A SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF IDENTITY WORK AMONG HOMELESS

PANHANDLERS IN DOWNTOWN AUSTIN, TEXAS

THESIS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The rise of homelessness in America has been well documented in popular media

and widely debated in political discourse since the early 1980s (Lamar, 1988). In

addition, a great deal of social scientific study has been devoted to homelessness during

this time span (Momeni, 1989; Sommer, 2001). Population estimations, perhaps the most

debated area within this research, varied widely throughout the 1980s (Burt, 1992).

However, the most accepted and recent estimate claims that at least 2.3 million adults and

children, or almost 1 percent of America's population, experience homelessness at least

once annually (Burt, 2000). The condition of homelessness is not limited to single adult

men as several studies reveal (Baum, 1993), rather the population is very diverse. In a

recent nationwide study of homelessness researchers found that 85% of the respondents

were single, 77% were male and 23% were female, and that 15% were a head of a family

(Burt, 1999). Furthermore, the same study found that while a significant percentage of

homeless persons are white, the majority of homeless persons are classified as a racial

minority.

The various sub-populations of homeless persons provide a unique view into the

marginalized "other" for sociologists. They are victims of societal inequities, generally

ignored by society and often rejected because of their assumed and sometimes real

deviant behavior. However, the segment of homeless persons who engage in panhandling or as it is defined by Merriam-Webster "to accost on the street and beg from" as their "shadow work" (Snow & Anderson, 1993) or those labeled "panhandlers" have received little attention in sociological literature (Taylor, 1999). The lack of attention may be largely due to the relatively small proportion of persons who panhandle as compared to larger, more distinct proportions of sub-populations within the overall population. Panhandlers are highly visible in society because of their need to occupy public space while doing their work panhandling. Despite this high visibility panhandlers are only estimated to constitute between 8 and 17% in nationwide studies (Stark, 1992; Burt, 1999) and even less, 3% in a study of homelessness in Texas (Samuels, 2000).

Recently, homeless panhandlers in Austin, Texas have attracted a great deal of attention and scrutiny from the community. Homelessness has been a social problem of Austin for several years from the homeless teenagers on Guadalupe Street to the homeless adults, families, and day laborers congregating around the downtown Salvation Army shelter and the Caritas and Austin Baptist Chapel soup kitchens (Snow and Anderson, 1993). However, Austin experienced dramatic growth in the 1990s (Bureau, 1999) and the population growth while largely due to a revitalized local economy also increased the visibility of a growing number of persons suffering from homelessness in the community. In response to a homeless population that climbed to an estimated 6,000 people the city began implementing plans to supply the increased need for shelter and services (Austin City Manager's Office, 1997).

In addition to planning for more shelter and services, the Austin city council began considering and implementing "quality of life" laws that would directly affect the homeless (Dworin, 1996). In 1996 the city council passed an ordinance making it illegal to set up camp and sleep within the city limits. Despite its eventual retraction, the issue fueled public debate on how the city should deal with this problem. The debate has resulted in the city passing an aggressive solicitation ordinance and more recently a sidewalk loitering ordinance (Austin City Council, 2001), which was enacted to curb the perceived disorder created by panhandlers in the downtown area. Ordinances designed to eliminate aggressive panhandling have been passed in several cities across the nation in recent years (Maggs, 1999). The movement to eliminate these "chronic street nuisances" (Ellickson, 1996) has its origins in the "broken windows" theory which claims that these types of "nuisances" facilitate an area's demise into more severe criminal activity (Wilson, 1982).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore why panhandlers are so problematic for the informal and formal sectors of society, how the formal and informal sectors perceive and react to panhandlers and the coping strategies employed by panhandlers in the downtown Austin area to deal with the degradation arising from their status and activities.

Research Questions

This study explores eight research questions related to the formal and informal sanctions homeless panhandlers in Austin face, especially in light of the increased public attention on them and their activities. Generally this research examines the "identity

work" (Snow and Anderson, 1987) that homeless panhandlers employ to cope with these

sanctions. Within this broad question I examine:

1) How do panhandlers interpret the recently passed aggressive solicitation ordinance?

2) How and why did panhandlers start panhandling?

3) What types of experiences have panhandlers had while doing their "work"?

4) What relationships have panhandlers formed with passersby whom they solicit?

5) What relationships do panhandlers have with law enforcement and downtown businesses?

6) How do panhandlers prepare for their "work"?

7) What panhandling approaches do panhandlers find the most effective?

8) What are panhandlers' opinions about panhandling and of other panhandlers?

These research questions explore the basic issues affecting panhandlers in

downtown Austin. They allow me to measure the work of panhandlers and their feelings

about it, experiences with informal and formal social controls, and the relationships

panhandlers have with all segments of society. Overall, the questions explore

panhandlers' perception of their work and identity within society and how they fit these

perceptions into their self-concept.

Definition of Terms

Beggary—the practice of begging (Merriam-Webster, 2002).

Formal Social Control—A term used in sociology to refer to the social processes by which the behavior of individuals or groups is regulated. Formal social control is distinguished from informal social control in that it is a repressive form of control or a so called hard technique, including direct physical constraint. These techniques are characteristic of institutions such as the police and the military. (Marshall, 1994).

Homelessness— The term "homeless" or "homeless individual or homeless person" [1] includes - an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is - a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill); an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (Legal Information Institute, 2003).

Informal Social Control— term used in sociology to refer to the social processes by which the behavior of individuals or groups is regulated. Informal social control is distinguished from formal social control in that it is a coercive form of control or a softer ideological form of control that operates though the shaping of ideas, values, and attitudes. These techniques are characteristic of institutions such as the mass media (Marshall, 1994).

Marginalized groups—A group that is denied access to important positions and symbols or economic, religious, or political power within any society (Marshall, 1994).

Panhandler—A "panhandler" is a person who asks for money or goods for their own use on a regular basis while in the public eye and through face-to-face interactions while offering nothing of comparable value in return (Lankenau, 1999).

Passerby—one who passes by (Merriam-Webster, 2002).

Shadow Work—Compensatory subsistence strategies that are fashioned or pursued in the shadow of more conventional work because of exclusion from existing labor markets, because participation in those markets fails to provide a living wage, because public assistance is insufficient, or because such strategies provide a more reliable means of survival (Snow and Anderson, 1993).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the unique interplay between the general public and homeless panhandlers. Homeless panhandlers represent the "stranger" in society (Simmel, [1903] 1971), the "stranger" is represented by all marginalized groups in our society. However, the situation for homeless panhandlers is much different from other, more hidden, marginalized groups in our society. While marginalized groups only rarely have to face public scrutiny, homeless panhandlers face it on a daily basis (Goffman, 1963b). The homeless panhandler has to cope with constantly being evaluated by the general public. Reactions by passersby when interacting with homeless panhandlers serve as these "evaluations." Therefore, this study is significant because it examines the coping strategies of the "other" in the public face.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter describes previous research about panhandlers and the homeless. I discuss several prominent themes about panhandling that sociologists have explored, including an overview of homelessness and panhandling in the U.S., attitudes towards panhandlers and homeless people, informal and formal social control of panhandlers and the homeless, and the "work" of panhandlers. First, I will summarize the history, scope, and causes of homelessness and panhandling. Then, I will discuss findings on attitudes toward the homeless and panhandlers to illustrate the relevance of the sections that follow. Arising out of these attitudes are informal and formal social controls that are imposed on the homeless and panhandlers, therefore these two types of social controls are then discussed. Finally, I discuss how homeless panhandlers adapt when and where they "work" and develop accepted and effective approaches to panhandling. I conclude this review by summarizing the theoretical work sociologists have explored in their analyses of attitudes toward panhandlers and the homeless, informal and formal social controls imposed on panhandlers and the homeless and on the coping strategies employed by these groups to deflect the stigma associated with their status and activities.

What is Panhandling?

According to Lankenau (1999), a "panhandler" is a person who asks for money or goods for their own use on a regular basis while in the public eye and through face-to-face interactions while offering nothing of comparable value in return. Panhandling, like homelessness, has increased in visibility over the last two decades (Lankenau, 1998; Taylor 1999). While not every panhandler is homeless the two terms are often linked in the sociological literature (Baum, 1993; Snow and Anderson, 1993; Taylor, 1999). For this reason, I discuss both groups in this chapter. There is no comprehensive census of homeless panhandlers in the U.S. but relying on the estimations presented in the previous chapter it appears likely that the number of people panhandling has increased as the number of people experiencing homelessness has increased.

Historical Background of Homelessness and Panhandling

Several studies have described the history of homelessness, many have defined what "panhandling" is and examined its relation to homelessness. Panhandling or begging has been in existence throughout history. For example, evidence of beggars and alms givers can be found in biblical references. Moreover, from the outset of capitalism in Western Europe the occurrence of beggary has been well documented (Lankenau, 1998). In America's relatively short history people experiencing homelessness and begging for money, food, and shelter has not been uncommon (Devine, 1897; Gillin, 1929; Snow and Anderson, 1993). The first serious crisis of homelessness in America occurred during the Great Depression when at least 1.2 million single men, single women, families and children found themselves displaced after the stock market crash

(Crouse, 1986). During that time and in years following, the occurrence of hobos panhandling for money was well documented (Anderson, 1923/1961). Through the middle of the 20th century, hobos or "a homeless and usually penniless vagabond" (Merriam-Webster, 2002) became the image of homelessness in America (Anderson, 1923/1961). The visibility of homelessness increased again during the early 1980s as affordable housing decreased and poverty increased (Wright, 1998). The problem of homelessness continued through the 1990s and still continues today in America so a great deal of sociological literature has been collected on the subject over the past two decades (Sommer, 2001). The link between panhandling and homelessness that researchers have noted is illustrated by estimates of the panhandlers making up between eight and seventeen percent of the total homeless population (Burt, 1999; Stark, 1992).

The Scope of Homelessness in the U.S.

In the early 1980s the increased visibility of homeless people within society implied that homelessness was growing and researchers began making attempts at a valid and comprehensive census of the homeless population. When homelessness increased in visibility advocates for the homeless (e.g. homeless service providers, public policy organizations) offered an estimation of two to three million people and acceptance of these figures by the media further exacerbated the debate over the number of people suffering from homelessness (Hewitt, 1996). In 1984 The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HU D) conducted a nationwide count and estimated the homeless population to be between 250,000 and 350,000 at any point-in-time (Hewitt, 1996). While the initial estimate presented by advocates received criticism from government

officials and social scientists as exaggerated, the lower 1984 HUD estimate received

criticism from advocates and social scientists as a significant under-count. In 1987 the

Urban Institute, a nonprofit nonpartisan policy research and educational organization,

conducted a nationwide study of homelessness and presented a homeless estimate of

between 500,000 and 600,000 people on any given day (Burt, 1992). The Urban

Institute's estimation of homelessness became the most widely accepted figure on the

number of homeless during the mid-1980s (Sommer, 2001). Still the most widely

accepted source for homeless population estimates, the Urban Institute currently

estimates that at least 2.3 million adults and children of America's population experience

homelessness over the course of a year or 842,000 at any point-in-time (Burt, 2000).

While the numbers and opinions of researchers vary widely concerning homeless

population estimates, social scientists agree that there is no single "right" number because

there is no perfect method to take a census of homeless persons given the unique

characteristics of the population (Link, 1995). The mobility of the population, continual

change of the population, and inherent problems involved in locating the total population

makes a comprehensive census of the homeless virtually impossible.

