestrians to respond, though as she describes, these responses may be more comical than truly injurious. At the same time, Jill recognizes that if she manages her responses in a way that demonstrates politeness, the politeness itself may sway people to make donations. Thus, in managing their sidewalk presentations, the girls are aware of two different ways to overcome the delivery of nonperson treatment, one through provoking a response on the part of the pedestrians by insulting them, and the other through inspiring a response by greeting this treatment in a polite and friendly manner. Rather than remaining silent and submitting to this attribution of invisibility, both girls assert their presence and seek validation by attempting to force the public to recognize them, whether positively or negatively.

In addition to these methods of overcoming nonperson treatment, Lesley outlines one way of distancing herself from that treatment. By trying to look at the encounter from the pedestrian's point of view she attempts to explain how they can walk by as though they do not see her. By comparing herself to a business like a Subway franchise, she is able to de-emphasize the personal aspects of these encounters and to draw a parallel between these encounters and other impersonal commercial relationships. By recasting these encounters according to the public's perception of them as primarily economic, Lesley reveals the disjuncture between her own personalized experience of nonperson

treatment and the largely impersonal delivery of that treatment by the public. As both girls would prefer not to be treated as nonpersons, they have developed these methods of overcoming and rationalizing the public's failure to acknowledge them in order to assert their personhood and to affirm their sense of dignity.

Similarly, one afternoon I sat with Jean-Marc as he was panhandling using the greeter approach outlined in the previous chapter. Jean-Marc said "hi" to a woman passing by, and she responded by slightly turning her head to acknowledge him. He turned to me and said, "See, I got a head turn, but no smile" then with a sly smile he quietly added, "bitch." Jean-Marc's joking statement was made, not in response to failing to receive a donation, but in response to his failure to fully draw the woman into a "face engagement." As he explained, "I'm not hypocritical, when I say hi I mean hi," and therefore, each time he says a genuine hi to a passer-by, Jean-Marc sets himself up for the disappointment of receiving nonperson treatment. As this example demonstrates, when his friendly "greeter" approach failed to garner more than a glance, his response was to use an insult, though in a humorous way, to distance himself from his failure to garner the desired smile. Significantly, he lowered his voice when he said the word "bitch" so that no one passing by could possibly overhear him. This lowering of his voice was clearly related to his desire not to alienate either the woman who had just passed, or the others passing by. It was meant, instead, to be heard only by me, and to be understood as a complicit joke. Part of the joke was that Jean-Marc did not really think that the woman was a "bitch," but because he was trying to illustrate the approach that he uses for panhandling, he was accompanying his panhandling with a running commentary for my benefit. In joking about the woman's response, Jean-Marc was able to reinforce the image of panhandling that he was presenting to me as being one big game oriented as much towards eliciting responses as it is towards soliciting donations.

When I asked Ben about the people he panhandled we had the following conversation:

Ben: It's nice when people come talk to you. It shows they are interested in your life, not just walking by like you're not there. Some are nice, they just say no sorry. Some just walk by like they don't see you and some stick their noses in the air [*he tilts his head back*] and walk by like "your existence isn't worth my time." Maybe they think they are better than me. Maybe they just don't want me to exist.

Jessica: Does it ever make you mad?

Ben: I'm not an angry person. I'm quiet. I just take it all in- then maybe later someone might do something and I might blow up at them.

Jessica: How do you feel when people act like they can't see you?

Ben: It's hard to explain. It's like, "excuse me for existing"- in a sarcastic way. I don't think too much about it, more people are good about saying something even if they don't give you anything.

As Ben's statements show, he interprets the nonperson treatment visited on him by passers-by as a statement regarding their feelings of superiority and their desire for him not to exist. While he does not react to this treatment with anger, he recognizes that he internalizes the treatment and that it impacts negatively in other areas of his life. It is clear from his statements that he truly appreciates when people make an effort to say something, even if they do not make a donation. In contrast, those who do not acknowledge him make him feel like they resent his existence, but as he indicates with the sarcastic remark "excuse me for existing," he resents the idea that they would try to negate his existence. In his statement, he reasserts his existence, and challenges those who would do not believe it is worth their time to recognize it. Again, in Ben's narrative, his emphasis on the social aspects of the encounter parallels his emphasis on the economic aspects.

When I asked Peter if anyone ever stops to talk to him while he is panhandling he replied,

Not really. I guess they just think that guy's a bum; they don't want to talk to you. But I'd be happy to talk to anyone if they wanted to stop and talk. 'Spare some change for something to eat?' [*He says to a man who ignores him*]. See? [*He nods towards the man*]. A lot of people won't even give you the time of day. But you can't get mad. Some of them give you something.

In Peter's response he states that based on his stigmatized status as a "bum" people do not want to engage in conversation with him, yet, rather than getting mad at the pedestrian who ignored him, Peter choose to focus on the positive observation that some people give him something. This factor, to some extent, seemed to make up for the "nonperson treatment" he must endure. On the one hand, the money donated is recompense for such treatment, and on the other, the actual donation of the money signifies a granting of social

recognition. Thus, Peter reconciles himself to his position by accepting that although some people dismiss him, others do not.

As these examples demonstrate, while people panhandling value the economic donations of the public, they also value the communicative exchanges they have with the public. When their communications fail, not only does it threaten their economic success, it also threatens their sense of personhood. While they work hard at not allowing the “nonperson treatment” to undermine their identities, it is clear that to some extent they feel hurt and frustrated by their failure to overcome this treatment. While they have some understanding of why the public would treat them this way, based on their stigmatized status and their businesslike activities, they do not feel that this response is entirely warranted. As Goffman describes, the central feature of the life of the stigmatized individual is that, “those who have dealings with him fail to accord him the respect and regard which the uncontaminated aspects of his social identity have led him to anticipate extending, and have led him to anticipate receiving; he echoes this denial by finding that some of his own attributes warrant it.” (Goffman 1963a:8-9). While people panhandling may recognize that their status as panhandlers stigmatizes them and results in the failure of the public to treat them as persons, on the basis of their “uncontaminated” qualities they resist the full acceptance of this reduced status. Thus, they develop ways of countering this nonperson treatment, whether through attempting to force pedestrians to acknowledge them by hurling insults at them, or by constructing rationalizations and distancing mechanisms to lessen the negative impact of the nonperson designation.

From “Non” to Worse

Far worse, perhaps, than the “nonperson treatment” panhandlers so frequently receive is the negative and confrontational treatment they occasionally receive at the hands of the public. In these instances, rather than being treated as non-people, they are treated more like bad-people, people who, by virtue of their status, are seen as illegitimate and on that basis are censured by people who are strangers to them. The experiences and reactions of the people panhandling to this overtly negative treatment varies substantially, though all must find a way to deal with it while retaining a sense of personal legitimacy.

One of the first days I spent in the field, I was standing across the street observing Mark panhandling. As he sat there quietly reading a book, I noticed two loud young men

who were walking down the street towards him. As they approached it became clear that they were going to engage with Mark, but what unfolded was surprising. First, one threw a glass bottle into the middle of the street in front of Mark's panhandling spot, then the other proceeded to talk to Mark in a voice loud enough so that it was audible from where I stood across the street. As the man spoke to Mark he inched his face closer and closer until his face was less than inch away from Mark's, and he continued to speak to Mark in this way for about a minute. It was clear from the man's body language that this exchange was laden with aggression; this was clearly a confrontation not an intimate exchange. Yet, through it all Mark remained seated and he appeared to be trying to get them to leave him alone. When the two men finally walked away Mark stood up and took a small broom out of his bag and proceeded to sweep up the glass from the street. After he had finished cleaning up the glass, I approached him and he explained that he did not know who those men were, but that they were just drunk and harassing him. Later on, during our first interview, when I asked him about his relationship with the public he explained, "Most people are good, some say get a job and kick my stuff around, some are angry and yell stuff at me, like you saw those kids today, but most people in Calgary are friendly. The people in Edmonton aren't as friendly. I'm very grateful for the people in this city, they help out a lot with the organizations here and the businesses are very friendly."

As Mark indicates, some members of the public yell at him to get a job, while others kick his things and get angry with him. As my observations demonstrate, he prefers to avoid these confrontations, though his vulnerable position out on the street prevents him from avoiding them entirely. When they do occur, he must manage the situation so that it does not escalate. Yet, despite this occasional poor treatment, he insists that people in Calgary are friendly and that he is genuinely grateful to them. By focusing on the positive relationships he has with the businesses and by acknowledging the positive contributions Calgarians make to supporting local services, he seeks to highlight that while some people are bad, most are good. As I noted previously, Mark had friends within the mainstream community and he used these friendships as a positive force to counter the negative impact of the occasional person who treated him poorly.

Perhaps the most frequent observation made by the panhandlers I interviewed was regarding the propensity of others to yell at them and tell them to "get a job." This is

particularly interesting in light of the emphasis the public places on demonstrating a work ethic. In using the joblessness of the people panhandling as a justification to yell at them and reprimand them, the public indirectly illustrates how the right to expect polite non-confrontational treatment is connected to the responsibility of the individual to carry out their obligation to work. When one fails to carry out this responsibility, one opens oneself to such spontaneous expressions of disapproval. Yet, in being subject to this disapproval, the people panhandling may find themselves on the defensive rather than accepting that this censure is warranted. As Jean-Marc told me, "You get the occasional person who says 'get a job' but I just say 'I have a job ass-hole' right to his face. I don't let it bother me." While it was unclear whether the job Jean-Marc was referring to was his panhandling or the job as a roofer he intended to return to after being absent for a few years, what was clear was that Jean-Marc resented being told to get a job by someone who had no idea of his circumstances. Likewise, Dan told me,

There are some nice people out there, but there are also some real bastards. But you just have to subliminally not take it in. Don't tell other people your problems because most don't give a shit and the rest are glad. Some people tell me I should work. I say, how am I supposed to work like this?

As Dan explains, he does not expect that people will be sympathetic to his circumstances as he feels most people do not care, while he suspects that others might actually take pleasure in his hardship. Dan tries not to internalize negative treatment by the public, but when people tell him he should be working he is faced with the recognition that he would like to be working but is unable to at the moment due to numerous injuries. Although he presents the appearance of a man who is somewhat able bodied (you do not notice his limp unless he is walking), and his injuries are two years old, he feels he is still unable to work. Thus, the comments of the public are largely uninformed affronts to what he believes is the reality of the situation.

Similarly, when I spoke to Lesley and Jill about their relationship with the public they expressed their frustration with a public that often fails to comprehend that living on the streets is a real barrier to gaining employment:

Lesley: Some people yell at us, get a job, but I ask them, how am I supposed to get a job without an address?

Jill: Yeah, what am I going to put on my application, I sleep at the doorway on 8th Ave. and Second Street?

In addition to believing that they were unable to get a job because they did not have an address, they also explained that it is difficult to work when you never know where you will sleep at night. Sleeping at night posed a particular problem as the girls would sometimes try to avoid being stuck outside at night. They explained that they would go sit in a mall until the building closed in the evening (1am or 3am depending on the day), and they would return there when the mall opened at 6am so that they only had to spend a few hours outside. Because they would spend the whole night awake, they had to sleep during the day to make up for it. Clearly, under these conditions, it would be difficult to engage in regular employment, though they felt the public failed to understand the difficulty of reconciling life on the street with life in the working world.

Eric made an interesting point regarding the proportionality of the public's responses when he told me, "There are some real ignorant people around that say some stuff. But it's not like I'm asking them for their life savings. I'm just here and if they have a spare quarter for me then great, but they don't have to give me anything." As Eric pointed out, the reactions of the public are often out of proportion with the request he is making. While Eric would like some spare change, perhaps as little as a quarter, and he is fully prepared to accept that they may not want to give him anything, he is taken aback by the responses people make to this small request. He dismisses these responses as ignorant, highlighting the public's failure to comprehend his circumstances or to recognize that he is not demanding large sums of money or trying to coerce them in any way. As in all of the above descriptions, Eric expresses his dismay at the tendency of some members of the public to misunderstand who he is, what he is doing, and why he is doing it.

People panhandling must deal with being not recognized and misrecognized on a daily basis. Charles Taylor (1994:25) discusses this "politics of recognition" in reference to ethnic identity. He explains:

Our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining, or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or

misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.

Although Taylor is primarily concerned with the “politics of multiculturalism”, the narratives above illustrate that these politics apply equally to other marginalized groups like homeless people or people who panhandle. While some members of the public fail to give recognition to people on the street by treating them as invisible, others misrecognize certain people on the street by making assumptions regarding their circumstances without basing those assumptions on factual and individualized information. This is not to imply that the assumptions the public makes are *always* misrecognitions, or that the public has an obligation *to* recognize anyone, but to point out that people on the street must face this poverty of recognition in the same way they must face their economic poverty. This is particularly important because, as Taylor argues, one’s identity is formed not in isolation, but “through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others” (1994:34).

Nonrecognition and misrecognition by the “others” in this dialogue have the potential to distort and confine the identity formed.

Much like food, shelter and clothing, Taylor states, “due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need.” (1994:26). It follows, therefore, that those who do not receive recognition will either seek that recognition out, as Jill does when she insults the passers-by who ignore her, or find a way to negotiate its absence, as Lesley does by dismissing nonperson treatment as a symptom of what pedestrians view as an impersonal commercial relationship. Likewise, those who are misrecognized may either may seek either to correct the misrecognition, as Jean-Marc does when he yells at passers-by who tell him to get a job that he already has a job, or to dismiss it, as Eric does when he dismisses those who misrecognize him by calling them ignorant. While these narratives have illustrated the frustration street people feel in this venture, they have also outlined how people deal with these frustrations in ways that enable them to counter the distorting effects of the mis/non recognition. Their counter narratives are not only assertions of identity; they subvert the dialogic forces that threaten to confine them.

These counter narratives have the quality of what James C. Scott refers to as “everyday forms of resistance.” According to Scott (1985:32), “what everyday forms of resistance share with more dramatic public confrontations is of course that they are

intended to mitigate or deny claims made by superordinate classes or to advance claims vis-à-vis those superordinate classes.” However, this struggle is not just struggle over tangible benefits like work and property, it is “a struggle over the appropriation of symbols, a struggle over how the past and present shall be understood and labelled, a struggle to identify causes and assess blame, a contentious effort to give partisan meaning to local history” (1985:xvii). Although the narratives above do not imply that the panhandlers who struggle over these meanings do so out of some greater political consciousness, they do illustrate that the panhandlers use their counter narratives as weapons in the struggle to create positive identities that run counter to those imposed by society at large.

However, counter narratives are not the only weapons available in this struggle for recognition. Sometimes such resistance takes the form of more visible, physical, bids to be recognized. These efforts range from those who destroy property, to those who panhandle “aggressively” (by obstructing the passage of people along the sidewalk, asking repeatedly for donations, or by panhandling in large groups and using intimidating behaviour to extort money), and finally, to those who act towards the public with physically violent actions. In marked contrast to the “everyday forms of resistance” used by “the weak” who are unable to partake in overt organized political activity for fear of reprisal (Scott 1985), the tactics used by these panhandlers, though they could not be considered organized political activity, are overt. Significantly, as street people are typically alienated by and excluded from standard venues for political expression and systems of justice, they have little opportunity to seek recourse through such institutional means. Instead, the frustration and anger they feel in the face of what they perceive as mistreatment at the hands of the public is transformed into action rather than discourse.

One afternoon as I spoke to Nick, he informed me, “I’m always out here getting punched by people for asking them for change.” I replied by asking, “People punch you?” to which he responded angrily, “Oh yeah, I hate the rich. I really hate the rich.” Then he yelled, “Don’t take my house” and punctuated his statement by turning towards the fence we were sitting behind and punching it with enough force to knock the board loose. He then exclaimed “Don’t take my car” punctuated by punching out another fence board. He looked at me then, and saw what must have been a horrified look on my face and he

explained to me, “It’s OK, I don’t take it out on people, just things. Except for foreigners. All those fucking foreigners coming here taking our jobs” and he punctuated his comment with yet another thundering punch. Here, Nick transforms his anger at the people who punch him when he asks for change into a tirade against “the rich”; he takes out this anger by damaging property, and by seeking out a scapegoat for his economic circumstances. I include this story not to demonstrate that some people on the street may behave violently, but to highlight how Nick’s experience of physical violence at the hands of the public, and social violence at the hands of the socio-economic system, have led him to react with a type of violence of his own.

Likewise, James explained to me how difficult it was to endure the insults of the public, including being spat at and having garbage thrown at him, without resorting to violence. He explained,

If I do snap I’ll go, I do more damage to myself punching out a wall or a garbage can or something like that instead of punching someone else out and go back to jail. Because I look at it this way, it takes a better man to go out and punch out a garbage can or punch out a wall. Even though it may look stupid, sound stupid, and you injure yourself, I’d rather do that than face charges behind bars for murder or something like that.

James has been to jail enough times to know that when he reacts with violence he is usually the one who suffers for it. Much like Nick, he tries to use inanimate property as an outlet for his aggression rather than taking it out on people. Yet, this is not always what happens. He told me about a day when in the space of ten minutes two men insulted him gravely. As James explained, “I had this one guy come up and he says, ‘I’ll give you a bit of change’, he grabbed his private area and hoarked in my face, he said ‘there’s some change for you.’” Then, about two minutes later, when he asked another man for a bit of change, the man replied, “I know why you’re doing this, I betcha because you mother was a slutty panhandler too fella, that’s why you’re doing it, hey?” The first man he chased down the mall but he got away, the second man he chased and as he explained, “I hate to admit, but I did beat the living crap out of him.” In both cases, James felt that the men had “disrespected” him, and found himself reacting out of a desire to enforce the notion that “you do not disrespect any street person like that.” Yet, he recognized that such a reaction was inappropriate, and in other cases he attempted to find more positive

ways of dealing with such confrontations. In one such attempt, he told me about an encounter he had negotiated:

She call[ed] me the most lowest scummiest disgusting pig she ever saw in her life. I looked at her and said, "Thank you very much for the nicest compliment you gave me all day Ma'am." She said, "What do you mean?" I said, "You called me a pig right?" She said, "yeah." I said, "Well that's, do you know what the meaning of a pig is?" and she said "No." "Pretty Intelligent Guy, thank you very much and have a nice day"...it's every day like this, I take my insults and convert them into a joke against the person in a nice way, that way I get the respect of others too.

As all of these examples show, James had developed a repertoire of ways to deal with the often critical treatment of the public. Rather than accepting this treatment as his just deserts, James resisted the assumption that just because he was a street person he was unworthy of respect. By way of asserting his claim to respect, James at times chose to act overtly by chasing and beating-up those who failed to respect him, while at other times he chose to release his anger on a wall rather than a person or to use humour to disarm the threat posed by the public's reaction. While all of these approaches enabled James to maintain a sense of self-respect, the first two of the three run the risk of carrying legal consequences. As James describes, he has learned that overt resistance is often met with time spent in jail, while a more subdued approach may even be rewarded. In a sense, he has recognized that the more he reflects the negative image the public imposes upon him, the less likely he is to gain the kind of positive recognition he seeks. James' sense of identity and his assertion of this identity have been formed "in dialogue with", and in "struggle against" (Taylor 1994:33) the mis/non recognition of others.

While these examples have detailed the issue of such confrontations from the perspective of the people on the street, this next example will illustrate how one member of the mainstream public I interviewed viewed such an encounter. Sean, a downtown resident and worker, told me the following story:

I was walking on Stephen Avenue Mall and I was asked for money from a street kid. He had a Mohawk and was very very dirty, and just your typical street kid. I just kept my head down and kept on walking, and he said, he swore, said a bad word, and you know, said something to me, and I just turned and flipped him the bird, the middle finger, and he didn't like that very much and jumped off where he was sitting and ran after me and was, wouldn't leave me

alone. I said, like ‘just go away, leave me alone’, but he wouldn’t leave me alone. He was extremely aggressive. And I literally had to put my hand on his throat and push him down, just to make him, to just, to get him away from me. I felt threatened, physically threatened. I was extremely upset. And his friends all joined in at the same time after that, and there were six people all around me yelling at me.

When I asked what they were yelling he explained:

Well, just like “who the hell do you think you are?” and you know, “you shouldn’t do that kind of stuff,” you know, “you think you’re a big man,” yada yada. Stuff like that, when in fact I was the one that was under attack!

Sean’s example shows how the panhandler’s struggle for recognition can escalate into a battle of wills. While Sean recognized that the panhandler “didn’t like the fact that I ignored him”, rather than perceiving the panhandler’s response as a plea for recognition, from Sean’s perspective, the panhandler’s actions were simply an attack. While the panhandler swearing at Sean did provoke him to respond, subverting the nonperson treatment, the response garnered was itself a negative recognition. Rather than earning respect, the panhandler’s profanities reinforced the negative image Sean imposed upon him and led to further profanities on Sean’s part. Although Sean did not mention it in this section of the narrative, the panhandler then spat at him, and this confrontation escalated into an altercation. When Sean grabbed him by the neck and threw him on the ground the battle of wills culminated in an act that, for the friends of the panhandler, seemed symbolic of their place in the social world. The comments made by the panhandler’s friends, like “who the hell do you think you are?” illustrate that they felt Sean’s act was unjust, that they felt he had no right to treat their friend that way, and that in doing so, Sean had acted as though he was a “big man” when really he was just abusing a street kid less powerful than he. Yet, the friends’ comments also illustrate that in this dialogue the misrecognition was mutual. Rather than recognizing that Sean was simply a man who responded violently because he felt threatened and under attack, the panhandlers saw him as the aggressor. Thus, the disjuncture in how these two parties perceived each other created a dialogue in which each failed to accurately recognize the other. This story aptly illustrates how anger, frustration and aggression can grow in the space between the personal identity one asserts and the social identity that is imposed upon one. In the case

of street interactions, what would otherwise be an innocuous encounter can be transformed into a pitched battle over identity and recognition.

Just as James described trying to find ways to avoid being drawn into such confrontations, so too does Sean describe the lengths he must go to in his effort to avoid such encounters. Sean explained to me that rather than simply pretending he does not see the people panhandling, he tries to avoid the areas the panhandlers frequent by picking alternate routes when he feels it is necessary. However, at times when encounters with panhandlers cannot be avoided, Sean has invested in props to help him block out the requests of the panhandlers:

I bought a walkman and I keep my headphones on and I keep the volume turned up so I can't hear them and I just keep my head down and I can't hear them. That's really pathetic but that's really all I feel comfortable in doing...I just avoid them and typically they just, I just avoid them and they don't say anything...The walkman is a great thing, you know, it's like putting on my sun glasses because you never have to make eye contact, you don't have to make ear contact with them.

By wearing sunglasses and listening to a Walkman not only does Sean avoid having to see and hear the requests of the panhandlers, he provides a way to block all communicative contact with the people panhandling. Rather than using "nonperson treatment," Sean opts to disengage entirely and to encapsulate himself in an impermeable shell. While he acknowledges that having to resort to such tactics is "pathetic," his bad experiences with people panhandling, his vehement dislike of people who panhandle, and the feelings of anger that result from that dislike have made him feel that these are necessary measures for him to take in order to avoid conflicts with people panhandling. Unlike the panhandlers who, by virtue of their income generating activities, cannot totally disengage from the public, Sean has the option to disengage from the panhandlers. In a sense then, Sean removes himself from the dialogue over identity by withdrawing into communicative isolation.

As these examples begin to explore, not only do the approaches of the people panhandling have an impact on the public, the responses of the public also have an impact on the panhandlers. That impact is a variable one ranging from accepting this treatment and attempting to distance oneself from it, to resisting this treatment by creating

rationalizing or affirming counter narratives, to reacting to such treatment with threats and acts of violence against people and property. While one fear of the public is that panhandlers approaching them may be unstable and react unpredictably, the same could be said of the reactions of the pedestrians. Unlike the interactions both pedestrians and panhandlers typically take part in, street encounters pose a unique dilemma for both parties. For pedestrians, the unique dilemma is that, unlike other strangers on city streets, panhandlers attempt to draw them into “face engagements” and place upon them uninvited communicative demands. They are, in essence, forced to respond, if only by the absence of a response. These reactions are inscribed with socio-political ideologies, personal fears and statements regarding the place of the panhandler in the spectrum of personhood. Yet, they are also often marked by ambivalence, as people with little knowledge, or little interest, grapple to decide on how they should respond.

In contrast, unlike the brief and often unremarkable experience of the pedestrians who pass by people panhandling on the street, for the panhandlers themselves these repeated encounters with strangers mark a central and often dominant feature in their lives and serve to shape the way they see themselves and the way they wish to be seen. As Goffman (1963a) suggests in his discussion of stigma, street people see themselves as normal people, and despite the obvious stigma of their poverty, they wish to be treated as normal people. Yet, the social distance engendered in their stigmatized status leads them to be treated as strangers, often as nonpersons or as bad-persons. The dilemma for them then becomes how to manage this stigma, how to present themselves in ways which will enable them to overcome nonrecognition and misrecognition, or in ways which will enable them to prevent the delivery of this treatment from undermining their personal identities. What is perhaps most significant about this process is that it is always carried out in dialogue, with both parties inevitably transacting meaning, whether words and glances are exchanged or withheld. While at one level these interactions are simply one person approaching another on the street for a donation, at another, they are arenas for the negotiation of identity in the politics of recognition- or in many cases, the politics of mutual misrecognition. The physical proximity of the panhandlers, and the social distance which separates “us” from “them”, adds a dramatic tension to these politics. This tension not only affects the nature of face-to-face interactions between panhandlers and

pedestrians, it also affects how panhandlers are approached in public policy debates. The following chapter will discuss how this tension shapes our dialogues at an institutional level in the reckoning of public policy regarding these “strangers in our midst”.

PART II

Chapter Six: The Rights of “Strangers”

While Part I of this thesis focused on the dialogic processes carried out in face-to-face encounters, the following chapters will begin to explore how this process is engaged in at an institutionalized level. While panhandlers encountered on the street are strangers by virtue of the social distance between their social world and ours, in the politico-legal realm, unlike strangers who are truly outsiders, these “strangers among us” are technically members of our society and legally citizens despite their “strange” status. The following chapter will discuss how we define the rights of these strangers and how we view their citizenship in light of their status as “strangers.”

In the Interests of Security and Peace

In his discussion of the genesis of the begging tradition, Harlan Gilmore (1940) states that, contrary to the common assumption that begging evolved out of “customs of mutual aid and responsibility” found among relatives and neighbours, it more likely developed out of customs dictating the treatment of strangers (1940:2). As Gilmore describes, in “preliterate societies”, the stranger is sometimes thought to be a “mysterious person” who possesses a “mysterious magic” (1940:2). Out of fear of this magic, such societies often have customs that dictate strangers should be treated well and offered hospitality in order to protect the local people. Yet, Gilmore speculates that, as the general mobility of people in such societies increased, and more strangers passed through foreign towns, the levels of hospitality decreased and, while guests of high esteem still received lavish hospitality, those who were “lowly” received only a minimum such as bread and water or a small coin (1940:4). Likewise, he acknowledges that as towns grew into cities, these “strangers” no longer had to be migrants, as the anonymity of the city enabled them to “live on the hospitality of those in his community to whom he was a stranger” (1940:4). In support of his argument, Gilmore notes that, in contemporary almsgiving, the beggar is “almost universally a stranger to those from whom he receives alms” (1940:3). So, in essence, the rise of the city marked the genesis of the “stranger within our midst” and the dilemma of hospitality posed by such strangers.

In his writings on the conditions necessary for the world to remain at perpetual peace, Immanuel Kant (1983:118) writes, “Cosmopolitan right shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality.” In making this claim, Kant shifts the discussion of hospitality for strangers from the realm of “philanthropy” to the realm of “right”. In essence, Kant argues that the minimum acceptable level of hospitality for such strangers is “the right of an alien not to be treated as an enemy upon his arrival in another’s country” (1983:118). Yet, as Kant (1983:118) further explains, this right is limited to

a right of temporary sojourn, a right to associate, which all men have. They have it by virtue of their common possession of the surface of the earth, where, as a globe, they cannot infinitely disperse and hence must finally tolerate the presence of each other. Originally no one had more right than another to a particular part of the earth.

What Kant captures in this description is the essence of the relationship between true strangers and those who inhabit the lands they enter. Living on a finite planet, we are forced to coexist with those who at first appear strange to us. We must inhabit the same places, spaces inscribed over time with our rights to their use. Yet, these rights are but constructs superimposed on spaces which were once uninhabited. We have long since colonized those spaces, and within them established domains that we rule. That is, we make the rules, we codify them, and we enforce them. We determine what the minimum rights of the stranger will be. We define our own notions of hospitality. We decide who will be refused, who will be treated with hostility. We decide who the strangers are.

