

# **Discursive Discrimination and Panhandling in Winnipeg Newspapers**

by

**Sarah G. MacKinnon**

**Thesis presented to the Graduate Committee at the University of Manitoba in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for Master of Arts degree**

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**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of  
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**MASTER OF ARTS**

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## ABSTRACT

Panhandlers everywhere are a disenfranchised population. They lack the resources necessary to fulfill their basic needs and they encounter discrimination as they go about their daily business. While some people support panhandlers and advocate on their behalf, others believe that panhandlers are criminal, dangerous, illegitimately needy, lazy, morally lax individuals who are the agents of their own misfortune. This thesis uses qualitative analysis to examine how panhandlers are represented in Winnipeg newspapers. It explores what these representations mean in terms of a phenomenological orientation which assumes that we create the meaning of our world and those around us through social interaction. This thesis finds that panhandlers are predominantly represented in negative ways in Winnipeg newspapers but suggests that reading newspapers more critically, along with advocating for panhandlers, resisting anti-panhandling by-laws, and empowering panhandlers to represent themselves may improve panhandlers' status in Winnipeg.

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#### Frequency of Panhandler Representations by Type of Article

## INTRODUCTION

Imagine that one day you wake up and you have no voice, no communication skills at all. You are completely silenced. Now imagine that there is someone else whom you have never met walking beside you wherever you went telling everyone else who you are, what you are doing and why - often getting it wrong. Frustrating? Unfair? Damaging to your relations with people around you? Yes.

This is what happens in many newspaper accounts of panhandlers. Panhandlers are a minority population, and negative representations of them in Winnipeg newspapers may support and empower discriminatory beliefs against panhandlers as a population, facilitating the maintenance of unequal relationships between panhandlers and other Winnipeg residents. Positive or neutral representations of panhandlers do occur in Winnipeg newspapers, but substantially less often than negative representations. Panhandlers' voices can appear in these accounts, but almost never do. With the omission of panhandlers' voices, newspaper articles have the power to tell the rest of us who panhandlers are - deviant, criminal, illegitimate, or down on their luck. Newspaper articles inform us of what panhandlers are doing - creating problems, using change collected to feed their vices rather than their needs, or minding their own business. And newspapers let us know why individuals are panhandling in the first place - they are lazy, they are drug addicts, or they face insurmountable social and structural barriers in getting ahead. Newspaper articles which describe the situations of panhandlers in Winnipeg have the power to present panhandlers very negatively, and often they do.

Phenomenological sociology attempts to explain how we make sense of each other, and how we come to understand one another in the world. But there are times when

we do not want to understand one another at all or when the only understanding one wants to concede is that another is abnormal or deviant. In the case at hand, newspaper articles often claim to know the limitations or failings of panhandlers as an entire population, representing panhandlers as though they have no positive characteristics whatsoever. This is an example of an important form of (mis)understanding: discrimination against panhandlers. For the purposes of my research I am using the term discrimination as Kristina Boreus defines it in her typology of discursive discrimination: “By discrimination, I mean *unfavourable treatment of members of an (alleged) group on account of their membership of that group*” (2006: 408). In this thesis, my argument is this: that a phenomenological approach is capable of explaining how newspaper articles accomplish panhandlers’ selves through the identification of panhandlers with positively or negatively correlated external concepts.

This question is significant because phenomenological theory portrays individuals as active participants in the construction of the world and the meaning of everything around us. If we are aware of the role we are able to play in the constitution and maintenance of relations between individuals, we must also be aware of the potential we possess to alter unjust interactions. The application of a phenomenological sociology to the subject of newspaper representations of panhandlers implies that we do not need to passively accept explanations that are given to us, but can argue against versions of reality to which we do not want to adhere.

The first chapter of this thesis is a review of the relevant literature. This review begins by describing the phenomenon of panhandling, which is defined as the practice of requesting money, food or other goods with little or nothing offered in return (Lankenau

1999, Taylor 1999, Snow & Anderson 1993 in Farrell & Lee 2003: 300). This definition does not distinguish between the practice of panhandling and the act of campaigning for charity except that, in the case of panhandling, donations received are used for individual or personal gain. The research shows that panhandlers in Winnipeg are the subjects of discrimination based on their appearance, their behaviors, class status, membership to specific gender and racialized categories.

The literature review goes on to outline a phenomenological orientation that this thesis will take. This includes the assertions that meaning is not stable or fixed, and that meaning is created by and between individuals in their interactions. Further, normalcy is a form of meaning which is also unstable and must be accomplished through social interaction. On the flip side of accomplishing meaning in order to understand is a description of how we can manipulate meaning if we do not want to understand an object of inquiry as normal. In other words, if we want to hold discriminatory beliefs about something, how we can facilitate and empower these beliefs.

Chapter Two contains my methodology section, which describes my process for choosing, collecting and analyzing my sample, as well as the limitations of the choices I made in completing these tasks. This section also expresses the problems and issues that arose as I performed my data collection and analysis.

My data analysis section – Chapter Three – reports the findings of my analysis: in Winnipeg newspapers, there is a back and forth struggle between portraying panhandlers and their activities positively or negatively. Panhandlers are commonly represented as other, as illegitimate, dangerous and criminal. However, panhandlers are also sometimes

supported and defended as a legitimately needy population that deserves sympathy, not spite. Principally, panhandlers own voices are not included in these representations.

My results section – Chapter Four – explains what those findings mean in phenomenological terms. According to a phenomenological orientation, these representational practices have important implications for Winnipeg panhandlers and their identities.

My thesis concludes with several tentative explanations for this query and the implications of my research for future research and actions concerning panhandlers. On the positive side, the meaning currently accorded panhandlers and their activities is not stable and is subject to change; this implies that we do not *have* to associate panhandlers with negatively discriminatory concepts. Further, if advocates of panhandlers wish to attempt to improve the way panhandlers are seen they can do so simply by making their voices heard and by speaking out against commonly negative ways of representing panhandlers. I believe the lack of panhandlers' voices heard in the debate to be extremely significant. Panhandlers need their own voices in order to accomplish less deviant depictions of themselves, and those offering solutions need to hear panhandlers' voices to determine what supports panhandlers need.



## CHAPTER 1 – LITERATURE REVIEW

This section is my review of the relevant literature. I begin by examining the literature and research on panhandling itself. The literature on panhandling describes both how others view panhandlers and how panhandlers view themselves. Research has also been conducted on the different levels of gender, racial, and class oppression that panhandlers are subject to as well as panhandlers' own strategies for preserving their dignity and protecting themselves despite the negative conditions of their lives. Next I describe the literature on phenomenological sociology, which is a body of social theory indicating that meaning and normalcy are accomplished through social interaction. I continue my review of the literature by describing the literature within phenomenological sociology that examines how discrimination is also accomplished socially and can occur in a variety of ways.

### ***Part 1: Panhandling***

The term 'panhandling' refers to public requests from individuals for money, food or other items, offering little or nothing in return to the donor (Carter, Friesen, Polevychok & Osborne 2007: 1, Farrell & Lee 2003: 300, Lankenau 1999: 204, National Anti-Poverty Organization 1999: 4). However, the practice of panhandling is much more complex than that. Successful panhandling "depends not only on choosing the right spot but also on fine-tuning one's appearance, demeanor, and pitch (Farrell & Lee 2003: 302). In Winnipeg, there are an estimated two hundred panhandlers, with an estimated fifty of these individuals posing persistent problems to businesses and pedestrians (Carter et al. 2007: 16). Panhandlers in Winnipeg are most commonly found in the inner city and

downtown areas because this is where they will find the most supports: shelters, food banks, steam vents and high rates of pedestrian traffic (Carter et al. 2007: 15). The act of panhandling also involves a range of methods, from carrying a sign or holding out a cup to threatening passersby in order to intimidate them into giving money (Carter et al. 2007: 1). However, the use of aggressive or threatening behaviour is uncommon. Most panhandlers request money passively and without the use of threats because they realize aggressive requests are not an effective strategy and are more likely to have negative repercussions for the panhandlers who may be arrested or become subject to police attention (Ibid.).

In addition to issues panhandlers have with their own circumstances, there are very different reactions that others have when they encounter panhandlers in their everyday lives. Some people see panhandling as a strategy for dealing with poverty and a lack of services that people need such as affordable housing (Carter et. al. 2007: 1). Other people see panhandling in negative terms, as they believe begging is necessitated by abusive relations with drugs and alcohol, or by family breakdown, and that it is performed by those unwilling to sustain themselves in more conventional ways. Some people believe that begging also negatively affects businesses by keeping away tourists, conventioners and shoppers (Ibid 20). When young panhandlers are unable to find work, they are often seen as being lazy and are judged to be undeserving of assistance (Gans 1994: 270). Youth is assumed to be directly correlated to ability to work and the presence of youth but absence of employment is interpreted as implying a lack of work ethic and deviance from normalcy. Passersby often attempt to ignore panhandlers, leaving panhandlers to deal with a difficult identity of “nonpersons” (Farrell & Lee 2003: 302).

Business owners often view panhandlers as a nuisance to others and as a danger to the economy (Carter et al. 2007: 22).

Prospective donors assess panhandlers' appearance, whether or not they appear to be using alcohol or drugs, and whether or not they appear to be sincerely needy in determining whether or not to give a donation. In Winnipeg, only twenty percent of individuals surveyed indicated that they would give a donation to a panhandler while sixteen percent more suggested that they may consider a donation depending on specific circumstances. Most people surveyed indicated that whether or not they would donate money to panhandlers also depended on their mood and the amount of disposable income they had at the moment (Carter et al. 2007: 21).

### **1. Who Winnipeg's panhandlers are**

Panhandlers are individuals who are unable to survive on their income assistance, who may have spent years living in homelessness, joblessness and with health problems. They lack the resources or skills necessary to gain formal employment and must supplement their income by begging (Carter et al. 2007: 3, Lankenau 1999b: 314). While panhandlers are men, women, youth, children and the elderly, a study of panhandlers done by Carter et al. provides a profile of panhandlers indicating that most panhandlers are men. Many of these individuals deal with issues surrounding substance abuse and mental health challenges. The female panhandlers studied did not have children in their care but sixty three percent of panhandlers do have children. Many panhandlers were found to have criminal records and almost as many panhandlers have been the victims of crime. Many panhandlers feel that physical and mental disabilities, along with a lack of skills, contribute to their lack of readiness for formal employment, but a remarkable

ninety eight percent of panhandlers indicate that they would like to work (Ibid. 18). Many panhandlers in Winnipeg collect less than ten dollars per day and report that they spent most of their earnings from panhandling on food, followed by tobacco, alcohol and/or drugs (Carter et al. 2007: 4 - 17).

In Winnipeg, understanding Aboriginal issues is particularly key to understanding the living experiences of Winnipeg panhandlers. Aboriginal people have much lower rates of high school graduation and post-secondary school attendance than the rest of Canada's population (Carter et al. 2007: 12). Further, unemployment rates for Aboriginal people in Winnipeg are about three times greater than average rates (Ibid.). Even more, Aboriginal families headed by a lone parent are overrepresented in Winnipeg's inner city and Aboriginal people are one of the most poorly housed groups in Canada because of high rates of in-migration, residential mobility and poverty rates (Ibid. 13). Almost fifty percent of Winnipeg's panhandlers have recently moved from outside of Winnipeg, mainly from Reserves (Ibid. 17). Due to all of these circumstances, many of Winnipeg's panhandlers are Aboriginal (Ibid 14).

North and Smith note that "no one can assume that the experience of homelessness of white people is the same as that of people of color or that the differences between white and nonwhite men are the same as differences between white and nonwhite women" (1994: 640). Their study found that more nonwhite homeless respondents appeared "to have greater externally generated difficulties reflecting socio-economic barriers" than the white respondents, whose difficulties "often seemed internal", such as psychopathology for female respondents and substance abuse for male respondents (Ibid: 646). Further, of their respondents, North and Smith found nonwhite

homeless women to be younger but also more likely than white women to be mothers and “more likely to have children under age 15 in their custody” (1994: 646).

Issues surrounding race are not the only factors influencing the experiences of panhandlers in Winnipeg. Canada’s homeless include young people, families, women, men, and members of various ethnic communities (Donahue et al. 2004: 735). While there is already a perceived division between ‘us’ – mainstream society – and ‘them’ – members of the panhandling population, there are further divisions between ‘them’, with some panhandlers suffering multiple oppressions such as race *and* gender discrimination on top of class oppression. Further, individuals within the panhandling population may be represented as more or less deviant depending on their status within other social categories. An example of this is found in Will’s research, which found that, when given hypothetical representations of families in need, participants felt that individuals with children or disabled adult dependants, as well as individuals “who were unemployed, yet actively looking for gainful employment”, were more deserving of generosity and public assistance than those without these characteristics (1993: 329). The characteristics belonging to individuals, or the category that individuals were assumed to belong to, affected perceptions of the deviance of their behaviour and of themselves.

Panhandling issues related to gender come under the spotlight in studies like the one conducted by Gowan. For example, in terms of treatment, Gowan claims that, because of their frequent status as mothers and or victims of domestic violence, poor women have historically been given limited support in terms of finances and shelter “at the cost of close monitoring by social services” (Gowan2002: 502). Poor women can thus be said to be slightly less likely to be incarcerated for homelessness while

[p]oor unemployed men ... tend to be understood as the source of not only their own but their female family members' problems as well .... They consequently receive little to no financial support and are overwhelmingly caught up in the criminal justice system [and often] cycle continuously through homelessness and incarceration (Ibid.)

Not only are homeless individuals more likely to be incarcerated for being homeless, poor unemployed men are more likely to be incarcerated for being poor unemployed men.

On the other hand, Wardhaugh explains that the "home-homeless binary divide serves to underscore the 'goodness' of those women who consent to maintain the home (almost any home will do), and to be contained within this sphere, and the 'badness' of those women (and marginal men) whose only homes are the streets or the non-homes of institutional life" (1999: 106). Thus, gendered discrimination against panhandlers and poor individuals occurs on different levels and in different manners depending on the gender of the subject and the personal perspective of those confronted by them.

## **2. How Others View Panhandlers**

Because panhandlers conduct much of their daily lives in the streets, and their visibility in the streets is how we know them to be panhandlers, it is difficult to differentiate between those who panhandle but are housed, and those who are without homes. Often panhandlers and homeless persons are considered to be one and the same. It is true that panhandlers, whether they are housed or not, do have very little human and social capital to draw on in order to improve their living conditions (Carter et al. 2007: 4). Contrary to popular opinion, the majority of Winnipeg's panhandlers do have homes, although a substantial minority are homeless (Ibid. 17). Further, Lankenau finds that "negative stereotypes of homeless persons, such as being dangerous, dirty, diseased, and

mentally ill, are often connected to panhandlers” (1999: 203). These concerns enable perceptions that panhandlers are a danger to the economy and also mean that passersby will try to maintain a certain amount of distance from panhandlers in the streets (Farrell & Lee 2003: 300).

Panhandlers and homeless individuals are also linked in research, as evidenced in examples like the following: “[P]edestrians frequently avert their eyes when passing the homeless on the sidewalk, and they often hasten their pace and increase the distance between themselves and the homeless when they sense they may be targeted by a panhandler” (Snow & Anderson 1992: 140). In this example, ‘the homeless’ becomes replaced by ‘a panhandler’ and the individuals described by these terms float between the labels. What we *can* assume is that panhandlers at least endure the same stigmas that the visible poor endure, as well as the stigmas associated with panhandling itself. Thus, some stigmas against the homeless population in general can be said to also apply to panhandlers, whether they are literally housed or not because other citizens cannot differentiate between housed and homeless panhandlers based solely on appearance. For this reason, and also because literature on the experiences of panhandlers specifically is scarce, I have included within this literature review some research on experiences of homeless individuals as well as experiences of panhandlers. The following part of my literature review examines the literature on homelessness that is relevant to examining the experiences of panhandlers, whether they are housed or not.

Snow and Anderson point out that, while during the two to three months surrounding Christmas there is elevated charitable interest in the homeless, for the rest of the year “the homeless tend to be recipients of only negative attention, ignored altogether

or dealt with in a segregated and sanitized fashion that underscores their stigmatized status" (in Holstein & Gubrium 2003: 142). In another study, homeless individuals were found to be the recipients of less negative attention when they appear "despite the hardship, [to be] still actively working to help themselves get out of these difficulties" (Will 1993: 330). Thus, there are small intervals of time, or certain categories of identity, where the homeless population are seen as legitimately needy persons, or as less illegitimate than other homeless individuals, while, for the rest of the time, they are seen as 'nonpersons', deviant persons, or they are not seen at all. Applying these findings to the experiences of panhandlers, representations of panhandlers as legitimately needy correspond with representations of normalcy, as it is normal for those who are in need to ask for help. Meanwhile, representations of panhandlers as illegitimate correspond with representations of deviancy since asking for help that is assumed not to be needed is seen as exploitative or as an illustration of refusal to adhere to norms of work and personal responsibility (Gans 1994: 269). As a result of negative interactions with the rest of society, panhandlers "must [learn to] manage their own emotions in addition to manipulating those of passersby" (Ibid.).

Manipulating the emotions of passersby can be especially difficult since there have always been low levels of tolerance for panhandlers and popular assumptions indicate that "poor people act as they do because of moral shortcomings" and panhandlers are undeserving of help (Gans 1994: 269, Carter et al. 2007: 3). Not only viewed as morally lax, "[b]ecause their ... disapproved behavior is ascribed to moral shortcomings, the poor people who resort to it are often classified as unworthy or *undeserving*" (Gans 1994: 270). Collins, Damian and Blomley allude to this attitude.



They note that while small change dropped on the street or sucked up by the vacuum may be inconsequential to most people, these same people have generally negative reactions when they are being asked for the same amount of money by strangers in the street (2003: 41). Despite these views, a study of panhandling in Winnipeg found that the majority of panhandlers beg because they lack other alternatives and they must panhandle in order to survive (Carter et al. 2007: 3).

Gans reviews several positive functions served to the better-off population for maintaining representations of the undeserving poor. For one, the use of the label 'undeserving' "distances the labeled from those who label them. By stigmatizing people as undeserving, labellers protect themselves from the responsibility of having to associate with them, or even to treat them like moral equals" (Ibid: 271). Further, the label 'undeserving' reinforces mainstream norms, especially norms surrounding work, and some of the norms reinforced are norms that the mainstream population does not even uphold. For example, "[e]conomists like to argue that if the poor want to be deserving, they should take any kind of job, regardless of its low pay or demeaning character, reflecting a work ethic which economists themselves have never practiced" (Ibid: 275). Thus, labelling the poor population 'undeserving' justifies discriminatory perceptions of poor people, including representations of poor individuals as morally lax; as actively rejecting social norms; as separate, different from and less than members of the rest of society.

On top of this, homeless individuals risk incarceration simply for being in the streets. As Gowan points out:

municipalities have historically responded to mass street homelessness by stepping up the criminalization of 'private' home practices (sleeping, drinking,

urinating) when undertaken in public space .... [L]aws forbidding sleeping or loitering in public places ... increas[e] the likelihood that homelessness would lead directly to incarceration (2002: 500).