Demographic Profile of Homelessness in the U.S.

In addition to attempts at estimating the size of the homeless population

researchers have worked to provide an accurate description of this sub-population as

well. During the early 1900s and extending through the mid-1900s homelessness was

most often characterized in the form of the single adult alcoholic male (Hoch, 1989).

However, studies conducted in the early 1980s revealed a different characterization of

homelessness. Findings in those early studies revealed that homeless people included men, women, families and children (Bassuk, 1987; Snow, 1994). In a recent Urban Institute study of homelessness researchers found that 85% of the respondents were single, 77% male and 23% female, and that 15% were a head of a family (Burt, 1999). The percentages from a national study of homelessness conducted by the U.S. Conference of Mayors differed somewhat in that 44% of the homeless were single adult men, families comprised 36%, single adult women 13% and unaccompanied youth 7% of the population (Lowe, 2000). The discrepancies between the proportions of single adults to families in the two studies represent the differences in types of studies. The latter study solely drew respondents from large city shelters while the former study more closely resembles the homeless population at large because of a nationally representative data collection effort. Researchers have theorized that these types of discrepancies skew the perceived heterogeneity of the population (Shlay, 1992) but in either case it is apparent that the homeless population in no longer accurately characterized by the lone male vagabond.

In addition, findings indicate that the homeless vary a great deal in regards to race, educational achievement and employment history. Demographic findings from previous research reveal that while all ethnicities or races are represented, minorities are clearly over-represented among the homeless. Findings from the Urban Institute's study of homelessness reveal that 41% are white, 40% are black, 11% are Hispanic, 8% are American Indian and all other races make up the remaining 1% (Burt, 1999). Blacks are disproportionately represented among the homeless considering that the latest census findings indicate that only 12% of the total U.S. population are identified as African-

American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In addition, findings indicate that the majority of homeless persons are within the thirty to mid-thirty year old age group making this a relatively young sub-population within the U.S. (Wright, 1998; Burt, 1999). The educational attainment levels of the homeless population are much lower than those of the overall U.S. population. The Urban Institute found that while only 25% of the total U.S. population over the age of 25 did not receive a high school diploma, 53% of the homeless clients in the sample failed to graduate high school (Burt, 1999). Finally, many studies have revealed findings that challenge the notion of a population unwilling to work (Snow and Anderson, 1993; Burt, 1999; Duneier, 1999b). In her study, Burt found that 44% of the homeless clients responding to her survey did some paid work within the last month.

Causes of Homelessness

One of the questions addressed by researchers examining homelessness in the literature is the question of causality. Why do people become homeless? What causal factors lead to homelessness? Reasons for becoming homeless can be thought of on two levels: structural and individual. Structural level or macro-level causes were more often cited as the primary reason for homelessness by researchers through the 1980s and into the mid-1990s (Main, 1996). The structural issues that theorists discuss are: a lack of affordable housing, economic inequities, and the loss or lack of public assistance (Morse, 1992; Baum, 1993; Wright, 1998). A lack of affordable housing is the most basic element germane to the condition of homelessness. Several researchers cite the imbalance of available affordable housing and the rising proportion of low-income households as the

primary cause for the rise of homelessness in the past couple of decades (McChessney, 1990; Wright, 1998). Along with these claims are discussions relating the rise of poverty and its sustained level in America to the increased incidence of homelessness during this same time period (Wright, 1987; van der Ploeg, 1997). Then, many theorists point to the loss or lack of public assistance meant to bridge the gap incurred through the unequal distribution of the two structural components discussed above (Morse, 1992; Hudson, 1998; Wright, 1998). The relative significance researchers ascribe to these structural components as correlates to homelessness is debated, particularly by those attributing more importance to individual or micro-level factors.

Individual level causes such as substance abuse and mental illness also contribute to a person becoming homeless. Some researchers cite micro-level causes as the overlying factors for an individual's homelessness (Koegel, 1996). Trends related to micro-level causal factors and homelessness have been well documented in the available literature. Veteran status is often linked to homelessness and the proportion of male homeless veterans varies between about one-quarter of the population to a little over one-third of the population in past studies (Rosenheck, 1994; Burt, 1999). Also routinely cited is the frequency of mental illness and substance abuse among the homeless population. Mental illness is often reported to affect about one-quarter to one-third of the homeless population (Koegel, 1996; Burt, 1999; Lowe, 2000). Drug abuse or alcoholism is typically reported to affect about one-third of the homeless population (Burt, 1999; Lowe, 2000). Domestic violence is often cited as an event leading to homelessness, especially among women. In the U.S. Conference of Mayors study, 14 cities cited domestic violence as the primary cause for homelessness (Lowe, 2000). The Urban Institute found that 22%

of all respondents suffered physical abuse and 7% suffered sexual abuse prior to becoming homeless in their examination (Burt, 1999).

Most researchers contend that these micro-level factors are only contributors to an individual's homelessness and cite, for example, the failure of programs designed to address substance abuse and mental illness effectively. Advocates and researchers suggest these individual factors are at times situations over which persons have little control, such as in the case of domestic abuse, which alone accounts for a large percentage of the factors leading to homelessness among women and their families. Researchers disagree about whether structural or individual level reasons are more compelling explanations for homelessness. However, most agree that any valid examination into the causes of homelessness must consider the combination of both factors as contributors to an individual's or family's homelessness.

Attitudes towards the Homeless and Panhandlers

Much sociological work has gone into assessing the societal attitudes about homelessness (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Shinn, 1992). Researchers have sought to examine public attitudes about homelessness since the 1980s, and their findings have been conflicting at times. The media and some social scientists contend that Americans are tired of dealing with the problem of homelessness and are suffering from what has been termed as "compassion fatigue" (Goodman, 1989). Goodman uses the phrase to express the perceived public sentiment that over time compassion for the homeless has waned. However, other researchers debate these claims with findings refuting a loss in public sentiment for the homeless (Link et al. 1995; Toro and McDonnell, 1992).

Sociologically, the differences in opinions regarding public sentiment for the homeless seemingly follow the types of study from which researchers draw their findings from. Societal attitudes toward the homeless are measured on two separate levels in the available sociological literature, macro-level analyses and micro-level analyses, which reveal conflicting attitudinal responses from the public. Findings from examinations of public attitudes about homelessness conducted on the macro-level generally contradict the idea that Americans have suffered a loss in sentiment, but findings from micro-level analyses support the idea that attitudes toward the homeless are less than favorable.

First, much of the research into societal attitudes toward the homeless is conducted through macro-level analyses of responses from large samples using primarily telephone-based surveys. The majority of these types of examinations measure public attitudes through analyses of respondents' willingness to provide aid to the homeless and on their opinions about the causes of homelessness. Findings from these studies suggest that the public does support increased funding for programs designed to help the homeless (Link et al. 1995; Toro and McDonnell, 1992). The majority of respondents in these types of studies support increased taxes to provide aid to the homeless. Then, when assessing the public's beliefs about the causes of homelessness the majority of respondents tend to attribute more blame to structural problems rather than individual failings (Lee, Hinze-Jones, & Lewis, 1990; Lee, Hinze-Jones, & Lewis, 1992). Despite reporting generally positive attitudinal findings, these studies also revealed some inconsistent findings. It was found in these types of studies that respondents over estimate the proportion of drug abuse and criminality among the homeless (Link et al. 1995; Toro and McDonnell, 1992) and are generally unsupportive of a homeless shelter in their

neighborhood (Benedict et al. 1988). It also should be noted that in these studies the percentages of respondents who encounter homeless people on a daily basis or know a homeless person are very small. For instance, in a study by Link only 11% of the respondents actually reported seeing more than 10 homeless people in an average week and only 15% had been asked for money by a panhandler more than ten times in the past year (1995). The same study did report increased empathy among respondents who frequently encountered the homeless and panhandlers but also noted that these same respondents favored bans on begging and sleeping in public.

While research on attitudes toward the homeless on a macro-level generally tend to contest the idea of an overall loss of public sentiment some of the inconsistent findings described above begin to reveal what the analyses of micro-level interactions between the visible homeless and passersby further magnify. These types of studies reveal that interactions between panhandlers and passersby are problematic for both groups (Lankenau, 1998; Duneier, 1999). These problematic encounters often result in negative evaluations of panhandlers by passersby and in turn shape negative attitudes toward this group thereby stigmatizing its members. Negative attitudinal responses cited in the available literature seem to be concentrated around four themes: disinterest, distrust, discomfort and fear.

First, examples of passersby' disinterest in panhandlers may be the most negative attitudinal response type illustrated in the literature. Passersby' disinterest or their "blasé attitude" (Simmel, [1903] 1971) result in passersby treating panhandlers' requests and their presence with little regard in relation to the social landscape of a busy urban area (Lankenau, 1998; Duneier, 1999). Disinterested passersby may ignore or not even

acknowledge the presence of panhandlers because of this attitude. However, many people do notice panhandlers and form attitudes about them based on their appearance and past interactions with panhandlers. Many passersby view panhandlers as "con-artists" and distrust their actual motives (Luckenbach, 1993; Maggs, 1999). Among the popular misconceptions that facilitate distrust of panhandlers are stories of panhandlers making themselves wealthy out of the spare change they receive. Recent findings refute this perception, showing that panhandlers make very little money during an average day (Lankenau, 1998; Taylor, 1999) with estimates of earnings from panhandling that merely range from $25-$35 a day based on past studies (O'Flaherty, 1996; Lankenau, 1998). In addition, many passersby believe the money requested for "food" or "shelter" will actually be used for drugs or alcohol instead (Lankenau, 1998; Taylor, 1998).

This belief of panhandlers as "con-artists" can be found throughout popular media (Luckenbach, 1993; Maggs, 1999). These are examples of the negative stereotypes that surround the homeless (Wright, 1989) but these particular myths create a mistrust of panhandlers. These studies also reveal that passersby respond to panhandlers in accordance with their perceptions of them. The available literature presents examples of passersby expressing their distrust of panhandlers by refusing to give money, verbally questioning their true motives, or through insults (Duneier, 1999; Lankenau, 1998). These types of negative interactions in which passersby voice their displeasure and disdain for panhandlers are well documented in the literature along with instances of physical violence inflicted on panhandlers from passersby (Dean and Melrose, 1999; Duneier, 1999; Lankenau, 1999; Snow and Anderson, 1993).

Discomfort with panhandlers is most often cited in the literature when examining

the prevailing negative societal perceptions toward this sub-group of homeless persons

(Lankenau, 1998; Taylor, 1999). Passersby' discomfort arises out of several factors

surrounding the interaction with a panhandler. Being approached and addressed in public

by a stranger violates the way sociability normally precedes and may produce discomfort

in the passerby (Duneier, 1999). This violation of normal sociability may produce

discomfort in the unprepared passersby and the vast differences between the two actors

may make the encounter even more distressing. Homeless people because of their

situation and potential individual disabilities may act in strange ways, smell badly or

dress peculiarly and these differences can produce discomfort and at times disdain

(Taylor, 1999). The class or status of panhandlers, most often perceived as homeless or at

least very poor, is often very different from passersby. This distinction alone has been

cited in the literature to produce anxiety or suspicion (Jencks, 1994; Snow and Anderson,

1993). Then, differences in race and gender are often cited as factors making passersby

uneasy when confronted with a panhandler (Duneier, 1999; Lankenau, 1999).