Panhandlers, who are usually not strangers in the conventional sense of being “aliens” from foreign lands, are, in our culture, transformed into strangers by the anonymity and social distance engendered in city life and class distinction. Although these “strangers within our midst” have claims to the full rights citizenship entails, true to Kant’s conception of the limited rights of strangers, our society often extends them only limited hospitality. This is, of course, made possible because once defined as “strangers,” panhandlers become interlopers in the small portion of the globe we have come to rule. The degree to which they are seen as interlopers often varies in accordance with the degree of “strangeness” they engender, as those who are transients from other cities or provinces find themselves cast firmly in the role of “stranger,” while those who are local

are considered slightly less strange and find themselves slightly more welcomed. Likewise, whether transient or local, those who are “strange” by virtue of their race (particularly aboriginal people), their dirtiness, their unusual appearance (especially punks), their mental illness or their level of intoxication are also easily cast in the role of “stranger,” while those who seem more familiar, like women, children and sober white men, are less easily dismissed as “strange.” Thus, it cannot be taken for granted that, despite their legal citizenship, the rights of this variety of “strangers” are equally recognized equally, or that they resemble the rights granted to the general public. The nature of their citizenship is flexible and is actively negotiated in the relational arena of identity politics. As the following chapter will show, the way we define these “strangers,” their citizenship and their rights to “hospitality” is not only shaped by us as a society, it shapes us as a society. The way we come to conceptualize our role as purveyors of hospitality at an institutional level, and the public policies we create to accommodate such hospitality cannot, and should not, be separated from a discussion of how they are influenced by our ideologies regarding “strangers” and the dilemma posed by their strangeness.

Universal Hospitality

The question of what constitutes an appropriate degree of “hospitality” in relation to those living on the streets is an interesting one. Kant argues that the “right” of strangers is simply to not treat them as enemies (1983:118). Yet, as Gilmore (1940) points out, our society has a history of extending much greater hospitality to strangers. At times, our inclination has been to welcome strangers and care for them, while at others, it has been to send them on their way. As the following discussion of social policy will illustrate, there is often a fine line between greeting these “strangers” with hospitality or with hostility.

Following the Great Depression and the World Wars, Canada developed a social welfare system, which has largely come to define us as a nation. In our continual efforts to differentiate ourselves from our American neighbours, we make appeals to the virtues of our social safety net, our public health care and our public education. According to Seymour Lipset (1990:136,xii), even the founding principals of our country contrast Canada’s emphasis on communalism, “peace, order and good government,” to the

individualistic orientation of America's "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." While it would be unfair to claim that either country is accurately typified by such broadly generalized principles, the fact remains that in the minds and hearts of Canadian people, the difference between "us" and "them" is often seen to lie in our more communal orientation. Yet, Alberta has long been thought to be the most American of Canadian provinces, and Calgary to be the most American city in Canada. Chuck Reasons explains, "As self appointed protectors and promoters of free enterprise, Calgarians believe many of the policies and practices of the federal government undermine rugged individualism, free-spirited competition and economic success" (1984:13). A sense of "western alienation" has grown out of this general discontent with the federal government, and far from heralding "good government," in Calgary people generally seek to protect themselves from government abuses by embracing an ideal of "small government." The suspicion that due to bureaucracy and graft the government is incapable of managing public finances, regulating business, or delivering public services efficiently has led Albertans to support successive Progressive Conservative governments. These governments have taken an aggressive approach to reducing deficits, a laissez-faire approach to business and have gradually dismantled the social safety net while moving towards privatizing healthcare and other public services. Thus, in contrast to much of Canada which still seeks to define itself by its communalism, in Alberta discourses of independence and individualism tend to dominate public and political discourse as was discussed earlier in reference to the importance members of the mainstream public place on the idea that everyone must work, that (most) everyone could be working, and that those who do not work have chosen not to be productive members of society.

Parallel to these individualistic and anti-statist sentiments in the realm of economic and social life, there is a strong discourse in Alberta around personal liberty. When I spoke to Kate, a downtown resident, about her past employment with a family planning clinic she explained, that while some "right wing" people would oppose pro-choice attitudes on religious grounds, others would "support the notion of pro-choice because their attitude might be, well you can do what the hell you like with your body, as long as you don't expect me to pay for it." Thus, the attitude of many is that so long as

one maintains one's independence, one should be free to do what one likes, so long as one is not infringing on the liberty, or pocketbooks, of others in the process.

However, this raises questions regarding why a libertarian city like Calgary would simultaneously embrace a system of social control that has, at times, been characterized as Orwellian. In speaking with members of Calgary's bylaw services department, I was told that people in Calgary "like their bylaws." As Alana, a downtown worker and resident, explained to me, "Everything's bylawed to death in this city. That's that clean-cut image that we want to structure our environment." True to Alana's observations, Calgary does present a clean-cut image, and the city environment is one of cleanliness and order. As William Thorsell describes, the city "is characterized by a seamless conformity of buildings and spaces...a kind of fascist unity" (2002). The combination of cleanliness and order with contemporary architecture and the strict enforcement of laws and bylaws gives the streets of downtown Calgary a uniformity that seems peculiar for a fairly large city. As Thorsell exemplifies, the reaction of outsiders to the city is sometimes critical of the sense of order such a system engenders. Yet, as Derek, a police officer explained,

To hell with these guys that don't like rules, let's stick to those rules. Let's do things to clean up our city and make us proud to be Calgarians and have people come and visit us here and say my God, what a beautiful place...the highest compliment as a citizen or a policeman that you can get is that they come here and they feel it's a beautiful place and they feel safe...I'm not bothered when somebody says Calgary is a redneck place and they don't put up with anything. That's fine, that's what makes this a great city to live in.

From Derek's viewpoint, the strict enforcement of laws and the resulting cleanliness and order create an environment that is valued for its safety and beauty. Derek argues that preserving order on city streets is, like writing tickets, a "necessary evil," "something that has to be done for the greater good." Thus, the concern for public safety and the need to balance the competing rights of individuals both act as accepted constraints on the freedom to exercise one's liberty. People accept and abide by the laws and bylaws because they believe it is in everybody's interest to do so. Within this libertarian discourse, it is through maintaining good order that people are able to enjoy their liberty and to pursue their individual courses of action without being inhibited by feelings of fear.

Though the above description is a simplistic overview and generalizes broadly, my intention is not to caricature the citizens of Calgary, but to highlight some of the values which are common among many, though not all, of its inhabitants. Recognizing the juncture between individualism, independence, libertarianism, and social control is integral to understanding how Calgarians define citizenship and how mutual social obligations are negotiated. The following section will elaborate on these concepts and explore how they become incorporated into the way Calgarians approach extending “hospitality” to the people on the street.

Independence in Action

The most obvious impact of the above emphasis on individualism and independence is the division of poor people into two categories: the deserving and the undeserving. The tenets of individualism, wherein people must accept responsibility for their lot in life, and of equality of opportunity, which is assumed to exist in a laissez faire capitalist system, combine to produce the conclusion that those who are poor have only themselves to blame and, excluding the “deserving poor” (constituted by the elderly, the disabled and children), who are relieved of personal responsibility, the “the poor” are held responsible for their condition by the general population (Kerbo 1996:258). In many of my interviews it was clear that while the “deserving poor” were deemed to be worthy of assistance, the “undeserving poor” were expected to accept responsibility for their situation and to endeavour to overcome it. As Doug, a downtown worker, explained, “You have to help those that need help and that *can't* help themselves. But I don't necessarily agree with helping those out that *can* help themselves. Like, I don't think that welfare for an able bodied individual is appropriate. Temporarily, to get them on their feet, to get them going, but then to get them off that cycle and get them working and contributing.” Doug acknowledges that there are some people who are unable to support themselves and that “we have a society that can afford to provide that help” which leads him to conclude that we have a social responsibility to provide that assistance. However, for those who should be able to support themselves, Doug's expectation is that with a small and temporary amount of assistance, they will be able to re-enter the work force and to begin contributing to society in a productive way.

In a similar vein, Sean, a downtown worker and resident, explained, “I don’t think it’s right to give people daily hand outs and a place to sleep. You know, it doesn’t give them the incentive to get out there and to try to better themselves, to learn a skill, to learn a trade.” While Sean did not approve of such measures, he did support a service agency that delivers medical care to street people by stating,

It’s more than just a stop-gap Band-Aid thing...there are women in there, there are children, and the working poor that just simply can’t afford a place to live, that need this service. They don’t panhandle but they are homeless and I genuinely feel bad for those people, because they are trying, they are working. Some people are really not bright, but they working, they’re trying their best, and those kind of people should be helped as much as possible, and they should be held up as a shining example for your typical panhandler.

In Sean’s view, women, children and the working poor should all have access to services because they are “trying their best,” and, as Sean indicates, they should be held up as an example of what could be accomplished if the people panhandling would “try their best.” However, the kinds of services Sean believes should be available are not “stop gap measures” which “give them fish rather than teaching them to fish.” In this view, the goal of assisting people should be to provide them with a way to achieve their independence and to support themselves, not to enable their dependence on the system.

Although this view was linked to a discussion of the deserving and undeserving poor, it was clear that, for both the general public and for most of the service providers, facilitating the independence of street people was considered to be the primary goal of any attempt to assist them. As discussed previously, even the social assistance program in Alberta is characterized by this focus on independence, as its name, Supports for Independence (SFI) indicates. However, the way this emphasis on independence is enacted in the provision of services varies according to several concerns which were voiced by the general public. The one concern was, of course, that the services provided should focus upon those factors which are requisite to supporting oneself. There was recognition by most people that short-term emergency services that provided for basic needs (food, shelter and clothing) were essential. Following those, the services the public felt were the most important tended to be those which would help people gain

employment and housing. Secondary attention was given to services that would provide psychiatric and emotional support and support in overcoming addictions.

Another concern was that the services provided should not in any way discourage the pursuit of independence. As Doug indicates in his statement above, while he recognizes that some people may need assistance to “get them on their feet,” this assistance should only be available on a temporary basis. Likewise, the quality and quantity of assistance should be limited so as to provide an incentive to pursue a better life. This view was explored when Russell, a downtown worker, described how SFI should function, “you want to give them enough to live on, but not so much that they are too comfortable. If you get to the point where they can make as much on welfare doing nothing as they can bussing tables at a restaurant at minimum wage, then they’re never going to get off welfare and go get a job... I mean, who would?”

This concern with not making services too attractive did not just relate to SFI, but was also extended to other basic services. Alex, a member of the business community, explained to me that the community had decided to spend 3% more to construct an attractive new shelter downtown instead of constructing a utilitarian concrete structure because the building marked an important gateway into the city and they felt “there should be some dignity and respect for those people too.” However, when I asked him if he felt that such an attractive shelter would draw homeless people to Calgary from other places, he explained, “those buildings are going to be pretty sparse inside. I mean yes, the outside may look good, but that’s the public space. The inside is their space and it will actually be very bare bones and so it won’t be that attractive, I don’t think, to actually be there.” Thus, while Alex felt it was important to spend extra money to create an attractive building for the public view, he also stressed that similar expenditures were not made to create an attractive or comfortable interior living space for the people who would inhabit the building.

Ironically, although Alex explains that this extra expenditure was made with the dual purpose of providing the public with a beautiful building for view from the “public space,” and of granting street people the dignity of staying in a place that more closely resembles the posh condos sprouting up around them than the old warehouses currently used to house them, this expenditure has met with much public criticism. Throughout my

fieldwork period, members of the public referred to the new shelter being built as an icon of all that is wrong with the “system.” Perhaps the most vocal about her concerns was Sherri, a member of the business community:

I think they’re spoiled. I have no sympathy for the homeless, the panhandlers, or whatever. We give them everything. You see that new luxury homeless shelter they’re building on prime downtown real estate. Why do you think those people would work when they have that? When it’s finished I think I’ll go check in to the penthouse suite. Right downtown! I won’t have to drive to work, I’ll have everything right there.

Sherri’s comments make clear her belief that the outwardly attractive homeless shelter would serve as a disincentive for people to return to the work force. Unlike Alex, Sherri was not aware of what the inside of the shelter would look like, and based on the exterior she speculated that the inside would be a luxury space. Additionally, she felt that it was unfair that street people should be able to live downtown on “prime real estate” while she was forced to commute to and from the suburbs to her job downtown. Sherri was particularly critical towards the services provided for street people because as a child her mother had worked and struggled to provide for her two children and had been denied assistance from the welfare office when she had asked for money to help fix their rotting teeth. As she explained, “that’s what’s wrong with the system in Canada, you can’t just get what you need, what you can’t afford, you’re either totally on welfare or you’re not. It almost encourages people to be on welfare.” In contrast to the perception that it is only the wealthy that subscribe to ideologies of independence and suspicions of the “system,” I found that those who had at one point lived on the margins were often the most ardent proponents of self-sufficiency and the most critical of the services. Thus, both the wealthy and the working classes in Calgary stressed the importance of encouraging independence through the provision of temporary, “bare bones” services and minimal social benefits.

The final major concern that people had regarding the services was that, although they wanted street people to regain their independence through re-entering the work force, they also recognized the essential liberty of all people to decide how they want to live their own lives. As Doug, a downtown worker, explained, “If you want to be a bum, then that’s your choice, and I don’t think I need to support you for that.” Doug recognized that some people do not want to work, and while he accepted the fact that some people

choose to live on the streets, he felt that in making those choices he no longer had a responsibility to support those individuals.

Kate, a downtown resident, presented a similar view when she described to me how she had gotten to know one young man who was on the streets. She talked to him at length about why he was on the streets, and she gave him money, gift certificates to a local restaurant, and the card for a local social organization that could help him to find housing. Yet, after she found out from someone working at that organization that he routinely refused their help, she explained: "I sort of stopped worrying about him quite as much at that point because, well, he's plugged in to the system, he knows what's available, and if he wants it, he can access it, and if he doesn't, you know, he doesn't." Although she felt that he had played on her sympathies to a certain extent, when I asked her if she felt conned she replied,

He might have thought, oh good here comes that stupid woman again, or he might have thought, oh good here comes that nice woman again. I don't know, but either way it didn't make any difference because I don't figure you help panhandlers really for them, you more do it for some need you have to help...I mean it's just sort of us with a guilt thing isn't it? You think, you're so fortunate and somebody else is living in a doorway.

Kate's narratives illustrate that she accepts the liberty of the young man to refuse services and to solicit donations from her, and she rationalizes these liberties by recognizing that, in truth, she helps people in order to satisfy her *own need* to help them rather than to satisfy *their need* for help. In the case of the young man she was helping, once she discovered that he would not accept the help of the service organization, her own need to help him diminished. It seems that the availability of services and her knowledge of his access to them served to satisfy her need to help him. When she explained to me why she had bought the young man gift certificates she explained, "Who knows what they're going to spend the money on, not that I have a problem with that... but I don't want to be the one, I prefer to feed them than feed their addiction. Somebody else can do that." Interestingly, while Kate acknowledges the agency of the people panhandling to refuse services, or to spend their money on feeding substance abuse problems, her approach is to try to avoid enabling the exercise of this agency by making her donations in ways which control the outcomes of her actions. By not giving money to someone who refuses the

services available, and by giving donations in the form of gift certificates, Kate simultaneously assuages her own guilt, attempts to reduce the amount of harm done by her satisfying this need to help, and implies that the people she helps cannot be trusted to satisfy their own needs in what she would consider an appropriate way.

Social Services: An Overview

Keeping in mind this emphasis on independence as the goal and determining factor of how services are approached in Calgary, the next question to be addressed is who should be providing these services? As Kate, a downtown resident, explained to me,

A lot of people here kid themselves, that you can be fiscally conservative and socially not conservative. Like liberal with a small l. And then you say to them, well where is the money going to come from for your liberal social values and services and so on if you're fiscally so conservative that you're not paying any taxes and you don't want the government to be involved in anything? Like who's going to implement this?

The answer I received from members of the general public was that, although the government had a role to play in providing key services like SFI, AISH and some health services, the government should administer funding to private charities which should in turn provide the needed services. In contrast to the reluctance of Calgarians to pay taxes, Calgary boasts a strong commitment to supporting charity. At the moment, private organizations do offer a variety of services that are funded through various combinations of provincial government funds, corporate donations, and private donations.²⁷ However, as the following discussion will illustrate, social service providers and panhandlers alike both have strong critiques of how this system of service provision is operating at the moment.

The first critique centres on the use of charity to replace government involvement in the provision of services. As Gail, a social service provider, explained,

People here are very generous, but generosity is a sneaky phenomenon because if I've never given you anything and today I buy you a cup of coffee, I'm generous, but one cup of coffee is not going to give you enough to live on. And similarly, some very rich people are very generous with their money in exchange for tax write-offs, which allow them to get more rich, but it's not enough. So, for one thing, it's not enough to deliver services of the magnitude and the depth that is obviously needed because all the

services have waiting lists, big waiting lists, long waiting lists.
People are turned away from shelters...so the need is very great.

As Gail described, depending on charity often results in an inadequate level of funds to support essential services. Gail pointed out that while charitable funds have a tendency to "dry up" when the economy is poor, the support of government funds, though also insecure, is "more sustainable" and "longer lasting." In the end, Gail argued that depending on charitable donations "makes for a very hand to mouth kind of existence. In some ways it replicates the phenomenon of the marginal existence of people on the street." Another problem she described is the dependence of agencies on "trying to catch the wave" in order to tap into whatever the next popular group to support will be. According to Gail, "homelessness is actually quite sexy now. It's trendy to be concerned about homelessness, but it's not trendy to be concerned about the people who are homeless. Well, it's OK if they're just homeless. It's not OK if they're panhandling and homeless, or addicted and homeless." Thus, those organizations that work to provide services for groups who fall out of public favour run the risk of not being able to attract enough donations to continue providing adequate services. Of course, this creates a system within which particular groups deemed undeserving, like the panhandling homeless or the addicted homeless, are placed at greater risk of not being able to access adequate support.

Substance Abuse Services

As evidence of this phenomenon, services for homeless people with substance abuse problems were in short supply. When asked what service areas needed to be expanded, many of the service providers responded that more detoxification and treatment services are required. Notably, however, the existing addiction services are funded almost entirely by the provincial government, which stands in evidence of the fact that even government support provides no guarantee that services will be adequately funded. Maria, a social service provider, described this shortage of services using a local detox/ shelter facility as an example. According to Maria, in the month of March 2001, the shelter, which provides people with addictions a place to sleep at night, turned away 180 people and typically ran at 104-112% capacity. The 5½-day detoxification program, which is

designed to provide people with an “opportunity to stabilize their health” and with “support through their withdrawal,” is usually accessible without a wait. The aim of this detox program is not actually to treat the addiction, and, although some people may attempt to use it this way, or to carry on from the detox program into a 28 day or three month treatment program, many people who access this program use it to take a break from the streets and intend to return to using. But, for people who wish to carry on from detox into a treatment program, a shortage of treatment beds means that there is an average wait of two to three weeks between detox and treatment.

The problem posed by this wait is two-fold. First, as Maria explained, “they always say with addictions when someone is ready to make some changes, it’s urgent that things are done at that time. So I think that there’s truth too in terms of someone having that momentum and feeling some hope, it’s something you always need to build on at the time that it happens.” Clearly, after making the decision that you are ready to deal with your addiction, and entering a detox program, discovering that it will be another two or three week wait before you can access treatment has the potential to slow that momentum. Likewise, for someone who is living on the street, not having a place to live poses a serious barrier to maintaining ones sobriety throughout that wait. As people on the street are surrounded by other people who are abusing substances, and often belong to social networks of people whose main social activities centre on abusing substances, the temptation to return to using is a strong one. The story told by Eric in Chapter Three illustrates the social problems he encountered when he stopped drinking and found himself isolated from former friends and cut off from former social networks.

Also, Eric’s story illustrates the second major barrier street people who go through addictions treatment face: when they complete treatment but do not have a place to live, they find themselves back on the streets and in the same social environment they left when they entered treatment. As Maria explained, “It’s easier to get them into treatment than it is to find housing that’s sort of adequate and will provide what someone needs to stay sober.” Due to a severe shortage in the availability of low cost housing in Calgary, the biggest challenge facing service providers and street people is that even if the street people are able to deal with addictions, gain employment, or access social benefits, they may still be unable to access adequate housing. Even if they are able to find

affordable housing, as Jennifer, another service provider explained, “Probably the only place they could afford to live is Vic park, where there’s a lot of crack houses, a lot of addiction problems, and so if you’re struggling with any kind of addiction problems yourself, you’re going to be right back in the middle of living next door to someone that’s doing a lot of crack.”

From a holistic perspective, the process of addiction treatment requires that there be continuous support, which includes access to detox, a pre-treatment bed, treatment, a post-treatment bed, and transitional housing which is appropriate to someone who is struggling to maintain their sobriety. A breakdown at any step in this process runs the risk of destroying the momentum of the individual. Although the existing organizations work diligently to accommodate the needs of their clients and sometimes allow them to use detox beds as pre and post-treatment beds, such steps are not adequate and inevitably affect the functioning of the detox facility. While the city is currently expanding its addictions services to include an Aboriginal healing facility and a section of the new shelter dedicated to addictions, the concern remains that with a rapidly increasing homeless population, among which 30% report using alcohol on an typical day and 30% report using drugs on an typical day (Arboleda-Florez and Holley 1997:67-68), these services may be unable to keep pace with demand. However, perhaps most importantly, despite these expanding detox and treatment services, the dearth of appropriate low cost housing available in Calgary marks the primary barrier for people dealing with addiction. Without a place to live, and the hope such a place signifies, becoming and remaining sober is made far more difficult.

Low-cost Housing

For all people on the street, the availability of low cost housing is integral to any possibility of making the transition from the streets to being housed. When I asked Frank how he became homeless, his answer was simple and poignant: “I lost my home. The rent went up and I couldn’t pay.” Although there may have been other contributing factors to Frank’s loss of housing, the fact remains that until his rent went up he was able to maintain his housing. In speaking with Louise, a social service provider, she explained that with the rising cost of living, including rents and utilities, “affordable and safe housing is extremely rare” and the result is a “revolving door: live three months, can’t

afford it, get out.” Louise stated, “If you’re going to raise the cost of living, and you’re going to raise the rent, then you’ve got to raise the income level, whether it be minimum wage or whether it’s SFI rates.” The trend in Alberta has been the reverse. SFI rates have been decreasing, and, as Audrey explained, although the minimum wage was raised in 1999 to \$5.90/hr, there has been discussion about getting rid of a regulated minimum wage altogether. Without raising income levels, ensuring provision of low cost/ subsidized housing becomes even more imperative. However, Audrey, a social service provider, pointed out that, at the moment, the discourse between the three levels of government (municipal, provincial, and federal) has involved a lot of, “that’s your responsibility, no it’s yours- they just finger point back and forth.” Audrey described what her organization views as the appropriate division of responsibility, with the municipal government addressing zoning and incentives for development, the provincial government responsible for subsidized and affordable housing, and the federal government responsible for providing funding. However, she also explained that the province has “basically capped it and said it’s not our issue” and have justified that by saying, “well, the federal government no longer sends funds.” Thus, at the moment, with nobody taking responsibility for the dire shortage in housing, there can be little progress in its provision.

Calgary is facing an actual depletion of low cost housing stock as the downtown core is increasingly gentrified with the tearing down of old homes and their replacement with condo developments. Also, affordable apartments are rapidly being converted into high- end condos. With a general shortage of housing, due to the large number of people who migrate to Calgary to find employment, there is money to be made in the high-end housing market and there is little-to-no incentive for private developers to build low-cost housing. Additionally, as Louise explained, “A chunk of land in Calgary now is liquid gold, literally soil is gold...Calgarians are phenomenally generous with their time and money...When it comes to property and lands, it’s not quite so.” As land is so valuable in Calgary, Louise felt that people preferred to donate time and money, and to hold on to their investments in land. She went on to say, “Business is business, and that is the mentality, honestly, in Calgary, in my opinion. Business is money, and social causes are not good money.” Without being able to make a return on their investments, Louise felt

that people did not wish to part with land that could be used for low cost housing developments.

However, without huge amounts of money, purchasing land and developing housing is simply beyond the financial capabilities of most social organizations. As the governments fight over who will accept responsibility for social housing, affordable housing stocks are actually depleting and, without access to affordable housing, 45% of people staying in Calgary shelters are employed (United Way 2000:7). The best services in the world will not reduce the homeless population so long as there are no homes for them to live in, and each person who arrives on the street for lack of affordable housing must endure a reduction in their quality of life, in addition to burdening the resources of the community. The community has proposed to deal with the shortage of housing through solutions centred on: 1) expanding the private Landlord Rent Supplement Program, 2) removing the federal tax disincentives to maintain and preserve rental housing, 3) providing developers with tax-based incentives to construct new low income rental accommodation, and 4) innovative volunteer/ private sector partnerships (Calgary Homeless Foundation 2000). Significantly, in the spirit of allowing the market, rather than legislation, to rule, these proposed approaches focus on tax incentives and voluntary compliance rather than on legislating low-cost housing quotas or zoning restrictions. Without decisive support from all levels of government and some major investment, low cost housing will remain the biggest challenge facing service providers and homeless people in Calgary.

Mental Health Services

In addition to the shortage of low cost housing, the shortage of addiction services, the low minimum wage and the low rate of SFI benefits, Calgary also faces a shortage of appropriate mental health services. In Canada, during the 1960s and 1970s the movement to deinstitutionalize psychiatric patients removed them from long-term hospital facilities and replaced these services with crisis-oriented hospitalizations and community placements in group homes, boarding houses and apartments (Glasser and Bridgman 1999:25). However, about ten years after this movement began, a visible number of former patients appeared on the streets after wandering away from placements and discontinuing their medications (Glasser and Bridgman 1999:25). This process has

resulted in current estimates that 31-41% of the homeless population in Calgary may have serious mental disorders (Arboeda-Florez and Holley 1997:67). Unfortunately, service providers reported that there is a shortage of support services available for these people.

As Charlie, a mental health services provider, explained, people who end up on the street are often those who have a substance dependency on alcohol or drugs, which he considers a form of mental illness, in addition to an illness like major depression, schizophrenia, or bi-polar disorder. According to Charlie, these people often “struggle with just accepting their illness and accepting that they need to take their medication. So then they don’t take it, they get sick, and they go to hospital.” During this process, the tendency to self medicate using alcohol or street drugs often contributes to their downward spiral. When they get admitted to hospital they may lose their housing, and when they are discharged they may have nowhere to go, at which point a plan is set up to help them, and often this plan involves coming to a clinic for an appointment, which Charlie explains, “quite often that doesn’t fit with the structure or the lifestyle of these people, so they don’t follow through, they get sick again, and quite often the family gets burned out, if there ever was a family around to help them. So then they’re alienated, they’re isolated, they have nothing to come back to.” Finally, after repeating this process a number of times, “the system in a way gets frustrated with them...it gets to a point where people feel it’s kind of hopeless for these individuals.” Alberta has recently introduced a special assertive outreach program designed to “take the treatment to wherever they are.” This program provides medical support, outreach services, and access to supported/ supervised housing. It primarily serves people who repeatedly show up in crisis-oriented treatment in hospitals.

According to Charlie, despite this assertive outreach program, one group in particular manages to fall through the cracks. These are the people who are homeless but are not accessing services and are not showing up in hospital. As Charlie explained,

They can survive and they know what it takes to make it...Those people are very hard to service, very hard to connect and engage because they are such survivors. They really don’t need anybody. So to get them to believe in you and believe in your program, you’re going to have to do a lot of work, and it’s going to take a

lot of time. So your pay back is a lot further down the road than for someone who is maybe coming up more and more into the system, who continues to come back to mental health clinics. They're the ones that are accessing more services, cost more to the government, to the agencies, and who may be more willing to work with services if they're provided.

Although the original mandate of the assertive outreach program was to serve the homeless and destitute individuals Charlie refers to as "survivors", that mandate has changed to "high-cost, high-service" individuals (apart from a few exceptions). One of these exceptions was a man whom Charlie originally found living under a bridge and who had survived for years by panhandling. When I asked Charlie what characteristics would enable someone with a mental illness to engage in panhandling activities he explained,

Even though they're not able to maintain their housing, they're still able to hold it enough together to be able to garner some sympathy from someone walking on the street...like the guy we met tonight, again, is able to do that, no matter how bad he could be, he's still able to pull it together enough to put out the hand and to have at least that contact with an individual to get enough money to buy some cigarettes and a bag of cheesies.

Thus, those who are able to "hold it together" enough to panhandle are likely to belong to precisely the group which is most difficult to reach via the current mental health services.

I met the man, Luc, whom Charlie describes as a survivor, and during this meeting it became evident that Luc was very resistant to being a part of this outreach program. Luc informed me that his room in a supported housing complex with twenty-four hour supervision was like a prison, and that he preferred to live on the streets. Charlie replied to this comment by trying to reinforce the positive side of being in housing, reminding Luc that he is warm and safe in his new room and that he is not being chased away from his bridge by the police. After our meeting with Luc, Charlie explained that

[Luc's] idea of independence would be to sleep under a bridge and forget about his medication. So it comes down to a question of rights, our rights and what are Luc's rights and when does it become an infringement on other's rights, or does that even occur with someone who is living under a bridge and is very sick and then stops eating...We can say Luc has the right to have access to how he manages his money, and he has the right to say no to treatment, and he has the right to lots of things, but then when you do start to look at his history and realize that this man does have the right to be independent but there are repeated examples of how

he uses his independence at a detriment to himself...It's a balance between having the right to do what you want, but also, that it be in your best interest and the best interest of the community at large.