This finding also applies to panhandlers, since panhandling requires loitering in areas of the city where they will encounter passersby. Thus, panhandlers and the homeless are identified in terms of criminality simply because they conduct their lives in the streets.

Winnipeg is no exception. In 2005, Winnipeg city council passed a panhandling bylaw severely limiting the areas within the city in which panhandling may occur legally. This bylaw is an amendment of the 2000 Obstructive Solicitation bylaw. The stipulations are as follows:

WHEREAS people need a safe and civil environment in public places within the City of Winnipeg where residents and visitors may freely engage in the usual activities and enjoyments of the urban milieu; AND WHEREAS residents and visitors in the City are entitled not to be obstructed while enjoying public places; .... No person shall solicit in a manner which causes an obstruction ... [or] solicit a captive audience. (City of Winnipeg 2000, City of Winnipeg 2005)

Furthermore, 'captive audience' is defined to include a multitude of people and places such as people around bank machines, pay phones, public transit stops or taxi stands, people "in or on a public transit vehicle", people in elevators, people getting in or out of vehicles or in parking lots, people on patios or people located within "red zones" into which the downtown area of Winnipeg has been divided (City of Winnipeg 2005).

Considering all the areas from which this bylaw excludes panhandlers from legally being, there is virtually nowhere left in the downtown area for panhandlers to remain. Thus, panhandlers become identified in terms of criminality simply for being in the downtown area.

The decision to enact and to continue to pass amendments to Winnipeg's anti-panhandling legislation is especially significant in terms of dictating how the public

should view panhandlers. Collins et al. note that the concerns leading city councils to pass these laws are not based on the fact that people are being solicited for money in public spaces, as billboards and store fronts solicit passersby on a daily basis without raising alarm. Rather, they claim that the central concern seems to be the messenger: "the unsightly and untrustworthy beggar whose presence in public space may variously annoy, frustrate and disconcert" (2003: 42). In this light, passing anti-panhandling by-laws supports the feelings of those who do not wish to be bothered by the sight of marginalized individuals who may signify the instability of the labour market and economic system (Ibid.).

The National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) published a study on the effects and ramifications of passing this legislation and others like it. NAPO maintains that these laws discriminate against the poor since it is only the poor who are being restricted from parts of a city that are supposed to be public areas and the governments who pass these laws criminalize begging while simultaneously creating more poverty by reducing social supports and aid (National Anti-Poverty Organization 1999: 3). NAPO criticizes government for passing anti-panhandling legislation for looking to 'quick fix' solutions to remove poverty from public view rather than looking for venues by which to address the underlying issues of poverty (Ibid. 8). Also, anti-panhandling legislation is accompanied by the imposition of "stiff financial penalties on a population which has no or little income to begin with" and this indicates that these laws are in no way intended to assist panhandlers (Ibid. 10).

Those in favour of anti-panhandling bylaws cite preservation of economic vitality, protection of the public's right to peacefully enjoy their city, and the need to eliminate

panhandlers' unhealthy life practices as justifications for supporting the legislation (Ibid.). However, each justification has real implications for individual panhandlers.

Arguments that the eradication of panhandling will preserve the economic vitality of a city construct a hierarchy in which the rights of businesses and shoppers are favoured over the rights of people living in poverty (Ibid. 11). Upholding anti-panhandling by-laws in order to preserve the public's right to enjoy their city creates even more distance between poor and non-poor individuals. "They effectively exclude people living in poverty from being considered as part of 'the public' and therefore not equally entitled to enjoy public spaces" (Ibid. 12). As noted above, favouring anti-panhandling by-laws as tools for eliminating panhandlers' unhealthy lifestyles is inconsistent with the penalties imposed by the legislation on panhandlers which create more problems for panhandlers rather than assisting panhandlers to change their positions in society.

The NAPO study also offers suggestions for supporting panhandlers in the face of anti-panhandling legislation. The study notes that discussing anti-panhandling by-laws as an abuse of human rights is one way to counter their negative effects. The by-laws prohibit panhandlers from exercising their rights to communicate their need for assistance in the spaces where they are arguably the most likely to be heard (Collins, Damian & Blomley 2003: 41, National Anti-Poverty Organization 1999: 15). Highlighting this fact encourages support for panhandlers and opens up a venue for combating these laws.

When panhandlers are not perceived as breaching criminal laws, they are often still viewed as an example of social incivilities, or "low-level breaches of community standards that signal an erosion of conventionally accepted norms and values" (LaGrange, Ferraro & Supancic 1992: 311). These "minor misbehavior[s]" are linked to

fear: “the fear of being bothered by disorderly people. Not violent people, nor, necessarily, criminals, but disreputable or obstreperous or unpredictable people” (Ibid: 312). These fears, in turn, are linked to people’s fear of crime, “because people associate ‘negative’ neighborhood conditions with criminal activity” placing panhandlers and their behaviour, once again, within a framework and discourse of criminality whether their behaviours are actually illegal or not (Ibid: 313). LaGrange et al. further note the discriminatory bias behind these associations since “assum[ing that] incivilities are ‘bad’ or ‘undesirable’ community characteristics that provide advanced warning of potential danger” overlooks the fact that many of these characteristics are common or unavoidable facets of living in poverty (Ibid: 328).

### 3. Strategies for Survival

In response to dealing with difficult issues surrounding identity, homeless people and people at risk of homelessness use different strategies to help them “salvage the self” (Wardhaugh 1999: 105). One of these strategies is “role distancing” (Ibid.). An example of the benefits of role distancing for maintaining a positive sense of self is illustrated by the case of Ruksana, who labelled herself ‘not homeless’ although she was without a home. Ruksana’s choice to label herself as ‘not homeless’ “represented a distancing from negative attitudes towards the homeless, rather than from her own experience of homelessness *per se*” (Ibid.). In this case, Ruksana used her agency, thereby “shaking off the passivity expected of social victims” to label herself ‘not homeless’ in order to be seen as ‘not deviant’ (Ibid). Panhandlers may also use role distancing to evade certain stigmas applied to poor people. They may claim that they are simply down on their luck

but do not panhandle as a rule, or that they are not currently employed but are actively looking for a job and will accept any employment they are offered.

Another strategy used by homeless individuals to help 'salvage the self' is invoking causal accounts (Snow & Anderson in Holstein & Gubrium 2003: 142). Causal accounts are "the reasons people give to render understandable their behavior or the situations in which they find themselves" (Ibid.). One example is cited by Snow and Anderson as evidenced when homeless individuals claim to be 'down on their luck'. As one man claims: "[I]t ain't my fault I'm on the streets. I didn't choose to become homeless. I just had a lot of bad luck" (Ibid.: 143). This claim shifts responsibility away from the panhandler in question and legitimizes begging as an acceptable response to suffering such hard luck.

Carter et al. cite several causes of panhandling in Winnipeg which may be offered by panhandlers in their own defense or by individuals who wish to support panhandlers. The study names "social issues of poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, lack of or high cost of housing, insufficiency of social programs, and low income [along with] drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness, increased levels of Aboriginal migration to cities ... marital or relationship breakdown, imprisonment and a history of physical or sexual abuse" as all being root causes leading individuals to panhandling (Carter et al. 2007: 5).

Wardhaugh points out that when individuals become homeless "the body assumes an increased, or even paramount, importance. Lacking access to that second skin, the home, the homeless body becomes the first and often only line of defence against a dangerous world" (1999: 102). Homeless persons much use their bodies in various ways to protect themselves as much as possible. Wardhaugh explains these "bodily reaction[s]

to the vulnerability of homelessness [to be] of two ... types: contraction or expansion. The homeless person may seek either to reduce the visibility of their physical body and the space occupied by it, or else to increase their *umwelt*, their sphere of protection (1999: 103). This is often done differently by women and men.

[S]treet homeless women typically disappear in to the shadows .... [while] some homeless people, and men in particular, choose not to 'disappear', but to expand their *umwelt* to include a wide area of the cityscape. For them, safety lies not in the shadows, but in claiming the streets as their own (Ibid.).

As well as dealing with rejection, difficult emotions, safety issues and discrimination based on their stigmatized identities, panhandlers must deal with the fact that "[e]ven when panhandling is ... mastered, the yield (in dollars, meals, etc.) remains far from steady" (Ibid.).

Encounters between passersby and panhandlers are defined as "mixed contacts" by Lankenau since they are "public encounters between the stigmatized and 'normals' [which] reveal a whole array of normative breaches involving issues such as gender, race, and employment status" (1999b: 299). This sentiment is confirmed by Farrell and Lee who note that "[n]ormatively, panhandlers breed resentment by violating a core tenet of the work ethic: that gainful employment is the acceptable way to earn a living, especially among men." (Snow & Anderson 1993 in 2003: 300). These arguments determine panhandlers to be discriminated against as the general rule, not as an exception.

However, there may be some hope, as Wardhaugh explains these normative breaches in other terms; stating that "[f]or the settled population, homelessness is a source of fascination and repulsion, an embodiment of their fears (of poverty and alienation) and their dreams (of freedom and simplicity)" (1999: 91). Even further, Wardhaugh notes that while "'being at home' is an unselfconscious and taken-for-granted

state, to be homeless brings with it an awareness of absence, a consciousness of difference, of deviation from the norm" (Ibid 93). In this case, consciousness of difference indicates that the stigma associated with homelessness may not be simply doled out by the rest of the population but also embraced by homeless individuals themselves. Either way, there is an implied division between 'us' and 'them' in encounters between homeless individuals, panhandlers and the rest of the population, and this division often includes the stigmatization of 'them' and the reinforcement of 'us' as normal.

The division between panhandlers and other Winnipeg residents is illustrated by people's reactions when they do encounter a panhandler. One beggar says "Some of the people just walk by and don't say nothin'. I call them zombies ... They just walk by you like they don't even see you" (Lankenau 1999: 183). Panhandlers have to deal with the fact that others' do not want to recognize them. And they sometimes manage to deal with it in highly creative ways. Lankenau found in his study of panhandlers that the interactions between panhandlers and the people walking by resemble roles performed in a play (Ibid.).

Lankenau cites five "panhandling routines" that are used in interactions between panhandlers and other Winnipeg residents and are quite sophisticated in their use of props, manipulation of appearance and one's ability to manipulate the emotions of the people around them. Both parties are also players in this performance as pedestrians use props to pretend that panhandlers are not seen or heard, continuing to avert their gaze as though a panhandler were a tree or other inanimate object (Lankenau 1999: 183). In



response to being ignored, panhandlers act out the part of the entertainer, the greeter, the servicer, the storyteller, and the aggressor (Ibid 2).

The entertainer uses humour, music or some form of performance to create a sense of familiarity and intimacy thereby reducing the feelings of strangeness and fear that may be the immediate reactions of passersby (Ibid 12). The greeter uses friendliness, flattery, and respect to encourage cordiality and donations as responses to panhandlers' requests (Ibid 11). The servicer transforms the awkwardness of the exchange to familiarity by offering a service and encouraging passersby to view the interaction as a business transaction which is a more familiar ritual than simply handing money over to strangers (Ibid. 9). The storyteller offers tales of woe and hardship to evoke pity and other emotions from passersby in the hopes that these emotions will increase passersby philanthropy and increase the panhandler's opportunities for a successful exchange (Ibid. 6). In contrast to these four roles, which encourage good feelings and seek to reduce the strangeness felt by passersby, the aggressor uses real or feigned aggression to evoke feelings of guilt or fear in pedestrians (Ibid.). All of these roles allow panhandlers to take control of a situation in which they are being ignored and their presence is being denied. Playing a role and transforming the entire interaction into a performance increases their chances for success as pedestrians are encouraged to play along.

In another study, Lankenau notes that "panhandlers gain status as legitimate persons in their own minds and in the eyes of passersby .... [through a]ssociating with persons of greater status [and c]onformity to social norms or adhering to higher status conventions" (1999b 299-301). However, "[s]ince a panhandler's low status partially stems from the violation of norms pertaining to issues such as housing, gender roles, and

employment status, conforming to these norms is typically beyond the realm of possibilities" (Ibid: 291). For example, many youth become homeless as a result of having "been forced out of their parents' home or .... [leaving] home because of emotional, sexual, and/or physical abuse" (Donahue, Este, Hofer & Miller 2004: 736). For these youth, violating norms of housing was not a choice they made lightly, yet they are stigmatized for making it. Donahue et al. also note barriers to change for homeless youth as including "limited finances, lack of education, employment limitations, stress, despair ... loneliness and alienation" (Ibid: 742).

Panhandlers are not the only people who can act to alter the ways others view them. Carter et al. explain the implications of several large structural and social issues that affect poor people and have a serious influence on panhandlers.

Economic restructuring and changes in the labour force mean that there are far fewer job opportunities for people who have low levels of skill (Carter et al. 2007: 5). Further, there are very high levels of poverty in Winnipeg with one out of every two individuals and one out of every three families living in poverty (Ibid. 7). Changes in social assistance regulations, including stricter eligibility requirements to qualify for social assistance in Winnipeg, marginalize people living in poverty even further and lead those individuals to seek out alternatives for supplementing their income (Ibid. 8). Deinstitutionalization of patients from mental health institutions leads to instability which, along with a lack of resources, can leave individuals feeling that they have few alternatives to panhandling (Ibid. 11). Low skill and education levels also influence the size of Winnipeg's panhandling population since 20.5 percent of Winnipeg's population lacks a high school diploma (Ibid), and lacking high school education interferes with

obtaining employment and status. Further, discrimination encountered by individuals seeking employment and housing plays a large role, especially for Aboriginal persons who may encounter higher levels of discrimination than other groups (Ibid 12).

Individuals may also panhandle to support addictions to alcohol and drugs or simply to support themselves after fleeing broken homes and abusive relationships (Ibid 14).

Publicizing these facts can help individuals and groups represent panhandling as a survival strategy rather than as an annoyance or a disturbance and can also create awareness so that people may react to panhandlers with sympathy rather than disdain.

There are also concrete actions that can be taken by individuals at all levels of society in order to better the circumstances panhandlers live in. Silver makes several recommendations for addressing the 'problem' of panhandling in Winnipeg. He notes that the creation of jobs that pay a living wage could increase the percentage of the population that is able to find employment and that is able to survive on their earnings (Silver 2000: 66). Stabilizing and increasing welfare eligibility and subsidies could also increase the number of people who are able to get by without resorting to panhandling. Providing funding and support for education and training programs oriented toward qualifying individuals for work and employing them on their terms – without controlling or coercing them – could increase the number of employable individuals in Winnipeg. Funding and subsidies for childcare could allow single mothers to pursue learning and employment opportunities that they may not currently have access to due to family responsibilities. Finally, active participation by governments to endorse positive images of panhandlers and poor individuals could decrease the obstacles these people face due to stigmas against them (Ibid.).

In an article by Lankenau, one panhandler reports on how he feels other people see him: "There are people who are gonna be rude to you – that are gonna look at you like you're an animal" (1999b: 298). Rudeness and dirty looks are both overt forms of discrimination that panhandlers experience. However, as the following excerpt from the Winnipeg Free Press illustrates, written discrimination, as found within news media articles, can be less aggressive, or seem less wrong:

"[S]uburbanites furiously tremble at the thought of having to go to the dreaded downtown, where crime is rampant, the panhandlers are pervasive and the homeless are just downright embarrassing to see" (July 21, 2006: A12).

One can imagine replacing the word "panhandler" in this statement with "paraplegic individual" and "homeless" with "homosexual". Anyone who complains about the pervasiveness of paraplegic individuals or equates homosexuality with embarrassment will be corrected for their discriminatory remarks. However, discrimination against panhandlers somehow slips under the radar of equality and social justice. Somehow, criminals, panhandlers and the homeless are all squeezed into one box, which is subsequently labelled 'not us – thank God' and left to sit on a shelf. Those who discriminate against panhandlers and the poor refuse to understand them as normal and are able to continue doing so for as long as they like. For those who want to maintain discriminatory views, who want to continue to treat a population unfavourably, it is really not so difficult.

## ***Part 2: A Phenomenology of Discrimination***

### **2.1 Accomplishing Meaning and Normalcy**

The social world is not presented to us already imbued with meaning, values or significance. According to Garfinkel, "members' inquiries are constituent features of the

settings they analyze .... [B]y his accounting practices the member makes familiar, commonplace activities of everyday life recognizable *as* familiar, commonplace activities" (1967: 9). Through interacting with each other and our environments, and in interpreting these interactions as meaningful, we *create* a meaningful world. Furthermore, the meaning we attribute to the world is neither stable nor fixed but is subject to change according to changes in actors and interpreters.

Since meaning is subject to change in each new interpretation, the meaning of a social action cannot pre-exist the action itself (Schutz 1967: 42). For example, children may see cookies as those things that should be eaten in the greatest quantities their bellies can hold, while dieters see cookies as a sign of weakness. Eating cookies does not essentially mean either fulfilling childhood dreams of sugar binges or cheating on a diet. The meaning of eating cookies changes with each new cookie eater. Furthermore, actors' behaviour is motivated, or intended toward a goal, and meaning cannot be simply attached afterward (Ibid). For example, the child who does not eat cookies could be allergic to the ingredients and would therefore be motivated to abstain from eating cookies by the desire to avoid an allergic reaction. We cannot simply define the child's abstinence as abnormal childhood behaviour when it is perfectly normal behaviour for someone who suffers allergies. Finally, once we have interpreted the world as meaningful, we forget that our interpretation constituted that meaning (Pollner 1987: 100). We forget that the world came to our attention without meaning and that it is only meaningful because we made it so. In fact, in order to live meaningfully in the social world, we *must* forget our authorship of it.

We accomplish the meaning of others' behaviour and help others accomplish the meaning we wish to communicate through what Schutz calls 'orientation'. Orientation to another refers to our awareness of the other, our awareness of the other's behaviour, and to the meaning assumed of the other's actions. As a social actor I use my common sense of "What Anyone Like Us Necessarily Knows" to interpret the world around me (Garfinkel 1967: 54). So long as I assume I am seeing what another person would see, that I am interpreting meaning that another person would similarly interpret, then I am living within the natural attitude, which allows me to assume that my world is concrete and thereby meaningful (Schutz 1967: 105). I am consistently orienting my interpretations toward what I assume holds true for others in a similar situation.

Schutz uses the term 'simultaneity' to refer to the "basic and necessary assumption which I make that your stream of consciousness has a structure analogous to mine" (Ibid 103). Husserl also explains this assumption as being that "the world-about-them and the world-about-me [are] one and the same world" (1967: 105). It is therefore possible for me to orient to you and your behaviour as meaningful because I assume that your motives mirror what my motives would be were I walking in your shoes. Furthermore, this holds true for language as well as action, since "[i]n every case a communication presupposes a shared language" (Schleiermacher in Mueller-Vollmer 1985: 75). I assume that when you speak, you are using the same language that I am using and that you intend the same meaning that I would intend with those words.