Researchers cite that interactions involving gender and racial differences combined with

class differences help passersby to further develop perceptions of a potential problematic

situation. Especially problematic seems to be the interaction between male minority

panhandlers and Caucasian women (Duneier, 1999; Lankenau, 1998). Examinations of

these types of interactions cite the combination of status, race and gender differences as

significant contributing factors for disconcerting encounters.

The discomfort described above that stems from differences between panhandlers

and passersby might also produce fear in the passerby. Passersby respond to their

discomfort or fear in interactions with panhandlers by employing several tactics. Ignoring

panhandlers' requests, avoiding eye contact with panhandlers, changing direction so as

not to encounter a panhandler or refusing to go to areas where panhandlers are known to

be (Duneier, 1999; Lankenau, 1998; Taylor, 1999). However, passersby' fears are

typically unwarranted as actual crime reports of panhandlers accosting people are rare

(Duneier, 1999; Snow, 1989). Whether these fears are real or imagined, the perceptions

of panhandlers drive societal attitudes and eventually public policies. Moreover these

types of perceptions are found in modern criminological theory. A popular theoretical

construct in criminology is the idea that disorder breeds greater disorder (Wilson, 1982).

This idea contends that disorder such as panhandling, if kept unchecked, will eventually

result in more pervasive criminal activity. The passing of aggressive solicitation

ordinances and "quality of life laws" which are discussed in more detail below, are borne

from these perceptions and ideas (Dean and Melrose, 1999; Lankenau, 1998; Taylor,

1999).

Findings from the macro-level analyses summarized above reveal seemingly

positive societal attitudes toward the homeless. Respondents in these studies are willing

to help, think homelessness is a problem and generally believe structural rather than

individual level components are the determinants for homelessness. On the other hand,

findings from the micro-level examinations covered above reveal that personal

interactions with the homeless and panhandlers are distressing and lead respondents to

form generally negative attitudes about these people. Whether passersby are disinterested,

distrustful, uncomfortable or fearful of homeless persons and panhandlers upon

encountering them their attitudes in these instances are formed from these or other similar

situations. Therefore, findings from these two types of studies indicate that society does care about the welfare of the homeless population but on a personal level passersby tend to develop negative attitudes toward the homeless people they encounter, especially towards homeless panhandlers. Whether or not negative attitudes resulting from interactions with the visible homeless and panhandlers constitutes overall "compassion fatigue" (Goodman, 1989) in our society remains a matter of debate. However, these attitudes do lead the public to ask for the implementation of increased social controls of the visible homeless and panhandlers and force these groups to form coping mechanisms to deal with those controls as I discuss below.

<div align="center">Social Control of Panhandling</div>

Informal social control and formal social control of panhandlers and panhandling activities have arisen from the negative attitudes described above. Both types of social control affect the lives of panhandlers and cause panhandlers to adapt their behavior. The idea that peace on our streets is kept by the unconscious and voluntary duty of the people themselves (Jacobs, 1961) is seemingly an idea of the past. Rather, our society's reliance on informal social controls of the homeless and panhandlers appears to be waning as more formalized social controls have been put in place in recent years (Maggs, 1999).

Informal social control of the homeless and panhandlers begins with the stigma attached to all marginalized groups in our society. Marginalized groups and activities are socially excluded or stigmatized by the general public thereby reinforcing societal norms. The negative attitudinal responses by the public toward panhandlers that I illustrated above are examples of this stigmatization. The actions and inactions of passersby in

response to panhandlers reveal societal beliefs about accepted behavior. Even within the homeless population panhandlers are often stigmatized, other homeless persons often stigmatize panhandlers in an effort to distance themselves from this highly marginalized activity (Duneier, 1999; Snow and Anderson, 1993). These types of reactions encourage the stigmatized to adapt to or retreat from societal norms. While other stigmatized groups may simply retreat to social worlds where their differences are accepted panhandlers are not afforded that luxury. Due to their activities they cannot escape stigma due to their highly visible position in society. Therefore, panhandlers must cope with stigma and adapt themselves and their actions to suit the disparate social world around them (Duneier, 1999; Snow and Anderson, 1993). The means by which panhandlers cope with and adapt to informal social controls is described in more detail below. Despite the dissuading effects of informal social control methods society has increasingly turned to institutions to implement formal social control methods.

Examples of formal social controls include city ordinances making aggressive panhandling and sidewalk loitering, two laws recently passed in Austin, punishable by arrest or fine (Austin City Council, 2001). Similar types of ordinances have been passed in several cities across the nation in recent years (Maggs, 1999). The goal of these ordinances is to protect the public from "aggressive solicitation" or intimidation tactics of panhandlers (Conner, 1993) and improve the quality of inner-city life (Taylor, 1999). Furthermore, municipalities adopting the idea that disorder results in more disorder (Wilson, 1982) are implementing further formal controls on the homeless and panhandlers on the basis of crime prevention (Smith, 1994).

This turn to more formalized social control tactics is a matter of much debate in cities where these methods have been implemented (Duneier, 1999). This type of policing approach was implemented in New York City in the early nineties and the decrease in crime rate during that time lent credibility to the formalized social control style. However, crime rates also decreased in cities that did not employ this policing style. The debate over attributing the decrease in crime in New York City to this policing approach continues (Duneier, 1999). In addition to debates over the effectiveness of these increased formal social controls, there are concerns that these restrictive laws violate an individual's right to freedom of speech (Hershkoff, 1993). Besides violating first amendment rights critics claim these types of formal social controls are really designed to exclude socially undesirable groups (Crowther, 1998; Hershkoff, 1993). Furthermore, researchers claim this recent increase in social control follows an historical trend of tightening controls when a socially marginalized group becomes more visible (Coldham, 1992; Currie, 1997; Hopkins, 1998; Taylor, 1997).

Panhandling as Work

People who panhandle are not necessarily homeless and not all homeless persons panhandle. National estimates indicate that the percentage of homeless persons who panhandle range from 8% (Burt, 1999) to 17% (Stark, 1992) of the total sub-population. These estimates indicate that only a small number of homeless people panhandle. The stigma attached to panhandling in combination with typically low economic rewards may explain the low proportions of homeless persons who panhandle. In addition to engaging in a highly stigmatized activity (Snow and Anderson, 1993; Duneier, 1999) the available

literature reveals that panhandlers normally only engage in their activity just long enough to subsist on a day-to-day basis (Wardhaugh, 1996; Taylor, 1999).

Despite the low percentage of homeless persons who panhandle those who do are highly visible to the general public because their activities require them to occupy space in busy urban areas. Panhandlers engage in their "work" in downtown business districts, at congested intersections and along entertainment areas in large urban cities. The existence of panhandlers in urban society solicits public and governmental reaction in various forms as I discussed above. Public attitudes towards panhandlers are constantly being formed through frequent interactions between passersby and panhandlers in day-to-day city life. These attitudes lead to the aforementioned informal and formal social controls on the lives of homeless panhandlers. In light of these attitudes and forms of social control panhandlers must adapt when and where they "work" and develop accepted and effective approaches to panhandling.

Time and Space considerations

Homeless persons who panhandle must constantly adapt their "work" to changing public attitudes and law enforcement strategies to preserve their livelihood. Panhandlers become cognizant of public attitudes and policing tactics through their work and develop an understanding of when and where their "work" is accepted within a community (Snow, 1987; Snow and Anderson, 1993; Wardhaugh, 1999). Panhandlers develop a sense of when their activities are accepted through observation of the usual routines in distinct locations within a city and through recognizing the changes in these routines over time (Wardhaugh, 2000). This sense of time also extends to the recognition of seasonal changes within society especially during the holiday months when passersby are

traditionally more likely to give (Duneier, 1999). However, determining the times panhandling is accepted depends largely on the location within a city.

The changing routines or uses by citizens and the law enforcement practices designed to protect these routines determine the locations when and where panhandling is permitted (Ellickson, 1996). These changing routines or the constant renegotiation between "prime" and "marginal" spaces are what guide when and where panhandlers work (Snow and Anderson, 1993). Prime spaces are the residential, commercial, recreational or historical locations of value to citizens while marginal spaces are areas of the city believed to be of less value to citizens. Marginal spaces have long been surrendered to the homeless and destitute (ex. "skid rows") in order to contain these populations (Bittner, 1967; Wardhaugh, 2000). However, as cities grow, marginal space is lost and the amount of prime space increases leaving the homeless and homeless panhandlers with no choice but to occupy a city's prime space more of the time (Snow and Anderson, 1993). The use of prime space increases the visibility and in turn the potential for danger and stigmatization often faced by homeless panhandlers. Therefore, panhandlers often occupy marginal spaces that exist within general prime spaces such as alleys or overpasses so their time occupying prime space can be reduced (Wardhaugh, 1999). Upon observation of downtown Austin, for instance, panhandlers typically restrict their activities to three areas: along a street that runs parallel to the local university, the downtown business and entertainment district, and on interstate overpasses located near the downtown area.

Panhandling Strategies

Public attitudes, informal social controls and formal social controls all persuade panhandlers to adapt the way they conduct themselves while at "work." Panhandlers realize that they are asking people for money without anything in return who may have negative attitudes about them, fear them, or choose to ignore them. All of these aspects must be taken into account in order for panhandlers to initiate productive interactions with passersby. Panhandlers develop ways to draw passersby' attention and then use scripts or lines of action to increase their chances of reward. A review of these typologies observed by sociologists is summarized below.

The first goal of panhandlers is to draw the attention of a passerby in order to initiate the interaction. Some actively engage passersby while others prefer to panhandle passively. Observations of these active and passive forms of solicitation have led some sociologists to categorize the forms differently. Some sociologists differentiate between active and passive solicitation by labeling one activity "panhandling" (actively pursuing donation) and the other "begging" (passively accepting donation) (Snow and Anderson, 1993). For the purpose of my discussion I group both forms under "panhandling" because in either case money or goods are requested for personal use with nothing of equal value offered in return. Panhandlers choose between passive or active forms of solicitation through their own assessment of the rate of reward and what type of behavior is acceptable to themselves and others. Those choosing a passive approach often feel their method is the most polite and in sum just as rewarding as active panhandling (Dean and Melrose, 1999; Snow and Anderson, 1993). Panhandlers choosing an active approach feel their methods are more rewarding economically and some see their actions, rather than

the passivity some take, as a "return" on the rewards passersby give (Dean and Melrose, 1999; Duneier, 1999; Lankenau, 1999; Snow and Anderson, 1993).

Whether a panhandler jingles the change in his or her cup, hangs their head toward the sidewalk with a hat turned up, holds a sign requesting help, attempts to create conversation with those walking by, walks up to passersby requesting money or offers a service in return for money all forms of solicitation, passive or active, are designed to break in inattention of passersby (Lankenau, 1999). Once attention is gained panhandlers taking an active approach perform various types of routines (Lankeanu, 1999) to increase their chances of reward. Sociologists writing on their observations of panhandlers actively pursuing reward describe several types of pitches or routines used in panhandling (Dean and Melrose, 1999; Duneier, 1999; Lankenau, 1999; Snow and Anderson, 1993). Lankenau offers the most extensive analysis of panhandling routines or "repertoires" as he calls them (1999). He breaks down these repertoires into five categories: the "entertainer," "greeter," "storyteller," "servicer" and the "aggressor."