While Charlie acknowledged that "In the end they do have rights and we can't stop them from doing what they ultimately want to do," the object of the assertive outreach program is to assist people like Luc in making choices that are in his, and the community's, best interest. While the ultimate goal of such programs might be to have people operating independently without the assistance of the outreach program, the reality is that most of the clients the outreach program services may never be able to attain that level of self-sufficiency. In fact, Charlie acknowledges that some individuals may spend the rest of their lives dependent on such supports. Perhaps due to the extremely reduced functioning of these individuals, the popular emphasis on independence is muted in Charlie's discourse, and instead, he acknowledges that the rights of people like Luc to do what they want must be tempered by a recognition that in the course of doing what they want they risk damaging themselves and others. Thus, Charlie felt that at times the rights and freedoms of individuals, like Luc, might need to be restricted even so far as petitioning the courts to grant guardianship to the outreach program, in effect stripping certain clients of control over their own lives. Of course, this would be an extreme measure to be used only in cases where individuals posed an extreme risk to themselves or others, but it demonstrates that for the mentally ill, unlike those who are simply homeless or dealing with addictions issues, the dominant discourse regarding independence and the right to make one's own decisions may be replaced by a discourse which admits that some people are unable to manage their own agency and thus can be stripped of it.

Although the above description and critique of the social services available is by no means exhaustive, it serves to illustrate some of the key concerns voiced to me by the public, service providers and the people panhandling. Significantly, those services which are seen as the most under-funded typically fall under the purview of the provincial government. In testimony to the Alberta's emphasis on small government, laissez-faire markets, and charity driven services, the provincially funded health services (including addictions and mental health services), social housing, SFI benefits, and the provincially

regulated minimum wage, are all inadequate and have contributed significantly to the current manifestation of homelessness in the Calgary.

While private charities function to offer basic services (food, shelter, clothing, and assistance gaining employment), they are not, at the moment, able to make up for the shortfall of the other services listed above. Instead, as the service providers explained, they are dealing primarily with providing beds for people who are no longer allowed to remain in hospital following surgeries, or people who are referred directly to the shelters by hospitals releasing psychiatric patients or prisons releasing inmates, or people who are working but, even being paid the tiniest bit more than minimum wage, are too poor to afford housing. They are also struggling to provide food to the working poor who cannot afford groceries or to people on SFI who have only enough money to pay for their rent. They are providing emergency funds to those who, following the deregulation of the energy market, are unable to afford their utilities, and they are providing dental care to people who could never hope to afford it. They are helping people to access the many jobs available in Calgary, although many of them need two or three of these jobs to make ends meet. They are dealing with the social cost of the cut-backs the provincial and federal governments continue to make, and although the services community are doing an excellent job, the basic services which were once designed to eliminate homelessness in Calgary are increasingly being accessed by a new group, the neglected poor who have been disinherited by the government, while the truly destitute must struggle to compete with these “deserving” poor to access services. This is not to imply that these people are not able to access services at all, but to point out that the more the government, at all three levels, devolves responsibility for the provision of services to charities, the more difficult it will be for already struggling charities to keep up with demands. Perhaps the director of a local shelter said it best when he told me, “In the past five years we’ve grown by 400% [with a 30% increase in funding]. There aren’t too many corporations that can claim that, even with the best brains and sophistication available.” Although corporations might envy such growth, when growth is measured by a four-fold increase of homeless people who are clamouring each night to sleep on a mat on the floor of a warehouse the fallacy of the “Alberta Advantage” is apparent.

A Street Critique

From the narratives of the people panhandling I spoke with, it is obvious that the policies of the government, the capabilities of the service providers, and the ideological values inherent in the provision of services have all taken their toll on the quality of the services. While I previously discussed how criticizing the available services enables panhandlers to distance themselves from the service institutions, this section will focus on the actual content of these complaints and how these services are experienced by the people who panhandle. For example, Ben gave me the following explanation of why he preferred to sleep on the street rather than staying in the shelter:

I don't like the shelter. It's dirty and you have to sleep on mats that other people have sweated or thrown up on. And you can't wear your shoes where the mats are, so you have to walk through there and people spit on the floor or throw up. I remember when I was first on the streets I stayed at a shelter and after a week I had an infection in both ears. I went to see the doctor and he said if I left it much longer I would have lost my hearing. So I don't stay there unless I have to...I sleep in the parking garage. I sneak in. There are no cameras there; I mean, I know how to get around them so they don't see me. I have a little spot where I can sleep. I even found one of those bubble sheets with the bubbles you can pop. Well, I found one of those to sleep on. It's pretty comfortable. But, I likely shouldn't be telling you this, you might go tell someone.

Although Ben has to sneak past cameras and is concerned that someone might discover that he is sleeping in the parking garage, he still prefers his bubble sheet to the sweat and spit and vomit and infection he associates with life in the shelter. Time and time again I was told that conditions in some of the shelters were unacceptable, as people expressed concerns over getting lice and communicable diseases and felt that by staying in the shelter, they were putting themselves and their possessions at risk. In one colourful story, James told me of the night he woke up to discover that the man sleeping on the mat next to him [only inches away] had grabbed him from behind and cuddled up to him in his sleep. While some shelters got good reviews, other shelters, in particular one that allowed people to use its services while intoxicated, was considered a dangerous place, to be avoided. When I told some of my panhandling friends that I was thinking of staying there, they made me promise that I would not, because they felt it was unsafe and refused to sleep there themselves. Thus, the "bare bones" approach of providing temporary services

that are under-funded and so unattractive that no one would ever find them comfortable or inviting, and hence antithetical to their pursuit of independence, has resulted in services that are sometimes so unattractive that people refuse to access them. Likewise, the lack of privacy, security and a quiet comfortable sleeping area, even at the better shelters, makes it difficult for those who are attempting to work to get enough sleep to function.

Another issue regarding the shelters, which was of key importance to the younger panhandlers I interviewed, were the more restrictive practices of the youth shelters. When I asked Lesley and Jill why they preferred sleeping in doorways to sleeping at the shelters they explained,

Jill: The shelters have curfews. You have to be in by six and if you're a minute late they won't let you in. And you can't go there stoned; even if you deny it they'll kick you out. That's what happened to me.

Lesley: They only let you stay fifteen days. I had a friend and the only reason they let him in was because he had pneumonia. Then they only let him stay fifteen days and when he left he still had pneumonia.

They further explained that you had to be sixteen before they allowed you to stay at the adult shelters which have later curfews, and if you are under sixteen the youth shelter must contact your parents before you are allowed to stay at the shelter. Although neither girl had a problem with the shelters contacting their parents, they did take issue with the rules they were expected to follow at the youth shelters and with the fact that despite their long term homelessness (one and a half years and four years) they were only allowed to stay at the shelter for two weeks at a time. Clearly, the providers of services for youth face additional legal and ethical concerns, by virtue of their status as minors, which dictate such restrictive practices. As Jennifer, a social service provider, explained, they must try to avoid "harbouring a kid that's run away from somewhere." Yet, according to Jennifer, often when the service providers contact the parents of the children, the parents deny that they kicked them out and say that they ran away. So, although the child is really unwelcome at home, they are also unable to stay in the shelter. Similarly, if a child is not ready to disclose that there is abuse (physical, sexual, or mental) going on at home, they may be sent back to the same abusive situation they are seeking to escape. The result is

that street youth avoid shelters to sleep in stairways or squat in buildings, alternatives that are typically unsafe and place youth at risk.

Perhaps the greatest risks are of coming into contact with sexual predators who are recruiting youth for prostitution, or encountering scenarios where, as Jennifer explained, they “hang out with some old man because he says that [they] can stay there, then ultimately [they] get put in the position where [they] have to do survival sex in order to stay there.” While Jennifer stated that what is needed is an alternative shelter which is designed to address the inappropriateness of these restrictions, she also felt that “that’s never going to happen realistically, not in this city.” It was apparent in my interviews with the mainstream public that most people did not believe that it was legitimate for youth to be on the streets. While most people acknowledged that some street youths might be escaping abusive home situations, the general consensus was that, as Nancy, a downtown worker, put it, a lot of street youths “are down here just because it’s cool, and to see how much money they can get off Joe Public”. Thus, the inclination is to avoid “enabling” youth on the streets to live lives that are viewed as defiant or potentially destructive. However, the result is that Calgary seems to be failing to address the shelter needs of the street youth and, in the process, is placing those youth at risk.

Another common complaint was that the food at local shelters was unappealing. When I asked Mark about the donations he received while he was panhandling, he explained to me that he was happy to receive food from passers-by and local businesses because he is often hungry and it saves him money he would normally spend on food. He complained that the quality of food at the soup kitchen had deteriorated and that, while he was grateful for the food, he just couldn’t eat the “tuna casserole slop” unless he was extremely hungry. Similar complaints were made by most of my informants, though they did state that some of the soup kitchens were better than others. In particular, mention was made of certain places where the soup kitchen volunteers made a special effort to engage with the people eating there. For example, James described one place where, “they talk to the street people like they’re human beings, not like animals that should be locked up and forgotten about.” Additionally, James and others complained that the staff and volunteers at various soup kitchens were known to pilfer the best donations of food and clothing for themselves, a transgression which was taken very seriously by those who

complained of it. While the degree of this pilfering is uncertain, I can say that in my own experience several years ago as a volunteer at one of these organizations I was fed a very good meal of fried chicken and all of the fixings and when I suggested that the people at the soup kitchen ate very well, I was informed, "oh, this isn't what they eat at the soup kitchen, this meal was prepared especially for us." While I could understand the sentiment of wanting to provide the volunteers with a nice meal, it struck me as entirely inappropriate under the circumstances. It appears that with the focus of the services on providing "bare bones" services which will not encourage dependence, the meals for the people in the soup kitchen may be designed to encourage them to move on, while the meals for the volunteers must convince them to stay. The soup kitchens no doubt struggle with obtaining adequate donations of appropriate foodstuffs, and with preparing meals for hundreds of hungry people, but the fact remains that many people I spoke to felt that they could not eat what was provided for them. Despite the old adage that "beggars can't be choosers," they can, and are, choosing to panhandle and to purchase their own food rather than to eat what they view as substandard fare, and, unless this issue is addressed, they will continue to do so.

The purpose of this chapter is not to diminish the contribution service organizations make, but, rather, to highlight areas where service providers and panhandlers alike have observed a great need for improvement. It is evident that our effort to extend hospitality to these strangers in our midst has created a system that is not very hospitable. These "strangers" are treated like unwanted houseguests, grudgingly given a place to sleep and eat and expected not to outstay their welcome. While some would argue that this is reasonable and necessary for encouraging their independence, others would argue that it is punitive and antithetical to this process. The problem is a complex one, and I offer no simple solution. Instead, I offer the words of Grant, an anti-poverty activist who has spent much of his life homeless:

When you live in this country, your prime objective is to get wealthy enough to support yourself in a dignified fashion and the more money that you're able to get the more superior you become to your fellow citizens. And that, to me, is underlying what goes on. The richer you are the better you are. It's a class system, it always has been a class system and I'm not denying that it should be a class system. What I am disputing is the fact that certain

people are, for all intents and reasons, just simply thrown out of the entire system. They become human refuse. Panhandlers, and to some degree homeless people, can in instances be treated like human refuse, like garbage... There are numerous examples of what happens to people who are beginning to be treated like garbage. The quality of the soup in the soup lines, where we could wind up feeding human waste products to what we consider human garbage. The idea, I don't know how much you know about shelters, the overcrowding, the warehousing of human beings where they're treated more like cattle than human beings. These are instances where I think the homeless and panhandlers lifestyles are allowed to fall below their ability to obtain their rights under the *Charter [of Rights]*.

When people, like Grant, come to see the hospitality they receive as demeaning enough to strip them of their humanity and transform them into human refuse, we must look closely at the system we have created and ask ourselves how people come to perceive the system in such a light. Grant believes that the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and the *UN Declaration of Rights and Freedoms* guarantee rights that are inaccessible to street people. These documents, respectively, grant the right of all people to "life, liberty and security of the person" and guarantee "a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control." Yet, neither document guarantees the right to palatable food or a comfortable and secure place to sleep. The vagueness of these articles, and clauses like "in circumstances beyond his control," carry us towards contentious questions regarding the necessary prerequisites to liberty and debates over how much agency and control people at the margins have over the course of their lives. Even if these documents were to be honoured to the letter, and the spirit, of the law, we would first have to define what is considered an "adequate" standard of living to nourish life, liberty and security of the person. Perhaps the best way to gauge our current measurement of this is to look at the basic hospitality extended to strangers in our midst.

On this we are divided, with some who see our system of "hospitality" as one of luxury and vice, and others who see our system as one of punishment and dehumanization. As with most disjuncture, the perspective that dictates policy is that

aligned with the reins of power. However, as the following chapters will illustrate, the consequence of these policies is a changing definition of citizenship, which increasingly marginalizes the people on the street and reinforces the perception of them as “strangers” who warrant only a reduced set of rights. In the face of this marginalization, we must ask the question, how long we will continue to accept these strangers in our midst before we violate Kant’s conditions of perpetual peace? That is, how long before we begin to treat them as enemies, or have we already?

Chapter Seven: The Disorder of Panhandling

Within our society, those who are most clearly understood to be enemies, and treated as such, are those we refer to as criminals. Michel Foucault places the transgressions of criminals within the context of the social contract we enter as citizens, “The citizen is presumed to have accepted once and for all, with the laws of society, the very law by which he may be punished. Thus, the criminal appears as a juridically paradoxical being. He has broken the pact, he is therefore the enemy of society as a whole, but he participates in the punishment that is practiced upon him” (1977:89-90). Although panhandlers are not typically considered to be criminals, most panhandlers, save for those born to life on the streets, are presumed to have once belonged to the common social order, living independently, housed, employed, educated, part of a family structure, regardless of how marginal or dysfunctional an existence this may have been. In being a part of this system, they are presumed to have accepted these dominant social institutions, and in breaking with these institutions they are seen to have broken the pact that binds us in obedience to the dominant ideologies these institutions engender. In breaking this pact, the panhandler runs the risk of becoming a different kind of “enemy”. As Simmel describes, the “poor” and “sundry” are often seen as “inner enemies”, who, like strangers, possess a membership within the group, which involves “both being outside it and confronting it” (1971:144). The panhandler, then, is an ideologically paradoxical being, and it is this paradox that makes the panhandler all the more dangerous in the public consciousness. The panhandler, once near, living and working among us, becomes remote, by virtue of breaking the social pact. The tension they create, by being like us, but not like us, is a strain on the social fabric. Yet, how great a strain is what remains to be seen.

According to Foucault, “if one sets aside the strictly material damage...the injury that a crime inflicts upon the social body is the disorder that it introduces into it: the scandal that it gives rise to, the example that it gives, the incitement to repeat it if it is not punished, the possibility of becoming widespread that it bears within it” (1977:92). Although the act of panhandling is not typically considered a crime, the injury that panhandling inflicts on the social body is this same kind of disorder: the presence of unkempt bodies in public spaces, the transgression of communicative conventions which

dictate that strangers do not speak to one another, the contravention of norms bound in the ethics of work, independence, sobriety, and family, the public manifestation of mental illness, substance abuse and poverty, the visible spectacle of suffering and its irony juxtaposed to the wealth of the cityscape, and the possibility that this disorder could multiply and entomb that cityscape. It is in the face of such disorder that the current debate rages over exactly what kind of “strangers” panhandlers really are. This chapter will examine what it is about panhandling that makes it so threatening despite its relatively benign nature. By Taking Foucault’s observation that “the injury that a crime inflicts upon the social body is the disorder that it introduces into it” (1977:92) as our starting point, we must ask: what kind of disorder does panhandling introduce to the functioning of the social body?

Aesthetic Disorder

The first and most obvious disorder people who panhandle introduce to the social body is their very presence on city streets. As the discussion regarding appearance in Chapter Four indicates, people panhandling are often poor, homeless, and unable or unwilling to improve upon their personal appearance. The presence of their unkempt bodies in the otherwise sanitized public space of Calgary’s downtown core introduces an element of disorder. According to Alana, a downtown worker and resident, the people of Calgary “like their little pristine community, right? You know, a panhandler mucks up the community.” In the context of a city as clean and well ordered as Calgary, the presence of these people may be enough to “muck it up” from the perspective of pedestrians who have grown accustomed to the absence of dirt and disorder.

In addition to the actual dirt and disorder that panhandlers are thought to embody, they also present the public with the visible spectre of poverty in the midst of affluence. As Audrey, a social service provider, explained,

There’s an awful lot of “I didn’t know” in this city because they live in the suburbs, they drive downtown, they park in their parking space, they go into work, and they don’t have a clue what this city is really like...we have extreme wealth and extreme poverty... So I think on the one hand yes, it is an extremely affluent city, but I think it’s really being challenged right now to look at its under belly a bit.

For the people of Calgary, the fairly recent appearance of homeless people and panhandlers on the streets has been challenging the notion that Calgary is a uniformly affluent city. According to Audrey, until recently Calgary has hidden its poverty well by “taking care of our homeless...and keeping them out of sight,” and through avoiding the ghettoization of low-income families by spreading them in small pockets throughout the city. Likewise, Audrey explained that the inner city has never been allowed to become a “battle zone” and, instead, the city revitalized and gentrified the city centre, in essence, pushing poorer inner city residents “from community to community.” Yet, as the city grows in size and population, Audrey observes that the poverty is “just becoming so much more apparent.” Perhaps it is because panhandlers provide the most visible and visceral evidence of this increasingly apparent poverty that their presence is received with so much trepidation. In a city which has, up until recently, enjoyed the relative absence of the spectre of poverty, the disorder introduced into the social body by this manifestation of poverty is perceived as even more threatening because it flies in the face of the dominant perception of Calgary as a city of great affluence.

Emotional Disorder

In addition, then, to the aesthetic disorder caused by the presence of these poor and often dishevelled people in public spaces, is the emotional disorder introduced by the contrary image panhandlers present to the public. This emotional disorder is intensified by the way people panhandling conduct themselves (sitting on the sidewalk beside a hat or a sign, sitting or standing while asking passers-by for change, or approaching people to ask for change) because, in attempting to engage strangers in direct acts of communication, they violate standard conventions which demand reciprocal exchanges in the mode of “civil inattention”(Goffman 1963b:84). In attempting to communicate with passers-by, the people panhandling, by virtue of presenting an image of poverty and accompanying pleas, are seen to play on the emotions of passers-by, introducing another element of emotional disorder.

As Alex, a member of the business community, explained to me, “I think the public has a right to walk on the streets without being asked for money. You know, I think we have a right to share public spaces in a way that you don’t infringe on other

people's emotions, making them feel somewhat uncomfortable, making them feel guilty, making them feel scared." Similarly, Derek, a police officer, explained,

They shouldn't be able to play on your, on you feeling guilty, or feeling bad that you have so much and they have so little. They just shouldn't be allowed. I think they play on people's emotions that way. You should have a choice, and you shouldn't have to feel guilty, or be made to feel guilty...It should be [your] right to be able to walk down the street and not be accosted, or not be asked for money.

From the perspectives of both Alex and Derek, the act of panhandling is an emotional act, one that forces the passer-by to feel guilty against their will, and one that introduces an unacceptable degree of emotional disorder. In particular, Derek felt that panhandlers who approached passers-by and spoke to them were in violation of this prescribed emotional distance, while those who panhandled passively by holding out a hat were less emotionally aggressive. According to both men, the act of panhandling should not be allowed, particularly in its more direct forms, due to the "right" of the public to avoid having their emotions disturbed.

In speaking to Gail, a social service provider, about the emotional disorder of these face-to-face encounters, she explained,

I think that most of us are somewhat greedy, having worked for our money, however we define that work. We like holding on to it, or like spending it on the things that we choose to spend it on. On the other hand, most of us aren't terribly assertive, or maybe we don't feel that we ought to be as greedy as we are, and we know that other people may have greater needs than we do. So, I think we find ourselves in a really intense moral dilemma...I like being able to use my money how I choose, and yet, if [someone] asks me for it I may not have the gumption to say, "No, I want it, it's mine." So we end up giving money away but wishing we didn't have to, or we pretend that we haven't seen these panhandlers at all because that way we don't have to look them in the eye and say "No, even though you need this money more than I do, I'm not going to give it to you because I want to keep it for myself." That's just a crummy thing to have to say out loud, and we don't, I don't like to think of myself as being so selfish and greedy, even though I am.

In Gail's view, the face-to-face encounters we have with people panhandling place us in the uncomfortable dilemma of having to balance our own desire to possess and control our money with the recognition that other people may have needs that are greater than our

own. According to Gail, panhandlers force us into confronting what is an emotionally charged conflict between elements of our social consciousness which are at once “selfish” and “compassionate.” The end result is that a simple exchange on the street between a panhandler and a pedestrian is transformed into a form of emotional disorder that the majority of the public would prefer to avoid.

When I asked Sean, a downtown worker and resident, if he thought that people on the street needed some kind of “help” he responded,

I don’t know if they do or not, honestly I don’t. That’s why I don’t give them money, because I don’t know if they need help. I don’t know what they want. Maybe they’re junkies, maybe they’re drunks, maybe they’re just slack assed people that don’t really give a rats ass about anybody else but themselves. You know, it’s none of my business. None of my business. I just don’t want them making their life my business.

As Sean’s statement illustrates, another part of this dilemma is that, in addition to the tension between wanting to keep our hard earned money and recognizing that other people might have needs greater than our own, we often lack the information needed to determine what kind of help, if any, these panhandlers actually require. This uncertainty adds another emotional layer to the street encounter, and, as Sean indicates, the suspicion that the panhandlers are really junkies or “slack assed people” is likely to lead to reluctance to give them donations. Sean introduces yet another emotional layer when he insists in that he does not want them *making* their lives his business. His statement implies a certain resentment of the panhandlers, whose attempts to engage him in an emotional discourse are seen as attempts to draw him into something which Sean feels is none of his business. I would speculate that these feelings of resentment are tied to the feelings of anger Sean exemplified in the emotional/ physical exchange between Sean and the young panhandler discussed in Chapter Five When Sean responded to the panhandler’s profanities with a profane gesture, and responded to the panhandler’s spitting at him by putting him in a strangle hold, Sean was acting not only on his situational anger, but also on his general feelings of resentment towards panhandlers. In light of the lengths that Sean goes to avoid encountering and communicating with *all* people panhandling (including using sunglasses and a walkman to block them out), it is evident that, for Sean, the emotional disorder introduced by panhandlers is not just a mild

annoyance, it is an emotional assault serious enough to make him alter his own behaviour to avoid such encounters altogether.

The Threat of Violent Disorder

The mention of Sean's encounter with an aggressive panhandler leads us into a discussion regarding the threat of violent disorder that panhandlers pose for the community. Talking to the police, social service providers, and general public, it became clear that panhandlers rarely perpetrate acts of physical violence, yet the fear that panhandlers *could* perpetrate such acts was frequently mentioned. Due to the perception that many panhandlers suffer from mental illnesses or have substance abuse problems, some members of the public expressed concern that the actions of panhandlers could become violent or unpredictable. However, most members of the public stated that in their experience they had never encountered or witnessed a violent interaction between panhandlers and members of the public.

Instead, what some people had experienced was what is commonly referred to as "aggressive panhandling." Aggressive panhandling is a term that has come to define a series of behaviours that may be perceived as aggressive or intimidating. The following "aggressive" behaviours on the part of panhandlers were either encountered or observed by members of the non-panhandling public: repeatedly asking for change after a negative response has been given, following passers-by while asking them for change, blocking the path of a pedestrian while asking for change, "getting in your face" or invading your personal space while asking for change, making loud and abusive comments to pedestrians after they do not make a donation, using intonation and body language to intimidate a pedestrian while asking for change, and panhandling in large groups which act to intimidate pedestrians. During my fieldwork, I was never "aggressively" panhandled, although I did observe Eric's friend Chad "aggressively" panhandling, as I describe in Chapter Three, by approaching people, blocking their path, and invading their body space.²⁸

Despite the general feeling that these particular approaches were "a bit more aggressive," there was no consensus as to whether these behaviours were threatening or just inconvenient. For example, Russell, a downtown worker, told me that he has encountered "aggressive" panhandlers who "try to follow you down the street a bit and

give you reasons, or some rationale for why you should give them the money,” but when I asked him how he felt about these encounters he explained, “it was annoying. I just didn’t think they should be that aggressive and, I mean, it wasn’t overly bothersome, but I would wish that they had not.” In contrast, Kate, a downtown resident, told me about an encounter she and her husband had with an “aggressive” panhandler, “this young kid asked us for money, and we didn’t have any change, and we said sorry we didn’t have any change, and he was quite loud and abusive. And I always think, thank God I wasn’t on my own, it made me a bit nervous with my husband there, and if I’d been on my own I would have been a nervous wreck.” While Russell did not find his encounter to be “overly bothersome,” Kate found that, despite the presence of her husband, her encounter left her feeling nervous and apprehensive of how she would have felt had her husband not been present. These so called “aggressive” acts were experienced very differently by these two informants.

As Derek, a police officer, explained, this discrepancy in perception is problematic because it is “...so subjective. Somebody that gets right in your face and asks you, ‘Can you spare some money?’ And their tone of voice, you could be intimidated by that, and somebody else would not be intimidated by it, and it’s exactly the same behaviour.” From Derek’s view, the subjectivity of what constitutes aggressive activity makes it difficult as a police officer to approach the problem of “aggressive” panhandling because there is no consensus regarding what constitutes aggressive behaviour. As Derek explained, “You could never enforce a rule that it’s OK to talk to people that are not intimidated.” This is particularly true, not just due to the impossibility of enforcing such selective legislation, but also because one cannot predict who will be intimidated and who will not. For example, out of three female senior citizens I interviewed, one was terrified of the downtown area in its totality, while the other two reported that they had never been intimidated by a panhandler and felt comfortable downtown. Similarly, one teenage girl I interviewed stated that she did not think that panhandlers were aggressive in their approach and felt that people who do believe they are aggressive just “don’t want to be reminded that blatantly that people need money that badly.” In contrast, a teenage boy I interviewed reported having an encounter with an aggressive panhandler and stated that, had his friends not been there, he would have felt

intimidated. Although one might expect that older women and teenagers would be more likely to be intimidated, one cannot presume that this is the case. Significantly, the two older women and the teenage girl who were not intimidated by panhandles were also involved with street people through their volunteer activities. This suggests that the more experience a person has with street people, the less likely they are to feel intimidated, despite age or gender. While one cannot generalize from such a small sample, it is evident that it is difficult to predict who will be most intimidated by the presence and behaviour of panhandlers, and that these perceptions can likely be altered with education and familiarity.

Another difficulty encountered by the police is that the line between aggressive panhandling and outright robbery is difficult to identify. Derek described an encounter between an off duty police officer and a panhandler wherein the panhandler approached the police officer outside of a bank and when the officer told him that he did not have any change, the panhandler replied “What do you mean, I just saw you take out a whole bunch of money!” In response to this remark the police officer told the panhandler to “get lost,” but as Derek explained,

There’s a lot of people working in a lot of offices that just wouldn’t do well in a situation like that. Maybe they would give up \$20 because all they had was twenties. You know, and that would be considered robbery. Taking something through threat or intimidation or physically taking it. That becomes robbery and that’s a criminal offence, that’s something in itself. But there again, that intimidating behaviour, it’s such a grey area, how do you prove that?

The intimidating and aggressive behaviours of some panhandlers present a particular dilemma for those working in law enforcement due to the difficulty of proving that such intimidation has occurred. While Derek states that panhandler’s remark “I just saw you take out a whole bunch of money”, might be perceived as intimidating by an office worker, the off duty police officer was obviously not intimidated by it. Likewise, the panhandler him or herself may or may not have intended the remark to be construed as intimidating. It is evident that the temperament, confidence and experience level of a pedestrian being panhandled is a major determinant of whether a remark will be construed as intimidating. It is also evident that the perception of panhandlers as poor,

dishevelled, intoxicated, high, mentally ill, Aboriginal or part of some other visible minority group all influence the way any statement they make will be interpreted, whether they intend that meaning or not. In fact, for some people, the simple presence of such people on the street is perceived as intimidating. The problem then becomes, that, in the absence of a reliable way to prove that a panhandler intends to intimidate, it is difficult to determine whether the panhandler should be held culpable, or whether the pedestrian has overreacted.

This last observation is illustrated particularly well by an experience I had with a friend who came from Calgary to visit me in Montreal. My friend went out one evening to visit the bank and returned panicked and breathless a few minutes later informing me that she was almost robbed. When I asked her what happened, she explained that a man opened the door for her at the bank and then stood inside the door while she was at the ATM. Frightened, she did not withdraw any money and ran out of the bank all the way to my apartment convinced that she had almost been robbed. In this case, her unfamiliarity with the situation led her to believe that the panhandler intended to rob her, and clearly she was intimidated by the situation. In contrast, after living in Montreal for several years I am accustomed to people panhandling by opening doors at banks and, far from being intimidated, I often appreciate it. The same action on the part of the panhandler is construed in one instance as an attempt at robbery and in the other as a useful service. The problem posed by such a discrepancy is clearly that if law enforcement officers are to address accusations of robbery, relying on the perceptions of pedestrians is often problematic. This is not to imply that panhandlers are never threatening, or that they should not be prosecuted when they commit robberies by intimidation, but to illustrate that the emotional disorder they introduce by their presence alone is often intimidating enough to make them seem like a threat, even if they are not.