When I speak of intended meaning, I am also speaking of motive. According to Schutz, "each actor in the social world, if asked to give the meaning of his act, would

enumerate certain motives" (Schutz 1978: 32). Motive is the rationalization behind social action.

In accomplishing the meaning of speech, much of what is said is "such that [its] sense cannot be decided by an auditor unless he knows or assumes something about the biography and the purposes of the speaker, the circumstances of the utterance, the previous course of the conversation" (Garfinkel 1967: 40). The actor and interpreter assign each other the duty of "furnish[ing] whatever unstated understandings are required. Much therefore of what is actually reported is not mentioned" (Ibid: 37). Much of what is understood as the motives for speech or action are intuited by the interpreter rather than provided by the actor.

One form of these unstated understandings are Pollner's 'intuitions of the real' (1987: 28). Pollner gives the example of two mothers who approached Solomon, each claiming to be the mother of one child. Solomon's solution was to propose that the child be cut in half and distributed evenly between the two women. One woman pleaded that the child simply be given to the other. Solomon inferred that this was the rightful mother of the child and gave the child to her. This solution "is predicated upon substantive commonsense assumptions about 'mothers' .... For Solomon, 'real mothers' place the well-being of their own child above any other consideration" (Pollner 1987: 32). This is an example of Solomon's 'intuition of the real' whereby he relies upon his common sense to inform him that "regardless of substance a real thing is determinate and non-contradictory" (Ibid: 28). Husserl also refers to these "background intuitions" which are present in every perception of the world (1967: 117). However, our intuitions of the real deceive us as to the character of the world; it is not determinate or non-contradictory.

Meaning is neither stable nor fixed. Rather, meaning is “always open to further disclosure or [to] obtain new meaning in the context of future events (or the new uncovering of prior events)” (Wieder 1974: 202). Thus, rather than having one true meaning, we have multiple alternatives of meaning.

These alternatives can and do lead to competing versions of reality, what Pollner refers to as the ironicization of experience (1987: 73), which

requires a choice as to which of several competing experiences of the same world, each of which for an instant tacitly claims to have faithfully reflected the world, will be accredited as *the* version of the world .... [*W*]e are liable to think differently of the same and, ... when we have done so, we can choose which way of thinking to adhere to and which to disregard (Ibid.).

In choosing which version of the real to adhere to and which to disregard we attempt to distinguish between which version is essentially true, and which is false. And we have a third option, falling in between declarations of truth and falsehood, when “the attempt to accept what is said as true fails [and] we try to ‘understand’ the text ... as another’s opinion” (Gadamer 1989: 294). Although there is an advantage held by the version of truth which “appear[s] as normal within the compass of my practical interests” (Husserl 1967: 139), what I attempt to understand “is always more than an unfamiliar opinion: it is always possible truth” (Gadamer 1989: 394). In other words, while an object of inquiry may never be essentially determinate, it is always potentially true.

The same holds for normalcy since, while a mode of behaviour may not be interpreted as dominant, it is always potentially normal. Norms are accomplished by and between social actors in much the same way as meaning in general. However, in the case of normalcy, it is a specific type of meaning - ‘I can recognize this! This is normal’ - that is being accomplished. Furthermore, norms are no more stable than meaning in general.



The rules by which we are said to act can vary in each occasion of social action; thus, social action itself cannot be made predictable from the discovery of a rule (Wieder 1974: 40). Rather, the rule itself will shift according to the rationalization of behaviour by actors and interpreters.

We rely upon our own common sense knowledge of the world and what certain actions mean within it to assume the Other's sense. Then we act accordingly so that our actions will be successfully interpreted. Furthermore, members' accounts "are constituent features" of normative activity (Wieder 1974: 203). Rather than conforming to an external norm that precedes social action, normalcy is accomplished through talk about social action. For example, an inmate who asks, "'Where can I find that meeting where I can get an overnight pass?'" is talking his action – attendance at a meeting – into conformity with 'the code' (Ibid: 185). He is implicitly saying "I'm not going to that meeting because I'm interested ... I'm going ... just because I would like ... the reward of an overnight pass ... I'm not a kiss-ass" (Ibid.). The prisoner orients himself to how he imagines others would perceive his action, to interpretations that have been made of similar actions in the past, and to the potential abnormality of his action. He normalizes his behaviour with his account which constitutes both the code; with its infinite modes of violation it cannot possibly precede all social action, and the normalcy of his action.

However, an interpreter can and often does disagree with an actor that the action they observe is normal. In this case, the interpreter or observer can normalize the observed behaviour, and often does. "[W]e cannot know whether a given act will be categorized as deviant until the response of others has occurred. Deviance is not a quality that lies in behaviour itself, but in the interaction between the person who commits an act

and those who respond to it" (Pollner 1987: 90). When the actions of those around me no longer appear normal, I rely upon my common sense and lived experience to "make the strange actions intelligible and to restore the situation to normal appearances (Garfinkel 1967: 47). I can demand explanations: "What's the matter? What's gotten into you? .... Are you sick? .... Why are you mad? .... are you just stupid?" (Garfinkel 1967: 47). The interpreter will seek out what is not being said through recourse to their common sense intuitions of the world, the actor they are faced with, and the actor's imagined motives (Wieder 1974: 197). I will rely upon my orientation to the actor, what I know of him or her, and what I know of the world in order to make sense of the actor's behaviour.

One way in which this is accomplished is through the reduction of "the Other's act to its typical motives, including their reference to typical situations, typical ends, typical means, etc." (Schutz 1978: 52). And in finding the typical motives, "recourse is had to a personal ideal type" (Schutz 1967: 229). Once the ideal type has been established, we can assume that their future actions will correspond to this type. Furthermore, once we have established a personal ideal type, if "the person does not act as predicted, we must assume that we have applied the wrong ideal type to the person in question [and] look around for *another* personal ideal type which *will* make his action comprehensible" (Ibid: 228). In this sense, the typical becomes normal and, so long as an appropriate ideal type can be applied, the individual in question can be interpreted as a normal actor.

## 2.2 The Fine Art of Discrimination

It follows that if we can potentially mistype someone, we can also potentially misunderstand them. This can occur when "the speaker and hearer differ in their use of

language and in their ways of formulating thoughts ... as for example, when the meanings of two words are confused" ( Schliermacher in Mueller-Vollmer 1985: 82). Misunderstandings can occur in the interpretation of behaviour as well as in the interpretation of speech. In other words, one's behaviour can mistakenly be interpreted as normal when it is not, when the actor's or interpreter's logical rationalization for the action is absent. Behaviour can also be mistakenly interpreted as abnormal when it is normal and the actor's or interpreter's rationalization for the action is present.

For example, in the case of panhandlers, Hansen states that

[p]anhandlers and squeegee kids might lack a lobbying network, but what they do is honest and defensible. Beggars sell pity, and ... the opportunity for the donor to feel important by assisting. Often their antics can comprise legitimate street entertainment .... [T]hey will ... give superb directions or suggest a good, cheap place to eat ... [and] squeegee kids can be useful, cleaning my filthy windshield even after I admit to having no means of compensation (2006: A15).

This is an attempt to counter representations of panhandlers and squeegee kids and their actions as dishonest, indefensible, illegitimate, and useless by rationalizing panhandling within a discourse of productivity, work, and legitimacy. The author assumes that the reader will understand honesty, defensibility, legitimacy and usefulness in terms of normalcy and uses this shared understanding to attempt to normalize the behaviour of panhandlers or to prove that the assumed deviance of panhandling is simply a misunderstanding of what panhandling 'really' is.

It is always possible that the meaning one wishes to communicate will not be successful. With the dominant representations of panhandlers being those of inadequacy, drunkenness, addiction, and beliefs that panhandlers "are of a 'lower form of life'" (Greeno 2005: A11), panhandlers have been unable to effectively communicate themselves as normal and legitimate citizens and society has been unable to interpret

them as such. It is likely that both parties have failed because even when one's behaviour is seen to be abnormal, the ball rolls into the other court where the other party still has the option of normalizing it. If panhandlers fail to achieve the meaning of good and legitimate citizens, other individuals do have the option of interpreting them as such nonetheless. And some do. However, the dominant representation of panhandlers as inadequate implies that this legitimation does not occur often. This is a perfect example of how powerful discrimination can be in the hands of one who wants to discriminate. When individuals do not want to see panhandlers as legitimate citizens, as 'just like us', they simply refuse to.

According to Chladenius, "[i]f one misinterprets a passage and is conscious of it, yet still tries to present the interpretation as a correct one, then one wilfully misrepresents the meaning of a text" (in Mueller-Vollmer 1985: 63). Misrepresentations, when accomplished rationally, become what Gadamer calls potential truths. By 'rationally' I mean according to phenomenological sociology's method of understanding. For me to be rational is to orient myself to your point of view, assuming that you understand the world to be the same way as I understand it to be; or else it is to admit that we both understand the world differently but that neither understanding of the world is wrong and that both are potentially true. On the flip side, to be *irrational* is to recognize that you legitimately view the world differently than I do but to maintain that your view is wrong and mine is right. For example, panhandlers are people, as are the rest of us, and there is no essential difference between panhandlers and everyone else in terms of our human-being-ness. However, within the newspaper articles I have at hand, panhandlers are referred to as "addicts", "drunks" and a "lower form of life" (Greeno 2005: A11), indicating that they

are reduced to their behaviours – addiction to drugs, alcohol consumption – and that they are less *something* than other individuals are, all the while irrationally ignoring the possibility that “[t]hey’re just people like anyone else that for some reason need to get some money” (Ibid).

Misrepresentation is a handy tool for the discriminartist to use when discriminating against others. And by ‘discriminating’ I am referring to the refusal or inability to accomplish the normalcy of another, wanting to obstruct another from appearing normal and maintaining a negative representation of them as individuals or of the population they belong to. For example, misrepresenting panhandlers as “addicts and drunks” (Greeno 2005: A11), and misrepresenting panhandling as “unnecessary to survival” reinforces beliefs that panhandlers are deviant – not like us – and that panhandling is not a normal tool for survival in society (Prism Business Media 2005: 10).

According to Gadamer, when faced with another’s argument, “[i]f we want to understand, we will try to make his arguments even stronger” (1989: 292). On the flip side, if we do not want to understand, we will do everything we can to make his arguments weaker. If we do not want to come to understand panhandlers as normal people, just like ‘us’, we ignore the potential truth of this argument, and even weaken the argument by defining panhandlers in terms of substance abuse, failure, illegitimacy and uselessness, automatically transforming real people into “lower form[s] of life” (Greeno 2005: A 11).

Schliermacher defines active misunderstanding as that which “[o]ccurs when one reads something into a text because of one’s own bias. In such a case the author’s meaning cannot possibly emerge” (in Mueller-Vollmer 1985: 83). The same is true of

social action. The discriminartist can actively misunderstand social action because of his or her own bias, thereby obstructing the emergence of the actors intended meaning.

According to Dilthey, bias operates in the following way:

In the elementary forms of understanding we infer from a number of cases in which a series of similar life-expressions reflects similar mental content that the same relation will hold in other similar cases. From the recurrence of the same meaning of a word, gesture, an overt action, we infer their meaning in a fresh case (Dilthey in Mueller-Vollmer 1985: 163).

Thus we assume that what we found in one instance holds true in similar instances, that what we found to be positive remains positive and what we found to be negative remains negative. Bias, or prejudice, is inherent in every apprehending of the world (Heidegger in Ibid: 223, Gadamer 1989: 271). Furthermore, there are cases where bias is true and “by which we *understand*” (Ibid: 299). For example, I can infer, after tasting chocolate ice cream that chocolate ice cream tastes good, and that when I encounter chocolate ice cream in the future it will taste good as well. However, we must distinguish “legitimate prejudices from the countless others” which are false (Gadamer 1989: 277). It is through false prejudice, a negative form of discriminatory bias, that we misunderstand (Ibid: 299).

In terms of discrimination against panhandlers, we can look at the example of a by law, suggested in Toronto, “that would include a provision that ‘no person can impede any other person’s reasonable enjoyment of day-to-day activities through panhandling’” (Rosenthal 2006: A13). This suggestion came about in reaction to the news that “councillor Michael Thompson had been assaulted by a panhandler the previous day” (Ibid.). Toronto’s City Council, in considering this bylaw, is acting based on biased and prejudicial judgements by inferring from one case in which a panhandler criminally assaulted an individual that this holds true in similar cases and all panhandlers are

criminal and potentially dangerous and must be stopped. As Rosenthal argues, “[t]o use the allegation of an assault by one panhandler as a vehicle to increase repression of all panhandlers is similar to racism: a wrongdoing by one member of a group is used to attack the entire group” (Ibid.). The prejudicial judgement that panhandlers are criminal is false. *Criminals* are criminal; panhandlers are people. The judgement that panhandling is an impediment to the general population’s “reasonable enjoyment of day-to-day activities” is also false, not to mention dramatic. Based on the assumption that assault is an impediment to reasonable enjoyment of the day, and the assumption that if one panhandler is abusive, all panhandlers are abusive, the councillor responsible for suggesting this bylaw further assumes that all panhandlers impede all societal member’s enjoyment. *Some* panhandlers *will* be aggressive, in much the same way that *some* members of the rest of the population will be aggressive. However, in no way does ‘panhandling’ directly translate into ‘abuse’.

Thus, false prejudices occur when the discriminartist refuses to recognize that meaning is neither stable nor fixed and that alternative forms of truth are possible. They occur when the discriminartist refuses to grant legitimacy to another’s opinion and maintains that the other’s opinion is simply wrong. False prejudice succeeds when the other’s behaviour contradicts the discriminartist’s sense of coherence and normalcy, but the discriminartist refuses to provide whatever rationalization would normalize the other’s action.

Husserl argues that “intuition and the intuited, perception and the thing perceived, though essentially related to each other, are in principle and of necessity *not really ... one and united*” (1967: 130). Our intuitions and perceptions, what we interpret the object of

our inquiry to be, are based on our prejudices, our past experiences of like objects, and are not equivalent to that which we actually observe. Again, we see this illustrated in the example of discrimination against panhandlers: in one newspaper article the Downtown BIZ is quoted as saying “[t]he many social agencies in Winnipeg do such a great job of providing the fundamental basics of food, clothing and shelter – and are so well-supported by businesses and the public – that no one needs to panhandle in order to feed themselves” (Hansen 2006: A15). Thus the perception is that panhandlers are not panhandling out of necessity and are therefore illegitimate. Contrast this with the statement “[Panhandlers] are not doing this [panhandling] because they like doing it, ... If anything, it’s a humiliating experience” (Greeno 2005: A11). This illustrates a completely different perception of the same subject. Since panhandling cannot logically be both legitimate and illegitimate simultaneously, this example shows that perception and the thing perceived are not one and the same. However, our intuitions and perceptions are how we come to know that which we intuit and perceive. Thus, false intuitions and perceptions lead to false understandings of objects, individuals and actions.

According to Heidegger, “[i]n every case ... interpretation is grounded in *something we have in advance* – in a *forehaving*” (in Mueller-Vollmer 1985: 223). The prejudices which lead to all interpretations of the world, whether these interpretations are positive or negative, are biases that we bring with us when we confront the objects of our inquiry. Also, according to Husserl, within the natural attitude,

[t]his world is not there for me as a mere *world of facts and affairs*, but, ... as a *world of values, a world of goods, a practical world*. Without further effort on my part I find the things before me furnished not only with the qualities that befit their positive nature, but with value-characters such as beautiful or ugly, agreeable or disagreeable, pleasant or unpleasant, and so forth .... The same considerations apply of course just as well to the men and beasts in my



surroundings ... They are my 'friends' or my 'foes', my 'servants' or 'superiors', 'strangers' or 'relatives', and so forth (1967: 103).

Thus, we forget that our perceptions are grounded in our forehavings, we forget that we came to an object of inquiry with anything whatsoever. Furthermore, in coming to understand one another we attempt to apply ideal types. And when we discover that one behaves in a manner that is contradictory to the ideal type we have applied, we look through our lived experiences of similar behaviour for another type to apply. However, when our past experiences of like individuals or behaviour is negative, when our forehavings indicate that we are faced with individuals or behaviours that are disagreeable, incompetent, or illegitimate, we assume that the ideal type holds true in the current situation and apply it once again.

In the case of panhandlers, the negative ideal type is consistently applied in the formation of bylaws, in complaints against panhandling, in outright discrimination against panhandlers as individuals or a population. One newspaper article tells us "many people wrongly believe panhandlers are all addicts and drunks or are of a 'lower form of life'" (Greeno2005: A11). These forehavings – that panhandlers' needs are illegitimate, that panhandlers are addicts and drunks, undeserving, and poor because of personal failures – are used to justify discriminating against them and denying them help.

Another prejudice that the discriminartist can bring to an object of inquiry is tradition. "That which has been sanctioned by tradition and custom has an authority that is nameless, and our finite historical being is marked by the fact that the authority of what has been handed down to us ... always has power over our attitudes and behavior" (Gadamer 1989: 280). The discriminartist benefits from representing tradition as fixed throughout history, although "[e]ven the most genuine and pure tradition does not persist

because of the inertia of what once existed. It needs to be affirmed, embraced, cultivated” (Ibid: 281). The affirmation, embracing, and cultivation of tradition constitutes the accomplishment of tradition. For example, the tradition of the man walking on the street-side of the sidewalk so that the woman should not be splashed by the contents of a chamber pot thrown out a window is now absurd, as is the tradition of women staying home from work because they essentially make the better parent. While some may continue to affirm, embrace and cultivate the latter tradition, it is being left behind by others, which proves that it is not fixed and that the choice to reject tradition is possible. Meanwhile, the former tradition is no longer affirmed, embraced or cultivated. On the flip side, in the case of discrimination against panhandlers, the tradition of “working to provide for the family” is affirmed, embraced and cultivated to reinforce the belief that “[p]anhandling is unnecessary to survival” and legitimize discrimination against panhandlers (Prism Business Media 2005: 10).

As is the case with tradition, “[o]bviously we can keep seeing things in a certain way while at the same time knowing that doing so is absurd” (Gadamer 1989: 449). For example,

[w]hen we speak of the sun setting, it is the appearance presented to a man who is not himself in motion. It is the sun that comes and goes as its rays reach or leave us. Thus, to our vision the setting of the sun is a reality .... we can mentally liberate ourselves from the evidence of our senses, and because we can do this we can see things from the rational viewpoint of the Copernican theory ... [but] what we see with our eyes has a genuine reality for us (Ibid.)

Just as it is our prerogative to continue seeing that it is the sun which rises and sets while at the same time knowing that we are wrong, it is the prerogative of the discriminartist to continue interpreting individuals and their behaviour prejudicially as negative ideal types despite evidence to the contrary. Despite the evidence advocating panhandlers as

legitimate and normal citizens, panhandlers continue to be seen as an embarrassment (Winnipeg Free Press 2006: A12), as criminal (Preston 2006: A11), as “unacceptable” (Shurtz 2005: A1), as “nuisances” (Prism Business Media 2005: 10), and in any number of other discriminatory terms.