The "entertainer" typically is a panhandler who offers music or humor in exchange for money. "Entertainers" are common in Austin and have been for many years, Snow and Anderson refer to "rhyming Mike" (1993), a type of "street poet." An entertainer is an example of a panhandler who provides a return for passersby' money and this routine is often chosen for its less stigmatizing effects. The greeter solicits money through friendliness, flattery, respect and deference. Greeters place themselves in busy pedestrian thoroughfares and often rely on a city's day-to-day routines and repeated interactions with the same groups of passersby. Many panhandlers describe having "customers" or "friends" that give them money regularly (Dean and Melrose, 1999;

Lankenau, 1999). These customers are afforded a certain respect by panhandlers (Dean and Melrose, 1999). Panhandlers who develop a regular group of customers form enhanced versions of the greeter routine often singling out their customers for specific compliments or comments (Lankenau, 1999).

Storytellers ask for money after describing a "hard luck" scenario and rely on passersby' empathy for their situation. Storytellers often position themselves in surroundings that accentuate the details of their story. Panhandlers telling passersby about car trouble may position themselves near a service or gas station. A panhandler telling passersby about their need for money to purchase a bus ticket may take a position around a bus station or bus stops for instance. The servicer offers specific services in return for money such as in the case of "car parkers" who direct motorists to open parking spaces. Car parkers direct drivers to open but public and free spaces so drivers are not obligated to give any money but often do when it is requested for the service. Servicers also open doors for patrons of banks, stores or restaurants in return for "tips," but these techniques are often deemed aggressive by patrons, business owners and ultimately the police (Duneier, 1999). In New York City the work of "squeegee men" or the homeless who wash car windows at intersections and then request money for their service was a type of panhandling that was hotly debated in NYC's 1993 mayoral campaign for its perceived aggressiveness, and it ended up being banned by Mayor Dinkins (Duneier, 1999). The servicer routine is similar to the entertainer because of the perceived return in service for money but intimidation rather than "service" may sometimes be the compelling reason behind a giver's donation. The aggressor solicits money from passersby through intimidation, persistence and shame. Approaching pedestrians in areas believed to be

dangerous or approaching people of very different racial, gender and status groups from

their own in a threatening manner often facilitates reward because of fear. Aggressors

may also persist in their solicitation, sometimes following passersby for blocks asking for

money (Snow and Anderson, 1993). Aggressors will also use shame to solicit money by

pointing out to passersby that they obviously have money to spare even if the passerby

claims otherwise. This type of routine is often performed around ATM machines and

outside of restaurants or bars (Duneier, 1999). These are the types of actions by

panhandlers that many cities are attempting to control through formal sanctions similar to

Austin's "aggressive solicitation" ordinance.

Theoretical Background

In this section I review the theoretical work sociologists have explored in their

analyses of attitudes toward panhandlers and the homeless, informal and formal social

controls imposed on panhandlers and the homeless and on the coping strategies employed

by these groups to deflect the stigma associated with their status and activities. I

specifically focus on the available theoretical discourse resulting from studies on the

micro-interactions between the visible homeless and passersby. These works reveal much

about the problems arising out of encounters between passersby and panhandlers. The

intent of this theoretical review is first to identify conceptualizations cited in the available

literature that attempt to describe how problematic encounters between passersby and

panhandlers create negative attitudinal responses which ultimately lead to informal and

formal controls imposed on panhandlers. Then, theoretical work examining the coping

mechanisms panhandlers use to deal with these negative attitudes and social controls is covered.

Societal Attitudes Towards the Homeless and Panhandlers

As I discussed above, researchers have examined both overall societal attitudes toward the homeless in America and attitudinal responses resulting from intimate encounters with homeless persons. Analyses of attitudes toward the homeless on the macro-level have primarily concentrated on measuring society's willingness to provide aid and society's attributions to a person becoming homeless (Toro and McDonnell, 1992; Link et al. 1995). These macro-level examinations reveal that societal attitudes toward the homeless are generally positive as respondents reported a willingness to provide aid to homeless persons and a tendency to attribute homelessness to structural deficits rather than individual faults. However, the research findings described above that deal with the attitudes resulting from interactions between panhandlers and passersby reveal that these encounters are often problematic for both groups (Lankenau, 1998; Duneier, 1999). These micro-level analyses have produced the most salient theoretical conceptualizations for the topic of this study. Findings suggest that problematic encounters facilitate negative attitudes toward the homeless and, as earlier asserted, these attitudes are inextricably linked with informal and formal social controls imposed on the homeless.

The examples of passersby's disinterest, distrust, discomfort and fear cited earlier illustrate the stigma faced by panhandlers and the visible homeless. Goffman explains stigma as a discrediting attribution of a person that spoils one's identity and excludes one from full social acceptance (Goffman, 1963b). Homeless persons and especially those

who panhandle certainly fit Goffman's definition as a group excluded from full social acceptance. First, the class or status of panhandlers, which is very different from most passersby, has been cited in the literature to produce anxiety or suspicion (Jencks, 1994; Snow and Anderson, 1993). While the homeless as a whole remain a stigmatized group it is also true that among the homeless some endure greater levels of stigmatization than others (Snow and Anderson, 1993). The varying levels of stigma often depend on the homeless person's physical characteristics such as sex, race or disability. Differences in race and gender are often cited as factors producing discomfort for passersby when encountering panhandlers (Duneier, 1999; Lankenau, 1999). And, homeless people, due to their condition and potential disabilities, may be unkempt or act strange, differences that may be distressing or disdainful to passersby (Taylor, 1999). Stigma may also be enhanced by the apparent plight of a homeless person. For example a mother with her children typically receives less stigma than an apparently healthy male standing on the street corner (Snow, Anderson and Baker, 1989). Moreover, for those homeless who have no where to go or engage in subsistence activities that require them to remain in the public eye for extended periods of time such as homeless panhandlers the "span of sympathy" (Coser, 1969) for their plight is further extended (Snow and Anderson, 1993; Lankenau, 1998).

The appearance of homeless persons alone is a contributor to the level of stigma they receive, but stigmatized activities further enhance the stigma received. Therefore, homeless panhandlers given their necessity to present themselves to the public and engage passersby in interaction endure a very high level of stigma. The act of engaging passersby itself is a highly stigmatized activity for panhandlers. Being approached and

addressed in public by a stranger violates the way sociability normally precedes; this is what Duneier calls "interactional vandalism" (1999). This type of interaction is stigmatized by "normals" and when combined with often very vast status differences stigma is enhanced. Presenting their stigma amongst "mixed contacts" (Goffman, 1963b) or among people of often very different social strata open the homeless panhandler to a variety of attitudinal responses from passersby. As I illustrated above, passersby respond to panhandlers with disinterest, distrust, discomfort and fear.

Previous research (Cahill and Eggleston, 1994; Gardner, 1995; Leblanc, 1997; Pascale and West, 1997) that examines exchanges between stigmatized populations and "normals" (Goffman, 1963b) are beneficial to the study of interactions between panhandlers and the public. Goffman's work on encounters among strangers (1963a) and on stigma (1963b) provides the theoretical background for the aforementioned research. In his work Goffman theorizes that interaction rules are enforced primarily through fear of social disapproval or rejection. Those who break interaction norms face stigma, an attribution that damages their identity and excludes them from full social acceptance. Of the previous research, Gardner's (1995) work on gender and public harassment is of most benefit to this study for the purpose of categorizing the variety of passersby' responses to panhandlers. The stigma faced by panhandlers is manifested in the attitudinal responses from passersby, law enforcement and the business community in reaction to them. The previous research on interactions between the stigmatized and "normals" (Goffman, 1963b) examine social control through public harassment and humiliation. Gardner (1995) extends on Goffman's (1963) work through her conceptualizations of three categories of public harassment practices. Passersby responses illustrated above can be

categorized into Gardner's three categories of public harassment practices: exclusionary, exploitative, and evaluative (Gardner, 1995).

Passersby' responses to panhandlers reveal their attitudes toward this group and sometimes serve as precursors to further actions taken against this group of homeless persons. Gardner's three categories of public harassment practices are examples of these responses. Each category is representative of a type of informal social control imposed on panhandlers by passersby and one category, exclusionary public harassment, is representative of both informal and formal social controls imposed on this group. The latter two public harassment categories that Gardner outlines, exploitative and evaluative public harassment practices, are informal types of social control that intend to humiliate the panhandler. Exploitative practices are generally aggressive physical reactions by passersby toward panhandlers such as hitting, pushing or spitting (1995). Another exploitative practice that is documented in the literature is the giving of tainted or poisoned food contributions. This is an example of "hostility in gift exchange" (Schwartz, 1967) in which the aim is the degradation of the recipient. Evaluative practices are typically verbal reactions by passersby to panhandlers such as questions of a panhandler's need or degrading insults that refer to the appearance or attire of panhandlers (Gardner, 1995). However, evaluative public harassment practices may also be non-verbal in nature. A passerby's watchful eye, their scowl or the covering of their nose when encountering a panhandler are examples of non-verbal evaluative practices. The humiliation in this latter instance is borne internally whereas the examples of physical assaults, tainted food contributions and verbal insults stem from external practices by passersby. Humiliation caused by non-verbal public harassments may arise internally as

panhandlers evaluate themselves through the negative actions of passersby. This theoretical conceptualization connects to Cooley's idea of the "looking glass self" in which individuals evaluate themselves through the appraisals of others (1902 [1964]).

Exclusionary public harassment practices include both informal and formal social control methods imposed on panhandlers. Exclusionary public harassment practices are employed by the public and institutions to discourage the activities and presence of certain individuals (Gardner, 1995). The public employs these methods through verbal and nonverbal means. For example, business owners may ask panhandlers to leave the premises or place signs in the store front that discourage panhandlers from congregating there. Passersby may implore panhandlers to leave them alone or to stay away from their car in an effort to discourage contact. Passersby' exclusion of panhandlers through verbal means is distressing but perhaps more distressing are the non-verbal methods of exclusionary public harassment employed by the public. "The art of avoidance" (Anderson, 1990) may be employed by the passerby to compensate for a feeling of vulnerability or fear. On the other hand, passersby' disregard of panhandlers may stem from what's been termed as a "blasé attitude" (Simmel, [1903] 1971). As I described above, a "blasé attitude" is a reaction by individuals to the constant stimuli of a busying urban area that causes those individuals to respond to new situations with little regard or to be oblivious of the observable distinctions. These types of reactions are not to be confused with "civil inattention" (Goffman, 1971) which is a courtesy extended to the large numbers of people we have passing contact with on a day-to-day basis. "Civil inattention" is a tool people use to acknowledge the presence of another person they come in contact with whom they do not know. The types of non-verbal exclusion or

"nonperson treatment" (Goffman, 1963a) described above are stigmatizing because these types of treatment reveal passersby' evaluation of the panhandler's worth (Snow and Anderson, 1993).

Institutional exclusionary public harassment practices can be employed verbally or non-verbally by law enforcement divisions to deter the presence and actions of panhandlers. Law enforcement excludes panhandlers through the enforcement or threat of enforcement of laws prohibiting aggressive solicitation or loitering in certain areas within a city. The exclusion of panhandlers from an area is based on the idea that their presence and the presence of others participating in marginal criminal activity will produce further, more serious criminal activity. These perceptions are influenced by a theoretical construct in criminology that posits that disorder breeds greater disorder. This linkage is illustrated by the "broken windows theory" which in this case contends that the increased exposure of panhandlers and panhandling activities may lead to more serious criminal activity (Wilson, 1982).