Thus, whether through overtly aggressive acts, or through their mildly intimidating presence, panhandlers present the public with what they perceive as a threat of violent disorder. This threat is intimately tied to the threat of aesthetic disorder as the unkempt appearance of panhandlers adds to the public's perception of them as unpleasant and threatening. Likewise, this threat is linked to the threat of emotional disorder as the emotional impact of the encounters may intensify feelings of vulnerability. As Alana, a

downtown worker and resident, described, “I think it’s more of a guilt than an aggressive issue. And I think people feel that, right? So they don’t want to be approached in that manner. It’s in their face a little too much for them.” Strong emotions like guilt or anger may intensify the emotional impact of an encounter and lead pedestrians to react with equally strong feelings of fear or intimidation and the perception that the panhandlers pose a threat of violent disorder.

Financial Disorder

The final form of disorder introduced by panhandlers is the financial disorder caused by confluence of the aesthetic disorder, emotional disorder, and the threat of violent disorder embodied by the panhandlers. First and foremost, the managers and owners of businesses feel that panhandlers cause financial disorder, reasoning that their customers either will not come downtown because of the presence of panhandlers or will not enter their businesses due to their presence on the street outside. As Sheila, the manager of a local business, explained,

I can’t even go eat my lunch outside sitting on a bench without being bothered every two minutes. I think along here there should just be nice cafes, maybe a wine shop, none of these McDonalds, Dairy Queen, places where the kids just hang out. Then this place would be nice and people might come and shop. People won’t come and shop downtown anymore. Why would you when you can’t walk down the mall without being bothered? People are tired of it. They don’t shop here anymore.

In Sheila’s view, the presence of panhandlers and kids “hanging out” on the pedestrian mall act to discourage people from coming downtown to shop. As her shop is located at street level on the pedestrian mall she felt that her business was being harmed by the preference of her customers for environments where they would not be bothered, like indoor suburban malls. She explained that her customers do complain about the panhandlers, but that for the most part the customers “just don’t come anymore.”

Additionally, Sheila described her own experience working in that environment, “I’m tired of it. When I come in the morning there are people sleeping in the doorway. I have to ask them to move. Then I can’t even go outside. I just walk across the street right into the mall. I don’t walk down the street. I pay taxes and I can’t even go out and sit on a bench and enjoy the sun.” From Sheila’s perspective, the panhandlers not only harm her

business but also reduce her ability to enjoy the public space downtown. Significantly, she states that she pays taxes and yet she is unable to enjoy this public space undisturbed. The sentiment that paying taxes should entitle a person to use public spaces which are paid for with these taxes was one that I heard frequently. For example, Brian, a downtown worker, explained that “the senior citizens won’t come down here anymore, the people that are paying the taxes here won’t come down here anymore, because every ten feet they walk they say they’re being asked for money.” In Brian’s view, the occupation of the public space downtown by non-tax paying panhandlers, homeless people and kids “hanging out” is preventing the tax paying members of the public from using the space they have paid for.

The businesses make a similar argument regarding the property taxes they pay for their storefront locations on the pedestrian mall. As Derek, a police officer, explained,

The shopkeepers that you deal with on a daily basis are saying to you, “I’m getting tired of this. My customers have to run through a gauntlet of panhandlers to get into my store and then they want someone to walk them to their car because they don’t feel secure going through. I paid \$50000 a year in taxes for my thirty feet of frontage on 8th avenue mall, and I have to put up with this?”...Now how can you go to them and say, “Well, I’m sorry. We can’t do anything. There’s no law, you know, what they’re doing is legal and water off a ducks back.” I can appreciate what they’re going through. I feel terrible and I feel the same way, that that shouldn’t be allowed. That’s the tail wagging the dog. These are the people that are paying all the taxes making our city nice and neat, and the panhandlers are contributing nothing and making it look like hell. There’s no balance.

From Derek’s statements, it is evident that businesses feel that by paying high taxes for their frontage on the mall that they have also paid for the right to control the use of public space in front of their business. As a police officer, Derek feels uncomfortable telling the businesses that because there is no law against panhandling there is nothing he can do. As he describes it, “that’s the tail wagging the dog,” implying that those who pay the taxes to make the city “nice and neat” should have control over the situation, but instead, those who do not pay taxes and make the city “look like hell” are in control. The result of this lack of balance is that, although there is no law in place prohibiting panhandling, the

police are put in a position where they must respond to the complaints of the businesses, often agreeing with their perspective, but without appropriate laws to back them up.

Finally, in addition to panhandlers scaring away customers and preventing the tax paying public and businesses from enjoying and capitalizing on their investments, it is also believed that the presence of panhandlers may dissuade people from visiting or investing in the city. As Sean, a downtown worker and resident, explained it,

It's an urban blight. I mean, it affects the city in so many different ways. Business people coming here, why would you want to invest in a city with this kind of problem going on? It's like why would you want a house that's full of mice or rats? Visitors that come, tourists that come to visit here...they come here and say, "Well this is just the same as it was back home, all the street people begging for cash." It doesn't paint a pretty picture of the city.

Sean feels that the image the of the city visitors are presented with leaves a lasting impression and that if they are greeted with the "urban blight" panhandlers represent, then they will be reluctant to invest their money, make a return visit, or recommend the city to their friends.

From scaring away customers, to hijacking public space paid for with the taxes of the working public, to discouraging an inflow of capital from investment and tourism, panhandlers are believed to be responsible for introducing a large degree of financial disorder into the community. The financial disorder suffered in the downtown core when people fail to visit, to spend their money, and to invest is believed to be connected to the public's reluctance to interact with panhandlers due to the aesthetic, emotional and violent disorder that panhandlers represent in their minds. Although there is little evidence to suggest that these panhandlers, rather than the shortage of parking, the dearth of unique stores, the higher prices, or the suburban sprawl of the city, are responsible for the financial disorder of the downtown core²⁹, the fact that the businesses believe that panhandlers are at least partially responsible is of the utmost importance to understanding why the business community, with a few notable exceptions³⁰, would generally like to have panhandlers removed, one way or another (through outreach services or legislation) from the downtown core.

Taken all together, the aesthetic, emotional, violent and financial disorder introduced by panhandling is perceived to be substantial enough to make their presence in public spaces seem problematic to some, though not all, people. Significantly, Ipsos-Reid (2000b) conducted a poll that asked Calgarians whether panhandling had become a “major problem” which the city’s government should consider in their “top five issues to address”. The results showed that 34% of those polled agreed that panhandling was a “major problem”, with older (age 55+) respondents, lower income respondents (less than \$30K) and lower educated respondents (high school or less) slightly more likely to feel that it is a major problem. However, although this poll establishes that panhandling is a salient issue for a fair number of people, it gives no information regarding *why* panhandling is seen as problematic (e.g. due to the poverty of the panhandlers or way they harass people) or regarding *how* the city government should address the “problem” (e.g. through providing social services or passing legislation to ban panhandling). Although the narratives discussed in this thesis, particularly those regarding the kinds of disorder introduced by panhandlers, give us some indication as to why panhandling is sometimes seen as a “problem”, we must also address the practical implications of the opinions and emotions expressed in these narratives. While earlier chapters dealt with how they influence the way pedestrians deal with face-to-face encounters, the following chapter is concerned primarily with how they influence public policy.

Chapter Eight: Exploring Public Policy

This thesis has characterized the social/moral/ethical problem of panhandlers as truly being a problem about “strangers.” How do we, as a society, deal with strangers in our midst? A. David Napier contends, “Strangers are, in fact, definers of culture....” (1992:147). According to Napier, “How we manipulate outsiders conceptually thus designates them as either harmful or helpful- either as dangerous themselves, or as bolsterers of our cultural immunity, reinvigorating our capacity to sustain outside influences, foreign pollution, social disease” (1992:147). It is through the choices we make as a society that we determine whether strangers pose a danger to us, or whether we pose a danger to them. Women and men living on the street may at once be seen as ugly, dangerous members of the “underclass” poised to overthrow the beautiful world we have created around them, or as the sad evidence of a dysfunctional system which sacrifices people for the sake of progress. Both views are sheer melodrama, simplistic, trite, but they illustrate how the way we define these strangers in our midst will lead to one cultural critique or another. As Napier indicates, where the balance falls between a critique of “us” or a critique of “them” is what ultimately determines our capacity to sustain our society in the face of difference. Historically those cultures who have been most open to the outside have also been the longest-lived, “since they are most likely to cultivate a sophisticated mythology by which the outside is approached and assimilated” (Napier 1992:147). Without such mythology, a culture runs the risk of closing itself off and becoming inflexible, conditions which, in the modern global context, might prove antithetical to cultural well being.

With this in mind, we must turn to a discussion of the way panhandlers, as “strangers”, have been conceptualized in Calgary. Are panhandlers to be seen simply as misguided wanderers from convention? Social adversaries? Astute entrepreneurs? Or as people, friends and neighbours? This debate is of the utmost importance because the way we define the people who panhandle informs the way we approach them in the arena of public policy. If they are misguided wanderers from convention, we must find a way to either guide them back towards convention, or learn to cohabit in peace despite our differences. If they are social adversaries, their injurious activities must be codified in our law books, these laws must be enforced on our streets, and the panhandlers must be

disciplined accordingly. If they are astute entrepreneurs, then their activities must be regulated and entrenched in the same state bureaucracy that other entrepreneurs must negotiate. If they are people, friends, neighbours, we must find a way to assure of them of the entitlements which accompany such roles. Regardless of how we define them, we must find a way to deal with the presence of these “strangers” in our community. This chapter will review how the different conceptual incarnations of panhandlers shape public policy and how these, in turn, shape who we are as a society.

Panhandlers as Misguided Wanderers:

The first, and primary, way the mainstream public, social service providers, and public policy advisors conceptualize panhandlers is as misguided wanderers from convention. From this perspective, panhandlers are people who have been led astray, either through their own choices, or by structural and personal factors that have constrained their choices and forced them away from living more conventional lives. As described in Chapter Six, the policy response to these wanderers is to offer services designed to encourage their independence by gaining employment, finding housing and being educated and trained, all with the goal of eventually integrating the panhandlers back into the economic, social and familial structures of the mainstream world. This model uses to its advantage the knowledge that, although panhandlers may be seen as strangers due to our incomprehension of their lives, deep down they are not truly all that strange. The success of rallying public and financial support for policies which embrace this view of panhandlers hinges largely on convincing the public, corporate donors, and government policy makers that the provision of services is the best way to deal with these wandering “strangers.”

There is recognition in Calgary that the general public knows little about the people who panhandle. One major concern on the part of both the municipal government and the services community has been to educate the public as to who the people on the street are, what kind of assistance they require, and how the public can begin to improve the relationship between the two communities. As Louise, a social service provider, explained,

I don't think it's a bad idea to teach the people how to handle these issues. Why are we trying to protect society in one realm, and

protect panhandlers in another? Let them talk to each other. When you get a human being in front of your face instead of an issue, they become a lot more human to you. If you know what to say, and how to say no, then you're not going to be so intimidated, or when you know how to deal with someone who's being really inappropriate.

In Louise's narrative it is evident that she would like to see more effort being made to educate the public on how to approach face-to-face encounters with people on the street in positive ways to help reduce anxiety and to humanize these interactions. However, also evident in Louise's narrative is her belief that part of this process should involve educating the public on how to say "no" to panhandlers. According to Louise, a minimal proportion of the money the public donates to panhandlers goes to meeting basic needs while most of it goes to addiction issues. Thus, in Louise's view, donating money directly to panhandlers is a problem because "the public wants to believe that what they do makes a difference, they want to believe they can help whoever they want and that's their right. And it is, it truly is. We, however, know that the consequences of where that money goes is something we eventually have to deal with anyway." When donated money is spent to support substance abuse and addictive lifestyles, rather than supporting employment or housing opportunities, it is seen as "enabling" panhandlers to remain wanderers from convention.

One program, specific to panhandlers, that the community has used to address the propensity of panhandlers, by virtue of this source of income, to remain independent of the service agencies has been to hire a panhandle outreach worker (since 1996) to provide outreach services during the spring and summer.³¹ This program, which is still in place, has focused on reducing panhandling activity, decreasing the public perception of panhandling as a major downtown issue, and working to identify employment opportunities for panhandlers (White, 1996). The outreach worker provides services information and assistance to the panhandlers (in particular, assistance finding alternative employment), educates them about the bylaws and acts as a liaison between businesses, pedestrians, police and panhandlers. Thus, the outreach worker is dually concerned with facilitating a peaceful relationship between the panhandlers and non-panhandlers and with assisting panhandlers to meet their temporary needs and reintegrate themselves into

mainstream society through attaining employment and housing. Through preserving relations with these “wanderers” and providing them with assistance returning to mainstream life, the outreach worker endeavours to help them return to mainstream life.

The other program that has specifically dealt with panhandlers and their propensity to be given donations by the public is the “Make Real Change with your Spare Change” program, which was carried out in the summer of 2000. This program was sponsored by the Calgary Downtown Association (a business association for downtown businesses) and CUPS Community Health Centre. The program involved the distribution of handbills and the posting of posters in the downtown core which encouraged the general public to approach encountering panhandlers by doing the following: 1) acknowledge the person, 2) politely say “No,” 3) then continue on your way, and 4) at the first opportunity, make a donation to any of the agencies that really do help Calgary’s people in need (See Appendix B). The aim of this campaign was to convince the public to “Put your spare change into the right hands,” the hands of services which provide “medical assistance, adequate shelter, nutritious meals, counselling, training or a job.” Operating under the premise that panhandlers may not purchase these services for themselves, that panhandling is a “problem for the panhandlers themselves” because it is a “dead-end,” and that panhandling “is a problem for citizens in general” because citizens avoid visiting downtown in order to avoid “unwanted, overaggressive” panhandlers, this handbill characterizes panhandling and panhandlers as a “problem” to be “solved.” The implication being that so long as money continues to flow into their hands, the problem will remain unresolved. The “problem,” as this program alludes, is that of the misguided wanderer from convention. Panhandlers are presented as people who need help, not punishment, and the assumption inherent in the handbill is that if the spare change tumbling out of people’s pockets was put in the right hands, these misguided wanderers might be, through the provision of appropriate services, guided back into mainstream life.

As part of this process, the pedestrians are instructed to “acknowledge the person” and to “politely say ‘no’.” This itself is a part of the process of bringing these wanderers back into the fold. By encouraging the pedestrians, as Louise suggested above, to talk to the panhandlers and to see them as humans, this handbill works to reincorporate the panhandlers into the realm of safe communication. By encouraging the passers-by to

recognize people on the street, and to feel confident in their withholding of funds (because they have donated or intend to donate money to service organizations), this handbill works to bridge the gap between the two worlds by displacing feelings of guilt and responsibility and inducing a state of free communication. At the same time as people are instructed to deny the panhandlers donations, they are also instructed to treat them with civility. Ideally, such a system would provide people on the street with all they need to survive: food, shelter, clothing, medical care, training, jobs, and social recognition.

However, simultaneously, such a system would consign the panhandlers to dependence on those services and, in a sense, alter their ability to maintain independence from “the system.” By portraying them as misguided wanderers who cannot find their own way back to the fold, who are resigned to “dead-end” lives with “no hope for improvement and no way out,” the handbills create an image of people who are without the agency to control their lives or to direct them in publicly acceptable ways. In contrast to this portrayal, some panhandlers feel that they are in control of their lives, and though they may not be making decisions that are acceptable to the public, they feel they are making choices that are acceptable for themselves. As the descriptions in Chapter Six illustrate, panhandlers have many reasons for not accessing services, particularly those they find substandard, dangerous or demeaning. Additionally, due to their internalization of the dominant discourse regarding independence, some panhandlers take pride in supporting themselves by “working” for donations and maintaining their independence from “the system.”

Perhaps the biggest concern raised by such an approach is that conceptualizing panhandlers as wanderers from convention obscures that some of them are more like fugitives from convention. According to Les, an anti poverty activist, such approaches leave no room for an “allowance of lifestyle” and smack of what he refers to as “social Darwinism.” This phenomenon consists of coercing individuals into lifestyles an individual may find it “impossible to work in.” As Les explains, in the process of offering “options” to people on the street the services community is delivering a message that states:

In order to survive in this society as a fellow human being I know you're wrong, and I know I can make you right, and I'm going to

make you right. You're going to adapt to my lifestyle, my values, my idea of what's right, and once you've adapted to that you will have evolved into what is acceptable...We're all work-a-holics working 80 hours a day, and we hate our bosses, we hate the situations that we're in for the most part. We hate slaving away for the almighty dollar, we think that our governments are corrupt, but we have this wonderful society, you know. And you have to be just like us. Otherwise, I don't know, there's a threat there or something. It's a form of ultimately brutal social Darwinism.

In Les' statement, he makes clear that embedded in the attempt to treat panhandlers as misguided wanderers from convention is the notion that to be like "us" is to be "right," in a sense, to have evolved. While, to remain on the streets, would be to remain "wrong," in a sense, to remain "primitive." According to Les, despite our hatred of the lives we lead, to transgress the hegemonic norms of our society is to pose a threat, rather than to offer a valid critique. Thus, under the guise of being "helping" institutions, Les feels services agencies sometimes, though not always, act to "coerce" more than they "help." Not surprisingly, the panhandlers' perception of the "Make Real Change" program was reportedly negative. However, more surprisingly, the reactions of the general public were equally negative.

Although the public generally supports the provision of services for people who panhandle, the suggestion that they should donate their money only to those services rather than into the hands of the panhandlers themselves was met with much resistance. True to the libertarian attitude of many Calgarians, according to Louise, their overall response was to say, "Don't tell me who I can give my money to!" or "I'll give them my money anyway because I want to know that I'm helping that person and not some agency." Thus, the campaign ended in failure. It worked to alienate the panhandlers who perceived it as an attack, it offended the sensibilities of people who felt it was inappropriate for an organization to tell people how to spend their money, and it failed to influence the public to redirect their spare change to the service organizations, which saw no increase in donations.

However, the failure of this particular policy response did not alter the attachment of those involved to the conception of panhandlers as misguided wanderers from convention. As Louise insisted, "the general public has an onus to know what's out there to help these people," so when they meet these people on the street they are empowered

by that knowledge and able to refer people to the available services. Though this sanctioned relationship would consist of redirecting these wanderers, it also reflects an essential understanding that Louise and others have come to comprehend through their attempts to educate the public. It is through improving the communication between the two groups, and increasing their mutual understanding, that the relationship between these two groups may improve and, wanderers or not, the two groups may find the ability to peacefully coexist.

Panhandlers as Social Adversaries

As discussed above, criminals, those who break the law and contravene the social contract, are those who are most clearly conceptualized as enemies of society. However, contrary to the popular misconception that panhandling is illegal in Canada, at the moment there is no law in the Criminal Code restricting panhandling and, thus, it is not considered a criminal act at the federal level. However, at a municipal level, as cities attempt to deal with complaints from their citizens regarding panhandling activities, they have increasingly adopted anti-panhandling legislation in the form of bylaws, which regulate the act of panhandling. Through such legislation, panhandling and specific behaviours associated with it are being redefined as unlawful, though not entirely criminal. As Ryan, a municipal civil servant, explained, bylaws impose fines, and although if those fines go unpaid the individual may serve jail time, the offences committed are not considered criminal, and rather are seen as "social." Those who panhandle, in violation of these bylaws, are coming to be redefined as social adversaries, true to Simmel's (1971:144) conception of the poor as "inner enemies". Through this process of redefinition, the behavioural and ideological characteristics of panhandlers are transformed in the public consciousness from the practices and musings of innocuous wanderers, to the ruses and subversions of social adversaries. In the minds of the public, the adversarial nature of the panhandling encounter lies in the petty annoyance and nuisance of having to deal with their requests, the aggressive behaviours used by some panhandlers to secure donations and the criminal use of force and intimidation, or the possibility thereof. While most people still see panhandling as merely a nuisance, the perception that panhandlers are increasingly behaving in aggressive ways reinforces the

image of panhandlers as social adversaries and supports the notion that more restrictive legislation is needed to deal with their presence.

Anti-panhandling Legislation

In March of 1999 Calgary introduced Bylaw Number 3M99 “Being a bylaw of the city of Calgary to Regulate Panhandling” (Appendix A). The bylaw states that because panhandling has been identified as “a significant social and safety concern,” the City is taking a “coordinated approach to ameliorate the negative impact of panhandling activities”. This coordinated approach involves outreach programs, which promote “alternative income generating or support options,” and the bylaw, which limits the activities of panhandlers. Specifically, the legislation stipulates that panhandlers must not panhandle within ten metres of a bank or ATM machine, a transit stop, or a pedestrian walkway. Also, panhandling is prohibited between 8:00pm and 8:00am and it is prohibited to solicit people in motor vehicles. Finally, panhandlers are not permitted to continue to solicit people who decline the initial solicitation, or to obstruct the passage of, walk next to, or follow the person being solicited.

The first important element of this legislation is that it addresses safety/ security concerns aroused by the *performance of panhandling in certain spaces and at certain times*: where people are taking out their wallets to make transactions (near bank machines and bus stops), where they are unable to move away from a panhandler (as when waiting for a bus or when in a motor vehicle), where the space is confined (as in a raised walkway or an underpass), and at night or in the early morning when people are more easily frightened and criminal acts are more likely to be enacted. The second important element of this legislation is that addresses safety/security concerns aroused by the *behaviour of panhandlers in their solicitations*: as described in the previous section, these “aggressive” behaviours include repeated solicitations, obstruction of the sidewalk, and following those who are being solicited. Also, the penalty for transgressing this bylaw is a fine of up to \$10,000 dollars or imprisonment for up to one year.

When this bylaw was introduced it replaced sections of the Stephen Avenue Mall By-law and the Barclay Mall By-law, which were repealed. The repealed sections had specifically stated “No person shall beg or ask for gifts for himself or for any person on the mall” and that “No person, on the Mall, shall beg or ask for gifts,” respectively. As

Alex, a member of the business community, explained to me, with this old legislation, “technically that wouldn’t have stood up in court. So, I mean, we could have turned a blind eye and said we’ll keep that, but that wouldn’t have been really responsible. So, we’re trying to work with the panhandlers and be fair, and to work with the public and be fair to them.” The new panhandling bylaw was introduced to address the realization that, under *The Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, a bylaw that totally banned panhandling on the pedestrian malls would be seen to contravene the rights of panhandlers. Specifically, panhandling is believed to be protected under Section 2 (b), which guarantees the freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression. In recognition of this, the City of Calgary recognizes that “the act of verbal solicitation itself is not illegal and is protected as ‘expression’” (City of Calgary 2001:16). However, the City also recognizes that, according to the Municipal Government Act, it has the power to regulate the behaviours in public spaces and hence may regulate the behaviours associated with the “expressions” of the panhandlers. As Gail, a social service provider, explained to me, bylaws are “a tool that the City has used historically to manage behaviour in public spaces.” Therefore, the city has shifted to regulating the act of panhandling through their bylaws rather than outlawing it altogether.

From a legal standpoint, rights under the *Charter* are guaranteed, but they may be limited provided that, according to Section 1, they are “subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.” As all people are guaranteed the same rights, and, in certain instances, the rights of one individual may conflict with those of another individual, it is necessary to engage in a process whereby these competing rights are balanced against one another. In creating legislation, the responsibility of the legislating body is to ensure that in the process of balancing these rights they do not limit the rights of either party beyond such “reasonable limits.” If there is concern that such legislation has breached these reasonable limits, it may be challenged in the courts where, as Joel Bakan explains, “The judge’s role is to identify competing interests, balance these one against the other, and determine which ought to prevail through impartial evaluation of the potential consequences of available outcomes” (1997:30). The City of Calgary, in fearing that their former legislation banning panhandling on the malls would not withstand such a constitutional challenge, opted to

introduce By-law 3M99 which they argue places only “reasonable limits” on the expressions of people panhandling.

The City justifies these limits by stating that panhandling poses a significant “social and safety concern,” and that they are providing panhandlers with access to outreach services that supply them with income alternatives. As Gail, a social service provider, explained, “The argument against a panhandler bylaw would be to say that all citizens have a right to free speech and free movement and that’s what this bylaw restricts. The reverse of that is that citizens have a right to feel safe and the city has a right to restrict behaviours that might threaten people’s sense of safety.” Thus, the city feels that their current legislation is constitutionally valid because while it restricts the behaviour of the panhandlers, it does so in the interests of protecting the public’s sense of safety.

In contrast to this opinion, the National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) (1999) has argued, in reference to almost identical legislation which it constitutionally challenged in Winnipeg, that such legislation not only violates the panhandler’s right to freedom of expression under Section 2, but also violates their rights under Section 7 which guarantees “life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice,” and Section 15 which guarantees equality “before and under the law” and the “right to the equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination.” From NAPO’s (1999:16-17) perspective, in addition to inhibiting the free expression of panhandlers, such legislation 1) denies panhandlers their ability to provide for themselves which in turn undermines their personal security, 2) further jeopardizes their security by imposing fines which, due to their poverty, they are unable to pay and leads to time in jail in lieu of payment, 3) discriminates against panhandlers on the basis of poverty (as most panhandlers are poor), 4) discriminates against panhandlers on the basis of some characteristics of those who live in poverty (like homelessness, mental illness, addictions), and 5) denies panhandlers the equal protection and benefit of the law by excluding them from public spaces due to their activities. Although the legislation in Calgary has not been subject to a constitutional challenge, the issues NAPO raised in the challenge of this similar

legislation in Winnipeg illuminate some of the key issues in the question of whether such legislation does indeed place *reasonable* limits on the expression of panhandlers.

Arthur Schafer argues that if a by-law like Winnipeg's was upheld as constitutionally valid, "it could become a legal offence for one citizen simply to communicate to another, in a public place, that she or he is in trouble and needs help" (Schafer 1998:7). In essence, for those restrictions described above as limiting the *performance of panhandling in certain spaces and at certain times*, identical communications are considered legal or illegal depending on where an individual is standing or what time of day it is. Although the city argues that panhandling within these areas and at these times of day poses a "safety" risk, it is unclear why it is only people panhandling who are restricted in their expressions within these areas and at these times of day. For example, if I am standing at a bus stop and I ask a woman beside me for the time, do I not pose the same "safety" risk as the person panhandling? I am a stranger communicating with the woman in a confined space and she is unable to move away because she is waiting for the bus, and yet there is no legislation stating that I may not ask her for the time. Such an example shows that, in fact, it is not simply communication that is being limited, but rather a specific kind of communication by a specific kind of person.

In legally assessing whether or not certain kinds of expression should be limited, courts often question the substance of the expression and whether it could be considered harmful, as in the case of certain hate literature, pornography, or advertising (Bakan 1997:64). It appears that, in terms of content, a panhandler asking a pedestrian for change is no more harmful to the pedestrian than a panhandler asking a pedestrian for the time. In either case, the communication is not personally offensive (unless we consider poverty to be as offensive as hate literature or pornography), and the pedestrian is free to respond or not respond however they like. Instead, what is considered harmful is the possibility that, by virtue of *being poor* and *requesting money*, pedestrians might perceive panhandlers, in certain contexts, as threatening or intimidating. I would submit that, in this instance, the legislation is restricting the freedom of expression of a group of people on the basis of the *possibility* that the public might *perceive* them as intimidating in certain contexts. The restriction of these rights is rationalized by arguing that the rights of the public to "feel safe" override the rights of the people panhandling to express their need. Using this same

logic, we must ask, could we limit the rights of other people whom the public perceives as intimidating in certain contexts? Could we limit the rights of racial minorities (for example, Aboriginal people, as Calgarians finds them particularly intimidating) to communicate with the public in all of these same contexts? If it is possible to justify restricting rights due to the possibility that the public might feel intimidated, it should be immaterial *why* the public feels intimidated, whether it is because a person is poor and asking for money, or Aboriginal and asking for the time.

What is evident is that, due to the vague and general language used in the *Charter*, “whether a governmental action is ‘reasonable’ and ‘demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society’ is a matter of opinion and political choice, not a technical legal question” (Bakan 1997:27). At this point in time, to restrict the expression of people on the basis of minority status would be politically construed as discriminatory, while to restrict the expression of people on the basis of being poor and in need is not considered discriminatory, or has not yet been proven to be discriminatory, as evidenced by the very existence of anti-panhandling legislation. Significantly, I was informed by police and social services employees that the two groups which pose the most serious safety concerns in the downtown core are Aboriginal people and youths, yet no similar legislation has been passed to restrict their expressions. I would speculate that the difference in approach lies partly in the perception that one cannot help being Aboriginal or young, but one, in theory, can help being poor and in need. In failing to support themselves, in failing to capitalize on the alternative income activities offered by the social services community, the people panhandling also fail to earn the full rights of citizenship. The moral discourse surrounding the ideologies of the work ethic, equality of opportunity, and the ascribed agency of the panhandlers is enough to tip the balance in favour of valuing the rights of the public over the rights of the panhandlers.