## CHAPTER 2 - METHODOLOGY

My methodology section begins with a discussion of how I chose my sample. Then I discuss my reasons for deciding to conduct a qualitative analysis of representations of panhandlers in newspapers as well as the method by which I conducted this analysis. This section continues with a discussion of the limitations of my methodological choices. Following this is a discussion of how phenomenological sociological theory fit into my project methodologically. I give a brief description of the ethical aspects of my project and conclude this section with a discussion of the methodological issues I encountered during the course of my research.

### *Part 1 - Sample*

My research is oriented toward examining discriminatory representations of panhandlers in print news media in Winnipeg. I chose to study discrimination against panhandlers because panhandlers have recently become, once again, a politically topical population in Winnipeg. In 2005, city council passed a panhandling bylaw severely limiting the areas within the city in which panhandling may occur legally. This bylaw is an amendment of the 2000 Obstructive Solicitation bylaw and stipulates that, in order to ensure the safety of Winnipeg citizens and their freedom to conduct and enjoy their daily lives without obstruction, “[n]o person shall solicit in a manner which causes an obstruction ... [or] solicit a captive audience” (City of Winnipeg 2000, City of Winnipeg 2005). The bylaw further specifies that ‘captive audience’ refers to people around bank machines, pay phones, public transit stops or taxi stands, people “in or on a public transit vehicle”, people in elevators, getting in or out of vehicles or in parking lots, people on patios or people located within “red zones” which the downtown area of Winnipeg has

been divided into (City of Winnipeg 2005). Some communities and individuals applaud the passing of this bylaw while others protest that the law inhibits panhandlers' rights to free speech, that the law itself is discriminatory, or that the law is redundant in the face of laws against assault and harassment that currently exist (Edgar 2005b: b1, Edgar 2005c: a3). Either way, public discussion of panhandlers is rich with representations of panhandlers as both legitimate and illegitimate, illustrating panhandlers and their behaviours positively or negatively depending on the speaker and his or her own views.

I conducted a qualitative analysis of print news media coverage on panhandlers in Winnipeg. My analysis involved two main steps. First, I coded the articles retrieved for representational themes that are used to characterize panhandlers and panhandling. Second, I examined these representations as means of accomplishing panhandlers selves. I will explain this process more fully below. To complete this analysis, I gathered a sample consisting of all articles written in the Winnipeg Free Press and the Winnipeg Sun in the past ten years on the subject of panhandling.

I chose to examine newspaper representations of panhandlers since the construction and maintenance of appearances of normalcy within society depend on the socialization of social actors. Learning and unlearning our roles, our positions within society, and the positions of others is what socialization is all about. Newspaper coverage is one medium through which we are socialized.

Henderson-King found that people often develop their feelings toward another population through indirect contact (1999: 336). This means that negative feelings and hostility toward another population are often based on second hand information, which often "conveys the most extreme aspects of a group stereotype" and represents members

of a population homogenously (Ibid). Newspapers are one example of an indirect source of information about panhandlers. Newspapers are thus a rich source of data for my purposes as they are a field where the struggle to construct the meaning of panhandlers and their activities – whether they are deviants, whether they are normal, whether their activities are any of our business at all – is ongoing. To get a more complete and accurate sample of newspaper depictions of panhandling and panhandlers in Winnipeg, I chose two newspapers for analysis: the Winnipeg Free Press and the Winnipeg Sun. These are the two major newspapers produced within the city of Winnipeg, and they often present various opinions on the same issues.

Examining newspaper articles from the past ten years allowed me to get an idea of how representations of panhandling have been maintained or changed over time, which representations appear to be dominant and which representations are new. Examining ten years' worth of data also allows me to be more accurate in my findings, as it increases the probability that my sample is representational.

In order to retrieve my data I used several methods. To begin with, I used the Winnipeg Free Press online archival search to find the titles of all relevant articles from the past seven years. I used the search terms 'panhandler', 'panhandling', 'panhandle', 'beggar', 'begging', 'squeegee kid' and 'homeless' to ensure that I would find all articles written on the subject of panhandling. Since not all homeless individuals panhandle, I filtered through the results from the search term 'homeless' to ensure that I was only using articles referring to panhandling. I then used the Ebsco Host database to retrieve all the articles from the Winnipeg Free Press from the past three years and the microfilm centre at the University of Manitoba library to retrieve all the remaining articles from the

Winnipeg Free Press and to find all relevant articles from the Winnipeg Sun. Searching the microfilms involves skimming all pages of the newspapers from the time period I am interested in, allowing me to read all article titles and read articles if necessary to find data that is appropriate to my research. I then printed the articles found that discussed panhandlers and panhandling.

## **1.2 Sampling Omissions**

For my research, I did not conduct interviews with panhandlers, those who work with panhandlers, Winnipeg city councillors, private business owners or members of the general population of Winnipeg. I also omitted analyses of television and radio representations of panhandlers and spoken discourse from my analysis. These omissions limited my study in terms of breadth; however, analyzing ten years' worth of newspaper articles, which include various perspectives on the panhandling issue, from both the Winnipeg Sun and the Winnipeg Free Press gave me enough information for my purposes. Future research may be interested in looking into these other sources.

Finally, I chose to examine only articles referring to panhandlers and their activities as opposed to doing a comparative study and comparing articles on panhandling to articles discussing the social status of another population. I chose to omit a comparative analysis because, within the articles on panhandling, there are arguments both in favour of and against recognizing the legitimacy of panhandlers and their distinctive practices. Thus, my research already has a comparative slant, as I have examined all the articles found on the subject of panhandling and one aspect of my research involves examining how discriminatory representations of panhandlers are maintained in the face of positive illustrations of this population.

## ***Part 2 - Method***

Phenomenological sociology suggests that individuals should try come to know the world in a new way, we should mistrust the ways by which we currently learn about the world we live in. Newspapers, television, religious authorities, every source of learning has been found to present distorted versions of the world by suggesting that certain individuals, populations or values hold special significance while “omitting or recasting the contributions of minorities and women, the defeats and atrocities of our country, and ... alternative values and life styles” (Schwartz & Jacobs 1979: 353). Phenomenological sociology is an attempt to react to these distorted sources of knowledge by starting over from personal experience (Ibid.). While it is impossible to simply forget everything we have learned in order to restart the learning process with a clean slate, phenomenological sociology suggests that we simply make the attempt, not to forget our experiences and prior knowledge, and not to value it as positive or negative, true or false, but to attempt to bracket that knowledge and set it aside (Ibid. 354). If we bracket our previous assumptions about the values of our world, our roles in it, the meaning of our behaviours, we can allow them to present themselves to us in a new way. We can allow ourselves to understand social actions in ways that we were previously incapable of. So, in order to conduct a phenomenological analysis of panhandlers situations, there is no rule book. There are no rules for how to set aside prior assumptions and to rebuild individual knowledge (Ibid: 355), but we can try.

I chose to make the attempt by conducting a qualitative analysis of representations of panhandlers within newspaper articles. I used coding to separate representations of panhandlers from the rest of the text, and to segregate these representations into



categories. I used connective strategies to locate these categories of representation within phenomenological sociology's claims of the accomplishment of self. I will discuss coding and connective strategies in more depth below.

My research involves examining one site where panhandlers are talked and written about: newspapers. In order to examine representations of panhandlers I needed to locate them. The method I chose for locating and analysing newspaper representations of panhandlers is what Schwartz and Jacobs call 'hunt and peck ethnography' which is used for studying topics, not people (1979: 289). This method entails the examination of examples, illustrations or representations, which are used to teach their audience about the significance of social phenomena (Ibid: 292). In my case, the examples I am examining are representations of panhandlers and their behaviours within newspaper texts.

I used coding, which allowed me to fracture the articles I collected to isolate different depictions of panhandlers within representational categories that I would later analyse as phenomenological constructions of panhandlers' selves (Maxwell 2005: 96). For my research, I used colour coding to highlight and separate representations of panhandlers from the rest of the text. I used different coloured highlighters to mark each representation of panhandlers according to the coding categories I distinguished. I will talk more about these categories below. I made a table of my findings to illustrate how many times each mode of representation occurred, with a separate column to account for voice and to illustrate which representations were being backed by powerful figures in Winnipeg, such as the mayor or members of the police. I transferred this table into Microsoft Word, and it is attached to this thesis as an appendix. I counted these

representations to form conclusions about consistent and popular modes of constructing the meaning of panhandling.

There are different types of coding categories, and I used both substantive and theoretical categories in my research. Substantive categories are categories that are primarily descriptive, “stay close to the data categorized, and don’t inherently imply a more abstract theory” (Maxwell 2005: 97). These include both categories taken from the words of the text and categories based on my own description of the data. These categories are especially significant because they allow me to incorporate analyses of representational schemes that emerge from the data and that I had not anticipated prior to analysing the texts (Ibid: 98). I have included a chart in my appendices of coding schemes used to analyse the newspaper articles I collected.

Theoretical categories allow researchers to locate their data within a more general context and may be based on prior theory, including similar research projects conducted in the past (Ibid: 97). For example, a preliminary qualitative analysis of print news media coverage of panhandling in Winnipeg revealed several frameworks within which panhandling has been represented. One of these categories accounted for representations of panhandling in terms of safety. Panhandlers and the practice of panhandling were discussed in terms of either the danger they present to other citizens of Winnipeg or the safety Winnipeggers should feel around panhandlers who are represented as harmless (Edgar 2005a: a1, Oleson, T. 2006: a15). This analysis also found representations of panhandlers situating them within a framework of rights. This can refer both to panhandlers’ rights to free speech (Edgar 2005a: a1), and the rights of passersby to the unobstructed enjoyment of their daily activities (Ibid.).

Another theoretical category that emerged from representations of panhandlers concerned difference and othering. Pascale, for example, found that

Although most newspaper articles do not use class to characterize individuals, for people who cannot afford housing, their status as homeless precedes all other information about them, most generally, even their name. People without housing are commonly identified simply as 'the homeless' .... These practices ... divide people into two groups: *the homeless* and everyone else (2005: 257).

In addition to this type of othering are the distinctions made between panhandlers, dividing them between 'good' and 'bad', presenting one group as normal and the second group as 'other' (La Grange et. al 1992: 328).

In other studies, researchers have found poor individuals to be illustrated alternatively as victims and agents of their circumstances (Pascale 2005: 254), persons and non-persons (Ibid. 258), legitimate and illegitimate (Reid & Tom 2006: 411). In addition to these frames of representation, Pascale points out the practice of declaring the gender of the subjects in news reports: "Only when people do not have housing, do reporters write about them as if they were neither women nor men" (2005: 258). Thus, non-gendered subjects is also a significant coding scheme to use in my analysis of newspaper articles on the subject of panhandling.

Boreus constructs a typology of discursive discrimination, which is "discrimination carried out through the use of language" (Boreus 2006: 406). Drawing on Boreus' findings, I looked at four additional means by which discrimination takes place. First, she discusses "[n]egative other-presentations, the presentation of 'others' as inferior" through negative labels, descriptions and associations (Ibid. 410). Next, she discusses "exclusion from discourse" including exclusion of voices and "invisibility making" (Ibid. 414-415). Third, "[p]roposals that point towards unfavourable non-

linguistic treatment” constitute examples of discursive discrimination, including “support for, normalization of, existing unfavourable treatment” (Ibid. 410). This form is especially relevant to my research, because the panhandling by-law passed by Winnipeg’s city council is exactly that: a “proposal that point[s] toward unfavourable non-linguistic treatment” of panhandlers within the city of Winnipeg. Fourth, Boreus discusses “discriminatory objectification”, which is the practice of “people [being] discussed as if they lacked feelings, needs and wishes: denial of subjectivity” and “people discussed in other ways as if they were things, for instance, tools” (Ibid.).

Talk about social action is a significant method for establishing meaning (Wieder 1974: 203). Therefore, the meaning of panhandling (whether it is normal behaviour or deviant) and panhandlers (whether they are normal social actors or deviant) is constituted through talk about panhandling and panhandlers. Examining talk about panhandling reveals how discriminatory representations of panhandlers are normalized, legitimized and stabilized.

## **2.2 Methodological Limitations**

One limit in conducting a qualitative analysis of representations of panhandlers in newspapers concerns the issue of representation itself. According to phenomenological sociology, language is capable of constructing the meaning of one subject in different ways at the same time. Thus, my analysis is not a method that will get at the empirical truth behind the data. My research will not provide any single answer to the questions of what panhandlers really are and what is the true meaning of their behaviour. However, this is also the reason that a qualitative analysis of representations of panhandling is especially appropriate for answering my question: how does phenomenological sociology

account for negative discursive discrimination against panhandlers in print news media in Winnipeg? Because not all ways of representing panhandlers are negative or discriminatory, I will be able to examine both normalizations of panhandlers and acceptance of their activities and *abnormalizations* of them and negative discrimination against them in Winnipeg.

The issue of representation also arises because multiple meanings of speech are possible. Therefore, I may read articles about panhandlers and their behaviours with a certain orientation or understanding and miss other potential meanings that another reader may differently, but legitimately, interpret. Furthermore, the meaning I interpret may be incidental to the author, or unintended. Even further, because newspaper articles are filtered – written by the author, edited by the editor – the intention of the original author's words may be skewed by the time I read it.

This brings us to an issue of determining motive. My analysis will not illustrate the motive of individuals who produce or perpetuate certain representations of panhandling. Without interviewing those who produce and perpetuate discourses surrounding panhandling, we cannot ask for the motivation behind their use. However, because I am looking at discursive discrimination against panhandlers in terms of the 'selves' that such discrimination accomplishes, the motive of those who commit the discriminatory acts, whether intentionally discriminatory or not, is of secondary concern and is not directly linked to my research question.

Finally, I may also miss out on specific representations of panhandlers and their behaviours because there may be other ways of depicting panhandling that the newspapers exclude and that I will not have access to. However, because I am

questioning discriminatory constructions of panhandlers within newspaper articles, depictions of panhandlers that occur outside of newspaper coverage are not specifically linked to the aims of this project.

### **2.3 Using a phenomenological orientation**

The final step in answering my thesis question involves the examination of phenomenological sociology's ability to account for discursive discrimination against panhandlers in newspaper articles. My analysis shows that a phenomenological approach is perfectly capable of explaining how the different modes of representing panhandlers in Winnipeg newspapers function as accomplishments of panhandlers' selves.

### **2.4 Ethics**

My interest for this project is in examining representations of panhandlers in newspaper articles. Because newspaper articles are already available to the public, and because I did not perform any interviews or use any type of confidential data source, I did not require the Ethics Committee's approval for my research.

### **2.5 Methodological Issues**

My first methodological issue arose in the data collection stage of my research. Twelve articles were too dark or smudged to be legible even after zooming in and focusing the print. These articles had to be omitted from my study, even though the article titles indicated that they were covering some aspect of panhandling, because they could not be read.

The literature I read to inform me of issues surrounding the subject of panhandling led me to include certain coding schemes (objectification, denial of feelings, and reduction to behaviours, belittling, sexism and racism) but these themes did not

appear often in my sample of newspaper articles. In the case of sexist and racist representations, most articles simply referred to “panhandlers” or “squeegee kids” and did not include their subjects’ voices, or references to their gender or race. Thus, while gender and racial discrimination may be very present in day to day interactions between panhandlers and other Winnipeggers, I did not find these types of discrimination reflected in newspaper articles written on the topic of panhandling.

While coding for the themes ‘exclusion from discourse’ and ‘non-gender’, which I anticipated finding based on my review of the literature on panhandlers, I found that these practices were so common that I counted the articles that omitted panhandlers’ voices or references to panhandlers’ genders, rather than counting each instance where panhandlers were referred to as ‘them’, ‘they’, or ‘the panhandler’, ‘the beggar’ or ‘the squeegee kid’. While looking for examples of racism, I found that it was much more common to omit references to panhandlers’ race than to note it, so I also counted the number of articles in which panhandlers were non-raced.

Some coding categories warranted redefinition once I had begun the coding process. For example, many modes of representing panhandlers – e.g. as criminals, as non-persons, dirty, diseased, lazy, in sexist or racist terms - are negative, but I used them as coding schemas themselves rather than counting them as negative representations. Thus, when coding for negativity, I noted each time panhandlers were represented as ‘a problem’ or each time a writer voiced disapproval of panhandling and those who do it. Also, when coding for ‘support for non-favourable treatment’ or ‘proposals for unfavourable treatment’ I singled out examples of treatment that would be unfavourable to panhandlers. Therefore, every time a panhandling bylaw was supported, determining

that legislation against their way of life was unfavourable to panhandlers led me to include these examples as instances of support for non-favourable treatment. Further, any suggestions that focused on improving the image of Winnipeg or the safety of the citizens at the price of the well-being of panhandlers was included as examples of proposals for unfavourable treatment.

Issues of 'voice' arose when people's statements were paraphrased in articles as the original speakers' titles or names (ie: mayor, police sergeant, lawyer, professor) were still being attached to the statement but they were now being conveyed through the voice of the article's author. When this occurred, there was no way to determine if they were paraphrased correctly, in context, or if their intended meaning was the one portrayed. One example of incorrect paraphrasing emerged when a professor's research was incorrectly referenced as being in support of anti-panhandling bylaws. The newspaper subsequently published an apology to this professor and confessed to mis-quoting him.

Many people are involved in producing one article. Newspaper articles are written, rewritten, and edited. I cannot label who it is making specific claims about panhandlers because I don't know. There is power held by individuals writing articles in choosing which stories to cover and the language with which to depict panhandlers, and by editors in choosing which articles to print, not print, or alter. I was unable to assign responsibility for these choices to specific individuals because I was always unaware of how many people had been responsible for each article.



### CHAPTER 3 – DATA ANALYSIS

This section reports my findings. I first present an overview of the data. This is followed by my presentation of the most persistent representations of panhandlers found within my sample. These were both positive and negative: panhandlers were most commonly identified as criminals, but supportive claims advocating for panhandlers were also highly persistent. Panhandlers were commonly referred to in negative terms: as dangerous, as being separate from other Winnipeg residents, as drug users. While my sample did include references to panhandling as a legitimate form of work, there were far more representations of panhandlers as lacking work ethic. My findings also indicate that panhandlers' voices are commonly excluded from Winnipeg newspapers, as are references to their membership to gendered and racialized categories.

This section is followed by modes of representation that occurred often but not with extreme frequency like the previous representations. Most coding themes fall within this category. The struggle to represent panhandlers in positive or negative terms is clearly visible here as, moving from the most common to least common representational themes, there is constant alternation between supportive representations and negative ones. For example, it is almost equally as common to find representations of panhandlers as victims and examples of causal accounts for panhandlers' circumstances as it is to find representations of panhandlers as illegitimate. Support for non-favourable treatment of panhandlers occurs almost as often as suggestions are offered for helping panhandlers in their plight.

Finally, I present the findings that were highly uncommon throughout my sample, such as racist or sexist representations, objectification of panhandlers and supportive

claims that panhandlers are just like the rest of us only poorer. References to panhandlers as individuals lacking education were the most *uncommon* representational theme found within my sample.