Coping Strategies used by Panhandlers

Earlier I described how panhandlers adapt their "work" in light of the prevailing negative attitudes and informal and formal social controls imposed on them. In this section I summarize the strategies panhandlers employ to cope with the degradation these attitudes and social controls bring to panhandlers. In their examination of homeless street people Snow and Anderson note: "to panhandle effectively requires a certain interactional mettle and the employment of interpersonal skills and lines that are part and parcel of many kinds of sales work" (Snow and Anderson, 1993 p. 169). What Snow and Anderson refer to as "certain interactional mettle" is of importance to this section but

their reference to "the employment of interpersonal skills and lines" of which I gave examples of in the panhandling strategies section above is also relevant to this discussion so references to those strategies are placed throughout this portion of the literature review.

When discussing the coping tactics employed by the homeless and homeless panhandlers in the face of stigmatization, Snow and Anderson's analysis on "identity work" (Snow, 1987) is appropriate for this section. Their analysis begins with a review of Goffman's work on stigma. Goffman explains that marginalized groups employ strategies to deflect degradation, but Snow and Anderson cite the problems homeless people have employing these strategies. Goffman states that these groups can deflect degradation through "passing" or hiding information about their stigma or through "physical isolation" or removing oneself from potential stigma (1963b). However, as Snow and Anderson explain, the homeless and especially panhandlers are not afforded this luxury because of "stigma symbols" (Goffman, 1963b) such as tattered clothing or an unkempt physical appearance and the simple fact that in order to survive "isolation" is not an option (1987). Instead of employing passing or physical isolation tactics, homeless panhandlers must work to manage their emotions and identity through "identity work" to deflect stigma (Snow, 1987). Furthermore, panhandlers must manage their emotions and identity in similar ways to people in service sector jobs so they do not violate social norms and so they can maintain and potentially advance relationships with givers insuring that their return will be high (Lankenau, 1999). Managing emotions or controlling one's emotions to increase reward and minimize degradation is sometimes called "emotional labor" (Hochschild, 1983). In certain respects anti-panhandling

legislation such as Austin's "aggressive solicitation" ordinance provides panhandlers' boundaries for their emotional labor (Lankenau, 1999b). Panhandlers may develop strategies such as complying with, ignoring or answering a passerby who harasses them to help manage these emotions (Gardner, 1995). In addition, they may develop recipe responses to often-heard degradations in order to answer their harasser.

Before discussing identity work, Snow and Anderson find it useful to break down "identity" into three categories (1987). They explain that "identity" can be grouped into "social identities" which are identities attributed to others and based on appearance, behavior, location and time of action, "personal identities" which are meanings attributed to the self by the actor, and "self concept" which is one's overarching image of her- or himself or a sort of compromise between an actor's social and personal identity. The authors state that identity work is an assortment of activities that the homeless employ to create, present, and maintain the personal identities that coincide and are supportive of their self concept. Snow and Anderson delimit identity work into four groups: acquiring and arrangement of settings and props, management of appearance, associative work with individuals or groups and verbal production and assertion of personal identity. The first category of identity work, acquiring and arranging settings and props, is covered in the earlier sections "Time and Space considerations" and "Panhandling Strategies." Panhandlers employ identity work by first choosing where and when they will engage in their work and then by choosing the props that will aid them in their work. As I explained above where and at what time a panhandler works can affect the intensity of the stigma they will receive. Panhandlers must recognize where in a city and at what times panhandling is accepted or tolerated, their choices in this matter may heighten or lessen

negative perceptions of them and in turn heighten or lessen the informal and formal

sanctions imposed on them. In addition, the "props" panhandlers use in their work may

say something of their identity. As I discussed earlier a panhandler working passively

may utilize a cup for change, an upturned hat or a sign as props. Panhandlers taking an

active approach may use a musical instrument as in the case of the entertainer, their

location as in the case of the storyteller or a specific situation as in the case of the servicer

helping people park their cars.

The second component of identity work that Snow and Anderson discuss is the

management of appearance. Panhandlers must manage their appearance in many of the

same ways those working in service industry jobs do. Appearance plays an instrumental

part in what is described as the "socioemotional economy," "a system of give and take

within which people negotiate many aspects of identity and social worth" (Clark, 1997).

Extending from this idea, panhandlers face the scrutiny or "inspection draw" (Gardner,

1995) of passersby attempting to assess the panhandlers' neediness and worthiness by

their appearance and actions. Therefore, panhandlers must choose how to manage their

appearance to suit their personal identity without depleting their "sympathy margin"

(Clark, 1997) or the amount of sympathy accorded to them from passersby.

The third category Snow and Anderson present is the associative work with

individuals or groups. Lower status people can increase social status by associating with

higher status people or groups and by conforming to social norms (Milner, 1994).

Panhandlers are encouraged to conform to social norms through informal and formal

social controls, but forming relationships with higher status people also helps lessen the

stigmatization on them (Anderson, 1994). This type of identity work is seen among

panhandlers who develop relationships with passersby who regularly give to them. These regular interactions between panhandler and giver constitute a "tie sign" (Goffman, 1963b) or link to a higher status group.

The fourth category of identity work that Snow and Anderson discuss is the verbal production and assertion of personal identity or "identity talk." They describe identity talk in three themes: "distancing," "embracement" and "fictive storytelling." Panhandlers use identity talk to distance themselves from roles not desired in their self concept and they do this in three ways. Panhandlers use "associational distancing" to distance themselves from less desirable groups of homeless persons or other panhandlers, they use "role distancing" to disassociate their panhandling routine from other types of panhandling strategies that they see as less desirable, and they use "institutional distancing" to distance themselves from homeless service organizations or public welfare for instance. According to their own personal identities panhandlers choose which groups, roles and institutions to distance themselves from because they see association with these social identities as undesirable. Panhandlers may also use identity talk to embrace a particular social identity that associates them with particular roles, social relationships or beliefs they see as desirable. They may embrace certain panhandling roles to manage their identity as "entertainers" often do. Panhandlers may also associate themselves with other panhandlers they see as more desirable as in the case of passive solicitors who view their work as polite (Wardhaugh, 1999). Then, the homeless and panhandlers may embrace others in similar positions with similar spiritual or ideological beliefs to manage their identity. Homeless teens who purport to be revolting against traditional values and norms or the "drag worms" (Snow and Anderson, 1993) in Austin

are examples of homeless persons using this type of embracement. Finally, panhandlers

engage in fictive storytelling in their identity talk. Fictive storytelling are narrations of

stories about an actor's past, present and perceived future. Panhandlers use fictive

storytelling to embellish their past and present situations in order to assert a positive

personal identity. This tool is also used to fantasize about the future through fabrications

of far away riches, material possessions or promised employment to name a few

examples. These fabricated fantasies also help the actor form positive personal identities.

While identity work does help the homeless and panhandlers manage their

identity, Snow and Anderson conclude that over time they come to accept more of the

social identities imposed on them (1987). This process of accepting imposed societal

identities may be hastened for homeless panhandlers in light of the negative societal

responses and increased social controls assessed against them. A panhandler's "stigma

symbols" (Goffman, 1963b) of appearance and action are perhaps the impetus of these

actions and these symbols prevent them from "hiding" their status from society and lead

to inevitable acceptance.

Summary

In the early 1980s homelessness increased in size and visibility (Wright, 1998). The

increase drew a large amount of attention from social scientists seeking to measure the

scope of the population, identify its characteristics and examine the causes of

homelessness. The most recent national estimate of homelessness (Burt, 2000) indicates

that homelessness is a growing phenomenon; the estimate argues that over 800,000

people are homeless on any given day. Past findings reveal that minorities are over-

represented among the homeless, educational attainment levels are lower among the homeless and many suffer from mental illness or substance abuse (Burt, 1999). Additionally, findings from these types of studies reveal that panhandlers constitute between 8% and 17% of the overall homeless population (Burt, 1999; Stark, 1992). Finally, most social scientists agree that the causality of homelessness stems primarily from structural inequities with society while individual disabilities or failures merely serve as additional contributors to a person's homelessness.

Much sociological work has gone into measuring societal attitudes about homelessness (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Shinn, 1992). Some make the claim that Americans have undergone a loss of sentiment for the homeless in recent years , (Goodman, 1989). Despite these beliefs, findings from examinations of the public reveal a willingness to provide aid to the homeless and a reluctance to place blame on the individual for becoming homeless (Link et al. 1995; Toro and McDonnell, 1992). However, results from studies conducted on the micro-level reveal negative public attitudes arising from interactions with the homeless, these include interactions between panhandlers and passersby (Duneier, 1999; Lankenau, 1998). Passersby' reactions to the homeless can be categorized into four types attitudinal responses: disinterest, distrust, discomfort and fear (Duneier, 1999; Lankenau, 1999).

Informal and formal social control of panhandlers and their activities have resulted from the difficult interactions with passersby and ensuing negative attitudes. Informal social controls of panhandlers are actions taken by society to discourage panhandling through social exclusion and humiliation. Formally excluding panhandlers and the homeless from certain areas is a practice utilized by law enforcement under laws

prohibiting aggressive panhandling or loitering. These types of social controls can be delimited by Gardner's three categories of public harassment practices that include exclusionary, exploitative and evaluative practices (Gardner, 1995).

Because of the potential problematic interactions with passersby and the resulting informal and formal social controls imposed on them, panhandlers must adapt their work and employ coping mechanisms to deal with the degradation arising from their status and activities. Discussed in the literature are the ways panhandlers learn to adapt their "work" to changing public attitudes and policing tactics. Lankenau (1999) gives an extensive description of effective panhandling routines, he describes panhandlers that offer a return in the form of entertainment, pleasantries or service for money; those playing to , passersby' empathy through hard luck stories; or those using intimidation or shame to increase reward. Because of these "stigma symbols" and the necessity to work among "mixed contacts" panhandlers cannot hide their stigma and therefore must form coping mechanisms to manage their emotions and identity. Therefore, rather than hiding their stigma panhandlers manage their emotions and identity by employing "identity work" to deflect stigma (Snow and Anderson, 1987).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

How do panhandlers deal with difficult interactions with passersby and cope with

negative evaluations and responses from the public? This study explores the "work" of

homeless panhandlers, problematic interactions with informal and formal sectors of

society, informal and formal social controls imposed on panhandlers and the coping

mechanisms they use to deal with the stigma attached to them and their activities. Using a

qualitative research approach, data were gathered through semi-structured one-on-one

interviews with persons observed panhandling in downtown Austin.