It is important to recognize that in making such compromises we transform notions of citizenship to reflect the way we weigh the rights of one group against the rights of another. If the right of the public to “feel safe” (note that this is the right to “feel safe” not the right to actually “be safe” as it is not argued that the public are *actually* more likely to be assaulted or robbed by a panhandler than they are by some other member of the public), is weighed more heavily than the rights of panhandlers to freedom

of expression, life, liberty and security of the person, and equality before and under the law, we must recognize that we are subordinating the rights of one group of people to the rights of another.³² Not only are we subordinating their rights, we are redefining their some of their communications of need as offences, and thus redefining the panhandlers, by virtue of their communications, as “social adversaries” The same phrase, “can you spare some change,” spoken twelve metres from a bus stop is a request, but spoken nine metres from a bus stop is an offence. At nine metres this phrase is poses a risk to public safety while at twelve metres the threat is abated. While the practical efficacy of such legislation is somewhat obscure, the political discourse is clear. At nine metres the rights of the public supersede those of the panhandlers while at twelve metres their rights are equal. At twelve metres panhandlers are free to speak while at nine metres their utterances make them social adversaries.

In contrast to the sections of the bylaw that restrict the *performance of panhandling in certain spaces and at certain times*, the sections of the bylaw which refer to the *behaviour of panhandlers in their solicitations*, do focus specifically on the aggressive behaviours of the panhandlers rather than their status as panhandlers. Although the Criminal Code of Canada “provides coercive sanctions against panhandling carried out with personal threats, intimidation, or outright aggression” and against the use of fraudulent claims (such as claiming to be disabled) the Code does not cover the “grey-area” between “aggression and passivity” (Schafer 1998:13). The sections of the Calgary by-law which focus on the *behaviour of panhandlers* do cover this grey area and, by virtue of concentrating on aggressive *behaviour*, rather than on the perception of the public that they pose a danger, these sections of the bylaw do not appear to discriminate on the basis of the panhandler’s status. These “aggressive” behaviours include repeated solicitations, obstruction of the sidewalk, and following those who are being solicited. Thus, the behaviour based restrictions appear to limit the panhandler’s expression based on what they do rather than on who they are, and are closer to what NAPO imagines could be deemed “reasonable” in a free and democratic society.

In response to the constitutional challenge launched by NAPO in Winnipeg, Winnipeg expunged all of the regulations that specified place and time restrictions on panhandling, and retained the behaviour-based restrictions. Additionally, they changed

the name of their by-law from “The Panhandling By-law” to “A By-law of the City of Winnipeg to Control Obstructive Solicitation for Donations.” In changing the name, Winnipeg no longer specified panhandlers and extended the legislation to apply to anyone who obstructively solicits donations. Although this challenge was settled out of court, this new legislation is seen to satisfy the demands of the *Charter* and to balance the rights of the public and the panhandlers in a “reasonable” way. However, despite the settlement of Winnipeg, and a similar settlement by Vancouver, Calgary has insisted on maintaining their legislation unchanged and, according to some stakeholders, is prepared to defend their legislation in court if the need be. The following section will discuss why the city is adamant about supporting their current legislation by reviewing how this legislation is currently enforced.

The “Tools” of Enforcement

In approaching the problem posed by aggressive panhandling there are a number of issues that influence the way the police enforce the laws at their disposal. As Derek, a police officer, explained to me, “Laws are a policeman’s tools to work with, and they have to do a job, they have to have those tools. If they don’t have the tools you can’t expect them to do the job.” As discussed above, in dealing with aggressive panhandling the police have a number of tools at their disposal including sections of the Criminal Code of Canada and the anti-panhandling by-laws. When I asked Derek what “tools,” apart from the anti-panhandling legislation, he would commonly use to deal with panhandlers he mentioned that loitering is no longer an offence under the Criminal Code because it was found unconstitutional to restrict people from hanging around without any money. Instead, he would charge people, under the Code, with “causing a disturbance” for yelling and swearing and startling people. Also, using intimidating/ aggressive behaviour to panhandle would fall under “robbery” in the Code. Likewise, being “intoxicated in a public place,” though not directly related to panhandling activities, could be used if the individual was intoxicated. Another officer, Carl, added that there is a law under the Code which states that you can cause a disturbance by impeding pedestrian traffic on the sidewalks, though he stated that he seldom uses it. In applying these laws, Carl explained that when the public complains of aggressive behaviour by a panhandler, “not many of them are interested in charges because they’d have to be a witness and for something that

trivial it seems a waste of everybody's time." Also, in many cases, by the time the police arrive on the scene, the panhandler is long gone, or they are unable to identify the panhandler due to typically vague descriptions of them provided by the public. Thus, in many cases, panhandlers are unlikely to be prosecuted for their aggressive activities.

It appears that anti-panhandling by-laws, in specifying those aggressive activities which are more along the lines of a public nuisance than a criminal offence, offer an alternative to pressing criminal charges for what is commonly considered a minor offence. Rather than laying charges, which often requires a member of the public to act as a witness, the police are able to write tickets, which should then be paid by the panhandlers. According to the police, these tickets are typically for small amounts of money, approximately \$25-\$50, but in the event that a panhandler is unable to pay the ticket, and they are convicted in court (with or without their presence), a warrant would be issued, they would be "picked-up" off the street, and they would spend one or two days in custody. However, in practical terms, the police officers I spoke with agreed that there are rarely any tickets written, and instead they use the by-laws to "get people in compliance rather than write the tickets." Basically, this means that panhandlers are given warnings and asked to move to another location, to stop panhandling, or to stop their aggressive behaviour. In the event they do not comply, according to Derek, "the chronic offenders get tickets, and they're the ones that just want to defy, they're the defiant anti-establishment type. They just defy authority." As Jane, a social service provider explained, in interactions between the police and the panhandlers "I've never seen a panhandler win the argument." Therefore, in most cases, the panhandlers comply with the demands of the police and it is unnecessary to write any tickets.

The irony of writing tickets for people panhandling for spare change is not lost on the police, and as police understand that the panhandlers are unlikely to pay for the tickets, they opt instead to get compliance. The current legislation, including the provisions regarding the space and time of day restrictions, gives the police a valued tool as they can use the bylaw to justify the compliance they request. In fact, although the police claim to be most concerned about the aggressive *behaviours* of the panhandlers, in looking at the panhandling tickets written during the period from January 1999 to April 30 2000, out of a total of seventeen tickets written, none were written for violations based

on *behaviours* (Calgary Urban Project Society 1999). Instead, all were written for violation of the *space/ time of day* restrictions. While this may be because by the time the police arrive on the scene the aggressive panhandlers have fled, cannot be reliably identified or because the public is reluctant to report such aggressive encounters, the fact remains that, in the view of the police these space/ time of day restrictions are valuable tools for enforcement.

However, in order to understand why these tools are being used, it is important to understand the way the police are using these tools. As the National Council of Welfare has documented, police actions are vulnerable to bias because “police decisions are made most quickly and are least public, and because police officers have enormous discretion in determining who gets stopped, who gets arrested, who gets detained and who gets charged” (2000:4). This discretion, in and of itself, is not problematic, but when such discretion is used in a way that discriminates against certain groups it becomes an arena for the enactment of bias. For example, Ray, a homeless Aboriginal man, told me about a time he was drunk and fell asleep in the lobby of a building. The building manager called to complain to the police and the police woke Ray up by beating him with their batons. Ray was convinced that he was being robbed, and tried to fight back until he realized it was the police. Although he stopped resisting, apologized and asked the officers if they could drive him down to the detox shelter, the police arrested him for public drunkenness, loaded him into their van, called him a “stupid drunken Indian” and beat him badly. In this case, the police had the discretionary power to arrest him or to take him to the shelter. Certainly Ray’s aggressive reaction when they tried to wake him up played a part in their decision to arrest him, but, based on Ray’s description, the beating which ensued was both unnecessary (he was already in the van and posed no threat) and racially motivated. Had Ray been a well-dressed white man asleep in the same lobby it is unlikely that the police would have taken the same course of action.

In a similar way, the discretion of the police effects how they react to panhandlers on the street. As businesses and members of the general public often complain to the police about panhandlers who are not doing anything illegal, when they receive the complaints there is technically nothing they can do based on the available legislation. However, often out of reluctance to tell the public and businesses that they cannot do

anything to address their complaints, the police may approach panhandlers even though they are not breaking any laws and attempt to persuade them to stop panhandling or to move to another location. Sometimes this persuasion takes the form of some rather loose interpretations of the law.

For example, Carl explained that although they repealed the section of the Stephen Avenue By-law that specifically restricted panhandling on the mall, the police have decided not to allow panhandling on the mall because they recognize that, as an area with high pedestrian traffic, many people would panhandle there and inevitably the businesses and buskers would complain. As another officer, Alan, explained, "A prime location like this, they're trying to revitalize Stephen Avenue. Well, they're trying to get rid of the panhandlers." As Carl described, despite the change in the bylaw, "We kind of work around it with the law that requires them to have a permit to ask for a gift, for any kind of performance, advertising etc. Asking for a gift, we interpret that as panhandling, although a judge might not. But, at this point in time we haven't been called to task on it, so we're just going to work at it that way." Carl's statement betrays that, although the city specifically repealed the section of the bylaw restricting begging and asking for gifts on the mall, he has been interpreting another section to mean the same thing even though he realizes that his interpretation may not be upheld in court. Although he states that the section of the bylaw he is interpreting includes needing a "permit to ask for gifts," the actual section of that bylaw makes no mention of asking for gifts at all, and instead (as amended in Bylaw 14M97) reads: "(2) When any person, group, firm or corporation wishes to carry on any activity, render service, or sell or advertise for sale or set up or make any display on the mall, application for permission to do so must be made to the CDA" (By-law 52M87). Based on the actual text of this section, and the knowledge that the panhandling portion of this bylaw was repealed, it is evident that Carl's interpretation is, at the very least, creative. As he explained to me, "There's too many laws in our society. We don't even know a fraction of them, you know, and we're supposed to be enforcing them." It may well be that Carl's understandable inability to memorize all of the laws on the books has led to this loose interpretation, yet his later comments draw this assumption into question. When I asked him what he would do if a panhandler replied, "I know my rights, I know what the legislation is," he explained,

Oh, they do all the time, but what saves us is that there are so many laws that nobody can possibly know them all, so just recite some law and say that “You’re committing an offence under this and this act,” and stuff like that. And they’ll say “No I’m not.” I say, “Well, I believe you are. So I’ll let the judge decide if you are or if you aren’t, but I’m arresting you.” And generally it works, you know, they don’t push it most of the time, and if they do, you have to be prepared to arrest them for whatever they’re doing.

After he explained this, I asked him, “Is it ever a bluff?” and he replied that yes, sometimes it was a bluff, but that “I’ve never had to back off. You have to know your opponent.” Thus, through bluffing, and citing laws which a person may or may not actually be in violation of, the police are able to “get compliance” with most of their requests. As Carl described it,

By and large, the police agencies in these civilized societies are flying by the seat of their pants. We’re constantly having to stick our necks out just to make criminals think we have some sort of control. If only they knew, we’d have total anarchy overnight, guaranteed. If only they knew what their real rights were. And it’s not that they don’t have that information available to them, it’s just that they’re primitive, they don’t know how to seek that information, or they can’t correlate that information with the real world. Some of them can, but most of them can’t.

Although Carl speaks here specifically about “criminals,” his statements appear to apply equally in the case of panhandlers. Neither group, nor the general public, are usually aware of their full rights, and the police are able to use that ignorance to their advantage in order to maintain some semblance of control in their dealings with these groups. From the perspective of the police, the *Charter* severely limits their ability to act. As Derek put it, “we’re so restricted, we have so many rules that we have to live by and we’re in a game, we’re in a fight against another team that has no rules... We are constrained by the constitution. You’ve got to make everything fair for everybody, and you make it so fair for everybody that it becomes unfair for a large majority of the people.” Derek was quite adamant that in the process of protecting the rights of the criminals, particularly serious criminals like members of organized crime, the rights of the public were inevitably infringed upon. In reference to NAPO and its work to protect the rights of people in poverty, Derek’s response was, “Who’s stepping up to the plate protecting your right to walk down the street and feel safe and secure? There’s nobody, so that’s what we’re

doing here as the police department, that's what we're fighting for is your right to feel safe out there on the street." In Derek's view then, it appears that his priority is on preserving the rights of average citizens to feel safe, and to a certain extent, he recognizes that this goal may be pursued at the expense of the rights of others.

When I asked Derek what kind of a relationship the panhandlers have with the police he explained,

There are some interactions that are very good, and some that are not so good. There's some that don't like the police because they get all jacked up all the time, and they get jacked up because the public is constantly complaining of being approached by panhandlers and they're tired of it, and they want us to do something about it. So we're trying to find some middle ground there that we can solve the problem without getting fired

When I asked Derek what kinds of thing the police might do to get fired he elaborated

I should have said, get themselves in trouble. That would be infringing on somebody's rights, excessive use of authority, where you tried to put the run on somebody that wasn't breaking the law. Where they know what their rights are, and you're trying to appease the people that are complaining, the shopkeepers that you deal with on a daily basis...If I went to a panhandler and said "look, you can't do it out here." "Why? What's wrong with it?" "Well you're blocking somebody's doorway, you can't do that, he's got a business to run. Just move it along." And [they] come and make a complaint, that would probably be sustained. So now, even though I don't get fired for it, I get maybe some negative paper. You know, excessive use of authority. That would be under the police act. You know, that I've violated something there in the police act, trying in good faith to do my job. But I've violated somebody's rights and they've taken me to task on it.

This description details a serious conflict for the police force. When the public and shopkeepers complain about the panhandlers to the police with the expectation that they will do something to remedy the situation, the police are put in a position where they may "put the run on somebody" who is not in violation of the law. Although Derek feels that the officer would be "trying in good faith to do [his/her] job," he does recognize that such actions might constitute an excessive use of authority. As Carl describes above, what saves them from being "taken to task" more often on such abuses is that panhandlers are unlikely to know the law or to know their rights, and they are unlikely to succeed in

challenging the officer or in making a complaint. The problem with this process, in Derek's view, is that when the officers are taken to task, they are reluctant to involve themselves the next time they face a similar situation. According to Derek, "You need to keep providing them with tools to do their job, and if you don't, then they just quit caring and they turn a blind eye to it."

From a certain perspective, this is precisely what this disciplinary process is supposed to do. If the process of receiving "negative paper" discourages the excessive use of authority, as in the case of harassing people who are not breaking the law, then the system is working as it should. However, from Derek's perspective, it is the system which is failing *them* by not providing them with the tools they need to do their job. When officers like Derek cease to define their job as the enforcement of the law, and redefine it as protecting the rights of citizens to feel safe, it becomes possible to construe the law as being insufficient for them to carry out their job. As public servants, the police feel a responsibility to address citizen concerns. Although it is tempting to view these abuses of authority as stemming solely from a corruption of their discretionary power, such a view would obfuscate the integral role the angst and anger of the public and the business community play in "jacking-up" the police.

Additionally, the personal ideologies of the police regarding panhandlers contribute to their propensity to act according to the wishes of the complainants. Carl explained that he does not have much sympathy for the people who panhandle because as a "harsh realist" he recognizes that "Humans are weak, right? We tend to, or humans tend to succumb to their weakness. But our, in many cases we look down on that because, I don't want to say we're stronger because we're not, you know, in certain areas, but I guess just traditionally we look down on weakness." Also, in Carl's view, many of the aggressive panhandlers are "native" and are "retired criminals" with long and varied criminal records who have "nothing else left in their lives except they have to make some money to get their drinks." According to Carl, "They've chosen their life. Circumstances dictate where you start from in life but they don't dictate the choices you make in life." In choosing the criminal path, alcoholism, and panhandling Carl finds himself with little respect for the choices they have made.

Similarly, another officer, Alan, explained,

What bothers us about panhandlers is that for a man to panhandle, unless he's a cripple, it's against the code of manhood because a man's job is to provide for his family, and that does not include begging. A man has to swallow his pride badly to beg, so in order to do it he's got to make a severe turn to the left, and compromise his manhood. I mean, that might sound out of date, but it's exactly true. And if he wants to change bedpans, there's a lot of things he can do. We respect a guy doing a menial job much more than somebody begging for money...The thing about poverty is we're terrified of poverty. So when you see someone begging on the street- when a guy goes for lunch, he's a business man and he sees someone begging on the street- that's like a spectre of "hey that could be me" and people don't want to see that.

Clearly, both Carl and Alan have very strong moral views regarding what is it about panhandlers that offends police officers so deeply. As the police have traditionally been epitomized by strength and masculinity, the officers' comments regarding their distaste for weakness and their disgust with those who violate the "code of manhood" fit well within their workplace ideology. Significantly, these officers echo the sentiments expressed by the general public regarding the importance of work, while at the same time zeroing in on the true epicentre of the public's terrified response, the spectre of poverty in their midst. At once, these officers embody and enforce the dominant moral ideologies of the public, and often with only this ideology to back them up, they answer to the desire of the public to have that spectre removed from their view. To a certain extent, it is this ideology, rather than the law itself, which provides them with the authority they wield. By defining panhandlers as social adversaries, panhandlers become subject to this authority, and as a result, their citizenship rights are redefined parallel to this ideology.

Yet, this redefinition of rights goes further than simply moving people along, writing tickets or arresting people for minor infractions. This redefinition goes so far as redefining their very humanity. As one officer explained:

A lot of people fail to realize there's a different mentality on the street, it's a lot more primitive if you will. You know, the street is ruled by violence and fear...The only thing that these, this type of people who live in this environment understand is their own rules, and that's something that they respect, and in reality if you wanted to get anything across to them that they will remember is to work within their own parameters or what they understand...For example, prostitutes work the street, somebody's working in an area they're not supposed to they get beaten up, they get threatened

to be stabbed, they understand that, it works. We as police obviously can't do that, although it would work. So then we have to rely on tickets and empty threats.

It was clear from the officer's description that these ineffective enforcement measures were a source of frustration, so when I asked if the job ever involved beating people up, he explained,

No, that would be wrong. In reality, this is the way it works in real life. These people live by violence. At some point in time they're uncontrollable which means that you can't speak to them, you can't collect any information from them, even their name, until you have their attention. There's only one way, when they're in that state, to obtain their attention. It's to maybe give them a slap or something like that. I'm not saying I've ever done that, but it works. And I think by and large the people that are in that state- they appreciate it. They understand it and they don't complain. Because they know that they deserved it. As long as they are treated fairly, the punishment is fair, and they're left with their dignity. You know, they understand the way the world works. And I always say, I always tell people that there's the real world, and then there's the book world and you're in the real world now, and things are different, no matter what anybody says.

From this perspective, the mode of communication in street culture is one "ruled by violence and fear," so much so that people involved in street life are sometimes unable to communicate and behave according to our more "civilised" methods. An officer must negotiate the rough terrain between the book world, where people have rights, the police operate according to certain guidelines, and people comply, and the real world, where rights and guidelines are sometimes disregarded in the process of dealing with the violent non-compliance of people. However, in the process of negotiating this territory, the officer has redefined people on "the street" as "primitive." In fairness, he also notes that after seeing presidents of companies beat their spouses and rich men rape prostitutes, his job has taught him that many in the "civilised" world "just pretend to be civilised." In a sense, then, street people are seen to disband with this ruse of civility and allow their "instincts" to override the values and ethos they are expected to uphold as citizens. In this other world, it is possible for a person to "appreciate" being slapped, to understand it, and to not complain because they know that they "deserved it." In this world, physical

violence can be a fair punishment and leave a person with their dignity. It is clear from this description that this other world is conceptualised as radically different from our own, where being slapped constitutes assault, where people who do not complain because they know that they “deserved it” are considered to have psychological syndromes which enable their abusers, where corporal punishment is typically frowned upon, and where violence is usually regarded as degrading rather than dignifying. Redefining the world of the street in such a drastic way situates the people on the street squarely outside of our system of values and ideologies and re-imagines them as social adversaries. Thus, in the real world, the police feel justified in denying the rights entrenched in the book world, because the street people speak another language and were never a part of the book world to begin with.

I must note, however, that the officer who made the above comments also had a good reputation among people on the street for being fair and respecting their rights, while other officers had very poor reputations. I would speculate that this is because this officer recognized that panhandlers were not typically serious offenders and, hence, he seldom saw a need for a more aggressive approach with them. According to this officer, “the whole issue of panhandling is so minor in the scale of our work,” that, instead, the police spend most of their time dealing with true street criminals like the Hell’s Angels. Yet, in so far as panhandlers are considered part of this “real” world on the street, they find themselves subject to police authority in this real world. As the above descriptions demonstrate, the existing bylaw facilitates this process. Although at times the bylaw may be used to address aggressive behaviour, which truly is injurious to the social body, at others it may be used to enforce moral ideologies, which typecast panhandlers as social adversaries. The following section will discuss how people on the street experience this process.

Surviving in the “Real World”

From the perspective of the panhandlers, the “real world” can be a disorienting place. Perhaps Eric, who explained the process he had been through over the years, shared the best example of this with me:

I used to pan over in front of the courthouse; I made good money there. I had some regulars who would give me \$5-10 every week,

but then they brought in this new legislation so you can't pan anywhere on 7th. You have to be 10 metres away from anywhere along the C-train and from the bus stops and door ways and parking lots and there's nowhere over there you can pan. So I moved over to The Bay but that didn't last long- they kicked me off that. Then I walked all along 8th and I figure this is pretty much the only spot along this entire mall that you can pan- since you have to be 10m from all the doorways. I'm just barely OK here. If I could move down just a bit it wouldn't be so bad with the wind coming around the corner. But in front of the courthouse there were no doorways anywhere close, and I was far enough away from the c-train, but they still said I couldn't pan there. So what are you going to do?...They said that if I get caught panning on 7th again they'll give me a ticket...It was three different sets of cops...The thing I don't get is, if it's illegal to panhandle at all, then why do they have all these rules?

When I asked Eric who had told him that it was illegal to panhandle at all, he replied, "The cops. But I figure I won't have a problem unless the guy in [the shop] calls and complains." Eric's story clearly illustrates the confusion he has faced in dealing with the police and attempting to make sense of his experiences with them. First of all, having been told that panhandling is not allowed on 7th avenue, he was forced to move away from his initial panhandling location despite the fact that it was not within 10m of any of the restricted zones which he lists as "anywhere along the C-Train," bus stops, door ways, and parking lots. However, even before the two mall bylaws were repealed, there was never a bylaw restricting panhandling on 7th avenue. Likewise, doorways and parking lots are not included in the space restrictions of the panhandling bylaw.³³ Also, while the C-Train stations are included in the space restrictions of the bylaw, all other areas "anywhere along the C-Train" are not included. When Eric moved to The Bay to panhandle, it was after the introduction of the panhandling bylaw and the repeal of the mall bylaws, so at that time The Bay was no longer in a restricted area, yet he was still told to move. After searching long and hard for a spot 10 metres away from any doorway he had found a spot, but recognised that if the store owner complained that he would be asked to move from that spot too, despite not being in violation of the bylaw. In this new spot, he was forced to sit against the building, just inches from the corner so as to be 10 metres from the doorway. Unfortunately, sitting in this spot he was hit by the blasting

winter wind, which rushed around the corner of the building, but he was afraid that if he moved over a foot or two that he would get a ticket. He did all of this while under the impression, fostered by the police, that it was totally illegal to panhandle. Although he complied with the police, the process made little sense to him, as it seemed riddled with contradictions. Despite his awareness that his initial spot on 7th avenue was not in violation of the bylaw, he was resigned to comply as the police threatened that if he was caught panhandling there again he would get a ticket. As he put it, “So, what are you going to do?” When your choice is between complying with the wishes of the police or getting a ticket, it is not much of a choice.³⁴

Many similar stories were shared with me detailing how the police had pushed panhandlers from one location to another until they finally found a location where the police would leave them alone. These locations were typically outside of the revitalized downtown core and on streets where there were very few storefront businesses. Although in these new locations some of the panhandlers actually *were* in violation of the bylaw, sitting on the sidewalk portion of underpasses or panhandling in the early morning and evening hours, the police did not bother them, perhaps because these areas were away from businesses and the pedestrian malls.

For some who continued to panhandle in the pedestrian mall areas, interactions with the police became a locus of creative resistance engaged in to avoid getting tickets or escalating confrontations to the point of being charged. As Lesley explained, “When we see them coming we just put on the hat with all the money in it. They’ll take away the money if they catch you.” When I replied in disbelief “Really?” she explained further, “Yeah! You’re not supposed to pan within 150 feet of an LRT platform, or the mall, or anywhere. So it’s like, what? You’ve got to pan in a residential area? It’s not like we’re right in front of the banks.” In Lesley’s case, she had been misinformed and believed that she needed to be 150 feet from the C-Train platform and the mall, instead of 10m away from the C-Train platform with no distance restrictions on the mall. But, rather than actually moving to a residential area as she suggests, she panhandles in the supposedly restricted zone and evades detection and the confiscation of her donations by keeping an eye out for the police and placing her hat on her head when they approach. As an

“everyday form of resistance,” (Scott 1985) Lesley uses dissimulation and passive non-compliance to counter the application of laws that seem arbitrary to her.

Similarly, Mark explained to me that although he has never been ticketed, “I’ve been asked to move by the police. I just politely moved and then came back in 20 minutes. I don’t argue with the police- they have the power behind them, they have the handcuffs, they have the jails.” In recognition of the power of the police, Mark has opted to use passive non-compliance and deception to evade getting into confrontations. Although Mark was aware that the method and location he uses to panhandle are not in violation of the bylaw, Mark chose to simply walk away rather than face the handcuffs and jails. Despite the efforts of the police, and the city bylaws, these panhandlers are able to peacefully maintain their panhandling activities in these guarded public spaces without finding themselves subject to tickets and jail time. In truth, neither the city nor the police are particularly concerned with these peaceful people who typically panhandle passively and rarely harass the public, and their occasional attempts to move these panhandlers around likely serve primarily to reaffirm their authority and keep the panhandlers in line.

However, there are those panhandlers who take more aggressive approaches, with varied results. As James informed me, “You have to stick up for your rights, or you get walked on, and thrown off to the side, and that goes with anybody, on the streets or off the streets. You know how everyone says you’ve gotta stick up for your rights when it comes to government, it’s not only government, it’s in everyday life.” In particular, James felt it was important to stick up for his rights in his dealings with the police. As he explained,

A lot of them don’t realise that the street people know the law. Like last summer this cop was ragging on a street person, and I knew the street person was in the right because I knew what was going down. I stepped in and I said “What right do you have to harass him about something like this?” He said, “Who do you think you are?” And I said, “I’m someone who’s been in trouble with you guys enough to know the law like the back of my hand.” I said, “Why don’t you shut your face cop, and get out of here.” He busted me and threw me in jail. I called my lawyer. Lawyer had me out in ten minutes. He says, “You’re walking scot-free.” He says, “It falls under freedom of speech in Canada, they cannot stop you from speaking your mind, and if they do, they can get charged for harassment.

In James' interactions with the police, he took on a very confrontational stance. Armed with the knowledge of his rights and of the law, James found that he could prevent the police from harassing him by threatening to take them to court if they violated his rights and by reminding them that he was free to speak his mind. Although several of his stories illustrated that this technique worked fairly well in terms of convincing the police to leave him alone, his confrontational style had also earned him several tickets for violating the panhandling bylaw. In fact, he was the only panhandler who mentioned having received tickets. True to the police officer's description above, the panhandlers who defy authority may be the ones who get the tickets. However, in this case, it appears that defying authority also entailed standing up for one's rights in the face of harassment. Significantly, James was the only panhandler whom I frequently observed in an area that was heavily policed, while several other panhandlers described being pushed away from this area by the police, despite the absence of a bylaw regulating the space. It appears that through his knowledge of his rights and the law, and through his confrontational style, James was able to defend his rights and to assert his presence in the revitalized downtown space. However, it may be that this was accomplished more due to the reluctance of the police to deal with the hassle of his confrontational style and the possibility of getting negative paperwork, rather than out of a true respect and acknowledgement of James' rights.

It is clear from the narratives of these panhandlers that their relationships with the police take on many forms ranging from compliance, to subversion, to outright defiance. It is also clear that these relationships are heavily influenced by the way the police selectively enforce and loosely interpret the laws regarding panhandling. It appears that panhandlers may make an effort to abide by the rules of the law, but find themselves confused by misinformation they are given by the police, who wish to tightly regulate certain areas of the downtown core. Although the panhandler outreach worker works diligently during the summer to inform panhandlers of their rights and to educate them regarding the panhandling bylaw, this information may be of minimal use if the police decide that they want "compliance." It is clear from these descriptions that, in addition to interpreting the mall bylaws in some questionable ways, the police are also using loose interpretations of the time and place restrictions of the current panhandling bylaw to

facilitate moving panhandlers out of particular public spaces. Although none of the panhandlers I spoke to reported being approached by the police for aggressively panhandling, they frequently reported being asked to move to different locations. It appears that, in the experience of the panhandlers, this legislation has served to control where they panhandle rather than how they panhandle. This observation supports the notion that rather than being a useful tool to actively protect the public from the aggressive behaviours of panhandlers, this bylaw is currently being used to remove the panhandlers from public view. While this may be a desirable goal, given the aesthetic, emotional, violent and financial disorder believed to be posed by the panhandlers, it is important to recognise that, in the process of enforcing these bylaws, the panhandlers are being subjected to what can only be described as a questionable application of the current legislation.