### ***Part 1 - The Sample***

In total there were two hundred and two articles analyzed. Of these articles, one hundred were news stories, forty nine were columns, thirty six were letters to the editor, nine were op-ed pieces and eight were editorials. All coding themes appeared in most types of article, with op-ed pieces and editorials being the exception since they appeared less frequently in the sample than the other types.

#### **1.1 Persistent modes of representation**

##### **i. Voice and Identity**

It was highly common for articles to neglect the inclusion of panhandlers' voices. It was almost equally common for articles to omit references to panhandlers' gender or race. Of the articles I collected and analyzed, over two thirds of the sample was made up of articles that did not incorporate panhandlers' voices and did not give any indication of their subjects' gender or race.

##### **ii. Criminality**

The most persistent mode of representing panhandlers in my sample is through a discourse of 'criminality'. By this I mean that panhandlers were spoken of as criminals or that proposals were made that they should be treated as such. This form of representation is used by a wide range of players in the debate on panhandling as well. Within my sample, panhandlers were represented as criminal by the mayor, professors, Winnipeg residents, business owners, even panhandlers themselves. Further, these representations

were found in every type of article in my sample: news stories, columns and editorial letters.

Each time that panhandlers were represented within a discourse of criminality, they were presented in more or less the same way and the meaning was clear: panhandlers are criminal, and if they are not currently seen as criminal, they should be. For example, one columnist writes: "panhandlers are entrepreneurs, conmen, exploiters who thrive off us" (Worthington 2001: 9). Within discussions of anti-panhandling legislation and law enforcement, panhandlers are represented as though they *are* criminal and there is no debating the fact. For example, one columnist places panhandling on the same spectrum as other street crimes in his assertion that "(z)ero tolerance of petty infractions like panhandling, street vandalism and prostitution, not to mention annoying squeegee-welding vagrants, leads to neighborhoods that are safer from major crime" (Peter 2004: a11). Similarly, a news reporter notes that "(p)olice will have the discretionary power to arrest and jail repeat offenders" (Connor 1998b: 5). Referring to panhandlers as offenders defines panhandling as a crime and panhandlers themselves as criminals. In another article a foot patrol officer speaks positively about the choice to view squeegee kids as criminals, saying that charging youth for squeegeeing "has solved the city's problem" (Purdy 1998: a4).

### **iii. Support for Panhandlers**

In contrast to the frequent representations of panhandlers as criminal, arguments in support of panhandlers and that represented panhandlers positively were also very popular. However, these representations were not used by as wide a range of players as representations of panhandlers as criminal. Rather, most of the people arguing

supportively for panhandlers were individuals from communities that work to eradicate poverty. They were concerned community members, social services employees, professors, and the Winnipeg Social Planning Council.

Most of these arguments are made in reaction to unfavorable representations of panhandlers, some more vehemently than others. For example, one Winnipeg resident wrote about being confronted for giving change to a panhandler and responding "Why shouldn't he be warm and full, just like you are?" (Sinclair 2004: b1). This argument contains within it a defense that panhandlers are people just like us. I also found arguments specifically in support of panhandlers and their practices, such as the assertion by a professor that "panhandlers are within their rights to attempt to earn a living by begging for money" (Connor 1999: 7). Other arguments reacting to unfavorable portrayals of panhandlers were in response to less visible offenses. For example, in reaction to an unstated assumption that all panhandlers are aggressive, one panhandler writes that "(h)ostile panhandlers are rare" (Oleson 2006: a15). Similarly, another Winnipeg resident wrote about her brother: "I understand he chose to live a life on the street, but that does not mean that he is not valuable. He will still be missed. He is loved" (Owen 2004: b3). This statement is not in reaction to any immediate confrontation but rather the assumptions this woman feels most people are apt to make about street persons.

#### **iv. Safety**

Another popular mode of representing panhandlers in newspapers is through references to safety and danger. This discourse was used on both sides of the debate, both in support of and opposed to panhandlers, by police, Winnipeg residents, social services

employees, businesses, the mayor and panhandlers themselves. Further, safety is discussed in relation to a myriad of subjects.

Panhandlers are alternately discussed as either the subjects or potential perpetrators of harm. For instance, police argue that a squeegee ban was enacted because squeegeeing is dangerous to the youth who do it – identifying squeegee kids' safety as an issue and priority (Connor 1998b: 5). Meanwhile, a columnist argues that "We've been handing over far too much money to panhandlers over the past several years - and with it we've been giving up our safety and any notion that Winnipeg's downtown is a secure, visitor-friendly place" (Romaniuk 2003b:8). This statement positions other Winnipeg residents in positions of danger vis a vis the panhandling population. Even the safety of business is identified as a concern by business owners who claim that the presence of panhandlers in front of their businesses drives away customers (Di Cresce 2002: 4). Then, in reaction to this sort of argument, a Winnipeg resident argues that the majority of panhandlers are harmless – both acknowledging and dismissing the identification of panhandlers as a dangerous population (Editorial 2006: a14).

#### **v. Negativity**

Although there are both positive and negative representations of panhandlers in newspaper articles, negative representations of panhandlers predominate. Thus, negativity, as a mode of representing panhandlers and their activities, is also common. While many ways of presenting panhandlers in Winnipeg newspapers may have a negative connotation, I specifically coded instances where panhandlers were identified as 'a problem' or 'a nuisance' as instances of negativity. Again, negativity was expressed by

a wide range of individuals including the mayor, police, business owners, Winnipeg residents, professors, lawyers, and panhandlers themselves.

Negativity was also expressed in varying degrees. Least severe and most common were instances where panhandling was recognized as a problem in need of a solution (Welch & Kives 2006: a6). Other articles identified panhandling with negative social phenomena such as crime. For example, one columnist notes that “serious crime flourishes in areas in which disorderly behavior goes on unchecked. The unchecked panhandler is, in effect, the first broken window” (Holle 1998: a12). Through association with ‘serious crime’, ‘disorderly behavior’, and ‘broken windows’, we are left with a highly negative image of panhandlers and their activities. On the more severe end of the spectrum, and also common, are representations of panhandlers and squeegee kids like the following: “they were a nuisance”, “(t)hey were pests”, “they were relentlessly annoying” (Staff 1998: 12).

#### **vi. Othering**

Othering is a common tool for representing minorities and was found to be a popular mode of representing panhandlers in newspapers. Specifically, many representations of panhandlers create a division between other Winnipeg residents and panhandlers, often not even referring to the difference between panhandling and non-panhandling Winnipeggers but simply referring to two groups: Winnipeggers and panhandlers. This mode of representation was used by the mayor, city council, police, business owners, professors, Winnipeg residents, columnists and panhandlers themselves.

## vii. Work and work ethic

References to work and panhandlers' work ethic were equally common to representations of panhandlers through talk of drug use and addiction. These references were also made by many players both supporting and against panhandlers' way of life. Members of the business community, city council, the panhandling community, social services providers and columnists all used references to work and work ethic in their portrayals of panhandlers and their activities.

References to work and work ethic are made to convey the belief that panhandling *is* work by one professor who notes that panhandlers "earn a living by begging for money" (Connor, K. 1999: 7). However references to work and work ethic are also used to reinforce beliefs that panhandling *is not* a legitimate type of work. One panhandler notes: "I've had people scream get a job", depicting himself as not working, but goes on to explain himself: "I can't get a job if I don't have an address. I can't get an address if I don't have a job" (Pona, N. 2003: 7). Similarly, some articles represent panhandlers as having a work ethic. For example, one article quotes a squeegee kid who claims "Give me a job that's not flipping burgers and I'd take it" (Connor, K. 1998: 3). At the same time, some articles present panhandlers as though they have no work ethic to speak of. One columnist recounts seeing a woman with a sign claiming that she was willing to work and needed money for food and wonders "would she be happy if, rather than a handful of change, I handed her a handful of job applications?" (Macchia 2002: 8). The sarcastic tone throughout the entire articles implies that this columnist does not believe that the woman she saw is willing to work at all.

### **viii. Drug use**

Representations of panhandlers that involved references to drug use were also popular. These representations were always used negatively and always by individuals arguing in favor of banning panhandling such as the mayor, police, Winnipeg residents, representatives from the Business Improvement Zone (BIZ), and one panhandler arguing that something had to be done about aggressive and intoxicated panhandlers in the city.

In contrast to the one panhandler's argument that there is a difference to be noted between panhandlers who are intoxicated or using drugs and other panhandlers, most references to drug use were also generalizations about panhandlers as a population, depicting drug use as an issue pertaining to all panhandlers. Only panhandlers with mental disabilities were occasionally exempt from accusations of drug use or addiction (Watson, D. 2002: 12). Comments like this one, made by a Winnipeg resident were more common: "When they make enough money, they pool their resources for a cheap bottle of whisky. They pass out and start all over again" (Maksymowicz, S.J. 2005: a14). Representations of this sort not only present panhandlers as illegitimately using the change they collect, they present drug addiction as the only reason for collecting money in the first place. Another article describes a poster and brochure campaign launched by the Business Improvement Zone (BIZ) which portrays the same message with claims that "giving to panhandlers feeds their addictions" (Romaniuk, R. 2003: 7).



## **1.2 Common representational practices**

The coding themes discussed above appeared in my sample with exceptional frequency. The following themes do not appear as persistently but are still highly common ways of representing panhandlers in Winnipeg newspapers.

### **ix. Victims**

In my sample, panhandlers are sometimes designated the role of the victim. For example, a professor writes about panhandlers as victims of social circumstances, claiming that “a lack of jobs and affordable housing” forces panhandlers to beg in the street (O’Hallarn 1998: 3). Meanwhile, panhandlers are also depicted as the victims of anti-panhandling laws which target and criminalize panhandlers’ lifestyles (Ternette 1998b: 12). In other instances, panhandlers are depicted as being the victims of other residents of Winnipeg. One panhandler recounts “I’ve had Slurpees thrown at me. I’ve been hit with lead pipes. I’ve had people scream get a job” (Pona 2003: 7). Finally, some panhandlers are portrayed as being victims of mental illness. Often, in the case of these representations, mental illness is often listed as a stereotype of panhandlers in general, and descriptions of panhandlers often refer to people “with severe drug, alcohol and often mental problems” (Edgar 2005b: b1).

### **x. Causal accounts**

Causal accounts are simply the reasons given for why panhandlers act the way they do. These accounts can reinforce the identification of panhandlers as victims. However, they are also used in Winnipeg newspapers to reinforce the identification of panhandlers as the agents of their own circumstances. These accounts are used on both

sides of the debate, by individuals from different communities: Winnipeg residents, panhandlers themselves, businesses, social services organizations. Causal accounts allow individuals to assume the reasons for panhandlers' activities and these accounts act as a justification for either supporting panhandlers or discriminating against them.

One professor writes that "a lack of jobs and affordable housing is what drives people to the street, and begging is one of the few ways they can get enough money to eat" (O'Hallarn 1998: 3). In this case a lack of jobs and housing are cited as causes justifying panhandlers being on the streets. A panhandler further justifies his lifestyle, claiming that he would need an address to get a job and would need a job to get an address (Pona 2003: 7). Another panhandler argues that he needs the money he collects because he has to eat, has to pay his rent, and his welfare cheque does not cover those expenses (Sinclair 2005: b1). Meanwhile, a columnist describes a campaign poster put out by the City of Winnipeg that claims "seven out of 10 panhandlers use your spare change to buy alcohol, drugs and cigarettes" (O'Brien 2003: a3). While the other causal accounts indicate that panhandling is a strategy used by victims, this claim suggests that panhandling is a venue enabling panhandlers to feed their vices rather than to support their needs.

#### **xi. Illegitimacy**

Sadly, representations of panhandlers as illegitimately needy are quite common. Panhandlers are often presented as being able-bodied, healthy and young, or "needy by choice" (Macfarlane 2002: d1). These presentations assume that panhandlers appear to be capable of work so they must not be truly needy and must be choosing to live their lives in the streets. A representative of the Downtown BIZ argues that "no one needs your

money to fill their belly or stay warm" (O'Brien 2003: a3). These claims are often followed by examples of panhandlers using hand-outs in unfavorable ways. For example, one author claims that "giving to panhandlers feeds their addictions and is an incentive for them to loiter downtown where they drive customers away from legitimate businesses" (Romaniuk 2003: 7).

## **xii. Helping**

Happily, suggestions for helping panhandlers' plight are almost as common as representations of panhandlers as illegitimate. These suggestions allow readers to view panhandling in positive terms rather than negative ones. These suggestions indicate that it is possible to improve the issues surrounding panhandling without criminalizing beggars' lifestyles. Concretely, suggestions were made to interview members of the homeless population to find out what kinds of support they say are needed and to implement social programs to help panhandlers deal with the issues they raise (Hendry 2002: a3). However, what kind of social programs should be developed, and who would be responsible for their maintenance was not discussed. Less concrete were suggestions to address the root causes of homelessness like a lack of affordable housing, changes to the labor market and low welfare rates (Rudy 2004: a15), and suggestions that we work to "deconstruct harmful stereotypes that stigmatize the poor" (Carnochan 2005: b1). While these suggestions lacked concrete strategies, they did encourage thought and planning to solve specific issues.

### **xiii. Supporting non-favorable treatment**

In contrast to articles in support of helping panhandlers, some articles expressed support for non-favorable treatment that already exists. In this case, the support given was always in reference to Winnipeg's anti-panhandling legislation and was almost always voiced by those who would like to see panhandling go away. The panhandling bylaw is being hailed as an effective tool for police to use in controlling panhandlers (Edgar 2005d: b1), protecting Winnipeggers' safety and businesses' happiness (Edgar 2005b: a3, Edgar 2005e: b3).

### **xiv. Objections to the anti-panhandling by-law**

Indicating the back and forth debate as to whether panhandlers should be blamed or supported in their position, the next common way to discuss the issue of panhandling in Winnipeg is by objecting to the anti-panhandling by-laws enacted in Winnipeg. Objections to the bylaw varied, but three main arguments appeared repeatedly throughout my sample. These were: criticisms that the bylaw is a violation of panhandlers' rights to freedom of expression (Edgar 2005b: b1); objections to the criminalization of the poor (Ternette 1998: 12); and arguments that bylaws targeting aggressive panhandling are redundant because the city of Winnipeg already has laws in place to address aggressive and threatening behavior (MacKinnon 2005: a13).

### **xv. Using sarcasm**

Sarcasm is commonly used to portray negative beliefs about panhandlers. For example, a columnist writes, in reaction to the idea that the panhandling bylaw be eliminated, "That'll be good for our deteriorating downtown, won't it? People will pour in from the suburbs just for the privilege of being badgered at bus stops and bank machines

by panhandlers trying to relieve them of their spare change" (Lakritz 1998: 4). Another columnist expresses his disdain for squeegee kids, saying: "I don't ever remember getting into my car first thing in the morning and thinking, 'Boy, I hope there's a disaffected, tattooed, pierced youth standing at a street corner ready to clean my windshield for a buck'" (Lowen 2005: d1). However, not all uses of sarcasm in my sample were unfavorable to panhandlers. Sarcasm was also used to point out panhandling bylaws' failings or illogical treatment of panhandlers. These occasions were more often confrontational, as when a social services worker asks if red lines will be painted around Winnipeg to notify people of begging and no-begging zones and suggests that perhaps panhandlers should be employed to paint those lines so they would not have to panhandle (Edgar 2005e: b3).

#### **xvi. Making Generalizations**

Many representations of panhandlers are simply generalizations. Authors take stereotypical or negative traits and apply them in such a way that every panhandler is presented as the same, and panhandlers as a population are presented as a series of traits rather than as individuals. This occurs in several ways. A negative generalization can be made and applied to an entire population rather than an individual. For instance, a Winnipeg resident writes that many squeegee kids "are little more than spoiled brats" (Yakimchuk 198: 12). Or, panhandlers are lumped in with members of other populations in order to make claims about all populations at once. One article discusses plans to step up police efforts around "VIPs – vagrants, intoxicated persons and panhandlers" (Smiley 1998: 5). Finally, an article could mention a stereotype of panhandlers in order to release individuals from membership to an undesired category. A Winnipeg resident recounting a

meeting with a pair of panhandlers notes that “(t)hey looked kind of low end, but just down on their luck. They didn’t look like bums” (Williams 1999: 5).

### **xvii. Agency**

More specific identifications of panhandlers depict them through a language of agency. These representations illustrate panhandlers in several key ways. Some portray panhandlers as agents of their own misfortune. One Winnipeg resident writes: “I cannot believe how many people feel sorry for these no-good losers. They did this all to themselves” (Mustard 2001: 6). Other articles present panhandlers as agents of the misfortune of others, citing criminal and mischievous behavior such as “maundering downtown, demanding money and cigarettes, stealing tips and food off patios, and intimidating tourists” (Edgar 2005b: b1). Still other articles represent panhandlers as having the ability to alter their circumstances but neglecting to do so. For instance, a Winnipeg resident writes that many of the panhandlers she sees “are literate, since they can write their message on cardboard. Many of them appear able-bodied and well-dressed.” (Maksymowicz 2005: a14). My sample sadly did not reveal any positive representations of panhandlers’ agency.

### **xviii. Panhandlers vs panhandlers**

In some cases, panhandlers were not only presented as being different from other Winnipeg residents, but were presented as having a division among themselves, between ‘these’ panhandlers and ‘those’ ones. As with other forms of othering, these divisions attached positive connotations to one group and negative connotations to the other. Further, these representations were often used to support or oppose anti-panhandling bylaws. For instance, several columnists argue that passive panhandlers who sit quietly

asking for spare change are not a problem, but some panhandlers are overly aggressive and need to be taken care of (Pona 2003: 7). A business owner writes that “this is a new breed of panhandler: I don’t know if you can even call them panhandlers because they don’t beg for money, they demand it” (O’Brien 2002: a1).

#### **xix. Panhandlers’ rights**

Where panhandlers’ rights were discussed, there was a general consensus as to why anti-panhandling legislation was a human rights issue: “prohibiting where panhandling is allowed violates constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression” (Connor 2000: 1). This claim is supported by a professor who maintains that panhandlers have the right to support themselves by begging for money (Purdy 1998: 4). In another article the same professor simplifies the issue, asking “Can it be morally right in a democratic society to prevent one person from publicly saying to another, ‘I’m in trouble and I need help?’” (Shafer 2005: a11).

#### **xx. Citizens as victims**

Panhandlers were not the only group identified as being victimized. Often, on the occasions where articles present panhandlers as agents, they present other residents of Winnipeg as victims of panhandlers. The harm that panhandlers are said to cause varies from more passive to more aggressive forms. Passively, panhandlers are accused of “exploiting the indulgence of others” (Worthington 2001: 9), and panhandling is presented as an activity that “degrades the spirit” and “brutalizes us all” (Longhurst 2005: e9). Panhandlers are also accused of aggressively victimizing Winnipeg residents in cases of physical violence, such as the following: “A 42-year-old man was clinging to life last night after a vicious attack by panhandlers” (Pona 2003b: 5). The choice to identify the

victim's aggressors as 'panhandlers' rather than as 'aggressors' identifies panhandlers as criminals and other Winnipeg residents as victims of their crimes.