The challenge of interviewing homeless persons is well documented in the

literature (Anderson, 1992; Snow, 1991) but a review of recent dissertations on

panhandling in Washington, D.C. (Lankenau, 1998) and Los Angeles (Taylor, 1999)

provided useful guides for my study. Both researchers approached panhandlers as

"normal" passersby and allowed themselves to be solicited. Upon solicitation they gave

panhandlers 25 cents to a dollar before engaging the panhandler in conversation. The

researchers would then explain that they were students researching panhandling and

asked if the panhandler would agree to an interview lasting approximately one hour. The

researchers promised monetary compensation in return for the interview with the

assumption that taking the respondent away from his or her "work" would cause the loss

of "pay." Furthermore, in order to increase the diversity of their respondents, Lankenau and Taylor used purposive sampling techniques. To facilitate a purposive sample, preliminary observations of panhandling locations were conducted in the weeks leading up to the interviewing period. This technique (Taylor, 1999) calls for the researcher to traverse the survey area on foot at varying times of the day and week "looking" for panhandler solicitation. Using this method eased engagement with panhandlers through recognition and rapport, and subsequently guided future interview requests.

<p style="text-align:center">Sample and Sampling Method</p>

Respondents for this study included any person observed panhandling in downtown Austin who indicated they were currently homeless and upon learning about the study's purpose agreed to an interview. Using the purposive sampling techniques I described above I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with 15 people (13 men and 2 women) of varying ages and ethnic backgrounds from March through May of 2002 (see Table 1 for demographic information). I define downtown Austin as the area bordered to the east by Interstate 35, to the west by Lamar Boulevard, to the north by Martin Luther King Boulevard and to the south by Cesar Chavez street (Appendix A). Nine respondents were encountered near the southwestern border of downtown Austin, three people were met near the southeastern border and the remaining three respondents were found in the central area of downtown. Interviews were only solicited during daylight hours throughout the week and weekends and were conducted in public places such as coffee shops or restaurants.

Following the preliminary observations, interviews were requested through the methods (Lankenau, 1998; Taylor, 1999) described above. I traveled to the areas where I previously observed panhandling activity and allowed myself to be solicited and then I gave 25 to 50 cents to the panhandler to facilitate further conversation. The potential respondent was informed of my thesis project and then asked if he or she would like to participate. As compensation for the interview and the loss of time that could be spent collecting money respondents were offered $10 if they agreed to retreat to a nearby restaurant or coffee shop for a recorded interview lasting thirty minutes to one hour.

A consent form (Appendix B) was read and supplied to each participant. Subjects were given the choice to sign the consent form after it was read and the purpose of the study is understood. The consent form explains that any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with the subject will remain strictly confidential and when the researcher describes information obtained a pseudonym will be used in place of the subject's true name or identity. In addition each consent form included a list of services (Appendix C) available to the homeless on the opposite side. On subsequent "interview searches", I would follow up with those previously interviewed, if encountered, through brief discussions to check if the interviewee had anything to add and to clear up possible discrepancies discovered during their interview transcription.

Instrument

A semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix D) was used to guide one-on-one interviews with respondents. Interviews lasted thirty minutes to an hour and were tape-

recorded and transcribed later. After asking respondents some basic demographic questions the remaining questions were structured around three main themes. The first group of questions asked of informants was in reference to their "work" asking for money on the streets, the second group dealt with respondents' knowledge about the aggressive solicitation ordinance and their feelings about it and the third section asked respondents to describe their relationships with the general public, downtown business owners, law enforcement and other panhandlers. Each section was designed to address the study's research questions and generally to explore the "identity work" (Snow and Anderson, 1987) employed by homeless panhandlers in downtown Austin. To facilitate a comfortable interview and allow the revelation of unanticipated, but important data, I allowed respondents to discuss experiences that might be unrelated to the research questions.

Data Analysis

My analysis consisted of finding common themes of responses from homeless panhandlers concerning their answers to the interview questions. Transcriptions were read several times, coded, and analyzed in order to determine and establish any recurring patterns or themes regarding their approach and thoughts about panhandling, their interpretation of the "aggressive solicitation" ordinance and on their relationships with other groups in society. I then grouped the recurring patterns that corresponded with each research question and those that fell under the category of unanticipated findings. Finally, I arranged the findings pertaining to the treatment respondents reported receiving while panhandling under Gardner's (1995) conceptualization of public harassment categories

and their responses to this treatment under the theoretical conceptualization, "identity work", offered by Snow and Anderson (1987).

I strived to make inferences about the lives of panhandlers and panhandling in Austin based solely on the data derived from my interviews. I consider my findings and deductions to be based only on the information given to me in interviews. However, I need to state that I do have a history of working with the homeless in Austin and I am knowledgeable about issues facing the homeless population in Austin. I have worked with city officials to address the issue of homelessness through federal grant programs and with a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to advocating for the homeless. I made every attempt not to allow my previous experiences interfere with my analysis in this process. Still, the reader should be informed of my previous experience in regards to the topic of this study.

Table 3.1: Summary of Demographic Information on Homeless Panhandlers in this study

	Respondents
Total	15
Female	2
Male	13
White	11
African American	3
Latino/a	1
Average Age	39
Age Range	27-51
Average Length of time Homeless (years)	8
Average Length of time Panhandling (years)	7
Did not Graduate High School	3
High School Graduate	10
College Graduate	2

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This chapter describes the major themes identified from the one on one interviews

conducted with panhandlers. A short introduction to each informant can be found in the

appendix (Appendix E). I present data gleaned from interviews with panhandlers that

serve to illustrate the stigma faced by them and the methods respondents' employ to deal

with these discrediting attributions. As stated earlier, panhandlers are highly stigmatized

within society because their status and activities arouse feelings of disinterest, distrust,

discomfort and fear among passersby. These feelings result in informal and formal social

controls imposed on them from the general public and formalized institutions that

damage their personal identities by attributing social identities to them that are

incongruent with their self-concept. Panhandlers deal with these actions by employing

activities that serve to create, present, and maintain the personal identities that coincide

and are supportive of their self-concept.

The theoretical framework used to analyze the data relies on Goffman's (1963a)

work on stigma and Gardner's (1995) conceptualizations of public harassment practices

enacted against stigmatized groups by the public. Utilizing these categories of public

harassment practices along with other theories that explore the humiliation experienced

by marginalized populations within society, I illustrate the stigma respondents face.

Moreover, I employ Snow and Anderson's "identity work" (1987) propositions to examine how homeless panhandlers in downtown Austin deal with stigma.

Public Harassment and Humiliation

Each respondent in this study described instances in which they have been publicly harassed and humiliated in some way. Yet, the people with whom I spoke felt that they are generally treated well by the public, businesses, and law enforcement. Interviewees spoke about passersby helping them by giving them money and food and on a few occasions passersby offering them jobs, leads to jobs or shelter. The panhandlers in this study spoke highly of passersby they see regularly. Respondents also said that downtown business owners generally treat them well, allowing them access to bathrooms, making change for them or allowing them to panhandle nearby. Some even described times in which business owners gave them food or employed them to do odd jobs. Likewise, many of panhandlers I interviewed indicated that they got along with law enforcement well. Some have been helped by police officers or downtown Austin rangers or been offered help from them.

Despite interviewees' positive feelings about their overall treatment, it is the negative treatment they receive that has the greatest effect on their "self concept" (Snow and Anderson, 1987). Therefore, in this section I focus on the treatment from the public, businesses and law enforcement that is the result of the stigma attached to these respondents. This treatment or public harassment influences interviewees' view of themselves and forces them to adapt their work panhandling. I examine the instances that are manifestations of the stigma panhandlers' are attributed through the use of Gardner's

(1995) three categories of public harassment practices (see chapter 2): exploitative, evaluative, and exclusionary harassment practices.

Exploitative Public Harassment

Exploitative public harassment practices are infringements on an individual's personal space or privacy such as staring, pushing or touching (Gardner, 1995). With only a few exceptions respondents indicated that they have received this type of treatment while panhandling. Physical assault or threat of assault was the most common type of exploitative public harassment faced by these respondents from passersby and the two women respondents in the study have experienced sexual harassment from passersby. Overall it seems that respondents see these instances as "part of the job" and, while distressing, these acts are somewhat expected. Chris explained why he does not worry about his safety while out on the streets:

> I mean you can't worry, if you're going to worry about it you better find something else to do, ya know sit on a corner somewhere and beg for change.

Since the majority of respondents in this study "fly a sign" (term respondents used to describe panhandling with a sign) at intersections, a common assault they cited were cases in which passersby threw something at them from a moving car. Interviewees reported that beer cans and change have been thrown at them; in one case a pipe was thrown at a respondent and another person reported having been shot with a BB gun.

Two respondents also reported passersby spitting on them while driving away from intersections. Chris talked about the worst assault he has endured:

> I was standing on the median and they, it was a carload of young males, and they had passed by and went around the block and they come back again. And, uh ya know one guy in the back hung out the back window and threw a whole handful of pennies right in my face as they were going by about 30 miles an hour. So that was the worst but ya know you also get spit on and you get shit thrown at you.

He also said that he has had people spit on him and passersby throw stuff at him. This was Chris' response to my question of what was the worst experience he has had while panhandling. His recollections of these types of assaults were similar to other respondents' answers to this question. Two informants stated that passersby have swerved their cars at them while driving through intersections and some report people who stop and get out of their cars to confront them. Two respondents described instances in which passersby have tried to start a fight with them and one instance where a person robbed a panhandler. The cases where a fight between passerby and panhandler nearly occurred are rare because these are cases where the panhandler deflected public harassment without relying on an emotional management mechanism and lashed out instead (Lankenau, 1999). These cases are uncommon because most deflective strategies employed by panhandlers are of a deferential nature (see below). As an example, Steve described an instance of passerby' harassment where he initially departed from managing his emotions because of the perceived danger and then retreated back to deflecting the

degradation by allowing the man to carry out his joke only to have his shirt ruined in the end:

> Over on Cesar Chavez a guy jumped out with what looked like a gun but it was squirt gun. He was playing with me and I said, "sir back up, back up," and I was backing up trying to get around the corner to run and I realized it was just a squirt gun but it looked so real you know at that time. But around the corner I had a 2x4, I was trying to get this 2x4 to hit him in the hand and knock that gun out. I ain't gonna get shot for something that he's mad at. Then I realized it was a squirt gun and I said go ahead and shoot me. He shot me and he had like food coloring in it and I had a white shirt. I looked at the driver and said, "sir I think your buddy owes me uh $10, he just ruined my $10 shirt." Then they drove off and looked at me and laughed.

These exploitative harassment practices are disturbing but their overall effect on respondents' social identities seems to vary by the type of exploitation. For instance, while respondents come to expect items to be thrown at them from moving cars as if it is a typical job hazard the exploitative harassment practices that seemingly cross the line from impersonal malice to directed attacks have a greater effect. Two examples that respondents spoke of under this theme stand out, instances in which passersby spit on panhandlers and sexual harassment faced by women panhandlers. This type of harassment is not only exploitative of the individual receiving it but the underlying meanings of these acts can easily be construed as an attack on that individual's worth in society (Gardner, 1995). Being spit on by a person is not an attack that is easily discounted by a panhandler as Denny explained:

"Oh man I've had people drive by and spit in my face. I mean you talk about humiliation, that is the absolute worst thing anyone has done to me."

Being spit upon is an aggressive attack but the underlying meaning of the act is an implication of the passerby' disregard for Denny as a person. As Gardner (1995) states,

each type of public harassment may carry with it and evaluative component. His primary source of humiliation stems not from the attack but from the passerby' evaluation of him.