Although in and of itself, as NAPO has argued, parts of the anti-panhandling legislation are potentially discriminatory, the true locus of this discrimination is on the street where this legislation becomes a tool of enforcement. Through a combination of the public will, and the discretion of the police force, the panhandlers lose their rights to expression regardless of what legislation is in place and how “reasonable” it may be. Yet, as the “reasonableness” of both the legislation and its enforcement remain a political question, rather than a technical legal one, we must decide as a society whether these panhandlers are social adversaries because of who they are, where they stand, how they behave, or how they make us feel. If they are social adversaries because of who they are, then, regardless of what the *Charter* guarantees, panhandling must be made illegal in the interests of protecting the public. If they are social adversaries because of where they stand, then they must be banished from the disputed public spaces. If they are social adversaries because of how they behave, then our legislation must regulate that behaviour. If they are social adversaries because of how they make us feel, then the solution to our “problem” is much more complicated than we could ever legislate in a simple bylaw.

Panhandlers as Astute Entrepreneurs

An alternative to conceptions of panhandlers as misguided wanderers from convention, or as enemies of the social order, is to consider panhandlers as entrepreneurs. Instead of countering the tenets of a capitalist system, in this incarnation, panhandlers are those who most truly embody the spirit of capitalism. They have discovered how to trade on emotions alone. Panhandlers ask passers-by for money, and in return the for their donations, the passers-by may assuage their guilt, revel in their generosity, gain moral satisfaction, earn their own salvation or foster the salvation of another. Each person may derive a personalized value from the exchange, and yet, the panhandlers themselves need only present themselves to the public and ask for a bit of spare change. As Lankenau (1999a) illustrates through his conception of “panhandling repertoires” discussed in Chapter Four, far from being an unconscious or accidental process, panhandlers actively choose among different approaches in order to grab the attention of passers-by and to convey their messages of need in effective and lucrative ways. Thus, when members of the City committee which was set up to address panhandling issues met with a focus group of panhandlers who expressed the view that they consider their panhandling to be an economic activity on par with other forms of employment, the City decided to take on an approach which would validate panhandling as “a non-traditional means of earning a living, by independent self-support without burdening social services” (City of Calgary 2001).

In their report and oral presentation to the S.P.C. on Community and Protective Services (a committee meeting of city aldermen)³⁵, the City’s representatives from the panhandling committee recognized that “panhandling is a last resort for some people,” and that they did not wish to “further reject or punish our panhandling community.” Instead, the committee wished to foster “mutual respect” between the public and panhandlers and to balance the rights of each group. Towards this end, they put forward a proposal to City Council to recognize and legitimate the activities of the panhandlers as a means of earning a living. In consultation with the committee stakeholders and a focus group of panhandlers, they created a proposal to issue identification cards to panhandlers which would, in essence, recognize active and passive panhandling as an “occupation.” These ID cards would not be actual business licenses, as the committee felt these would

be too difficult to administer and the cost would be too prohibitive for the panhandlers. Instead, these mandatory ID cards would be available for free, and would be issued to the panhandlers by a mobile bylaw van or at City Hall.

In conjunction with these ID cards, the panhandlers would be bound by a code of conduct which the committee proposed could include the regulations of the current panhandling bylaw, and also “courtesy” guidelines like “not panhandling under the influence of alcohol or drugs” and “respecting other people’s right to use the sidewalk without obstruction.” When the panhandlers were issued their ID cards they would be educated regarding the ID card program, the code of conduct, and the panhandling bylaw. At this time the panhandlers would also be informed of the services available in the city and provided with “assistance in developing methods of self-support other than panhandling.” Those panhandlers who violated the bylaw or the code of conduct would be “referred to outreach counselling to resolve the issues or negative behaviour.” Also, those in violation may have to pay a “specified penalty” as this ID program would be part of a bylaw which would codify its administration, and by convention, bylaws always include fines to be paid in the event of their violation. The stated purpose of this ID “would be to allow panhandlers who do not follow the bylaw or conduct guidelines to be identified.” The proposed ID would include a picture of the panhandler, a name (either their real name or their street name) and a large number by which they could be identified. This would aid outreach and law enforcement, as people who lodged a complaint regarding a panhandler could include the name or the number, which would assist in locating the individual. The committee stressed that this bylaw was not meant to be punitive, and instead, sought to address panhandling complaints through a co-operative approach incorporating both the services community and the police. These ID’s would not be used to “track” panhandlers, but instead would concentrate on allowing them to “identify themselves as law abiding citizens who have as much right to be on the street as you or I or anybody else does.” According to the City’s representatives, an accompanying education campaign would

not only educate panhandlers about their responsibilities and also their rights, but also to educate the general public to let the public know that when you see someone wearing this identification you can be assured that this person is following these rules or

understands these rules. You can expect a certain standard of behaviour, and you can behave accordingly. So, it's intended to take some of the fear and sort of mystery out of nameless faceless panhandling behaviour, and allow the panhandlers who wear this identification to stand or sit proudly identifying themselves as legitimate citizens.

The panhandlers themselves expressed to the committee that they would like to be able to "communicate to the public that they are not a threat, that they are not going to chase people or threaten people." As the statement above indicates, by wearing the ID the public would be assured that the panhandler was educated regarding the "rules" and that they would not behave aggressively. This ID would also enable the panhandlers to communicate that they are "legitimate citizens." In recognizing this, the public would be expected to "behave accordingly." In theory, by communicating their legitimacy, the public may feel more secure with the panhandlers and may be more likely to engage with them as they would with other "legitimate citizens."

Significantly, the statement above also mentions that the IDs would take the fear and mystery out of "nameless" "faceless" panhandling behaviour. Although this statement seems somewhat peculiar in light of the fact that panhandlers have always had names and faces, it communicates that in taking the anonymity out of the panhandling behaviour the panhandlers would appear less threatening to the public. The committee repeatedly stressed that the approach being proposed for the panhandlers is the same approach used by other businesses and charities that work with the public. For example, the city asks all charities that solicit door to door to voluntarily have their solicitors wear ID. Likewise, the vendors of the Street Talk newspaper also wear picture ID and follow a code of conduct, which includes guidelines regarding hygiene, politeness, and sobriety. Similarly, food vendors, buskers, bus drivers, taxi drivers, and police officers all wear or display some sort of permit or identification to identify themselves to the public. Based on these precedents, the committee felt that rather than singling panhandlers out for special treatment, they were standardizing the treatment to include panhandlers as well.

This proposal was particularly important, as the City's representatives were aware that "our current bylaw does not provide a framework to deal effectively with aggressive panhandlers." Although the City recognized that aggressive panhandlers made up only 5-

10% of the panhandling population, and noted that only 30-40 individuals “routinely and actively engaged in panhandling,” with somewhat higher numbers during the summer months, they still felt that aggressive panhandling was a problem which was not being dealt with effectively. As discussed in the previous section, based on the available information, it appears that the police have failed to effectively employ the sections of the current panhandling bylaw which refer to aggressive behaviour. In theory, this panhandler ID would make it easier for the police to enforce the panhandling legislation if pedestrians could more easily identify the aggressive panhandlers. However, in practice, Carl, a police officer, felt this program would not be that effective. As the police would likely not have direct access to the data base with the pictures and names, if a citizen complained to the police and provided them with the panhandler’s number, the police would have to phone the City to get the name, and if they needed the picture they would have to go to City Hall to view it. Of course there would be no guarantee that the ID the panhandler was wearing actually belonged to them, so on the basis of the ID number alone someone could not be charged. As Carl explained, “What do we do for a \$50 panhandling ticket? Are we going to make a photo line up that’s going to cost an hour of work with our identification unit? Then we’re going to go and show this person the photo line up and have them pick them out? Are we going to do all that work for a \$50 ticket?” Clearly, this labour intensive process would not be particularly practical. Additionally, as discussed in the previous section, if citizens are already reluctant to lay charges because they would have to act as witnesses, it is unlikely that they would be willing to go through the process of viewing a photo line up, particularly for a minor infraction.

While in extreme cases of aggression or violent assault, both the citizens and the police might be willing to invest the time and effort, for smaller offences the ID would likely be a tool of limited use from a police enforcement standpoint. However, if complaints were passed on from the police to the panhandling outreach worker, this ID might enable the outreach worker to more effectively identify and counsel panhandlers who were prone to aggressive behaviour. As the committee stressed that they wanted to take an approach oriented towards outreach and counselling, perhaps such a bylaw would assist in that process. Yet, as the panhandling outreach worker was already familiar with

the panhandlers and their behaviours, and routinely educated them regarding the services available and the rules of the legislation, it was unclear why, from an outreach perspective, this program would be necessary.

It was clear that one of the attractions of such a program was that, by contacting each individual panhandler and educating them about the services available and other employment opportunities, some of them might choose not to panhandle. Likewise, as the City was particularly concerned about the younger transient panhandlers, the rationale was that the ID requirement may make panhandling in Calgary more difficult and may dissuade transient panhandlers from panhandling or from remaining in the city due to the hassle of getting an ID. At the same time as the proposal sought to make getting the ID easy by having the bylaw van come out on the street to issue the ID, the hope was that even that minor inconvenience would encourage transients to go somewhere else or to utilize other options instead of panhandling.

Importantly, defining panhandling as a business opens up new avenues for its regulation. As one member of the business community put it, “You know, if we can’t outlaw it, then let’s treat it like a business.” The juxtaposition of these two options is indicative of the fact that, next to outlawing panhandling, the best way to approach regulating it is by redefining it as a business, rather than simply an act of expression. Businesses are subject to far more regulations than private citizens, and hence, in defining panhandling as a business, the City would gain far more regulatory power over the where, when, and how of panhandler’s economic activities. Although gaining this power through the “back door” was not cited by the City as one of the intended effects of this bylaw, the fact remains that this approach would give the City more regulatory powers than those they currently exercise. However, as Danny, an anti-poverty activist, pointed out, “the bus drivers have a union, the policemen have a union, the businessmen have business associations, their rights are somehow protected within those associations and unions. I mean, their civil rights are somehow protected, but the panhandlers at the moment have no unions, no associations.” Significantly, unlike other types of business that are able to organize and to protect their rights, the panhandlers lack such organizations and, due to their poverty and precarious living conditions, are unlikely to be able to effectively create and administer such organizations. Hence, at the same time as the city would gain greater

regulatory power through defining panhandling as a business, the panhandlers themselves may be unable to capitalize on the benefits of such a designation or the increased protections such organizations typically provide for mainstream businesses.³⁶

While the police support for this ID proposal grew partly out of the prospect of being able to identify aggressive panhandlers from their names, numbers and pictures, and partly out of the prospect of “making these people more accountable for their actions” through encouraging them to follow the code of conduct, it also grew out of the prospect that under this legislation the police would gain the “right to approach” the panhandlers on the street. As one officer described,

It's not the ultimate solution, but it's one tiny step. Now at least if you're out there panhandling and I approach you, now I have authority. 'Do you have your ID?' You know, so there's your identification, there's your code of conduct, it's right there. It gives me a reason to have a conversation with you...we're not looking to turn this into a cash cow that we can go and write a bunch of tickets. What we want ultimately is to have them conform to the rules, and if they're not aware of it, then this is where they go to get a permit. And if they're aware of it, if you warn them, well then you have to take some other action, and that would be to write them a ticket.

In practice, the police are not supposed to approach people who are not breaking any laws as this could be seen to constitute harassment. As the officer illustrates, this bylaw would give the police “a reason to have a conversation” with the panhandlers and would justify making contact with people who were not in contravention of the other bylaws. Although the goal, as in the case of the panhandling legislation, is not to write tickets, but to get the panhandlers to “conform to the rules,” such legislation would give the police another tool to ensure that they conform. Significantly, the officer stated that this bylaw would give him the “authority” to approach the panhandlers. This is particularly important because it ensures that the officer will not lose his credibility if the panhandler challenges him.

As one officer described,

Let's say I'm in a car, and I go over to the Macs store on about 11th Ave. and 5th Street, they're always sitting outside. They've got their sleeping bags in front of them and everything else. If you stop someone like that and say, “Hey, you've gotta move on,” and he says “Piss off, I'm not goin.” Well, we don't need a big law to do our jobs; sometimes we need little laws. So, “Well, where's your

ID?" "I don't need no stinking ID," "Yes you do!" Now, all of a sudden as long as we're on this side of the bylaws, we can read the bylaw to them to back us up, we can move them. Or, we can at least, we've got the grounds to continue with other things.

In this example, although the panhandlers would not be in violation of a space restriction outside the Macs store, which would warrant their being asked to move, the officer describes how the ID bylaw could be used to get compliance from the panhandlers without having to back down for lack of legislation to back him up. Although those at the City did not cite this as the intended use of the bylaw, it is evident that, much like the loose interpretations and applications of the other bylaws, this bylaw could be utilized for enforcement purposes in creative ways.

In particular, the major concern for possible abuse of such a program would be that, as the police, by law, do not have the right to ask someone to show them their ID unless they appear to be in contravention of a law, the police are currently unable to demand to see a panhandler's ID. However, the police routinely do sweeps of the pedestrian mall during which they demand to see the ID of the panhandlers, primarily street kids, who hang around on the mall. One street kid, who described Calgary as a "police state", explained, "Mostly they just invade your privacy. Like you'll be sitting around not panning or anything and the police will come and start asking you who you are, and if you don't have ID then they'll search you." Although this practice is actually illegal, if this ID bylaw were introduced, the police would have the right to demand to see an individual's panhandler ID. If the person could not produce the ID, then, as they would be in contravention of the bylaw, the police could proceed to ask them for their actual ID, at which point they could run a check on that ID to see if they have any outstanding warrants. This would be particularly effective from a law enforcement perspective because one of the jobs of the police is to track down people with outstanding warrants. As the people who are unlikely to have the panhandling ID are people who are new to the streets, or people who arrive in Calgary from out of town, this would provide the police with a built in mechanism to check the status of each new panhandler who arrives on the streets. Likewise, as it may be difficult to identify who is a panhandler and who is not, the police may be able to approach other street people who are just hanging around, like the

street kid described above, and ask them for their panhandler ID, then finding them without one, run them for warrants. Under these circumstances, the good intentions of such a program could be turned into an unpleasant actuality for the panhandlers. As the police have indicated, they must carry out their jobs, and use whatever tools they have at their disposal. It is clear that, if loosely interpreted, this bylaw would have had great potential to be used in creative ways.

However, as the Calgary City Council rejected this proposal it is difficult to gauge how effective it might have been. What is clear is that, while certain panhandlers, particularly the local long-term panhandlers, may have benefited from the program in terms of having better public relations, a greater sense of legitimacy, and a tool to combat the harassment of the police, other panhandlers may have found this program too difficult to negotiate. It was clear from my conversations with social service providers and panhandlers that certain groups would find it extremely difficult to comply with the program. For example, many individuals dealing with substance abuse problems, or with severe mental illnesses, would find it difficult understand the program or to remember to wear their ID tags, and would be likely to lose their ID tags routinely. Also, as Linda, a social service provider, described, the Aboriginal population is particularly suspicious of such institutional programs and would be unlikely to participate. When a previous attempt was made to introduce “smart cards” for clients of certain service organizations, the Aboriginal clients were suspicious of the program and, as Linda describes, “Our clients basically laughed at us with this idea because it’s too much like Big Brother for them.” Similarly, Emily, another service provider, explained that while such an ID program would be intrusive and inconvenient, the greater fear of Aboriginal clients would be “Ok, so if City Hall knows who I am, then the cops know who I am, then the social worker knows who I am, and they all know who I am, and what I’m doing, and if they know I’m panhandling then they’re going to cut off my benefits.” Real or imagined, such fears may prevent Aboriginal people, who are familiar with being abused at the hands of the “system,” from complying with the program and would, in turn, lead this group into conflicts with law enforcement. Another concern raised by Emily was that, for those Aboriginal people who did comply with the program, “racism would suggest the outcome would be that Aboriginal people would get more complaints against them.” Thus,

participation in such a program could have detrimental consequences for the most feared and discriminated against members of the panhandling community if they were singled out due to the biased perceptions of the public.

The reaction of the public to the ID proposal was a fierce condemnation of the program on two counts. As one member of the committee explained,

Everybody was annoyed for some reason. Or people had a passionate response, whether that passion was saying "How dare you legitimize a behaviour that we don't think should be going on," or whether it's "How dare you somehow label a group of people who are already down and now you're going to set them up for further abuse or you're going to target them or something."

As these comments illustrate, the City was criticized from all directions by people who felt that the program was either making legitimate an activity which no one really believes is legitimate, or was labelling an already stigmatized group of people and setting them up for some form of abuse. After the proposal was heard in the committee meeting with the City Aldermen, I overheard a radio report stating that Calgary had actually passed a bylaw to introduce these IDs when, in fact, the committee had only just heard a proposal to consider writing a bylaw. Overall, the media coverage focused on the ID and on the code of conduct, but failed to accurately describe the outreach and education elements of the program and, as a result, made it sound much more punitive than it was intended to be. What ensued was a public relations nightmare that the City was in no sense prepared for. While some people accused the City of trying to legitimate panhandling rather than provide people with services, others accused them of trying to legitimate panhandling rather than outlawing it, as it should be. Perhaps the most distressing accusation, from the perspective of those who had proposed the program, came from those who argued that the City's proposal was "akin to forcing Jews to wear stars as they did under Nazi rule during the Second World War" (Ho 2001). The City committee, with its good intentions of not further "rejecting or punishing" the panhandling community and of fostering "mutual respect" between the public and the panhandlers, found itself under fire from all directions. Although the Aldermen at the City committee meeting passed the proposal on to the City Council, by the time the proposal was heard at the City Council meeting the media buzz and public response was definitively against the proposal and the City Council voted against the proposal, seven

Aldermen against and six in favour. As one of the Aldermen stated in the Council meeting,

I think [legal council] said it very well when you said, you can't stop the conversation, but I really think that when you regulate the act of solicitation you are giving an authenticity to it that it simply doesn't deserve...I believe we're stepping into a can of worms that we can't get ourselves out of, and that we will become the ones to blame because we're the ones to write the bylaw...I think the visible identification issue is going back to the dark ages.

In the face of the public's outrage, this Alderman's statements made clear that not only should the act of panhandling not be legitimated, but those who panhandle should not be forced to wear identification in the mode of the "dark ages," as in either event the City Council would be blamed.

At the foundation of the proposal's rejection was the idea put forward by another Alderman who suggested,

They're living in extreme poverty. None of us believe, certainly I don't, that panhandling is anyway to make a living or is any substitute for income, responsible income, from work from a job, people looking after themselves. None of this addresses that issue...No city bylaw is going to stop [panhandling] because people need to survive. So until we address the larger issue, all of this is moot.

The larger issue referred to is, of course, the *poverty* of the panhandlers. As this statement demonstrates, nobody really believes that handing out ID tags or legitimating panhandling is going to in any way alleviate the poverty of the people who panhandle. From this perspective, a program such as this might simply act as a diversionary tactic for avoiding the real issues at hand.

Of course, the services community resented this implication, and as a member of the committee rebutted, "It's not that there's nothing going on, and that this is the first thing we thought of!" From their perspective, this program was simply one prong of a many-pronged approach that was designed specifically to facilitate contact between the services agencies and the panhandlers in order to deliver services more effectively. However, I speculate that this program would also serve another purpose that would be in the interests of the services community, but seemed to go unrecognized.

Louise, a service provider, mentioned that the public often directed criticisms towards the service organizations for not doing more to get people off the street. She explained the perception of people on the street is that they're begging for money and "there's no where to go." However, according to Louise, "That's just not true, it isn't. Their choice is to not deal with their issues, and that is their right, and that's what human rights stipulates, and that's fine." But, as she went on to describe, then people phone her organization in the summer and say "Why do I have to be bothered when I'm walking down the street? Why aren't you doing something?" Although this was not suggested by the service community, the panhandler ID program would have been an ideal way to communicate to the public that, although all individuals wearing ID's had been contacted and had been educated as to the services and employment alternatives available, they continued to "choose" not to deal with their "issues." In addition to forcing panhandlers into contact with the services community, this program could have been used, in moments of frustration, to redirect criticisms of the services community onto those who refuse to use their services.

Clearly, despite the fact that many panhandlers do view their panhandling as a kind of work, the community of Calgary is not prepared to accept that panhandling as a legitimate occupation. In the eyes of the public, the incarnation of panhandlers as entrepreneurs flies in the face of reason. The conception of panhandlers as "misguided wanderers from convention" and "social adversaries" is enough to overshadow any sense of legitimacy that could be gleaned from envisioning panhandling as a business. In light of the policy approaches Calgary has employed which cast panhandlers according to the wanderer and social adversary roles, the public seemed incredulous that the City had so radically altered its conception of who those strangers really are. Even more suspicions was the fact that, rather than truly recognizing panhandlers as a business and issuing them real business licenses, the City was offering instead a pale imitation which was intimately entwined with their existing policies towards panhandlers as wanderers and social adversaries. The reactions of the panhandlers themselves were telling.

On the one hand, most of those who were not involved in the panhandling focus group and who learned of the program through the media and word of mouth were dead set against it. For example, Jill, a young panhandler, dismissed the plan because, as she

described, “The people who are going to piss other people off are not going to wear one anyway.” Neither Jill or Lesley, another young panhandler, would be willing to wear the ID, even if they could put their street names on it, because, as Lesley described, “It’s already embarrassing, but it’s a living.” Contrary to those who argued that panhandlers were stigmatized already and, thus, to wear ID tags would not act to stigmatize them further, Lesley’s main objection was that panhandling was already “embarrassing” without the added embarrassment of having to wear an ID tag.

Similarly, Jean-Marc reacted to the program by stating, “I don’t understand why they’d want us wearing tags...I think it would look kind of dumb. They’d be tagging us like dogs. I wouldn’t wear one.” When I asked him, “What if the police came and said you have to wear one?” he replied, “Then I’d put it on and take it off when they leave. Simple as that!” Not only did Jean-Marc feel that the ID would look “dumb” but he likened it to the tagging of dogs rather than the licensing of businesses. The stigma attached to panhandling may run so deep as to totally sabotage any such program simply because the panhandlers themselves have internalized this stigma and are likely to interpret any institutional approach as trying to either further degrade them, or to force them out of their lifestyle.

However, amongst those who participated in the focus group, the response to the program was incredibly positive. The focus group appreciated the prospect of improving their relationship with the public and of differentiating themselves from the few poorly behaved panhandlers that make them all look bad. The most passionate supporter of the ID program was James who gave the following speech at the City committee meeting:

My main concern is, I’ll say this for my brothers and sisters, is the respect that we have, that we’re getting from the public themselves. Like, I’ve been a panhandler for quite a while now and I don’t like doing it for a living. Its embarrassing, it makes me feel, not right, if you know what I mean...We don’t like doing this for a living, but we got no choice. I mean we have, like the law guys on our cases almost every day, and we get citizens coming up to us insulting us, like for example, I’ve got spit in the face, I’ve got garbage thrown at me, I’ve got other panhandlers coming up to me and threatening to take over my corner, and threaten to take my money and everything else. I get, I get cops coming up giving me tickets left, right, and centre. And how am I supposed to pay these tickets that they’re handing out?...And when I see another fellow brother and

sister getting knocked down, and getting kicked in the teeth because this is the only way they can survive, what are we supposed to do out there? I go to social services, and do you know what they reply? They say sorry we cant help you. After 7 times I've tried. Then they turn around, and I said what am I supposed to do, beg, steal or borrow? And they said, do whatever it means to survive. And this is the so-called government!

All we're asking out there as panhandlers is a bit of respect. What's wrong with that? We haven't seen it. We haven't got it. We treat people with respect, and what do we get? Its crapped on. And if these laws come into effect, all we're asking is not a hand out. We're not afraid to, if you want to stop at our corner to talk to us, we're willing to talk to you. We don't expect a dime. I mean if you feel like giving, give. If you don't, you don't. It's a free country. All we're asking for is just a little kindness and respect and friendship, and a bit of love...Sure there's a handful that shouldn't be out there, but a lot of us cant help where we are. So, I'm begging, on my hands and knees on the behalf of my brothers and sisters, please consider our ideas. Just don't put us on a back burner and forget about us, like over half of this bloody city that think we're scum low-lifes that shouldn't belong.

I include much of his speech because I feel it aptly summarizes what he really wants. After suffering the embarrassment of panhandling, the harassment of the police, the assaults of pedestrians, the failure of the social services, and a general failure to receive any respect, James wants to redress these wrongs. Yet, he does not ask for more services. He does not ask to be saved from his poverty. He does not ask for more rules and regulations to control where and when he can panhandle. All he asks for is kindness, respect, friendship and a bit of love. He seeks to educate us and asks for understanding. More than anything he asks us to listen to him, speaking on behalf of his street "bothers and sisters," to consider their ideas, and not to forget about them. He does not just ask, he *begs*. Although he does all this in the context of asking the committee to consider the ID proposal, it was clear from our later conversations that it was not so much the ID he wanted, but for the worlds of "street" and "society" to be brought together and to find a way to peacefully coexist. To this end, James suggested what will make up the forth and final policy proposal put forward in Calgary.

Panhandlers as People

The proposal James put forward is one that centres on social recognition. As he passionately argued at the City committee meeting:

All I can say is we're human beings too. And we deserve the respect and kindness and love like everybody else instead of being crapped on. Because this is, that's my world out there, that's my family, that's all I know.

The most striking element of his speech is his insistence that "we're human beings too." What is striking about it is, of course, that he should feel it necessary to make a statement in which he asserts such a claim. One would only make such a claim if one felt that one's status as a human being was in doubt. Goffman argues that those who are stigmatized are so deeply discredited that we believe they are "not quite human" (1963a:5). It appears that James has experienced first hand what it feels like to be treated as though he is not quite human, and as his statement indicates, he rejects this idea categorically. Instead, he tells us, "That's my world out there, that's my family, that's all I know." His world, street people world, is one he values, where he finds a sense of family and community, and as he tells us, it is the only life he has ever really known. What he asks is that we respect that life, and the people who live it.

In writing on the politics of recognition, Charles Taylor (1994) discusses the many different approaches one may take to recognizing the value of other cultures. Taylor writes in reference to minority groups we would conventionally consider "other cultures," specifically Aboriginals and French Canadians, and while I have no intention here of arguing that panhandlers constitute an "other culture", like Oscar Lewis's (1996) "culture of poverty", I do wish to draw attention to Taylor's discussion of how we should approach the study of difference. As Taylor writes,

On the human level, one could argue that it is reasonable to suppose that cultures that have provided the horizon of meaning for large numbers of human beings, of diverse characters and temperaments, over a long period of time- that have, in other words, articulated their sense of the good, the holy, the admirable- are almost certain to have something that deserves our admiration and respect, even if it is accompanied by much that we have to abhor and reject. Perhaps one could put it another way: it would take a supreme arrogance to discount this possibility *a priori*.

Prostitution is often referred to as the world's oldest profession because it appears in the bible, but then so too does begging.³⁷ While the nature of begging and its place in society have changed over time, the fact remains that, begging and its contemporary North American variant, panhandling, have formed a central feature in the lives of a large number of people. As the earlier discussion in Chapter Three on the ethics of street people world illustrates, this way of life is accompanied by a canon regarding their "sense of the good." As Taylor suggests, it is likely that such an established tradition would have something that would warrant respect, even if much of it were abhorrent. It seems it would, indeed, be "supreme arrogance" to not even allow for this possibility.

I would take James' comments above to be a reaction to the arrogance of those who would assume that because of his station in life, he is not worthy of respect, dignity, or even recognition of his personhood. When he looks at his life, he sees something of value, and though he admits that he is embarrassed by what he does, he also feels a certain pride in being a part of his street family and the world they have created as a refuge from those who fail to recognize them. What James wants is to be recognized as an individual, as a person of worth, but he also wants the same recognition for those he considers a part of his family. At the very least, he does not want the public to discount the possibility that they are worthy of such recognition *a priori*.

Well aware of the fact that the public knows very little about the panhandlers and street people, James believes that, in order to avoid such *a priori* dismissal, the public needs to be educated about panhandlers and street people. This is why, after years of failing to receive the social recognition he felt he deserved, James agreed to speak, on behalf of the street community, when he was invited by the City to be part of a focus group of panhandlers and when he addressed the City committee in the above speech. By providing James, and other panhandlers, with a forum to speak, the City took the first step in the process of truly approaching panhandlers as people with intelligent opinions worthy of respect. Yet, even as he spoke James realized that, given the gap between the "street world" and "society world", it was not enough for him to tell the committee about his life. Instead, in his speech he challenged the City Aldermen to venture onto the streets to experience first hand what street life is all about. As he put it,

All I ask is why don't you guys take off those fancy uniforms, those fancy clothes and just take a couple days and live out there and see what we have to go through every single day of our life time to earn just a single dime so we can grab a bite to eat.