#### **xxi. Winnipeg's anti-panhandling bylaw is ineffective**

Again, common complaints that anti-panhandling by-laws are ineffective ways to deal with the issues surrounding panhandling in Winnipeg illustrate the true debate going on in Winnipeg newspapers as to whether panhandlers should be supported or attacked. For example, one Winnipeg resident writes that "laws to regulate the behavior of the poor does nothing to improve their plight" (Carnochan 2005: a15), while another resident of Winnipeg maintains: "If we blanket the symptom with a bylaw, we do not cure the disease" (Maksymowicz 2005: a14). Both these claims affirm that regulating panhandling through the criminal justice system is not an effective means of dealing with the issues surrounding panhandling

#### **xxii. Legitimacy**

Sometimes, articles make assumptions about the legitimacy of panhandlers and their supposed need or assumptions about whether their activities are legitimate means of survival. Representations of panhandlers as legitimate appeared only half as often as representations of panhandlers and their activities as illegitimate. When they did appear, some people simply maintained that panhandlers are people too; "human beings (who are) down on their luck" (Lutz 2005: 10). Others wrote in reaction to negative representations of panhandlers. An Aboriginal Council president wrote: "People blame the poor for their own condition but it's hard work being poor. No one elects to beg, but they do it to survive" (Hendry 2002b: a11). Another columnist depicts panhandlers as victims of circumstances such as "mental illness, substance abuse, unemployment," as



being trapped in a grim reality, to entice people to see panhandlers as a genuinely needy population (Winnipeg Free Press 2005: d1).

### **xxiii. Persons and non-persons**

In some instances, panhandlers are represented in terms of their personhood, or lack thereof. And it is difficult to maintain positive associations with panhandlers when they are being depicted as though they are not even persons. In the articles I collected, panhandlers are represented as non-persons quite harshly. A resident of Winnipeg is quoted as referring to a panhandler as an “(expletive) piece of dog (expletive)” (Sinclair 2004: b1). While the Winnipeg man’s exact phrasing was not repeated in the newspaper article, it is not difficult to imagine what was said. Similarly, a columnist reports that panhandlers are scavengers, “rather as hyenas circling a lions kill seeking to benefit from another’s efforts” (Worthington 2001: 9).

On the other hand, when panhandlers’ personhood was being defended, it was in a confrontational way. A relative of a panhandler maintains in one case: “He’s a person ... I understand he chose to live a life on the street, but that does not mean that he is not valuable” (Owen 2004: b3). Sadly, defenses of panhandlers’ personhood were not as popular as claims that panhandlers are made of something not only different but less than the rest of us. While coding for personhood, I did not separate instances where panhandlers were granted personhood from instances where panhandlers’ personhood was denied for the purposes of my table. When they were present, panhandlers’ personhood was defended most often in letters to the editor and this form of representation appeared in my sample only three times.

**xxiv. Concern for Winnipeg's reputation**

Some representations of panhandlers express concern that panhandlers' activities and their image mars the reputation of Winnipeg. These representations are all negative, indicating that panhandlers alone contribute to beliefs that Winnipeg is a high-crime, rundown, dirty (Kives 2006: b2), unsafe and unfriendly city (Romaniuk 2003: 8).

**xxv. Proposals for non-favorable treatment**

Concern for the image of the city of Winnipeg, for the safety of its citizens, and for the reinforcement of values of work and personal responsibility led columnists and Winnipeg residents writing editorial letters to make various proposals for unfavorable treatment toward panhandlers. For the most part, these proposals were not severe, but they were also not necessarily helpful to panhandlers and their plight. Some people suggested that Winnipeg residents hand out job applications rather than change (Macchia 2002: 8), that the city council force panhandlers to work (Loewen 2005: d1), or simply that residents should assume all panhandlers use the money they collect inappropriately and that residents should "keep their hard-earned change out of beggars' hands" (Winnipeg Sun 2003: 8).

**xxvi. Mental disability**

While panhandlers were often referred to as suffering from mental disability, these references were highly uniform. Articles noting that panhandlers either do or might suffer from mental disability simply noted this fact and did not go any further into discussing the significance or ramifications of that fact.

**xxvii. Cleanliness**

Occasionally, panhandlers were portrayed in terms of cleanliness, identifying panhandlers as Winnipeg's filth that needed to be cleansed. References were made to "sweep(ing) the poor and needy from public view" (Carnochan 2005: a15), and "cleansing the streets of aggressive panhandlers and squeegee kids" (Kives 2006: b2). This mode of representation was always negative and was always used to portray panhandlers' image as threatening a healthy image of the city of Winnipeg.

**xxviii. Disease**

Other times, I found representations of panhandlers classifying them as symptoms of disease, or as an infection, plague or social illness threatening the city of Winnipeg (Scott 1998: 6). However, these representations did not always function against panhandlers' favor. In order to entice support for street kids, a social services employee refers to the reality of these kids' lives as a cancer: "It's a cancer of poverty and homelessness" (Reynolds 2003: a9). This image evokes pity rather than fear.

**xxix. Speaking for panhandlers**

Within the articles I collected, panhandlers were sometimes spoken for. Often, these instances involved the use of causal accounts, presented as though they are the reasons given by panhandlers for their actions although it is not panhandlers who are voicing these statements. For example, a Winnipeg resident writes to the paper claiming that panhandlers do not want help, "(t)hey are happy to beg" (Mustard 2001: 6). In these instances, speaking for panhandlers always led to negative representations of them. Further, speaking for panhandlers gives the impression that panhandlers themselves share the same perceptions of their lifestyles when this may or may not be true.

### **xxx. Reducing panhandlers to their activities**

Other times, panhandlers are represented as simply being the sum of their behaviors. These representations are mainly negative. For example, a social services representative explains the duties of the Downtown BIZ foot patrols as “looking for people in the way, who are dirty or smelly or staggering or panhandling” (Welch 2006: a3). This comment was meant to describe how the Downtown BIZ patrols will enforce the anti-panhandling bylaw in Winnipeg. Instead of looking for panhandlers, the article claims that the patrols will simply look for the behaviors listed.

### **xxxi. Winnipeggers’ rights**

Negative treatment of panhandlers is occasionally justified by citing the need to protect Winnipeggers’ rights: the right to avoid solicitation (Edgar 2005: b1), the right “of all citizens to walk down a public sidewalk unmolested” (Lakritz 1998: 4), the right to wait for a bus without being accosted by aggressive panhandlers (Shafer 2005: a11). This mode of representation is utilized by champions of anti-panhandling legislation and was often used by Winnipeg’s mayor or members of the police force.

## **1.3 Uncommon modes of representation**

It is highly significant that during my analysis I rarely found instances of sexist or racist representations of panhandlers. My review of the literature on panhandling led me to expect that these representations would be common ways of discriminating against poor persons. That may be true in most other contexts, but, in the newspaper articles I collected, stereotypes based on race and gender are scarce.

**xxxii. Racism**

When they did appear, discriminatory representations based around panhandlers' race were often presented by columnists and by Winnipeg residents in the form of letters to the editor. For example one columnist writes that "(f)or the most part, the downtown is safe, but the small group of culprits, mainly aboriginal men, are having a disproportionate impact on the image of the district" (O'Brien 2002: a1). A Winnipeg resident is more overtly discriminatory in her convictions that, when it comes to the Aboriginal population in Winnipeg, "It's bad enough that we have to cater to every wish they demand, including working eight to six hours a day to feed a lot of lazy bums who don't care who or what they hurt" (Promfery 2003: 12). Promfery's assertions imply a division between the Aboriginal population and the rest of the residents of Winnipeg and attach highly negative associations to Aboriginal people while presenting the 'rest of us' as victims of their selfishness.

**xxxiii. Sexism**

Sexist representations of panhandlers were also mainly presented by columnists and Winnipeg residents in the Editorials section. Similar to racist depictions of panhandlers, representations of panhandlers discriminating on the basis of gender stereotypes also ranged from covert to overt. For example, one columnist writes that "a panhandler who is intoxicated or high on sniffing solvents is taken by police to an emergency shelter after he stumbles into the middle of the street or if he becomes a problem to shoppers" (Winnipeg Free Press 2003: a14). The covert discrimination here is the assumption, or generalization, made by the author that the generalized panhandler is male. A more overt form of gender discrimination is based on stereotypes of manhood

and found in an article where a columnist asserts “Working men down on their luck don’t beg” (Worthington 2001: 9). This article also claims that the majority of panhandlers in Winnipeg are white males, “while the most needy are from minority groups or single mothers on welfare” (Ibid.). This comparison indicates that ‘white males’ who panhandle are not legitimately needy people. However, as powerful as these discriminatory representations may be, they did not appear often enough to be considered popular or common ways of representing panhandlers.

#### **xxxiv. Panhandling is not a crime**

Within the sample, I was also surprised to find that there is a real lack of convictions that panhandlers are not criminal. While several people argued that “we have chosen to deal with our social problems by ‘criminalizing the poor’” (Ternette 1998: 12), this argument did not appear often. Also, there were only occasional instances where columnists or professionals maintained that panhandling is a poverty issue, not a criminal one (Carnochan 2005: a15), indicating that social programs, not law enforcement were more appropriate solutions.

#### **xxxv. Objectification**

My review of the literature on panhandling led me to code for ‘objectification’: where talk about panhandlers explicitly implied that they lacked feelings (Boreus 2006:410). While ‘othering’ panhandlers also objectifies them, my literature review led me to believe that both of these categories – othering and objectification – would be significant in their own right so I coded for them separately. Objectification in its general sense would refer to any time panhandlers were represented as objects and would include times when they were represented as lacking a gender or racial category, or lacking

personhood. However, I coded specifically for instances where panhandlers were discussed as lacking feelings, and this type of representation rarely occurred in my research. When it did, it was often with blatant claims about panhandlers like the ones made by a columnist who asserts that “they are without self-pride or shame” (Worthington 2001: 9) or a Winnipeg resident who “cannot believe how many people feel sorry for these no-good losers” (Mustard 2001: 6).

#### **xxxvi. Inclusion**

Another surprisingly uncommon way to talk about panhandlers is through a language of inclusiveness. Occasionally, articles maintained that panhandlers are still citizens of Winnipeg, are human, just like everyone else (Reynolds 2002: a3). I coded this last category of representations as ‘inclusion’ since they indicated that panhandlers were members of the same population as everyone else. However, there were not very many to be found. What I did find were arguments in defense of anti-panhandling and anti-squeegee by-laws claiming that the laws and the people enforcing them are there for “everybody’s safety” (Madden 2005: b7), panhandlers and Winnipeg residents alike. Other times, objections to criminalization of the poor reminded us that panhandlers are people just like the rest of us (Reynolds 2002: a3). These were the two main ways in which panhandlers were included in the same population as the rest of Winnipeg residents.

#### **xxxvii. Belittling**

Comments about the legitimacy of panhandlers and sarcastic quips criticizing panhandlers’ lifestyles led me to code for representations that belittle panhandlers. One columnist dismisses panhandlers’ plights as illegitimate with the comment that “(s)ome

requests are sufficiently creative to be turned into screenplays" (Longhurst 2005: e9). Another columnist writes about squeegee kids with contempt, declaring that he "can't believe someone who spends all day right next to a huge bucket of soap and water can look so filthy" (Loewen 2005: d1). However, although negative representations of panhandlers were quite common, belittling comments were very uncommon.

#### **xxxviii. Panhandlers rights are not violated by anti-panhandling by-laws**

I had expected to find common statements reflecting beliefs that anti-panhandling by-laws are not in violation of panhandlers' human rights. Happily, these claims were fairly uncommon. When they did appear, these claims were made by champions of the bylaws, like city council members who claimed that the zones designated by the most recent panhandling bylaw "are a reasonable limit on a panhandler's right to ask for money, while protecting Winnipeggers from intimidation and harassment" (Edgar 2005c: a3).

#### **xxxix. Panhandlers are an economic burden**

I was highly surprised not to find very many instances where panhandlers were discussed as being economic burdens on individuals, on businesses, or on the city of Winnipeg. When they did appear, panhandlers were represented as economic burdens because they deter tourists from coming to downtown Winnipeg or because of the costs of processing panhandlers criminally (Romaniuk 2003b: 8), but not because they are overly dependent upon the welfare system and taxpayers' support. The lack of these representations is hopeful because discussions of panhandlers in terms of financial repercussions due to their behaviors would potentially be quite powerful if they were more common.



**xxxx. Lack of education**

Finally, representations of panhandlers as a population whose members lack adequate levels of education only occurred twice in my entire sample. When this mode of representation was used, it was simply used as a means to reinforce the similarities between panhandlers and to further distinguish panhandlers as a group from other Winnipeg residents.

## CHAPTER 4 - DISCUSSION

According to Gadamer, all versions of reality as potentially true (1989: 394). However, certain versions of reality - *persistent* versions of reality - are also more powerful versions of reality as they are most likely to be viewed as the true version. Therefore, I am treating the representational themes that appeared more frequently in my sample as more powerful themes than others because they will be the versions of panhandlers' selves which are most easily presented as being true. I have organized this section of my thesis accordingly. I will begin with a discussion of how newspaper articles function to present their subjects; in this case, panhandlers. This discussion is followed by an examination of the most persistent representational themes in my sample and what they mean in terms of the literature review provided in this work. Moving toward the less persistent themes, I will examine all of the ways in which panhandlers are represented, emphasizing how each mode of representation may be used positively by poverty advocates and those wishing to support panhandlers and positively alter the ways in which panhandlers are perceived in Winnipeg.

### *Part 1 - How newspaper articles work*

Winnipeg newspapers are not a neutral medium for presenting both sides when it comes to panhandlers, with some articles claiming that they are deviant and others claiming that they are normal. Rather, my data show that newspapers in Winnipeg are a plain where the struggle to determine panhandlers' identities plays out. Often each article reveals a struggle as it alternately presents panhandlers in a positive or negative light.

Social actors use their knowledge of "What Anyone Like Us Necessarily Knows" to interpret their world (Garfinkel 1967: 54), along with the assumption that the world

they inhabit is the same world inhabited by those around them and that it appears the same to both parties (Husserl 1967: 105). What this means is that in order to believe ourselves to be members of the same world as our neighbors and to believe that the world we share is concrete and meaningful, we empower others' interpretations so long as they make logical sense to us and coincide with our personal experiences in similar situations. We also consult our personal histories and our biases to inform us that what was typical or true in the past is probably what is true in the present (Schutz 1978: 52). For example, so long as more authors depict panhandlers as illegitimate and as devalued because they lack formal employment, and we share with them values of legitimacy and a strong work ethic, *or* if we recognize that panhandlers have been understood in this way in the past, we are more willing to empower these versions of reality as truths.

Positive representations of panhandlers in Winnipeg newspapers prevent the dominance of negative depictions of panhandlers and their behaviors and act as a basis for poverty advocates to work from. My data shows that there are currently more negative representations being sponsored in Winnipeg newspapers, which indicates that, when searching for ideal types to apply to panhandlers as individuals and a population, the negative ideal type will be more common and may therefore be more easily applied. However, there is a flip side to each form of negative representation and there are many opportunities that poverty advocates may work from to persuade and improve public perceptions of panhandlers.

Because it takes many different people to produce one article for a newspaper, I cannot assign responsibility for my findings to any individuals. Also, the different types of articles each come with different sets of freedoms. Letters to the editor may present

opinions that newspapers would never present themselves, for instance. In this section, I will refer to 'the article' and how 'the article' represents panhandlers and their activities, instead of how any person is to blame.

We use talk about social action and normalcy to accomplish the meaning of the actions we perform ourselves and encounter in others (Wieder 1974: 203). Often, whether or not we determine an actor or certain behavior to be normative or deviant depends on the success or failure of the justifications given for the behavior's occurrence. The newspaper articles I collected for my research are a field where the struggle to determine panhandlers' identities is carried out. While face-to-face interactions allow for disputes and rebuttals in accomplishing the meaning of behavior (Pollner 1987: 90), newspaper articles make claims that are more performative because there are no opportunities for immediate reactions either supporting or refuting their claims. However, within my sample, many articles published about panhandlers elicited responses from members of the public in the forms of Letters to the Editor. Sometimes a first response was also the last, while other times it took several days' worth of responses to work out the meaning of the panhandlers' discussed. So rather than having one main player who assembles panhandlers' identities, there are multiple hands involved in molding, shaping and hashing out the end products. I use the term 'products' because there *are* several predominant modes of representing panhandlers in newspaper in Winnipeg, but there are also ways in which predominantly negative images of panhandlers are continually contested. Phenomenologically, the inability to fix a specific identity for panhandlers illustrates the power that we always hold to alter the ways we define and interpret our world.

***Part 2 - A Persistent absence***

My review of the literature on panhandling indicated that all people's experiences, not only those of poor people, must be understood as products of the identity categories they inhabit, such as gender, race and class (Bryson 1999: 34). Furthermore, the literature indicated that perceptions of individuals as belonging to specific identity categories affected whether or not these persons were perceived as being more or less deviant (Will 1993: 329). Men living in poverty, especially those who appear able-bodied, were held more accountable for their circumstances and for the circumstances of their families (Gans 1994: 270). Poor men were also found to be more visible in the streets than poor women and were therefore more often the subjects of discriminatory judgments (Ibid.). Meanwhile, being a woman was not always advantageous, as women who are visible on the streets were often the subjects of cultural beliefs that 'good' women maintain homes and women without homes are 'bad' women (Wardhaugh 1999: 106).

Aboriginal persons in Winnipeg were found by researchers to face more obstacles that may necessitate panhandling in order to survive. Aboriginal people have lower rates of high school graduation, higher rates of unemployment, are one of the most poorly housed groups in Canada, and have high rates of in-migration, residential mobility and poverty (Carter et al. 2007: 12).

These research findings led me to believe that I would find panhandlers' membership to gendered and racialized categories referenced throughout my sample. However, references to these categories were few and far between. In the majority of instances, panhandlers were simply identified under the label 'panhandlers' and membership to racialized and gendered categories was not noted.

When panhandlers were presented as belonging to a racial category they were assumed to be Aboriginal (Promfery 2003: 12). Once, when a specific group of panhandlers were identified as 'culprits' who are responsible for endangering the safety of Winnipeg residents, the article named Aboriginal men as being responsible (O'Brien 2002: a1). In another instance, an article claimed that white men who beg are not 'truly' needy (Worthington 2001: 9), appealing to cultural beliefs that whiteness comes with power. Other times, authors simply assumed, when describing a generalized panhandler, that the panhandler was male (Winnipeg Free Press 2003: a14). Attached to the assumption of maleness are gendered assumptions that masculinity is powerful, strong and capable. Assumptions that panhandlers are male may infer, for some people, that they should be able to change their circumstances on their own and that they are not legitimately needy people. Associating male Aboriginal panhandlers with danger, malice and criminality facilitates beliefs that these panhandlers do not deserve help when they ask for it and that they are not victims but are agents of harm.