Two respondents, the only women in this study, reported being sexually harassed by passersby. These interviewees stated that this type of harassment from male passersby is a common event for other women they know who panhandle. The available sociological literature reveals very little about gender harassment among the homeless or panhandlers. Snow and Anderson (1987) and Lankenau (1999) state that women panhandlers generally receive more sympathy than male panhandlers but the subject of gender harassment is not pursued. However, Gardner's (1995) work on gender and public harassment fits nicely for this topic. She discusses how women in public are in a , situationally disadvantaged position that opens them up to different forms of public harassment. I use her conceptualization of public harassment categories to describe the public's treatment of all panhandlers but for women panhandlers the treatment they receive should be thought of in two layers. Just as all panhandlers face social exclusion, public exploitation and evaluation, so do women thus women panhandlers deal with public harassment on two levels. Gardner (1995) explains that women are often discouraged from entering into some public places because of traditional norms. Additionally women are subject to inspection and intrusion and unwarranted appraisals from strangers in public. Examining gender harassment of women panhandlers was not the goal of this study but the interview data gathered on the exploitative harassment of the two women respondents in this study warranted special attention in this section.

The instances of sexual harassment described by the two women interviewed, Shelly and Lynda, are an indication that women who panhandle likely deal with public

harassment practices stemming from their gender as well as their social status. In addition to facing public scrutiny because of their homeless status, women panhandlers also face scrutiny as a woman out of place (Gardner, 1995) or a woman not conforming to women's traditional gender roles. Female panhandlers are often prevented from "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman, 1987) and this nonconformity is also stigmatizing as I explain later. Women in public along with other situationally disadvantaged groups are subject to scrutiny or "inspection draw" (Gardner, 1995) from the public. An element of "inspection draw" that Gardner terms as "forced witnessing" (1995) occurs in cases of sexual harassment. As an example Gardner cites a case of a sports writer who had potential interviewees flash their genitals at her in the locker room. Shelly talked about a similar experience and stated that other women panhandlers she knew had also endured this type of treatment:

> One time off of Lamar and 183 and also it has happened to me about three
> times off Rundberg. I'll pull up to the car and they, I mean the car signals
> for me to come over there and I go over there and they're jacking off.
> They got their pants down and they hand you money usually. One time
> guy handed me a quarter when I walked over there and he just handed me
> a quarter just so I could see him jacking off, his pants were down.

Women and other situationally disadvantaged groups also endure exploitations of their public presence in which men exploit the situation of proximity (Gardner, 1995). These exploitations may come in the form of touching, grabbing, hitting or subjecting women or their bodies to insulting scrutiny.

Because most of the panhandlers I spoke to worked at intersections they are close enough to passersby for verbal exploitations. Lynda explains one such encounter:

> I've had a couple of people holler out 'suck my dick and I'll give you money.' I'm like if I wanted to do that I would not be holding a sign. Telling me to go prostitute, to me that's the worst because that's the worst thing a woman could ever do.

Shelly and Lynda faced the same public harassment as the male respondents but they also faced a different form of harassment, one stemming from their gender. Women who panhandle represent a group that is situationally disadvantaged on two social locations, gender and status inequity, in public. These attacks are more personal than other types of exploitative public harassment in that the person attacking a panhandler in this manner seeks to degrade the individual not only because of their status but also because of their gender.

Each of the exploitative public harassment examples described above are attacks on panhandlers that indicate their worth to some in society. While some exploitative public harassment types might be discounted as anonymous acts of malice others are more pointed. The examples of people spitting on panhandlers and sexual harassment of female panhandlers I just examined are assaults that extend over into the next two public harassment types, evaluative and exclusionary, despite the fact that taken at face value they are defined exploitative. The exploitative public harassment examples respondents primarily spoke of are assaults that could harm them physically but those with the greatest effect are harmful to the self.

Evaluative Public Harassment

Evaluative public harassment practices are types of harassment that critically judge, differentiate, and assess a person in situations where it is not necessarily warranted

(Gardner, 1995). These harassment practices are often verbal or non-verbal declarations about a person's status and worth. The most common evaluative public harassment practices panhandlers in this study recalled were angry yells from passersby to get a job or disparaging comments about their homeless status. Other common evaluative harassment practices revealed by respondents were questions of the panhandler's true plight or true intentions for the money they are asking for. Only one person stated that a police officer said something to her that would be considered an evaluative public harassment. Likewise one person indicated an employee in a downtown business harassed him in this way. However, each respondent has experienced non-verbal evaluative public harassment in the form of "inspection draw" (Gardner, 1995) from passersby, business owners, and law enforcement.

For these respondents, being told "get a job" or called "you bum" are common reactions from passersby that panhandlers learn to ignore the best they can or as Hugh says, "blow it off, like the wind". Despite the frequency of this type of harassment and respondents' ability to "blow it off" the humiliation is still internalized. J.J. described a humiliating encounter:

> Well the worst experience is some guy getting up in your face yelling,
> 'why don't get a job, what's your problem?' Actually that's the worst
> experience. By that time now you're humiliated and you got to kind of
> sneak around the corner for about twenty minutes so you can build your
> self-confidence back up.

This was J.J.'s answer to my question of what was the worst experience he has had while panhandling. He was not able to simply ignore the man yelling at him to get a job J.J. had to leave the area for a while to build his confidence back up. Hearing the shouts of "get a

job" may also cause humiliation that arises internally in male respondents as they evaluate themselves through these comments.

Asking for money on the street does not conform to the traditional gender roles of men as breadwinners and highlights their status as unemployed. This finding is an example of the idea that men and women panhandlers are often prevented from "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman, 1987) because they are not able to carry out their traditional gender expectations. For men the act of panhandling implies a lack of self-reliance and control, traits that do not conform to traditional masculine ideals. More specifically, panhandling emphasizes the representation of the failed male worker who panhandles rather than working. While female panhandlers adhere to the traditional gender expectation of dependence, they violate social norms by being in public without men or other women accompanying them. Women panhandlers also fail to conform to the traditional gender role of motherhood whether being without children or caring for children while on the streets (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Conforming to traditional gender roles is a potential measure of social acceptance that is largely inaccessible to panhandlers. Denny explained this dilemma:

> Understand that you know that there are some people out there that just don't want to work but most of them would if they could get paid enough to have a decent life. I don't want anything different than you do I want to have a decent home for my family. I'd like to be able to have a family but there ain't no female that's going to have anything to do with me. Not one with any class or anything ya know unless I'm making, unless I'm able to support a family. I mean I want a decent home to live in, I want decent vehicle to drive ya know, nice clothes to wear, food on the table, I want my bills paid just same as you. You know that's all, I just want to have a normal life and people to understand that I'm not out there by choice. I'm out there because I don't have enough money to eat with and I gotta do what I got to.

Here Denny distinguished himself and other panhandlers like him from those who are

unwilling to work for a living and expressed his desire to conform to the traditional

gender role of the male breadwinner. He went on to describe how his inability to gain

employment prevents him from undertaking the familial responsibilities typically

expected of men. Denny wants a family, a home and a "normal" life he wants to fill the

role traditional filled by adult men in our society.

Interviewees indicated that they routinely hear degrading shouts coming from cars

driving away but at times the evaluative public harassment they face comes during

conversations with passersby. People sometimes make evaluations of panhandlers based

on their doubts regarding the panhandler's true intentions. These doubts range from

disbelief in the image or message a panhandler is projecting to a skeptical view of what a

panhandler uses the money he or she collects for. Ted talks about a young man who

questioned him about his status as a Vietnam veteran:

> I was actually out here the other day and this guy drove up and said,
> 'aren't you about twenty years too young to have been in Vietnam?' I said,
> "no it was hell, it was a nightmare." Then he said, 'good drugs there huh?'
> I said, "yeah but it was fucking war, punk!" I said, "you have a nice day
> and drive careful." And I said, "by the way, you get out of your car I'm
> going to break your legs!"

Passersby may be skeptical about a panhandlers' true use of the money he or she collects.

It is a common assumption that the homeless are substance abusers and that those who

panhandle do so to gather money to support their habits. While this assumption is not

baseless (Burt, 1999; Lowe, 2000) it is often over-generalized by the public at large (Link

et al. 1995; Toro and McDonnell, 1992).

Nevertheless passersby often believe panhandlers use their money for drugs and alcohol and occasionally confront panhandlers about this belief. Harvey described one such experience:

> What I don't understand is you know like sometimes like last night and I mean quite a few other times some of the dudes will pull up and go, 'hey man if I give you this money are you going to buy a beer man?' You know if he asks me something like that and he still gives me the money anyway, and he'll tell me something like, 'man if you do I don't care man it's on me dog.' They'll tell me that even though I'm not saying nothing like that. I say you're not supposed to ask a homeless person a question like that.

Harvey's response was prompted by my question of how he feels passersby treat him while he is panhandling. He also talked about other experiences in which people offered him alcohol or money for alcohol. He seemed to be offended by people assuming that drugs or alcohol are what he is panhandling for as did Dave (below) who talked about similar experiences. It is common for passersby to offer panhandlers alcohol or drugs from their cars. Again these instances are indications that passersby assume that is why the panhandlers are asking for money. Dave talked about times when he has been offered drugs and alcohol:

> I've been offered drugs, I've quit drugs years ago. When I got out of the service I quit alcohol and kicked heroin about six years later and you know I don't, I've been offered so much stuff I don't take none of it. Yeah, now beer and drugs yeah I get so many beers, (people) trying to pass out the window I just say no thank you I don't drink don't need it.

Like passersby' assumptions about homeless panhandlers' drug use the belief that there is a high proportion of criminal behavior among the homeless is exaggerated (Link et al. 1995; Toro and McDonnell, 1992). This assumption causes some passersby to surmise that panhandlers are to be avoided and perhaps even feared, many respondents indicated that it is common for passersby driving up to a panhandler to roll up their

windows, lock their doors and stare straight ahead. Steve explained how some women

roll their windows up and lock their doors when he approaches their car:

> I'll say, "hey lady can you do me a favor and smile" if they got their
> window down. But a lot of these older ladies you say something like that,
> they roll their window up all the way and they make sure all four doors are
> locked, if they got a four door, and look straight ahead. One lady grabbed
> the steering wheel so hard I thought she was going to rip it off.

Steve was responding to my question of how he tries to gain the attention of people. His

presence inspires fear in some people because of his status. This is an attribution apparent

to him because of some people's reactions such as the one he describes above.

According to respondents this belief of the homeless as criminals extends to some

working in law enforcement as well. Harvey talked about a conversation he had with a

police officer regarding his belief of the homeless as criminals:

> Okay so there is this one officer who told me one time, he said do you
> know that 90% of you transients, that's what us homeless are to them the
> transients, he said, 'that 90% of you transients commit crimes.' I said, "I
> guess I'm part of that 10% because I ain't done anything.' You know and it
> gets him to start thinking about that, in other words he's saying that dang
> near every homeless person is a criminal.

Harvey disputed the officer's claim because he does not want to be labeled as criminal

but later lamented that the officer was saying that almost every homeless person is a

criminal. Whether or not respondents stated that they have experienced evaluative public

harassment through yells to "get a job," being called a "bum," questions of their true

intentions, or actions or words directed toward them that are based on misconceptions

they know they are constantly scrutinized by the public. This constant evaluation or

"inspection draw" (Gardner, 1995) is internalized by the respondents in this study and

often this "inspection" is taken as a negative evaluation despite being a non-verbal or

directed response to them. Respondents' perceptions of passersby' negative evaluations is

perhaps a reflection of the verbal and more directed evaluative public harassment examples I summarized above. Steve described this perception as he explains to me how he believes he can tell what people are saying about him on their cell phones:

> I can read lips, they can have windows rolled up and I can stare them right in the face and they will be talking to somebody. And I look at their lips and I can tell you exactly what they say. A lot of them say uh, 'there is that no good lazy bum again.'