Inherent in James' challenge was a comprehension that, although people may empathize with stories of hardship, they do not truly understand them unless they have lived them.

Yet, in recognition of the fact that few people would be willing to take off their fancy clothes and to live like street people for any length of time, James suggested that the City should hold a forum to bring together members of the public and the street community to speak with one another.

I believe the only way's to get the street people and public together and working on it. Together. To hell with all these different organizations, god bless 'em, the whole entire works of them, and I mean that from the bottom of my heart, especially the Salvation Army. But I believe the only way of getting things happening is getting this forum done. Getting the people, the Calgarians to meet with the street people and grab their hands, and shake them, and say, "Hey, why are you treating us like this? Our life is an open book, as you notice if you walk down those streets. You want to ask us a question, we'll fire the answer back at you, best way we know how.

James stressed that the only way the division between these two worlds was ever going to be bridged was by bringing the two groups together to speak frankly. His vision of a forum involved an outdoor venue, accessible to everyone, "where the whole city can catch the buses and join in and have one big hell of party, and get to know each other. As neighbours and friends." In James' vision, the two groups would come together as "neighbours" and "friends," not as strangers. Although he realized that both groups would have some negative, and even shocking, things to say to one another, he felt that this opening up could be beneficial for everyone involved. As he explained,

How hard would it be for the public to open up like that? It's not like we're reaching in grabbing everything they own, all we're grabbing is a bit of their time, that's it. How hard is it to give up a couple hours of your time? It ain't going to kill anybody. It might do them some world of good, because you never know who you might meet out there. Like I've met lawyers that have slept out on the streets, I've met people that used to be in construction, you

name it, and you never know when you get a forum together what might happen. But it all has to start somewhere.

In James' view, the forum, which would take but a few hours of people's time, is the ideal starting place. He felt that in bringing people together, perhaps they would connect to form friendships, or to find a street person for a job opening.

But most of all, he felt that in the context of the forum, street people might be able to overcome the stigma they bear and to be recognized as fellow human beings. As he described,

I know a bunch of them out here think that we've got no respect, that we're low-lives, that we're against the law, and this and that. I don't think so. We're like you, a lot like you, but we don't have a home. That's it. Period. No questions asked. That's what it all boils down to. We could be your best friend, or we could be your worst nightmare, but I'm hoping for the best friend instead of worst nightmare.

Somehow, in all its simplicity, James' proposal makes perfect sense. The best way to deal with the problem of "strangers" is not to give them ID tags, or pass bylaws regulating their activities, or even to offer them limited forms of "hospitality," as all of these are unlikely to resolve the conflict between the strangers and those who find them strange. In James' view, the best way to deal with strangers is to allow them to become your friends and neighbours, to mitigate their strangeness by coming to understand what it is that makes them appear so strange. Sometimes, as James points out, what makes them strange is as simple as the fact that they do not have home.

Although he refers to a literal home, in the case of "strangers," what they lack is a metaphorical home- a place where they are accepted and respected and where they belong. When strangers find themselves in inhospitable lands, they find a home amongst each other, and through this process of isolation and marginalization, they seem even more peculiar living as strangers among us. In our fear of them, they may indeed become our worst nightmare. Yet, when strangers find themselves in hospitable lands, they find their home among us, they become our neighbours and our friends, and their strangeness becomes something we value, something we learn from, and something that reflects critically on our world and fosters both diversity and growth. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, Napier writes that cultures that are the most open to the

outside tend to be the longest lived, as they are the most likely to develop a “sophisticated mythology by which the outside is approached and assimilated” (1992:147). If we were to bring together the worlds of street and society, to collapse the distance between “us” and “them,” then rather than increasingly stigmatizing and fearing these strangers among us, we might begin to be able confront the issues that are at the foundations of their strangeness.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

In summary, this thesis has taken a holistic community-based approach to studying the current conflict over panhandling in Calgary. By focusing on the interaction between panhandlers and other major stakeholders in the community, this thesis explores the conflict from many different perspectives and illustrates the cultural dialogic inherent in such interactions. Altogether, the narratives explored in this thesis show that the relationship between panhandlers and other members of the community is one marked by social distance and, consequently, a high degree of tension. This tension appears to arise primarily from the peculiar position panhandlers occupy in society. At once physically near and socially remote, panhandlers have come to be seen as “strangers within our midst” (Napier 1992). True to Simmel’s (1971) conception of the “stranger,” panhandlers are at once outside, peripheral and marginal to the wider society, while their very presence confronts and divides the wider community.

As Chapter Two illustrates, the confrontational aspect of their presence stems partly from the moral location they occupy. In addition to the stigma attached to being poor, on the street and panhandling, the social distance between panhandlers and the general public creates a communication barrier which leaves the general public to speculate as to who the panhandlers are and why they are asking for change. Thus, panhandlers are seen by the public to be more like stereotyped caricatures than individual people. Pedestrians are particularly concerned by the common belief that panhandlers have broken the social pact which dictates that everyone *must* work and make a productive contribution to society, that everyone (excluding the young, the old, and those with physical and mental disabilities) *could* work, and that, consequently, those who do not work have *chosen* not to work. However, there is no consensus regarding why panhandlers have broken this pact or how they should be approached as a result. While some members of the general public are sympathetic to the personal and structural factors believed to constrain the choices available to people at the margins, others are outraged by the failure of panhandlers to be productive citizens and to capitalize on the opportunities believed to be available to them. What is consistent, however, is that panhandling appears to offend people’s sensibilities, and while the most sympathetic may be willing to accept that panhandling is a legitimate way to survive when one has limited

options, nobody seems to believe that panhandling is an attractive or appropriate way to make a living.

As Chapter Three explores, the panhandlers themselves do not necessarily view panhandling as an attractive or appropriate way to make a living. Their narratives illustrate that panhandlers are a diverse population of people with varying perspectives and experiences of the street, and that, while panhandlers may “choose” to panhandle, they are often choosing among a very limited set of options and according to a large number of personal and structural factors that constrain their opportunities. The imperative for the panhandlers is survival, in both an economic and social sense. While panhandling offers people an opportunity to make money, it also enables them to make social contact with the general public and other street people. Yet, due to the stigma attached to panhandling, the people who panhandle may or may not associate with being a “panhandler” or draw close associations with others who panhandle. While some attempt to distance themselves from their role as a panhandler and from other street people, others embrace these roles and associations and cultivate a sense of pride in being a part of a street family or in following a code of ethics. Either way, panhandlers carry out identity work to manage the negative effects of their stigmatized status, and, despite this status, they are often able to create positive and affirming personal identities. However, when panhandlers must negotiate this stigmatized status over a long period of time, they are more likely to become further alienated and isolated from members of the mainstream public, and, as a result, the social distance between the two groups is likely to widen.

In the face of this social distance, Chapter Four illustrates how the panhandlers go about presenting themselves to the general public. Panhandlers manipulate their physical appearance and develop “panhandling repertoires” (Lankenau 1999a) in order to manage their social identities. As pedestrians often have little information available regarding the need or legitimacy of the panhandler, these presentations are integral to determining a panhandler’s success. The panhandlers must attract the public’s attention, while striking a balance between presenting themselves as poor and needy, and preserving a measure of personal dignity. While the public is often suspicious of panhandlers who are too well dressed or display oppositional identities (e.g. punks), they are also suspicious of people who are too dirty or who appear to fit negative stereotypes like that of the “drunken

Indian.” Thus, panhandlers are faced with countervailing demands from the public to appear needy, but “needy” in a legitimate way. Likewise, they must attract attention to themselves and elicit sympathy, without sacrificing their self-image or demeaning themselves more than is necessary. Thus, in their presentations to the public panhandlers simultaneously manage their personal and social identities.

This process is expanded upon in Chapter Five, which explores face-to-face encounters between panhandlers and members of the general public in order to identify the sources of tension between them. This chapter demonstrates that, although this conflict is often presented as one in which the panhandlers are the aggressors and the pedestrians are the victims, there are actually two sides to the confrontation. Most encounters begin with panhandlers transgressing communicative norms that dictate a stance of “civil inattention” (Goffman 1963b) among strangers. In asking passers-by for change, in presenting themselves to the public with a sign and a hat or in approaching members of the public on the street, panhandlers attempt to communicate directly with passers-by and place communicative demands on them. Pedestrians must respond, either by positively acknowledging the panhandler, ignoring the panhandler or censuring the panhandler with a negative response. From the perspective of the panhandlers, the most apparent source of conflict in these encounters arises from the delivery of “nonperson treatment” (Goffman 1963b) or more negative forms of treatment. When the public ignores the panhandlers or treats them poorly, the panhandlers must negotiate their failure to receive the social recognition they believe is due and their frustration with being misrecognized. While responses to this vary from polite dismissal, to aggressively trying to disrupt the blasé attitude of the public, to swearing or ridiculing the passers-by, the more negative of these responses directly challenge the public to recognize the panhandlers. However, the result is often that the panhandlers make the pedestrians angry, and reinforce negative stereotypes of the people who panhandle. In truth, the public is often unsure of how to respond to panhandlers, and while some attempt to censure panhandlers by failing to recognize them, or wish to avoid communication with people who look unpredictable, others are simply disinterested or ambivalent towards them. Some even view nonperson treatment as a polite way to avoid entering into a communicative exchange. Yet, the impact of this ambivalence is that the social identity of

the panhandlers is undermined, and they are left feeling as though the public wishes they did not exist, in essence, negating their membership within the community.

Part II of this thesis explores how the meanings negotiated in face-to-face encounters, and their ideological corollaries, impact how panhandlers are dealt with at the institutional level and in the realm of public policy. Chapter Six begins this discussion by examining how the panhandlers' perceived status as "strangers within our midst" has led them to be approached according to the traditional extension of hospitality to strangers. However, unlike the entitlements that accompany full citizenship, hospitality is often limited and, in the case of those who are truly unwelcome, designed to encourage strangers to move on. The system of "hospitality" in Calgary is largely influenced by ideologies that value independence, individualism, libertarianism and an inclination towards social control. As the "hospitality" extended to panhandlers consists of social services designed to encourage independence and a return to mainstream life, the panhandlers often see the services as somewhat inhospitable. However, the service providers themselves have concerns that the services available are inadequate and underfunded. As a result, the "stranger" the panhandler (e.g. transients from other provinces or substance abusers), the less likely they are to be extended adequate "hospitality." This poses a particular problem as many of the services available are being accessed by the "deserving poor," while others who are seen as less deserving run the risk of being displaced.

Chapter Seven shifts the discussion to looking at how those who are deemed undeserving of the entitlements that accompany citizenship are increasingly being deemed undeserving of the right to access public space for their income-generating activities. While the act of panhandling does not typically inflict a grave injury on those who are panhandled, it is often viewed as injurious due to its introduction of disorder into the social body. While the simple presence of panhandlers in public spaces introduces an element of aesthetic and emotional disorder, the more aggressive forms of panhandling exacerbate the fear that panhandlers embody a threat of violent disorder. Also, as businesses believe that panhandling affects their profitability and the image of the downtown core, they fear that panhandlers embody a degree of financial disorder. The consequence of the public's preoccupation with the different forms of disorder

panhandlers introduce by virtue of their presence is that it often obscures the reality that most panhandlers do not inflict any real damage by their conduct.

As Chapter Eight illustrates, the conflation of this disorder with actual damages has the potential to lead to a kind of moral regulation that concentrates more on the status of the panhandlers than on their actions. In reviewing the policies pursued and proposed in Calgary to address the issue of panhandling, it is evident that the panhandler's perceived status as "strangers within our midst" leads policy makers to approach them as "strangers" rather than as citizens with full rights and accompanying needs. Although the "Make Real Change with your Spare Change" education campaign encouraged pedestrians to acknowledge people panhandling and to donate money to social service agencies to help meet their needs, it also portrayed panhandlers as people who are undeserving of direct assistance and unable to find their own way out of their present circumstances. In essence, the program treated panhandlers as *misguided wanderers from convention* who needed to be guided back into mainstream lives, but it did not question why panhandlers had wandered from convention in the first place. By treating panhandling as a "problem" that needs to be "solved," the program discounted any legitimacy the act of panhandling might have, and left the panhandlers feeling as though they were being attacked rather than helped.

Likewise, while the anti-panhandling legislation introduced in Calgary deals on one level with the inappropriate and aggressive conduct of panhandlers, on another level it works to regulate the disorder panhandlers introduce by their presence in certain spaces. It is apparent that as tensions rise and more panhandlers panhandle in aggressive ways, legislation which regulates *how* panhandlers can solicit money may be required to cover the grey area of aggressive behaviour not covered by the Criminal Code of Canada. However, in regulating *where* and *when* panhandling is allowed, the current legislation favours the rights of the public to feel safe over the rights of the panhandlers to freedom of expression. In the enforcement of this legislation, the rights of the panhandlers to freedom of expression and to use public space are further impinged upon by creative interpretations of the law, which serve to move them away from desirable downtown spaces. In treating panhandlers as *social adversaries*, rather than as citizens with equal rights, the parts of this legislation that deal with the presence of panhandlers in certain

spaces, and the consequent enforcement of these sections, act as a form of moral regulation that again deals more with the disorder introduced by panhandling than with the actual damage caused by the act.

Although the City attempted to circumvent these issues by proposing to introduce picture identification cards for panhandlers that would treat panhandling as a legitimate business and widen the scope of control the City could exercise over the activity, this proposal failed to garner much support. While some people felt this proposed program was a conspiracy by the government to create a Nazi-style regime of social control and to further stigmatize and demean the panhandlers rather than giving them assistance, others felt the City was trying to legitimate an act which should be seen as illegitimate.

Although, due to poor media coverage and many misunderstandings, most people did not really understand the City's proposal, their concerns with it seemed to stem from a fundamental dismissal of the idea that panhandlers could be conceptualized as *astute entrepreneurs* who carry out legitimate business. However, as James made clear in his speech to City Council, even the panhandlers themselves may be torn as to whether panhandling is a legitimate activity. The stigma panhandling carries with it is so great that, even though people may feel that it is their one honest option to make a small income, they may simultaneously be embarrassed or ashamed by it. Yet, what is most important to people like James is that, even if nobody sees panhandling as a truly legitimate business activity, the panhandlers themselves should not be dismissed as illegitimate. In James' view, what is required is not truly a legitimization of the activity itself, but a recognition that the people who panhandle may do it for legitimate reasons, and that, despite the fact that they place themselves at the mercy of the public, they are still people worthy of respect.

The final proposal to deal with the conflict over panhandling in Calgary was put forward by James. James wanted the City to approach the panhandlers as people with legitimate concerns rather than as a problem to be solved. As James described, he wanted the general public and the panhandlers to be brought together in a forum to break down the social barriers between them and to speak to each other about their concerns. While James appreciated the importance of providing social services, he was more concerned with improving the relationship between the panhandlers and the public. Through his

interactions with the people at City Hall in a focus group and speaking for City Council, James recognized that the barriers of communication were being broken down and that the mainstream people he spoke to were beginning to understand and even respect him and his opinions. By including him in consultations, the City was treating him as a citizen and allowing his voice to be heard and his concerns to be aired. In proposing the forum between the public and the panhandlers, James hoped that the two groups could meet as equals and work out their problems in a similar process of consultation. While James' vision may be somewhat optimistic in terms of how open the mainstream public or the panhandlers would be to attending such a meeting, his proposal has the foundational aspects of a sound approach to addressing the conflict between panhandlers and the public.

In defining panhandlers as wanderers from convention, social adversaries or astute entrepreneurs, the first three policy responses of the City concentrated primarily on finding a way to deal with the "problem" of panhandling rather than trying to address the concerns of all the parties involved or trying to counteract the social distance at the base of the conflict. This is a common municipal response, as, even in the United Kingdom, Hartley Dean and Keir Gale report that "beggars" "exist in political rhetoric as a problem to be addressed, rather than as constituents with distinctive needs and interests." (1999:15). According to Dean and Gale, part of the "beggar's deprivation is his or her exclusion from the ordinary realm of citizenship" (1999:16). While this exclusion may be justified based on their failure to fulfil citizenship obligations, such as engaging in "productive work," Dean and Gale argue that their citizenship also fails them, as it leaves them without support or access to the social rights attached to citizenship.

Although Dean and Gale refer specifically to the failure of panhandlers to access entitlements such as welfare, some trace this failure of citizenship further back in the panhandler's history. As Kate, a downtown resident, explained,

You could maybe go back further and say if no child was ever raised in poverty or without the parenting they need and without the social safety they need, then maybe you wouldn't have any panhandlers because there would be nobody damaged enough along the way that they needed, that they ought to live like that. But, I mean, I think you're much too late to say, well if we don't give them money on the streets they'll go away. We need a good,

good, good, excellent social services system to protect children and then we might lower the numbers, but we'll never get rid of it.

In Kate's view, the people who panhandle were failed by the system long before they ever tried to access social assistance benefits. While Kate was inclined to hold this systemic failure responsible for the present circumstances of the panhandlers, others were not so inclined. For example, Carl, a police officer, stated,

Well, they've chosen their life. Circumstances dictate where you start from in life, but they don't dictate the choices you make in life. There's plenty of people who have started in very bad situations that have done well for themselves, or at least been respectable.

While the statements given by Kate and Carl speak directly to the question of who is ultimately responsible for the current circumstances of the panhandlers, they also demonstrate what may be an intractable debate between two competing views. Perhaps what their statements illustrate best is that it might be impossible to determine who failed whom first. The question of whether the panhandlers were failed by their citizenship, or their citizenship was failed by the panhandlers, seems to parallel the question of whether the chicken or the egg came first. Regardless of the answer, we are left with the fact that, as Dean and Gale state, "there is a failure of citizenship in the sense that beggars are not effectively integrated" into society (1999:16). As this thesis has demonstrated, in Calgary this failure of integration occurs at both a state and community level. In both contexts, panhandlers have been approached like a problem to be addressed rather than as constituents with distinctive needs or as fellow citizens with problems we can relate to.

While some have argued that the existing situation is a symptom of the public losing its compassion for people on the street, or suffering from "compassion fatigue," Bruce Link et al. (1995) reject this argument. According to their research in the United States, people are still compassionate in so far as they "feel sad, compassionate, and angry that homelessness exists in a nation as wealthy as ours," are willing to make personal commitments to helping homeless people by volunteering or paying higher taxes, and believe the federal government should do more to build affordable housing for the poor or provide rent subsidies (1995:551). However, Link et al. also find that the public deviates from "full compassion" in so far as they feel that irresponsible behaviour

or laziness contributes substantially to homelessness (1995:553). Also, the public indicate a lack of empathy for the situation of homeless people by suggesting that they have a lot of free time, that they are relieved of worries about jobs and family, that their presence makes neighbourhoods worse, that they threaten the quality of urban life and that they should not be allowed to sleep in public places, erect temporary shelters in parks or to panhandle (1995:553). Significantly, Link et al. also found that while only a minority of those surveyed had enough contact with homeless people to result in compassion fatigue, those who had more contact were actually more empathetic (1995:551).

While the results of this study are inconclusive, what they seem to suggest is that, at a certain level, people are willing to improve their commitment to satisfying the needs of the people on the street, but they find themselves unable to truly understand them. While they are able to, on principle, commit to feeling compassion, they are unable to bring themselves to a level of “full compassion.” While it is not clear why this is, based on my research in Calgary I would speculate that a large part of it resides in the fact that, while the public may, in theory, recognize the legal citizenship of people on the street, the panhandlers, by virtue of being “strangers within our midst,” remain socially marginalized. The public fails to recognize the social aspects of their citizenship, and though they may be prepared to support certain entitlements and social supports, they remain unable to truly relate to the people they see on the street or to understand the nature of their suffering. The result is that, people like Sean, a downtown resident and worker, are able to recognize that panhandlers are “human beings after all” and that they have legal rights under the *Charter*. Yet, their perception of panhandlers as “strange” leads them to believe that, although they themselves would have to be in “really dire straits” before they would ever ask people for change, the same is not true for people they see panhandling. In essence, the belief that panhandlers differ fundamentally from the public has created a huge barrier to understanding and empathy.

This barrier is compounded when members of the public call the City or the police to complain about the presence of these panhandlers and these institutions respond by privileging the concerns of the public over those of the panhandlers. If we look to other communities where the number of homeless people and panhandlers far exceeds those in Calgary, it is clear that the inclination of municipalities to place more weight on the

concerns of the public than on the concerns of the panhandlers can undermine community relationships far beyond what has occurred in Calgary. For example, in San Francisco, the City recently introduced a program called "Operation Scrub Down," which involved city workers and police sweeping the streets three times a day of homeless people and panhandlers, seizing any unclaimed possessions, making arrests, and disinfecting the pavement they leave behind (Saunders 2002).

Much like the claim made by Grant, an anti-poverty activist, that panhandlers and homeless people are treated like "human refuse," San Francisco's program approaches dealing with the people on their streets as if they were garbage to be cleared away and dumped out of sight rather than as citizens with needs and concerns that are not being addressed. As Mohammed Nuru, the man in charge of the program, put it, "The activists will tell street people that they have the right not to move, but won't help them become better people... This is where we get bogged down, and I don't want it to get in the way of my goal of making this city look better"(Saunders 2002). In essence, as the rights of homeless people and panhandlers to be present in public space are in direct conflict with the goal of beautifying the city, San Francisco has decided to weigh the aesthetic goals of the city more heavily than the rights of the street people to be present in public space.

This thesis has presented the conflict between the general public and panhandlers as one that arises from the problem posed by the presence of "strangers in our midst." However, the true problem posed by these "strangers" is a problem regarding our own culture. A David Napier writes, "strangers are, in fact, definers of culture...." (1992:147). We define ourselves in opposition to those around us, and through this process we shape the society we become. If panhandlers are wanderers from convention, then we are their shepherds. If panhandlers are social adversaries, then we are their jailers. If panhandlers are entrepreneurs, then we are their customers. If panhandlers are people, then, perhaps, we can be their friends and co-citizens. The mythologies we build up around these strangers influence the strength of our culture and how well we will be able to survive the challenges posed by difference. While Immanuel Kant (1983) believed that the conditions necessary for universal perpetual peace hinged on not treating strangers as enemies, I would submit that the conditions necessary for perpetual peace in municipalities like

Calgary hinge on breaking down the false barriers formed by social distance and recognizing that panhandlers, as "strangers within our midst," are truly not strangers at all. There is nothing really "strange" about losing your job, getting a divorce, being short on the rent, drinking too much in order to escape reality for a while and, in the midst of this process, becoming homeless. What is strange is that we, as a society, act as though poverty were an illness that we might catch if we get too close to those afflicted. We accept that poverty "will always be with us" due to the way our economic system works, yet we blame the people who are poor for their poverty. Clearly, if things are to improve, we must find new ways to avert the ravages of poverty and to prevent people from ending up on the street. An important step of that process must be to revise the mythology of the "free ride" to acknowledge that, while the "free ride" may not be paid for with money, as this thesis demonstrates, it is clearly paid for with dignity. Emily, a social service provider, said it best, "somebody asking me has offered me their dignity, and I either care for that dignity, or I waste my own by throwing theirs away." However we choose to define these "strangers" in our midst, the choice we make will shape the face of our community. Through our treatment of these "strangers," we hold the power to determine the value of both their dignity and our own. The conflict over panhandling is complex, and there may be no simple way to resolve it. But, in the words of James, our goal should be "to see the two worlds reach out to each other and grab hold of each other's hands, and walk together like the good Lord wants instead of two different worlds."

End Notes

¹ The terms “fortunate” and “unfortunate” are used herein in their colloquial sense rather than as absolute descriptors.

² In the interests of brevity I will refer to the general population of people who do not panhandle as the “general public.” However, this is not to imply that the people who panhandle are not themselves members of the general public, it is simply to differentiate the groups for discussion purposes. Likewise, for the purposes of brevity I will refer to the people who panhandle as “panhandlers.” Although this is how most people who panhandle refer to themselves and to others who panhandle, I would like to draw attention to the essentializing nature of the term and to remind the reader that the people whom this term describes are diverse individuals who may or may not see themselves as “panhandlers” per se.

³ For literature specifically on panhandlers/ panhandling in Canada see City of Calgary 1996, Collins and Blomley 2001, National Anti-Poverty Organization 1999, and Schafer 1998; in the United States see Lankenau 1999a, Lankenau 1999b, Stark 1992, Williams 1995, Wilson 1991; in Mexico see Fabrega 1971; in Great Britain see Dean (ed.) 1999; in India see Chaudhuri 1986.

⁴ Also, see Glasser (1994) for a survey of international research on homelessness.

⁵ Although anthropological studies have traditionally emphasized the “objectivity” gained by studying “other” cultures, I feel that my status as a “native” anthropologist may have worked in my favour. During several of my interviews the interviewee asked “If you’re at McGill, why are you out here doing research?” When I explained that I was born and raised in Calgary this admission seemed to clarify my presence and to invite people to speak to me as an insider who understands that “things are done differently” in Alberta than in other provinces. It is possible that, due to feelings of “western alienation,” and a concern with the reputation Albertans have for being rednecks and cowboys, knowing that I was not an “outsider” from the East who had come to criticize their ways acted to put people at ease.

⁶ Also, as the man described as homeless and mentally ill was believed to be both “stigmatized” and “dangerous” it seems that, based on the belief of the general public that a high proportion of homeless people are also mentally ill, unknown homeless people encountered on the street may be considered dangerous. According to this study, a dangerous person is one that is considered “dangerous to be around” and “should be watched closely by the local police” (Phelan et al. 1997:330). Thus, in addition to the threat of social distance and exclusion, homelessness, via its association with mental illness, may actually carry with it a presumption of dangerousness.

⁷ For examples, see Ribton-Turner (1887), Gilmore (1940), Polanyi (1944), Rose (1988), Humphreys (1999) and Murphy (1999).

⁸ For example, Murphy outlines how the recent emphasis on reducing the country's deficit, and the declining bureaucratic and popular support for social programs, has led to cutbacks in both Employment Insurance (formerly Unemployment Insurance or UI) and Social Assistance (commonly referred to as welfare). According to Murphy, in 1992, the same year as the Employment and Immigration Department became preoccupied with chasing down "UI cheaters," the House of Commons finance committee called for a 25 per cent reduction in UI benefits, which led to reducing all benefits and disqualifying those who quit their jobs from eligibility regardless of why they terminated their employment (1999:122). In 1995 further cutbacks required longer qualifying periods and reduced benefits to frequent users (1999:123). These changes occurred concurrent to changes in the structure of work which saw an increase in part time, temporary contract work and seasonal employment, in effect locking those who most needed the UI benefits out of the possibility of receiving them, despite being required to pay into the fund (excluding independent contractors). These cutbacks to UI resulted in many jobless being forced to apply for welfare when their UI benefits ran out (1999:123). As a program which has never received great popular support, welfare, or social assistance has also fallen victim to increased anxiety about welfare fraud, and has seen a growing movement towards workfare initiatives and massive cuts to spending in recent years (Murphy 1999:126-128).

⁹ These estimates are presumably on the low side as homeless counts typically underestimate the number of people living without housing because they fail to include people who are living outside of a defined street observation area, people who are staying with friends and family, and people who sleep in cars and abandoned buildings (City of Calgary 2002: 2). Also, as my fieldwork was conducted from January to April 2001 it is important to note that it fell between the 2000 Count of Homeless Persons (1,296 persons) and the 2002 Count of Homeless Persons (1,737) (City of Calgary 2002: 6). The increase of 441 homeless persons reflects a 34% increase over these two years (City of Calgary 2002: 6).

¹⁰ As research has been conducted on poverty and the factors which lead to homelessness in Canada (see Hurtig 1999, Hagan and McCarthy (1997), Arboleda-Florez and Holly (1997), Daly 1996, and O'Reilly-Fleming 1993) this is not the primary interest of my current research. However, I will briefly outline the factors that are frequently cited as contributing to becoming or remaining homeless. The first of these are often referred to as individualistic/personal factors or "pathologies" and include: mental illness (including the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill), physical disability, lack of a support network (of friends and family), family/ relationship dissolution (through bereavement, divorce, "breaking up," getting "kicked out" etc.), alcoholism, drug abuse, criminality (including being released from prison with nowhere to go), lack of education/ training/ skills, poor hygiene, and attributes such as laziness and indolence. The second of these are referred to as structural factors and include: unemployment, changes in the structure of work (fewer high paid low skilled "good" jobs, more seasonal/ contract labour), a low minimum wage, work place discrimination (including racial/ gender/ age discrimination in hiring), cut

backs in funding for social benefits (including tightened eligibility requirements and reduced benefits), shortages in low cost/ subsidized housing, low vacancy rates, and racial/ economic discrimination in the rental market.