Perhaps this is because, in the case of panhandlers in Winnipeg, class status trumps gender and racial status and articles presented panhandlers as a population of poor, non-gendered and non-sexed individuals. However, it is also plausible that panhandlers are simply assumed to be male and Aboriginal in each instance where they are discussed at all. If this is the case, panhandlers are not thought to be non-gendered and non-raced but are considered in highly racist and sexist terms. The study at hand is not able to confirm either alternative. Rather, this is something that needs to be considered for future research.

The omission of panhandlers' voices means that panhandlers are not speaking for themselves at all but are merely represented by others. The omission of their voices increases the distance that is already perceived to exist between panhandlers and other Winnipeg residents. Not only are panhandlers perceived as different, perhaps even less, their own opinions of themselves and their behaviour is treated as though it is completely insignificant through the omission of panhandlers' voices.

This leads to the question of agency. What does the data indicate poverty advocates and panhandlers *can* do to alter the predominantly negative portrayals of panhandlers presented in Winnipeg newspapers? An increase in the number of voices heard and the amount of noise they make would be a big step in the attempt to rectify the negative images of panhandlers that currently prevail in these newspapers.

## **2.2 Persistent representational themes**

### **i. Criminality**

I expected to find panhandlers represented as criminals throughout my sample. I expected this not only because they are the targets of anti-panhandling by-laws but also because they risk being arrested for conducting private practices in public spaces and are perceived by some parties as being aggressive and dangerous (Gowan 2002: 500, City of Winnipeg 2000, City of Winnipeg 2005). My expectation was confirmed: I did find panhandlers to be represented in these terms.

Criminality is necessarily associated with undesirability and identifying panhandlers as criminal associates them with undesirability also. Mainly, a divide was constructed which identified panhandlers as criminals and separated them from the rest of

Winnipeg residents (Peter 2004: a11, Purdy 1998: a4, Connor 1998b: 5, Worthington 2001: 9).

While most references to criminality defined panhandlers as criminals, occasionally, this mode of representation was resisted as articles maintained that no, panhandlers are not criminals, panhandling is not a crime. These articles used the same language - identifying criminality as socially undesirable but maintaining that panhandlers are not criminal in an attempt to associate panhandlers with positive social traits rather than negative ones (Carnochan 2005: a15, Ternette 1998: 12). If panhandling advocates want to turn the tables they need to recognize that panhandlers are being represented as criminal far more often than not and they have to target those representations as false in order to weaken them and allow panhandlers to emerge as an accepted group rather than a stigmatized one.

## **ii. Support for panhandlers**

Some articles did attempt to present panhandlers as an acceptable lot. In fact, supportive arguments surrounding the issue of panhandling were quite common despite the persistence of negative representations of beggars themselves. I coded for 'support for panhandlers' and noted each instance where an article defended panhandling, or challenged negative portrayals of panhandlers. However, these instances were not separate from the other themes I coded for. For almost every theme by which panhandlers were presented negatively – as criminals, as dangerous, as illegitimate – there was a flip side where articles presented panhandlers as being just the opposite. Therefore, while it is highly significant to note that these supportive arguments occurred so frequently, I will



not discuss them each separately but will rather discuss them as the flip side of each negative representational theme.

### **iii. Safety and danger**

Articles often constructed binaries between safe and dangerous practices, with panhandling often illustrated as a dangerous activity. I anticipated finding this type of discussion concerning the issue of panhandling specifically due to the topicality of Winnipeg's anti-panhandling by-law (City of Winnipeg 2001, City of Winnipeg 2005). I expected to find instances where advocates of this by-law maintained that panhandlers are dangerous and something needs to be done. Like illustrations of panhandlers as criminal, depictions of panhandlers as dangerous automatically associates them with social undesirability. These arguments are plentiful. According to newspapers, panhandlers are endangering businesses (Di Cresce 2002: 4), the safety and happiness of other residents of Winnipeg, Winnipeg's reputation as a safe and friendly city (Romaniuk 2003: 8), and themselves (Connor 1998b: 5). These arguments are strong and oriented to Winnipeg residents' values – presenting those values as being threatened by panhandlers' behavior.

When panhandlers are depicted as dangerous, proposals are made for dealing with the threats they present. And many of these proposals are unfavourable toward panhandlers. In my sample, different forms of non-favourable treatment are proposed on various levels of society. City-wide actions like criminalization and the implementation of anti-panhandling legislation are proposed, but community and individual based actions are also suggested. Further, these suggestions range from physically arresting panhandlers to simply ignoring them while passing by; from maintaining and

encouraging beliefs that panhandlers are agents of harm to simply sustaining beliefs that panhandlers are lazy and morally lax. These suggestions also range from outlandish and aggressive proposals to mild and relatively tame forms of discrimination.

Taking a more supportive angle, some articles refuted the notion that all panhandlers are potentially dangerous, claiming that panhandlers are a harmless bunch for the most part and that the act of panhandling poses no threat to passersby. These articles drew attention to the fact that there are already laws in existence that prohibit aggression, harassment and assault noting that the act of panhandling is not a dangerous practice, but that assaulting passersby while asking for money is (Editorial 2006: a14). Since assault is already illegal, there is no reason for panhandling to become illegal as well. These arguments are successful because they are presented logically, using the same language as the arguments they are refuting, but using that language in a slightly different way.

#### **iv. Negativity**

Negative representations of panhandlers were highly common. Based on my review of the literature, I expected to find instances where panhandlers are spoken of negatively based on their gender, race, work ethic and legitimacy (Gowan 2002: 502, Carter et al. 2007: 1). However, while I did find negative references to these specific categories, I also found panhandlers to be negatively portrayed in some simpler terms. Speaking of panhandlers as pests, nuisances and annoyances creates a hierarchy which places panhandlers below the rest of us (Staff 1998: 12). However, any representational theme that presents panhandlers in a positive light is able to counter these negative depictions of them. I will discuss these themes in more detail below. However, it is worth

noting that advocates are able to refute negative representations of panhandlers in many ways, especially by presenting them as legitimate, as victims, as persons and as 'one of us'.

#### **v. Winnipeg vs panhandlers (othering)**

There are several means by which panhandlers are othered in newspaper articles in Winnipeg. Many othering techniques construct a division between good and bad, desirable and undesirable traits and apply these categories to panhandlers' identities. This is one of the simplest ways to discriminate against an individual or population.

Schutz's explanations for social orientation help explain this process. According to Schutz, maintaining awareness of the other and how we believe they see the world facilitates social interactions and communication (1967: 105). Further, in order to maintain the belief that our world is concrete and meaningful we also maintain the assumptions that what we are seeing is the same thing that another would see, that we are interpreting the world in the same way that others interpret it (Ibid.). This applies to discriminatory representations of panhandlers in newspapers in the following way: some representations of panhandlers or newspaper articles themselves are oriented to generally held notions and dichotomies of goodness and badness and present panhandlers within a context of these categories. Associating panhandlers' identities with external concepts which are generally understood as being either good or bad facilitates the association of panhandlers themselves with either goodness or badness and accomplishes panhandlers' identities as either socially acceptable or unacceptable. Furthermore, by orienting readers to pre-existing generalized notions of goodness and badness, articles are not challenged to create an entirely new argument but can rather fit panhandlers into dichotomies that

people generally accept already. This does assume that readers agree. There is still a role for agency to play in determining whether or not panhandlers are *accurately* associated with these general concepts of goodness and badness. In the case of panhandlers, for example, who may not share these judgments of themselves, it is possible to disagree with the representations offered by newspaper articles and to actively resist these representations through self-advocacy.

Within the literature on panhandling, a different concept of 'other' is common. In this case, the 'other' is identified as 'not us', as existing outside the moral community, and othering is a process by which a population may be segregated, stigmatized and discriminated against. Panhandlers may be othered by passersby who see panhandlers as unwilling or unable to maintain a 'regular' lifestyle – as those who are lacking something that other Winnipeg residents have (Carter et al. 2007: 1). Panhandlers may also be perceived as being undeserving of help (Gans 1994: 270), or may simply be ignored because they are perceived as being too annoying or insignificant to acknowledge (Farrell & Lee 2003: 302). Many people's perceptions of panhandlers indicate that, whatever panhandlers are, they are different, and they are commonly found to be somehow less, than everyone else (Carter et al. 2007: 21). All of these ways of separating panhandlers from other individuals were found in my sample as well.

Further to the simple act of separating panhandlers from other Winnipeg residents, this practice also associates the 'us' group with positive attributes and the 'them' group with negative ones, and discusses panhandlers in terms of their personhood – or lack thereof – rather than in terms of the value of the characteristics they possess.

In addition to this, each group is determined to be inclusive, where every non-panhandling resident belongs in one category and every panhandler belongs in the other, and positive value is attributed to housed residents and negative value attributed to panhandlers. Panhandlers are referred to as though they are pests, not even human: "They're everywhere. It's much worse than last summer" (Winnipeg Sun 2003: 8). Further, readers are meant to identify with the category of 'us', as seen in statements like the following: "They don't avoid you, you must avoid them" (Worthington 2001: 9). The people in the category of 'them' are assumed to be completely insignificant. A police officer, commenting on the panhandling bylaw, states "It's been very, very effective ... Everybody's happy" (Purdy 1998: 4). Finally, even panhandlers note the division between themselves and other Winnipeg residents. One panhandler comments that, while panhandling, "(p)eople's eyes skim over you, if they look at you at all. You're worse than garbage" (Winnipeg Free Press 2005: d1).

Panhandlers are not only separated from other Winnipeg residents. Some authors instantiate a division among panhandlers themselves, between those we can feel sympathy for on one side of the divide and those we should not pity on the other. The panhandlers who quietly stay out of the way, remember their manners, and accept whatever form of treatment they receive are salvaged (Pona 2003: 7, Winnipeg Sun 2003b: 8). Meanwhile, aggressive, loud and demanding panhandlers are not to be pitied at all (Obrien 2002: a1).

Statements that 'other' panhandlers can be countered with arguments maintaining that panhandlers are people, just like the rest of us, only poorer. Some articles manage to present panhandlers *and* other Winnipeg residents inclusively, depicting panhandlers as a

portion of Winnipeg's population, rather than as a population isolated from other residents. These articles maintain that panhandlers live in unique circumstances that necessitate panhandling for survival – they are unable to find jobs, they have low levels of skills, they are hungry, their employment assistance does not cover their living expenses. Further, they note that panhandlers are simply doing what anyone else might do to survive. Instances where articles portrayed panhandlers through a language of inclusion were rare in my sample. They were also strongest when found in letters to the editor. In terms of advocacy, it is necessary to increase the number of voices using a language of inclusion in *all* types of newspaper articles when depicting panhandlers and their activities.

#### **vi. Work and work ethic**

I anticipated finding references to work and work ethic in my sample. When it is perceived as a form of work, panhandling is a very controversial job to have. Alternatively, especially in the case of young male panhandlers, some individuals perceive panhandlers as being lazy (Gans 1994: 270), and see beggars who are unemployed but seeking employment as being more deserving of help than those who appear to make no effort to become employed (Will 1993: 330).

These perceptions are mirrored in newspaper articles that appeal to general notions of the value of work and personal responsibility in representing panhandlers. For the most part, articles claim that panhandlers are not working, but are able to work and should be either employed or looking for employment (Pona 2003: 7, Longhurst 2005: e9).

While there are relatively few articles presenting panhandling as a form of work, there are slightly more articles presenting panhandlers as people who are willing to work but who face obstacles in gaining employment (O'Hallarn 1998: 5, Connor 1998: 3). These articles encourage sympathy rather than spite and paint panhandlers in a more positive, if less hopeful, light.

#### **vii. Drug use**

Some articles in my sample negatively associate panhandlers with drug use (Romaniuk 2003: 7, Maksymowicz, 2005: a14). Further, in most cases, articles apply the term 'drug use' generally when describing all panhandlers. Articles also imply that drug use is correlated with drug *addiction* and that this is correlated with aggression and undesirability. While the negativity associated with drug use has a positive correlate: sobriety, none of the articles in my sample represented panhandlers as sober. Panhandling advocates need to distinguish between drug use and drug addiction, between drug addiction and abusive behaviour, indicating that one is not necessarily indicative of the other. Panhandlers who do use drugs were also represented as being weak, whereas advocates could maintain that drug use may be a survival strategy used when facing incredible obstacles as panhandlers do.

#### **viii. Panhandlers as victims**

In order to sway readers to feel sympathetic for panhandlers, other articles depict panhandlers as victims of individual, social and structural obstacles (O'Hallarn 1998: 3), of unjust laws (Ternette 1998b: 12) of other Winnipeg residents (Pona 2003: 7) of mental disability (Edgar 2005b: b1), and a lack of jobs and affordable housing (O'Hallarn 1998: 3). All of these are barriers that panhandlers have little power to change.

These arguments are all made in opposition to depictions of panhandlers as agents of their own misfortune (Mustard 2001: 6, Madsymowicz 2005: a14), and as the agents of the misfortune of others (Worthington 2001: 9, Pona 2003: 5, Longhurst 2005: e9).

Representing panhandlers' behavior as the source of their hardship represents panhandlers themselves as responsible for their situation and justifies discriminatory beliefs about them. Representing panhandlers' behaviour as the source of the hardship of others presents other Winnipeg residents as victims and holds panhandlers responsible not only for their own plight but for the plight of others. This encourages feelings that panhandlers are a negative presence in Winnipeg and that something needs to be done to get rid of them.

However, depictions of panhandlers as victims are oriented toward weakening the arguments promoting panhandlers' status as deviant. The 'victim' is a concept that is used in order to salvage panhandlers' dignity and to absolve them of the responsibility for their circumstances. Strategically, newspaper articles presenting panhandlers as victims act similarly to panhandlers who offer stories and causal accounts for their circumstances (Lankenau 1999: 206, Snow & Anderson in Holstein & Gubrium 2003: 142).

Salvaging ourselves is an opportunity for us to attempt to preserve our dignity and to normalize what parts of our lifestyles we can by redefining and justifying our actions (Snow & Anderson in Holstein & Gubrium 2003: 142). Offering causal accounts or stories is a method by which our selves may be salvaged. Accounts of victimization turn into stories about panhandlers' motives that legitimate panhandlers as a normal population. However, while the 'victim' role may salvage panhandlers' dignity and allow



them to emerge as a legitimately needy population, it is not an entirely positive role since panhandlers are only seen to be legitimate so long as they are also seen to lack agency. Therefore, I do not mean that panhandlers are seen to have the same qualities as the majority of Winnipeg residents, but that their actions are seen to be logically motivated and therefore normal considering panhandlers' unique situation. These stories allow other Winnipeg residents to view panhandlers as normal *considering* their circumstances by attempting to envision themselves in panhandlers' shoes and to imagine that if they were in similar circumstances, they may act similarly. Thus, panhandlers do not need to lack agency in order to appear legitimate, they must appear as agents who act appropriately to survive despite their harsh circumstances.

However, not all causal accounts are sympathetic. While some articles may succeed in presenting panhandlers as victims of their circumstances, other articles contain arguments stating that if panhandlers are victims, they need to get their act together and change their circumstances (O'Brien 2003: a3).

In both variations, it is agreed that panhandlers have endured harsh circumstances and their circumstances need to be changed. The inconsistencies are found when articles make claims about who is responsible for making those changes occur. Cities? Panhandlers themselves? Individual residents of Winnipeg? Although depictions of panhandlers that promote and insist upon their deviance tend to dominate, the persistence of oppositional claims that panhandlers are in fact victims shows that newspapers serve as a site of struggle, where that dominance may be proactively challenged. Examples of challenges to negative stigmas against panhandlers include objections to the anti-panhandling by-laws (Edgar 2005b: b1, Ternette 1998: 12, O'Hallarn 1998: 3,

MacKinnon 2005: a13), support for panhandlers (Sinclair 2004: b1, Owen 2004: b3, Connor 1999: 7, Oleson 2006: a15) and suggestions for positively helping panhandlers to change their circumstances for the better (Hendry 2002: a3, Rudy 2004: a15, Carnochan 2005: b1).

### **2.3 Common representational themes**

#### **ix. Illegitimacy**

Panhandlers are often perceived as being illegitimately needy. And they are perceived in this way for a number of reasons. The literature on panhandling suggests that passersby believe panhandlers beg for money to support their drug and alcohol addictions (Carter et al. 2007: 20). Others believe that panhandlers beg because they lack moral fiber, work ethic and a sense of personal responsibility and because they are lazy and unwilling to get a job (Ibid.). When passersby assume that panhandlers are begging for those reasons, they see panhandlers' need as illegitimate, or self-induced. They see panhandlers as being on the streets by choice and therefore as being less deserving of help (O'Brien 2003: a3, Macfarlane 2002: d1, Worthington 2001: 9, Romaniuk 2003: 7, Reynolds 2006: b1). When newspaper articles apply concepts of illegitimacy to panhandlers, they segregate people who panhandle from the rest of Winnipeg residents.

As in most cases, while panhandlers are negatively represented through a language of illegitimacy, these portrayals can be positively countered through a language of legitimacy. In my sample, although representations of panhandlers as illegitimate were more common, arguments in favor of panhandlers' legitimacy were more varied and were much more compelling. Readers' sympathy was appealed to in articles that claimed that panhandlers are people too, are down on their luck (Lutz 2005: 10), or are simply doing

what they can to survive (Hendry 2002b: a11). Justifications were given citing social and structural causes for panhandlers being on the street in the attempt to legitimate their behaviour (Winnipeg Free Press 2005: d1). In the attempts to prove panhandlers as either legitimate or illegitimate, authors orient themselves to their readers, to their readers' assumed values and to their readers' assumed notions of legitimacy or illegitimacy to present panhandlers in light of these assumptions. Currently, representations of panhandlers as legitimate appear only half as often as claims that they are illegitimate, but because they are so powerful, increasing the number of voices labeling beggars as legitimate and panhandling as a legitimate survival tool would increase beggars' chances to appear as a legitimate population.

#### **x. Suggestions for helping**

Examining the ways in which panhandlers are discussed in Winnipeg newspapers by moving from the most persistent representational themes to less persistent ones reveals a real struggle in the newspaper articles. This struggle is exhibited by the following findings. In terms of persistency, claims about panhandlers' illegitimate neediness are followed by suggestions for helping panhandlers to overcome the obstacles they face and to improve their circumstances. While references to illegitimate neediness imply that panhandlers should be digging themselves out of the holes they have landed in, suggestions for helping panhandlers assume that if panhandlers are unable to improve their conditions on their own, other Winnipeg residents should be helping them.

#### **xi. Support for non-favourable treatment**

Again, a struggle becomes evident as the persistency of this positive portrayal of panhandlers is followed by a negative one. Statements made in support of non-favourable

treatment of panhandlers range from supporting negative treatment sanctioned by the city of Winnipeg - like the criminalization of panhandling through anti-panhandling by-laws - to more informal types of treatment like avoiding panhandlers in the street, refusing to donate spare change, voicing beliefs that panhandlers need to get moving and find jobs.