¹¹ Several factors impact how accurately one can compare these two numbers. The first is that counts of homeless persons will typically underestimate the population. Conversely, as the count of panhandlers was taken over a greater period of time (one month as opposed to one day), one would expect that, given the mobility of people who panhandle (they often move from city to city) and the sporadic nature of some panhandling activity (not all people who panhandle do so on a daily basis), the count of panhandlers may overestimate their numbers, particularly relative to the homeless count. At the same time, however, as the Panhandle Outreach Worker only works within a small section of the downtown core near Stephen Avenue Mall, this estimate may also leave out a significant number of people who panhandle in other areas downtown (specifically on 17th avenue and in Kensington). Finally, as some of the people who panhandle may in fact be housed, one cannot measure what proportion of the homeless population actually panhandles without identifying what proportion of the panhandlers are actually housed. Therefore, we are left to simply make the weak observation that there are many more people who are homeless than people who panhandle, and therefore, we would expect the proportion of people who are homeless who also panhandle regularly to be quite small.

¹² Again, as described in Chapter One, due to a transit strike during the research period this study may underestimate the number of housed panhandlers.

¹³ In Alberta, Supports for Independence (SFI, the Albertan equivalent of welfare) rates have declined steeply in the last two decades, despite the province's relative wealth. For example, while in 1986 a single employable person received \$8,220 (in 1996 dollars) in annual welfare benefits, by 1996 the same person received only \$4,728 (in 1996 dollars), despite inflation and rises in the cost of living (Canada Council on Social Development 1996:3). This means that in 1996, a single employable person living in a community with a population of 500,000+ in Alberta was living on welfare benefits which were \$12,404 below the "poverty line" (based on the Statistics Canada low income cut offs), while an individual living in a rural area in Alberta received welfare benefits which were \$7,111 below the "poverty line." Notably, these cuts far exceeded cuts made in every other province, except for Newfoundland (Canada Council on Social Development 1996:2). In a similar vein, Alberta has one of the lowest minimum wages in the Canada at \$5.90/hr (recently raised from \$5.40), trailed only by the Maritime provinces (Canada Council on Social Development 1999:1). Despite this low minimum wage, as the economy has boomed in Alberta many people have migrated there for work, yet housing construction has failed to keep pace with the rising population and cities have found themselves with a shortage of housing, particularly low cost housing (the vacancy rate in Calgary for 1998 was 2.15%) (City of Calgary 2000b:2). It is within the context of these major cut backs to social funding, paralleled by changes to the structure of work, a minimum wage rate which fails to keep pace with inflation, and a failure of the housing market to provide

adequate low cost housing that poverty and homelessness have greatly increased in the city of Calgary.

¹⁴ Significantly, in Calgary only 19% of the panhandling population is Aboriginal, while 81% of the panhandling population is “Caucasian” (Calgary Urban Project Society 2000). Despite the overwhelming majority of Euro-Canadian panhandlers, there is a common perception among city residents that Aboriginal panhandlers are actually more prevalent than they really are.

¹⁵ As “squeegee kids,” or the young people who clean the windshields of cars when they stop at intersections, were almost non-existent in Calgary at the time of my research they will not be discussed in depth in this thesis. Many people I spoke to did not even know what a “squeegee kid” was, and those that did had mostly encountered them in other cities. However, it was clear that those who were familiar with them did not consider them to be panhandlers. While they acknowledged that squeegee kids delivered a service, most questioned the mode of delivery of that service. The people I spoke to seemed to recognize that squeegee kids belong to a category separate from panhandlers, but not equal in esteem to the buskers and vendors who similarly offer services in exchange for money.

¹⁶ There were some notable exceptions to this as some panhandlers do attempt to demonstrate a desire to labour. For example, several members of the general public told me about a panhandler who asked for donations in return for keeping the sidewalk of an underpass well swept. Also, panhandlers who used printed signs to communicate with the public occasionally included references to work, or to wanting to work, on the signs.

¹⁷ As mentioned above, 45% of homeless shelter users are employed (United Way 2000:7).

¹⁸ Perhaps significantly, many of the people I spoke to had worked in construction and construction-related fields (like renovation or roofing), were employed as professionals, or had been the owners of small businesses. All of these are fairly well paid jobs, though they are often seasonal. Some Aboriginal panhandlers I spoke to had lived on reservations isolated from work opportunities but had engaged in traditional activities like hunting and beadwork. Few reported ever being employed in truly low paid service labour.

¹⁹ Street Talk, like The Big Issue in the UK or L’Itineraire in Montreal, is Calgary’s homeless newspaper initiative. Community members (including some homeless and formerly homeless vendors) contribute articles to the paper, which is printed and distributed by the Calgary Urban Project Society. Vendors pay a nominal fee for the papers, which they then sell by donation. Each vendor is given a picture ID/ vendor permit and is assigned to specific vendor locations on the city sidewalks. Vendors are expected to follow a code of conduct that includes being polite and friendly with customers, other vendors, police, shopkeepers etc. and being sober while vending (Calgary Street Talk 2001)

²⁰ In Alberta, most homeless people do not qualify to receive social benefits. Even if one has a serious injury or illness it is often difficult to qualify for AISH benefits as you must be declared “severely disabled” and have a permanent disability (Human Resources and Employment Alberta 2002). Likewise, in order to qualify to receive both AISH and SFI you must have an address. Although several social agencies in the city assist in finding housing and in facilitating the receipt of these benefits, many homeless people I spoke to reported that when they went to social services on their own they were turned away.

²¹ Perhaps significantly, Mark panhandles in the same spot every day by using a sign and placing a hat out in front of him. This passive and regular form of panhandling may play a role in reducing the amount of fear felt by the mainstream public and in encouraging them to make social contact with Mark.

²² People collecting AISH benefits are allowed to make up to \$200 without losing a portion of their benefits. If a person makes more than \$200, 75% of the amount over and above the \$200 exemption will be clawed back from their benefits (Human Resources and Employment Alberta 2002).

²³ Snow and Anderson draw on works by Goffman 1961a, 1961b; Levitin 1964; Stebbins 1975; and Sayles 1984 for this concept. Throughout the proceeding section, Snow and Anderson draw heavily on Goffman in their discussion of associational, role, and institutional distancing or embracement.

²⁴ This ethic of “helping each other out” does not appear to involve asking each other for money as one does the general public. For example, the day I attempted to panhandle I was later walking with a street person, when a group of men seated on a staircase asked us if we had 30 cents. I reached into my pocket and pulled out a quarter and handed it to the men. As we walked away my friend told me, “Your breaking the rules, panhandlers are not supposed to panhandle other panhandlers!” Similarly, another day as I stood talking with some men I had interviewed previously, one of them asked some men walking by if they could spare some change and the men said no, then, as I was about to leave, I dug into my pocket and pulled out a bit of change for them. The man replied, “Oh, I didn’t mean to panhandle you. It’s OK, really.” He was concerned that I had misinterpreted him, and wanted me to know that, because by this time we had spoken many times, he did not feel that I was someone he could appropriately panhandle. However, after some cajoling, he did take the money.

²⁵ According to Calgary’s Panhandling By-law (see Appendix A) panhandling is only prohibited ten metres from C-Train stations and bus stops, not from C-Train tracks, parking lots, or doorways.

²⁶ Although the people I spoke to panhandling stated that maintaining their hygiene was problematic, this may have been more due to their preference for avoiding shelters and sleeping rough. I observed many other people who were living at shelters who managed

to maintain good levels of hygiene, so much so that you would never guess they were without stable housing.

²⁷ For an overview of services and funding information see Arboeda-Florez and Holley (1997).

²⁸ I may not have been aggressively panhandled because I typically respond to and converse with panhandlers who ask me for change. There seems to be a significant correlation between pedestrian response and whether an encounter escalates into aggression. As described in Chapter Five, the receipt of nonperson treatment or negative treatment sometimes leads panhandlers to respond in negative ways in a bid to be recognized. In my interviews with pedestrians, those who typically respond politely or give a donation did not report having aggressive encounters, while those who typically respond by ignoring the panhandlers were more likely to report having aggressive encounters. This may simply be because the former do not perceive their encounters with panhandlers as aggressive, however, as with most communication, there appears to be a reciprocity in the way the two parties respond. As Alice, a senior citizen living downtown, described it, “I’ve never had a panhandler be rude to me, but then, I’ve never been rude to a panhandler.”

²⁹ In a recent Ipsos-Reid poll (2000a), only 4% of the respondents who work downtown reported that “getting harassed by people in the streets” prevented them from staying downtown after work, while 3% reported that concerns for personal safety prevented them from staying downtown. In contrast, the other reasons people do not stay downtown included the following: children and other priorities (31%), lack of parking (11%), nothing to do/lack of interest (9%), transportation issues (8%), traffic issues (8%), stores closed (7%), cost of parking (5%), accessibility issues/ difficult to navigate (4%), having “enough of downtown” while at work (4%), crowded (2%).

³⁰ Although several members of the business community expressed concern with the presence of panhandlers, two business managers I spoke with were not concerned with panhandlers at all. Significantly, these business managers had businesses located on the 100 block of Stephen Avenue Mall. During my fieldwork I observed very few panhandlers on this block. According to one of these managers, because this block is very near City Hall and the Telus Convention Centre, and because the City owns many of the surrounding buildings, the area is heavily policed, “If the City has a vital business interest in an area then there won’t be any panhandlers.” Thus, the absence of panhandlers in this area likely contributed to the lack of concern with them on the part of these managers.

³¹ This outreach worker is paid by the Calgary Downtown Association (the downtown business association) but works out of the Calgary Urban Project Society office (a social services organization).

³² Several sources confirmed that panhandlers are seldom involved in violent acts. According to Lloyd, the panhandler outreach worker, he was aware of only one male

panhandler who has actually assaulted a pedestrian (out of 468 panhandlers he contacted in the summer of 2000). However, he did state that occasionally there are violent clashes between panhandlers, street talk vendors, and buskers vying for territory. According to the police, robberies by panhandlers do occur although it is difficult to gauge how frequently they occur as they do not necessarily have information regarding whether the person who commits the robbery is a panhandler or not. Also, the police stated that situations in which a panhandler goes beyond an aggressive solicitation to use violence have happened, but were “not frequent.” According to one officer, when the mind set of a panhandler is to ask for change, it is unlikely, unless the opportunity presents itself (like someone with a big bag of money walks by), that the panhandler will change their course of action. None of the people I spoke to argued that panhandlers actually posed a significant risk. Instead, when I asked if panhandlers were actually aggressive or just intimidated people by their presence, one officer stated “I think in most situations, it’s people’s perceptions. They think that a lot, some of these, especially the roving ones, they look drunk, and they come across as drunk, and they think that they’re being aggressive but they’re not. But we still get the complaints.”

³³ It was suggested that the police were interpreting the section of the panhandling bylaw which refers to a “pedestrian walkway” to mean a doorway to a business, despite a clear definition of it which specifies an elevated enclosed space between buildings or open spaces including stairways and the sidewalks in underpasses.

³⁴ Significantly, the antagonistic relationship between Eric and the police, his past history “getting in trouble with the law” and the lack of security for those who live on the streets all contributed to Eric’s reluctance to have any involvement with the police. He explained that he had been robbed three times in about 8 months, and although he knew five of the seven men who had robbed him, he felt he could not go to the police to have them charged. If he did, he believed it would be “my word against theirs” and that he would face retribution from the robbers’ friends. Similarly, other panhandlers never suggested that they could go to the police regarding violent treatment they were subject to at the hands of the public. It is evident that many panhandlers are so alienated from the police that they are unable or unwilling to access any sort of protection from them, and, as a result, they find themselves excluded from the benefit of their services and left vulnerable to acts of violence perpetrated by other street people and the general public.

³⁵ This oral presentation and report (City of Calgary 2001) were put together by the City of Calgary in consultation with their Committee on Panhandling which was made up of representatives from all of the stake-holding groups including the City Bylaw Office, the City Community Strategies department, the City Legal department, Calgary Police Services, the Calgary Downtown Association (the downtown business association), the National Anti-Poverty Organization, and the social services community. The City also met with a focus group of panhandlers.

³⁶ According to Richard Moon (2000:247), in the United States “restrictions on begging have been supported under the test for restricting commercial expression” because

begging is considered to be “commercial” or “profit-motivated”. However, none of the typical reasons for giving lesser protection to the freedom of commercial expression seem to apply to begging (2000:247). Due to the centrality of economic activity in people’s lives, it is difficult to separate commercial discourse from general public discourse, therefore speech being profit motivated is not typically considered grounds for its restriction (2000:79). Instead, commercial expression is restricted due to the “misleading or manipulative affect advertising sometimes has on its audience” and due to its potential to “dominate discourse and displace or ‘drown out’ other messages in the ‘market place’ of ideas” (2000:80). Although one could argue that there is a concern that the expressions of panhandlers may be misleading, neither of these concerns seem relevant enough in the case of begging to justify restricting it as commercial expression.

³⁷ In fact, the similarities in how communities deal with contemporary prostitutes and panhandlers, both at street level and a legislative/public policy level, are enormous and warrant further investigation. See Deborah Brock (1998).

References

- Arboleda-Florez, J. and H.L. Holly. 1997. *Calgary Homeless Study*. Unpublished Document.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1963. *On Revolution*. New York: Viking Press.
- Bakan, Joel. 1997. *Just Words: Constitutional Rights and Social Wrongs*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Boltanski, Luc. Graham Burchell, trans. 1999. *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourgois, Philippe. 1995. *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brock, Deborah R. 1998. *Making Work, Making Trouble: Prostitution as a Social Problem*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Calgary Homeless Foundation. 2000. *Housing Our Homeless: A Stakeholder Consultation Assessing Shelter Needs in Calgary*. Unpublished Document.
- Calgary Street Talk. 2001. *Vendor's Code of Conduct*. Unpublished Document.
- Calgary Urban Project Society. 2000. *2000 Panhandle Outreach Program Client Service Report Summary*. Unpublished Document.
- Calgary Urban Project Society. 1999. *Report For Panhandling Outreach Worker August 1999*. Unpublished Document.
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* reprinted in *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. 1982. Gerald-A. Beaudoin and Ed Ratushny eds. Toronto: Carswell.
- Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD). "Minimum Wage Rates for Experienced Adult Workers in Canada and the Provinces: Last Updated January 1999". <http://www.ccsd.ca/fs_minw.htm> (April 31 2000).
- Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD). "Provincial and Territorial Welfare Benefits, Canada, 1986-1994". <<http://www.ccsd.ca/welf295.html>> (April 31:1999).
- Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD). "Percentage Change in Welfare Benefits in Canada, by Province/ Territory, Between 1986 and 1996 (in constant 1996 dollars)". <http://www.ccsd.ca/98/fs_96wel.htm> (April 31 1999).
- City of Calgary. 2002. *The 2002 Count of Homeless Persons 2000 May 15*. Unpublished Document: Community Strategies, Policy and Planning.
- City of Calgary. 2001. *Executive Report to the S.P.C. on Community and Protective Services: Panhandling Bylaw Review*. Unpublished Document: #CPS2001-16.

- City of Calgary. 2000a. *The 2000 Count of Homeless Persons 2000 May 17*. Unpublished Document. Community Strategies Social Research Unit.
- City of Calgary. 2000b. "Housing in Calgary."
<<http://www.gov.calgary.ab.ca/community/research/socranindicators/dhousing.html>>
(December 9 2000).
- City of Calgary. 1996. *Panhandlers and Panhandling Activity in Calgary (1994)*. Unpublished Document: Social Services Department.
- Chaudhuri, Sumita. 1986. "Learning the Art of Begging: a Study on Socialization, Aspiration and World View of the Beggars". *Journal of Social Research* 29 (2): 51-62.
- Collins, Damian C.A. and Nicholas Blomley. 2001. "Private Needs and Public Space: Politics, Poverty and Anti-Panhandling By-laws in Canadian Cities". Unpublished Paper. Simon Fraser University, Burnaby.
- Daly, Gerald. 1996. *Homeless: Policies, Strategies and Lives on the Street*. London: Routledge.
- Dean, Hartley, ed.. 1999. *Begging Questions: Street-level Economic Activity and Social Policy Failure*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Dean Hartley and Keir Gale. 1999. "Begging and the Contradictions of Citizenship." In *Begging Questions: Street-level Economic Activity and Social Policy Failure*, ed. Hartley Dean, 13-26. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Erskine, Angus and Ian McIntosh. 1999. "'I feel rotten. I do, I feel rotten': exploring the begging encounter." In *Begging Questions: Street-level Economic Activity and Social Policy Failure*, ed. Hartley Dean, 183-202. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Fabrega, Horacio Jr. 1971. "Begging in a Southeastern Mexican City". *Human Organization* 30 (3): 277-287.
- Farmer, Paul. 1997. "On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below". In *Social Suffering*, eds. Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock, 261-283. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Gans, Herbert J. 1995. *The War Against the Poor: The Underclass and Antipoverty Policy*. New York: BasicBooks.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books Inc.
- Gilmore, H.W. 1940. *The Beggar*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Glasser, Irene and Rae Bridgman. 1999. *Braving the Street: The Anthropology of Homelessness*. New York: Berghahn Books.

- Glasser, Irene. 1994. *Homelessness in Global Perspective*. New York: G.K. Hall & Co.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books.
- Goffman, Erving. 1961a. *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situations of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. New York: Doubleday Anchor.
- Goffman, Erving. 1961b. "Role Distance." In *Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction*, 84-152. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Goffman, Erving. 1963a. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc.
- Goffman, Erving. 1963b. *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*. New York: The Free Press.
- Hagan, John and Bill McCarthy. 1997. *Mean Streets: Youth Crime and Homelessness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. T.M. Knox, trans. 1952 (1821). *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Ho, Ray W. 2001. "Letter to the Editor." *The Calgary Herald*. March 28:A14.
- Human Resources and Employment Alberta. 2002. *AISH: Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped. A Guide*. Unpublished Document.
- Humphreys, Robert. 1999. *No Fixed Abode: A History of Responses to the Roofless and the Rootless in Britain*. Houndsmills: Macmillan Press.
- Hurtig, Mel. 1999. *Pay the Rent or Feed the Kids: The Tragedy and Disgrace of Poverty in Canada*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc.
- Hutnyk, John. 1996. *The Rumor of Calcutta: Tourism, Charity and the Poverty of Representation*. London: Zed Books.
- Ipsos-Reid. 2000a. *Calgary Downtown Association September 2000 Alberta Reid Poll Study*. Unpublished Document.
- Ipsos-Reid. 2000b. *Alberta Reid- November 2000 (06-3142-04): Calgary Downtown Association*. Unpublished Document.
- Kant, Immanuel. Ted Humphrey, trans. 1983 (1784-1795). *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays on Politics, History and Morals*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Kerbo, Harold R. 1996. *Social Stratification and Inequality: Class Conflict in Historical and Comparative Perspective*. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, INC.

- Lankenau, Stephen E. 1999a. "Panhandling Repertoires and Routines for Overcoming the Nonperson Treatment." *Deviant Behavior* 20: 183-206.
- Lankenau, Stephen E. 1999b. "Stronger Than Dirt: Public Humiliation and Status Enhancement among Panhandlers". *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 28 (3): 288-218.
- Levitin, T.E. 1964. "Role Performances and Role Distance in Low Status Occupation: The Puller." *Sociological Quarterly* 5:251-260.
- Lewis, Oscar. 1996 (1966). "The Culture of Poverty." In *Urban Life*, eds. George Gmelch and Walter P. Zenner, 393-404. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press Inc.,
- Link, Bruce G., Sharon Schwartz, Robert Moore, Jo Phelan, Elmer Struening and Ann Stueve. 1995. "Public Knowledge, Attitudes and Beliefs About Homeless People: Evidence for Compassion Fatigue?" *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23(4):533-555.
- Lipset, Seymour. 1990. *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada*. New York: Routledge.
- Milgram, Stanley. 1996 (1970). "The Urban Experience: A Psychological Analysis." In *Urban Life*, eds. George Gmelch and Walter P. Zenner, 35-46. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press Inc.
- MLA Committee to Review Low-Income Programs. 2001. *Extending the Alberta Advantage: A Discussion Guide*. Unpublished Document.
- Moon, Richard. 2000. *The Constitutional Protection of Freedom of Expression*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Murphy, Barbara. 1999. *The Ugly Canadian: The Rise and Fall of a Caring Society*. Toronto: J. Gordon Shillingford Publishing Inc.
- Napier, A. David. 1992. *Foreign Bodies: Performance, Art and Symbolic Anthropology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- NAPO (National Anti-Poverty Organization). 1999. *Short Changed on Human Rights: A NAPO Position Paper in Anti-Panhandling By-laws*. Ottawa: National Anti-Poverty Organization.
- Nelson Canadian Dictionary of the English Language*. 1997. Toronto: ITP Nelson.
- O'Reilly-Fleming, Thomas. 1993. *Down and Out in Canada: Homeless Canadians*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Oxford English Dictionary*, online.
- Passaro, Joanne. 1996. *The Unequal Homeless*. New York: Routledge.

- Phelan, Jo, Link, Bruce G., Moore, Robert E., & Stueve, Ann. 1997. "The Stigma of Homelessness: The Impact of the Label 'Homeless' on Attitudes Toward Poor Persons." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 60 (4):323-337.
- Polanyi, Karl. 1944. *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Residential Tenancies Act: Chapter R-17*. Alberta: Queen's Printer.
- Ribton-Turner, C.J. 1972 (1887). *A history of Vagrants and Vagrancy and Beggars and Begging*. Montclair: Patterson Smith.
- Rose, Lionel. 1988. *'Rogues and Vagabonds': Vagrant Underworld in Britain 1815-1985*. London: Routledge.
- Rossi, P.H., J.D. Wright, G.A. Fisher, and G. Willis. 1987. "The Urban Homeless: Estimating Composition and Size." *Science* (March): 1336-1341.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jaques. Christopher Betts. trans. 1994. *The Social Contract*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Saunders, Doug. 2002. "Aggressive Cleanup Plan Targets Icon of the Homeless." *The Globe and Mail*. April 6:A3.
- Sayles, Marnie L. 1984. "Role Distancing: Differentiating the Role of the Elderly from the Person." *Qualitative Sociology* 7:236-252.
- Schafer, Arthur. 1998. *Down and Out in Winnipeg and Toronto: The Ethics of Legislating Against Panhandling*. Ottawa: The Caledon Institute of Social Policy.
- Scott, James C. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Simmel, Georg. 1971 (1908). "The Stranger." In *Georg Simmel On Individuality and Social Forms*, ed. Donald N. Levine, 143-149. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Simon, Harry. 1992. "Towns Without Pity: a Constitutional and Historical Analysis of Official Efforts to Drive Homeless Persons from American Cities". *Tulane Law Review* 66 (4): 631-676.
- Snow, David A, and Leon Anderson. 1987. "Identity Work Among the Homeless: The Verbal Construction and Avowal of Personal Identities". *American Journal of Sociology* 92 (6): 1336-1371.
- Stebbins, Robert A. 1975. "Role Distance, Role Distance Behaviour and Jazz Musicians." In *Life as Theatre: A Dramaturgical Sourcebook*, eds. D. Brissett and C. Edgely, 133-141. Chicago: Adeline.
- Stoner, Medeleine R. 1995. *The Civil Rights of Homeless People: Law, Social Policy, and Social Work Practice*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

- Stark, Louisa R. 1992. "From Lemons to Lemonade: An Ethnographic Sketch of Late Twentieth-century Panhandling". *New England Journal of Public Policy; a Journal of the John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs* 8 (1): 341-352.
- Statistics Canada. 2001. "Population and Dwelling Counts, for Canada, Census Metropolitan Areas, Census Agglomerations and Census Subdivisions (Municipalities), 2001 and 1996 Censuses - 100% Data"
<<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/standard/popdwell/Table-CSD-C.cfm?CMA=825>> (July 17 2002).
- Statistics Canada. 1996. "Population and Dwelling Counts, for Census Metropolitan Areas in Decreasing Order of 1996 Population, 1991 and 1996 Censuses - 100% Data."
<<http://www.statcan.ca/english/census96/table2.htm>> (July 17 2002).
- Taylor, Charles. 1994. "The Politics of Recognition". In *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. ed. Amy Gutmann, 25-74. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Thorsell, William. 2002. "Calgary Zen: An absence makes a city." *The Globe and Mail*. May 6:A17.
- United Way (of Calgary and Area). 2000. *Living on the Edge: When Paying for a Prescription Means Going Without Food*. Calgary: United Way.
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. 1948. General Assembly of the United Nations.
<<http://www.un.org/overview/rights.html>> (April 7 2000).
- Wagner, David. 1993. *Checkerboard Square: Culture and Resistance in a Homeless Community*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- White, Richard. 1996. *Calgary Downtown Association Project Report*. Unpublished Document.
- Williams, Brackette F. 1995. "The Public I/ Eye". *Current Anthropology* 36 (1): 25-52.
- Wilson, George. 1991. "Exposure to Panhandling and Beliefs About Poverty Causation." *Sociology and Social Research* 76 (1): 14-19.

Appendix A: Anti-panhandling Legislation

BYLAW NUMBER 3M99

BEING A BYLAW OF THE CITY OF CALGARY TO REGULATE PANHANDLING

WHEREAS the practice of panhandling has been identified as a significant social and safety concern;

AND WHEREAS public awareness and outreach programs to promote alternative income generating or support options are available for panhandlers;

AND WHEREAS a bylaw regulating panhandling is a required part of this coordinated approach to ameliorate the negative impact of panhandling activities;

NOW, THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CALGARY ENACTS
AS FOLLOWS:

1. This Bylaw may be cited as the "Panhandling Bylaw."
2. In this Bylaw:
 - (a) "panhandling" means the personal, verbal and direct solicitation by a person of gratuitous donations of money, food or goods of any kind from any member of the public, but, does not include a solicitation allowed or authorized pursuant to the *Charitable Fund Raising Act*, S.A. 1995 c. 4.5;
 - (b) "pedestrian walkway" means an elevated space which is enclosed and designed for the passage of pedestrians between buildings or open spaces, including any direct stairway from grade thereto, and also includes the sidewalk portion of any underpass;
 - (c) "transit stop" means the portion of a street signed by The City of Calgary for loading and unloading of Calgary Transit buses, including any shelter thereon, and station structures designed for the loading and unloading of passengers using the light rail public transit system.
3. No person shall engage in panhandling within 10 metres of the following:
 - (a) the entrance to a bank, credit union, trust company or other financial institution where cash can be withdrawn, or
 - (b) an automated teller machine or other device from which cash can be electronically accessed, or

Appendix A (cont.)

BYLAW NUMBER 3M99

- 2 -

- (c) a transit stop,
 - (d) any pedestrian walkway.
4. No person shall engage in panhandling between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m.
 5. No person shall engage in panhandling from any person who, at the time, is an occupant of a motor vehicle.
 6. No person shall continue to engage in panhandling, otherwise permitted by this Bylaw, with a person who has refused or declined the solicitation.
 7. No person shall, while engaging in panhandling, move to obstruct the passage of, walk next to, or follow the person being solicited.
 8. Any person who contravenes any provision of this Bylaw is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine of not more than Ten Thousand (\$10,000) Dollars and in default of payment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one (1) year.
 9. Section 16 of By-law 52M87, the Stephen Avenue Mall By-law is repealed.
 10. Section 8(5) of By-law 17M84, the Barclay Mall By-law is repealed.
 11. This Bylaw comes into force on the day it is passed.

READ A FIRST TIME THIS 8TH DAY OF MARCH, 1999

READ A SECOND TIME, AS AMENDED, THIS 8TH DAY OF MARCH, 1999

READ A THIRD TIME, AS AMENDED, THIS 8TH DAY OF MARCH, 1999

MAYOR

DATED THIS 10TH DAY OF MARCH, 1999.

CITY CLERK

Appendix B: "Make Real Change" Handbill

MAKE REAL CHANGE WITH YOUR SPARE CHANGE

The next time you are approached by someone asking for your spare change, think about how you can really help.

Then do the following:

- Acknowledge the person.
- Politely say "No".
- Then continue on your way.
- And at the first opportunity, make a donation to any of the agencies that really do help Calgary's people in need.

For assistance in dealing with panhandlers, call the downtown outreach worker at 703-7633.

This message is brought to you by the Calgary Downtown Association and the CUPS Community Health Centre.

**Giving to panhandlers
doesn't solve a thing.**

Put your spare change into the right hands. Give it to social service agencies that really make a difference.

PANHANDLING IS A PROBLEM

Part of the attraction of downtown Calgary is its diversity of people and experiences. Musicians, magicians, street vendors and a host of others all contribute to the positive atmosphere of downtown. But panhandling - asking others to simply give away their spare change - has no real upside.

Panhandling is a problem for the panhandlers themselves because it's a dead-end, one that offers no hope for improvement and no way out. And it's a problem for citizens in general, because too many Calgarians simply avoid downtown so they can avoid confronting unwanted, over-aggressive panhandlers.

There is no easy solution, but one thing is for certain. Giving spare change to panhandlers is not the answer. Spare change won't always buy medical assistance, adequate shelter, nutritious meals, counseling, training or a job.

Calgary's many social services agencies can and do provide all of these things to help Calgarians in need, agencies such as:

CUPS Community Health Centre: 221-8780
Salvation Army Anchorage Hostel: 262-2759
Salvation Army Booth Centre: 262-6188
Alpha House: 234-7388
Mustard Seed Street Ministry: 269-1319
EXIT Community Outreach: 262-9953
Casual Labour Office-
Calgary Drop-In Centre: 263-5707