## **xii. Objections to by-laws**

Returning to more positive treatment of panhandlers, objections to Winnipeg's anti-panhandling legislation were only slightly less persistent than statements supporting non-favourable treatment of panhandlers. These objections ranged from claims that anti-panhandling legislation is unjust, to arguments that Winnipeg's anti-panhandling legislation is an ineffective way to attempt to remedy a serious social problem like panhandling. This struggle is not something I expected to find based on my review of the literature. The literature on panhandling implied that there are some ways in which individuals and groups may argue positively for panhandlers - to protect panhandlers' rights (National Anti-Poverty Organization 1999: 3), or to offer causal accounts for their circumstances and activities (Snow & Anderson in Holstein & Gubrium 2003: 142), but that the majority of people view panhandling as socially undesirable if not harmful behaviour and panhandlers as socially undesirable themselves. The back and forth struggle between negative and positive representations of panhandlers illustrates the instability of panhandlers' identities as determined by newspaper articles. Further, it offers opportunities that panhandling advocates can grab hold of and run with. When we see that consensus as to how panhandlers should be represented is so unstable, we have the opportunity to point out that instability, and argue the importance of allowing panhandlers to emerge in a positive light rather than in a negative one.

### **xiii. Sarcasm**

There are several strategies for survival that are used by panhandlers to preserve their sense of self despite representations that paint them as 'other', inferior, illegitimate or dangerous. The use of these strategies fits nicely within a phenomenological framework as they allow individuals to resist undesired identities of themselves that are being created and sponsored by others. Within my sample, it appears that sarcasm may be used by individuals whose arguments are being put down to salvage their selves, their legitimacy, their validity. For example, one panhandling advocate who objected to anti-panhandling by-laws felt he was not being heard and sarcastically asked if the city would employ the panhandlers to paint their red lines designating no-panhandling areas around the city so that they would not have to panhandle anymore (Edgar 2005: b1). On the other hand, an article supporting anti-panhandling legislation stated that panhandlers' rights to freedom of expression were not the only rights that the legislation was concerned with. Were panhandlers' rights to harass and assault passersby going to be preserved as well? (Pona 2003: 7). On both sides of the debate, the use of sarcasm is used to challenge oppositional arguments and as an attempt to preserve the validity of the article, the author, the argument being made.

### **xiv. Generalizations**

Generalizations made about panhandlers are based on assumptions that what is true of one is true of all. My review of the literature on panhandling indicated that panhandlers are often spoken of in terms of their appearance (Lankenau 1999: 206). This observation also applies to my study. In Winnipeg newspapers, panhandlers are often

discussed as being lazy, unclean, intoxicated and aggressive. In these cases, stereotypical representations to be presented as true, articles strip panhandlers of their individuality, and in my sample, sets them apart from the rest of us as a population defined by its' members' negative characteristics. While the majority of generalizations found in my sample do present panhandlers in negative terms, it is possible to make positive generalizations about them as well. For example, generalizing that panhandlers are victims of their circumstances is still generalizing, but this type of generalization encourages sympathy rather than disdain and puts panhandlers in a more hopeful situation for achieving their goals.

#### **xv. Panhandlers' rights**

Our rights and freedoms are cultural concepts upheld and protected by those who believe in them. Human rights discourse affirms that Winnipeg residents, like all humans beings, have the right to be treated fairly, to have freedom from harm and to have freedom of expression. There are strong examples in the literature on panhandling illustrating how panhandlers' rights are a highly controversial subject in Winnipeg. Anti-panhandling legislation in Winnipeg restricts panhandlers from voicing their need for assistance in the areas of the city where they may be the most likely to find a sympathetic ear (Collins, Damian & Blomley 2003: 41, National Anti-Poverty Organization 1999: 15). Panhandling advocates are encouraged to discuss this legislation in a language of human rights in order to encourage sympathetic reactions to panhandlers.

Within my sample, some articles maintain that all Winnipeg residents, including panhandlers, have the right to freedom of expression, to ask for help when they need it, to earn a living by begging if they so choose (Purdy 1998: a4, Connor 2000: 1, Shafer 2005:

a11). In this light, not only are panhandlers to be recognized as human beings, but they are recognized as the bearers of rights and their rights are meant to be respected.

While human rights talk bolsters arguments in support of panhandlers, it is also used to oppose their behavior when articles talk about the rights of Winnipeg residents, which sometimes appear to trump the rights of panhandlers. Some articles correctly note that panhandlers do not have the right to violate Winnipeg residents' safety or to physically harm them (Lakritz 1998: 4). However, other articles claim that panhandlers violate Winnipeg residents' rights to walk freely downtown without having to listen to panhandlers' pleas for help, which entirely disregards panhandlers' rights to freedom of expression (Edgar 2005: b1, Shafer 2005: a11). Further, other articles maintain that yes, panhandlers are violating other Winnipeg residents' rights to the enjoyment of their day *and* that no, anti-panhandling legislation does *not* violate panhandlers' rights to freedom of expression and movement. Representing panhandling in this light eliminates the confusion that may be felt when both panhandlers and other Winnipeg residents are recognized as having their rights abused. These arguments simplify the situation and only label one side 'victim'.

The use of human rights talk is successful whether it is used to support panhandlers or attack them. Articles encourage sympathy for the victim whenever a person or population is discussed as though their rights are being disregarded, no matter which population it is that is being discussed. However, some articles also point out the hierarchy of rights that is established in some cases and the hypocrisy of maintaining the rights of one individual or group over another. If more articles noted that panhandlers'

rights are often being disregarded in favour of other Winnipeg residents' rights, panhandlers may be perceived in a more positive light.

#### **xvi. Panhandlers as persons**

While there are conflicts between categories as articles struggle to either represent panhandlers as a positive population or negative force, there are also some examples of struggles within categories. As I coded for panhandlers' 'personhood' there were examples within this category that positively represented panhandlers, as well as examples that portrayed them negatively, depending on the degree of personhood that panhandlers were permitted. The most severe way to separate panhandlers from the rest of Winnipeg residents is to discuss them as though they are non-persons. Individuals may validate their own behaviour toward panhandlers – whether they are ignoring panhandlers as they pass, supporting non-favourable treatment of panhandlers or speaking on behalf of panhandlers – by maintaining that since panhandlers are not persons they do not deserve the same treatment that they themselves deserve (Pascale 2005: 258).

In my sample, panhandlers are discussed as though they are animals (Worthington 2001: 9), a societal problem (Welch & Kives 2006: a6), inanimate objects (Sinclair 2004: b1), but not as persons. They are discussed as though they belong to another category all together. Further, they are contrasted with 'us' – fully human, upstanding citizens of Winnipeg. Sometimes they are represented in terms of their behavior rather than in terms of their personhood. This facilitates beliefs that panhandlers are not persons who act, but simply the sum of their actions alone. Finally, occasionally, panhandlers are represented as though they are partially human but not wholly so. Objectification of panhandlers and



denying that they have feelings also denies panhandlers the opportunity to appear as equal to the rest of Winnipeg's residents. Rather they appear as shameless losers, not even on the same level of humanity as the rest of us (Mustard 2001: 6, Worthington 2001: 9).

Phenomenologically speaking, this is a simple move by authors who orient to general concepts of what it means to be human, what rights come along with that, and what responsibilities we have to each other. Presenting panhandlers as not only other but as not 'us' means we no longer have to treat them the way we would treat each other.

That is not to say that there are no exceptions or objections. Some articles insist that panhandlers' humanity be preserved, that panhandlers are human beings and are valuable (Owen 2004: b3). Arguments that panhandlers are non-persons are powerful because they are oriented to their audiences' presumed belief and value systems. In contrast, arguments that maintain that panhandlers are people too may become powerful by addressing the arguments denying panhandler's humanity. Currently, these more positive arguments do not address the arguments being made against panhandlers' personhood and are simply not oriented in opposition to the arguments they are attempting to refute. These arguments may become much more powerful if the articles presenting them are oriented toward opposing the negative biases that currently exist in Winnipeg newspapers.

When panhandlers *were* being discussed as persons, they were often discussed in terms of negative traits or characteristics. Articles noted that panhandlers were mentally disabled, were unclean (Carnochan 2005: a15, Kives 2006: b2) and were either diseased or were illustrative of a social disease – poverty (Scott 1998: 6). While each of these

categories has a positive correlate: mental or physical health, cleanliness, none of the articles in my sample represented panhandlers in those terms. Rather, if panhandlers were represented within these themes, it was always negatively. However, identification within one of these categories, mental disability, may function positively for panhandlers as panhandlers are presented as suffering something that is beyond their control and this depiction may encourage a sympathetic response rather than anger.

## **2.4 Rare representational themes**

### **xvii. Belittling, Economics and Education**

The literature on panhandling indicated that panhandlers have very low levels of education (Donahue et al. 2004: 736). Also, according to the literature, panhandlers are often perceived as irresponsible and lazy (Gans 1994: 270). Because of this, I expected to find depictions of panhandlers in Winnipeg newspapers that belittled panhandlers, pointed out their lack of education, accused them of being economic burdens to the government and other Winnipeg residents. These themes rarely emerged in my sample. I see this as a hopeful finding.

In Winnipeg newspapers, representations of panhandlers are neither entirely positive or negative. Rather, there is a back and forth struggle as to what panhandlers are, what their behaviour means and how Winnipeg residents should respond to them. I see this struggle as positive because it means there is room for panhandlers to emerge in a positive light and the foundations are there to support a positive response to them.

### ***Part 3 - Strategies for Countering Negative Representations***

What can poverty advocates do to increase the number of positive portrayals of panhandlers in Winnipeg newspapers? With all of the ways of representing panhandlers

that are present, what can panhandling advocates – including panhandlers themselves - do in an attempt to address and correct what are commonly negative representational practices? They can start by making their voices heard. The more voices there are supporting panhandlers, the more choices people have when consulting their personal experiences to determine if they reflect the images of panhandlers portrayed in newspapers. When presented with an account of panhandlers we must examine our previous beliefs about panhandlers, and our previous experiences, and we have to decide whether or not to accept the explanations we are being given. If there were more positive representations of panhandlers present, we would have more reasons *not* to buy the negative portrayals we are being offered. Again, making these arguments appear popular gives them a semblance of truth and gives members of the public more choices when choosing which version of truth about panhandlers they wish to adhere to.

Finally, we know that we can advantage one version of reality over another by weakening arguments in support of the latter version. We can also advantage one version of truth by excluding the other versions. Panhandlers' voices are rarely present in Winnipeg newspapers. Advocates of panhandlers can increase panhandlers' opportunities to appear less deviant by ensuring that panhandlers' own voices are heard. In face to face interactions, we have the opportunity to refute interpretations of ourselves that we disagree with. In newspapers in Winnipeg, panhandlers' are not given that opportunity. If they cannot take that opportunity on their own, they need to be given the chance to present their own versions of the truth.

***Part 4 - Study limitations and implications for future research***

My study investigated representations of panhandlers promoted by newspapers in Winnipeg which were mainly presented by individuals who are not panhandlers themselves and therefore lacked panhandlers' opinions about their lifestyles. A comparative study examining opinions held by others about panhandling compared to opinions held by panhandlers themselves, which could be gathered via interviews, would provide valuable insight into the disconnection - or continuity - between panhandlers' motives for panhandling and interpretations of panhandlers' behavior.

Winnipeg is a city that has instituted anti-panhandling by-laws and these by-laws have now been around for a little over ten years. Comparing representations of panhandlers in newspapers in Winnipeg to representations of panhandlers in newspapers in another city which has not enacted such by-laws would reveal the significance of the types of representations found. For example, would panhandlers still be represented as criminals in a town that does not have anti-panhandling legislation? Would representations of panhandlers as a threat to other citizens, businesses and community reputations be as common?

Although I did not find any conclusive results indicating sexist or racist beliefs about panhandlers, it is possible that panhandlers' gender and racial categories were omitted from physical descriptions of panhandlers because readers are meant to assume that most panhandlers in Winnipeg are Aboriginal males. The small amount of evidence of sexism and racism that I did find suggests this possibility. While an analysis of newspaper articles about panhandling could not prove this, future studies including interviews with members of the public on their perceptions of panhandlers could.

My findings do not indicate whether a different theoretical orientation would better explain discrimination against panhandlers in Winnipeg newspapers. A comparative study examining the benefits of a phenomenological approach for examining textual discrimination against panhandlers in comparison to another theoretical approach might reveal even more insight into how this form of discrimination is carried out and maintained and into methods for combating the maintenance of this form of representational inequality.

My study also may have been limited because I was the sole researcher coding and analyzing the data. Having multiple researchers allows for different interpretations of the data to arise and for more extensive coding categories to be developed. Something I miss or interpret one way could be found or interpreted differently by another researcher. Further, I used the literature I found on the topic of panhandling to inform some of my choices about coding categories, but all of these articles were written by academics who do not live the same lifestyles that panhandlers' do. In the future, interviewing panhandlers on how they feel others may see them and interviewing members of the public about their perceptions of panhandlers, prior to conducting data analysis, could inform future research about other categories to keep in mind and look for.

Finally, while my study examines representations of panhandlers as they are currently presented and as they have been presented in Winnipeg newspapers over the past ten years, it does not evaluate programs and courses of action being taken to support panhandlers and improve their conditions. My findings can partially inform future research as well as praxis by pointing out how negative representations of panhandlers in newspapers function and how they may be countered. My study does not offer concrete

suggestions regarding what future actions are necessary in order to improve the status of panhandlers in society. However, my findings suggest concrete actions that can improve the ways panhandlers are represented in newspapers which, in turn, could improve their status overall.

## CONCLUSION

Let me return to my initial nameless, voiceless character. What if it turns out this person has a voice after all but simply cannot be heard above the noise everyone else is making? What if all that is needed is to turn up the volume? While it is not quite that simple, it seems that voices and volume might be a good start.

What has been learned is that things do not have to be as they currently are or as they are presented to be. If we want to swim against the stream we can. And sometimes we should. In the case at hand, the predominant voices in newspapers act like bullies who put down panhandlers again and again, and when people try to step in to support panhandlers, often these voices are also denigrated. Negative representations of panhandlers currently dominate newspaper coverage of panhandling. However, that does not mean that they should continue to do so.

People who wish to question or confront Winnipeg newspapers' representational practices need to make their arguments persuasively. However, this may not be simple. There is more than one side to every argument. The simple fact that one argument is logical does not mean that other arguments are not equally logical or more so. Poverty advocates need to step back from the natural attitude and perpetuate the positive side of things. Currently, poverty advocates appear in newspapers addressing negative representations of panhandlers with statements like: "no they are not" and "that is not true" without explaining why negative representations of panhandlers may be false or why we should understand panhandlers to be something other than what newspapers present them to be. Perhaps advocates are in fact making these arguments and newspapers are simply ignoring them, or perhaps the arguments are not being made.

Advocates of panhandlers need to address negative arguments that are against panhandlers' normalcy in order to weaken them. We actually empower negative arguments by neglecting to address their flaws because supportive arguments appear weak in comparison. So panhandling advocates need more and louder voices, those voices need to be oriented toward the arguments they are disputing, and they need to be persuasive in order to prove themselves to be just as legitimate as the voices that are currently being heard or more so.

My study shows that panhandlers' voices need to be heard. But panhandlers are already a minority population and they need help. Social interactions occur between at least two individuals – an actor and an interpreter. If panhandlers are unable to present themselves as normal in the face of the discriminatory beliefs about their lifestyles which predominate in Winnipeg newspapers, interpreters are still empowered to believe them to be normal. It is possible for us to maintain that panhandlers are simply acting how anyone else would in their circumstances or that panhandlers are victims of their circumstances and there are logical explanations for their actions that do not rest on beliefs that panhandlers are any less legitimate than the rest of us are. Portraying panhandlers as deviant and illegitimate facilitates and empowers discriminatory beliefs against panhandlers as a population. Opposing these depictions facilitates advocacy and support for panhandlers instead.

The lack of panhandlers' voices is also significantly suggestive of what kinds of studies are required. Studies need to interview panhandlers or use other qualitative methods that would permit panhandlers' voices to be heard such as participant observation, ethnography, or participant action research. Researchers need to conduct



interviews in order to determine how panhandlers identify themselves. What problems do panhandlers identify as obstacles to their well-being? What do panhandlers want? And what supports do they need? Without panhandlers' input on these crucial issues, we are simply left with the option of speaking for panhandlers rather than empowering panhandlers to speak for themselves.

What I believe this all boils down to is empowerment. The production of newspapers is a big and busy process and we cannot assume that the end result is the only option that was offered. Poverty advocates need to empower their voices and use them. Supportive individuals need to empower panhandlers and hear them. We need to empower each other in supporting those who need help and we need to *dis*-empower those statements that cause more harm than good.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Data Table:**

#### **Frequency of Representational Themes Sorted by Type of Article**

<b>Coding Theme</b>	<b>Column (49 articles)</b>	<b>News Story (100 articles)</b>	<b>Editorial (8 articles)</b>	<b>Op-Ed (9 articles)</b>	<b>Letter to Editor (36 articles)</b>	<b>Total (202 articles)</b>
Criminality	25	157	11	6	23	232
Support for panhandlers	41	85	20	23	28	197
Safety / danger	21	88	9	11	33	163
Negativity	23	62	8	10	32	135
Wpg. vs panhandlers	20	47	12	11	30	120
Work / work ethic	54	27	1	6	15	103
Drug use	18	34	16	14	21	103
Panhandlers = victims	13	37		14	8	72
Causal accounts	18	37		5	6	66
Illegitimacy	30	23			9	62
Suggestions for helping	2	28	10	5	17	62
Support non- favorable treatment		46		3	11	60
Objections to bylaw	6	34		6	13	59
Sarcasm	29	6		6	17	52
Generalizations	24	11		2	14	51
Agency	17	22	1	2	7	49
Panhandlers vs panhandlers	13	13	7	6	10	49
Panhandlers' rights	3	28	1	7	6	45
Citizens = victims	9	33				42
Bylaw ineffective	5	25	6	2	4	42
Legitimacy	19	9		1	7	36
Persons / non- Persons	9	9	4	3	8	33
Winnipeg's reputation	4	18		3	6	31
Proposals for non-favorable treatment	5	15	2	3	2	27
Mental disability	2	11	2	2	4	21

Cleanliness	8	6		3	4	21
Disease	4	9			2	15
Speaking for	10				3	13
Reduce to activities	2	5		1	4	12
Winnipeggers' rights	2	5			4	11
Racism	3	1			7	11
Sexism	9	1				10
Panhandling not a crime	2	3		2	3	10
Objectification	4	1			4	9
Inclusion		4			3	7
Belittling	2	1			3	6
Panhandlers' rights not violated	1				3	4
Economic burden		2		2		4
Lack of education	2					2

Other coding themes	Number of articles to which themes apply
Non-raced subjects	161
Exclusion from discourse	156
Non-gendered subjects	146