Respondents also stated that they feel they are scrutinized by law enforcement and business owners because the police and employees they come into contact with believe they are about to or are doing something they should not. Respondents often stated that security guards at downtown businesses will follow them around the buildings they are responsible for and that employees of downtown businesses will "keep an eye" on them while they panhandle in front on their businesses. Likewise, respondents believe the police "keep an eye" on them in anticipation of possible criminal activity. Chris talked about being watched by police officers:

> You know a new cop because they change beats every once in a while, and a new cop will come in to the beat that I'm on where I'm working and they'll see me for the first time. And most of them ya know, they'll stop and talk to me and figure out what the hell I'm doing. Wondering if I'm breaking in to cars and stuff like that and when they find out you know they talk to me and they find out and they see my sign and most of them will sit there and watch you, ya know what your doing for a few minutes and then come and talk to you.

Evaluative public harassment practices that respondents face are damaging in that these evaluations are indications of the "social identity" (Snow and Anderson, 1987) that has been attributed to them. Passersby that yell at them to "get a job" or insult them about their homeless status cause respondents humiliation because they do not see themselves in that light. Questions regarding the truthfulness of their requests or the validity of their

character are also damaging to their "personal identity." The association between panhandlers and substance abuse or criminality that is sometimes assumed and verbalized by passersby and police is another particularly discrediting attribution to respondents. Respondents feel like they are generally treated well and that only a few people would yell at them or verbalize their doubts regarding their true intentions. However the constant public scrutiny or "inspection draw" is perceived by panhandlers as an indication of passersby', police officers' and business owners' negative assessments of them.

Exclusionary Public Harassment

Exclusionary public harassment practices include both informal and formal social control methods imposed on panhandlers. These types of public harassment practices are employed by the public and institutions to discourage the activities and presence of certain individuals (Gardner, 1995). Respondents indicated that they consistently experience exclusionary public harassment in the forms of formal and informal social control measures but that informal sanctions rather than formal sanctions have a greater affect in their daily lives and to their social identities.

With the exception of one respondent all others revealed they have either received an aggressive solicitation ticket or been warned that they might receive one if they continue panhandling in certain locations or in certain ways. Despite the frequency of contact with law enforcement officers, respondents did not indicate that these encounters were particularly damaging, only that these types of controls define when and where they are likely to get arrested or harassed by police. One of the areas respondents have come to regard as prohibited because it is heavily monitored by law enforcement is the

downtown entertainment district. On the other hand, informal social control methods such as passersby' inattention and their expulsion from local businesses were instances that respondents internalized and that damaged their social identities by excluding them from the society around them rather than from a certain physical area.

As I mentioned earlier, almost every respondent has had contact with law enforcement in one form or another in regards to the aggressive solicitation ordinance. Half of the respondents have received aggressive panhandling tickets while the others report receiving verbal warnings from police officers about the ordinance. Jim talked about receiving one of these warnings:

> He said, 'they got a new thing out now and they're starting to arrest people for that so you need to calm down.' 'When they tell you to leave, leave and don't stay there or nothing like that, leave' and I said, "okay I'll leave ya know."

While most respondents in this study learned about the aggressive solicitation ordinance from the police either by being issued a ticket or receiving a warning, their knowledge about the specifics of the ordinance seemed very limited. J.J. explained his confusion over receiving an aggressive solicitation citation after asking for a cigarette:

> An undercover officer walked by, she had a cigarette in her hand smoking it and I said, "hey spare a cigarette" and she turned around and handed me cigarette. And then all the bicycle cops come up and give me a ticket.

J.J. was not aware that the ordinance forbids panhandling within so many feet of an ATM machine, which is why he received the ticket. While the police who ticketed J.J. seemed to adequately explain the reason for his ticket, police explanation is not always clear according to some of the respondents.

According to Shelly, the police told her and her friends that they could not panhandle in the area they were in, without explaining the aggressive solicitation ordinance or even mentioning it:

> I never really heard it mentioned as aggressive solicitation. It's, just that um they basically, the cops just basically tell you 'no panhandling.' That's all I really ever hear is 'no panhandling' but since Christmas I know that all my friends quit going down there, and that there's too many cops and that they always mess with them now ya know.

Despite respondents' lack of knowledge regarding the specifics of the aggressive solicitation ordinance the overall impression these respondents get from law enforcement is that it is not wise to panhandle in the downtown entertainment district. This may explain why most of the respondents in this study "fly signs" and do so in areas bordering on the downtown entertainment district. Whether or not this is the intent of the police, respondents feel that it is better for them to remain outside the entertainment area of downtown. When I asked Jim about panhandling downtown he referred to the perceived difference between the entertainment district and other areas:

"Downtown is a different ballgame. I don't panhandle at all downtown at all because it's bad you'll go to jail that quick."

Many of the respondents feel like their presence in the downtown entertainment district is deterred because they interfere with tourists and bar goers. H.I. hypothesized about why the downtown entertainment district is tougher on panhandlers:

> Oh about seven or eight months ago, a while back because on Sixth Street what you see is that they're kind of, they're hyper on sixth. But they'll tell you to leave out on Congress too, but it's kind of a big main street too. If you're panhandling on Congress the tourists are coming in and they get bad impression of the city.

Overall, the respondents' reaction to their exclusion from the downtown entertainment area is one of acceptance. Respondents see the situation downtown as another obstacle that must be overcome in their work, which they adapt to by taking up panhandling locations outside the immediate area of interest. Furthermore, respondents agree with the implementation of the ordinance due to their belief that those who are aggressive make it harder on all of them. Panhandlers' adaptation to time and space constraints and the verbal distancing from aggressive panhandlers are topics I undertake in more detail below. In short, panhandlers' exclusion from a certain location in downtown Austin is a reality of day to day life that they must deal with but not one that resembles harassment on a personal level.

The exclusionary public harassment practices (Gardner, 1995) employed by downtown businesses that many respondents described were taken more personally than the harassment practices described above but still less harmful than exclusionary public harassment from passersby that I discuss below. Respondents revealed that they cope with exclusionary harassment from businesses fairly easily but that it can be difficult at times. Respondents, for the most part, say they enjoy good relationships with local businesses but reports of business owners banning them from their establishments because of their appearance or because they are asking potential or current customers for money at their storefront were common as well.

When I asked Chris how he is treated by downtown businesses he described some

exclusionary treatment:

> Uh, pretty good, uh [a local coffee shop] used to be real, real good to us
> and they got a new manger now and she is uh you know. I mean she does
> not let us use the uh, we used to be able to use the restroom, get some ice
> water from them but not from her and since she has come here she has cut
> all that out. We can't do that anymore and uh but other than that they're
> alright. Now my buddy he's had a little problem with the [another local
> coffee shop], he's banned from the property here. I don't know what
> caused that but that was before I come out here. Uh you know over here at
> [a local grocery store], of course they got signs no solicitation and I don't
> do it out there. And they have an off duty police officer security out there
> and he'll chase you off. But you know I mean I don't solicit it, I don't do
> stuff like that at businesses so I don't have problem with them.

Most respondents are able to deal with businesses that ban their presence with little

emotional difficulty. Like respondents' reactions to their exclusion from the downtown

entertainment area, these harassment types are managed well by respondents emotionally.

Exclusionary public harassment types that are backed by institutional forces such as those

mentioned thus far may be easier to deflect because of the impersonal nature of them.

Lynda described an example of an employee asking her to leave the storefront and her

reaction to his request:

> Oh, there's one time in front of [a local coffee shop] over here and he
> asked, 'ma'am I'm not trying to be rude but I'd rather you go somewhere
> else.' I was like, "no problem" and I went over to the side. He was like
> 'okay, that's fine.'

Lynda claimed that this type of treatment does not bother her because the business owner

asked her to leave without being rude after I had asked her how it made her feel that he

asked her to move.

Unlike the exclusionary public harassment examples I outlined above,

respondents indicated that exclusionary public harassment practices employed by

passersby are more difficult to discount because of the personal nature of the practices. Whereas institutional public harassment practices may be seen as rules set by anonymous people, practices employed by passersby are not as easily ignored. Informants report that the "non-person treatment" (Goffman, 1963a) employed by passersby is the most difficult harassment type to cope with. This treatment can be delimited into two categories that depend on the basis behind the social alienation. Respondents report receiving the "non-person treatment" from passersby for two reasons: they are ignored because passersby are fearful of them or passersby do not regard their presence with any significant distinction in relation to the surrounding social landscape and thus ignore their presence. Passersby inattention of panhandlers because of a feeling of fear or vulnerability is termed "the art of avoidance" (Anderson, 1990) while passersby' responses to new situations with little regard in a busying urban area is called a "blasé' attitude" (Simmel, [1903] 1971).

Respondents reported that it is common for passersby to appear fearful or them while stopped at intersections. Passersby' fears cause them to avoid panhandlers through distance or inattention, however since most of the respondents "fly signs" at intersections the ability of passersby to avoid panhandlers through distance is reduced so inattention is employed. Respondents said that while they are at intersections many passersby will stop several car lengths away from where they are standing and those that do stop nearby often lock up the car and stare in another direction. Earlier I discussed Steve's description of some people locking their car doors when he approaches, he also talked about people stopping their cars a distance from the light so they are not parked next to him:

> Yeah, a lot of them do they can't wait for that light to change! Oh there he is I hope I get a green light! Some of them park way down there and leave about three car lengths between me (and them).

This treatment is bothersome to Steve because he does not believe he should be feared. However, most respondents seemed to understand passersby' fears despite their disdain for that reaction to them. Shelly explained how she understands passersby' fearful reactions to panhandlers because she has had the unique perspective of seeing the situation from both sides:

> I remember when I was smaller and my mom would even ignore people like that when I was in the car with her. You know it's kind of funny because I've seen both sides of it. And I remember um she would always do something like turn her head or look away or start fooling with the radio or acting like she's looking for something and you know, like she's looking for money and the light turns green and then she goes.

Shelly described her mother using "the art of avoidance" (Anderson, 1990) to deal with the vulnerability or fear she felt while near a panhandler. Her mother's response to panhandlers is a response she has experienced from people herself.

Passersby inattention because of a "blasé' attitude" (Simmel, [1903] 1971) was reported more frequently than passersby avoidance of panhandlers because of fear. It was also a response by passersby that seemed most reviled by respondents. Many respondents spoke of the lack of acknowledgement from passersby and about how it bothered them. Many respondents indicated that whether or not they received money they would like it if passersby would at least acknowledge their presence in some way. J.J. explained this feeling after I asked him how he would like to be treated by passersby:

> Uh, just I don't know I guess to more or less just to feel acknowledgement like they acknowledge your presence. See most of the time I'm not asking directly, I may just be sitting there wasting time, which I do most of the time. I'll be sitting there wasting time and here I am and I'll say, "hi, how are you doing?" and they just walk on by like you're not even there. At least acknowledge that you're there you know.

This type of inattention is particularly humiliating and damaging to the personal identities of respondents because not only does it negate a presentation of a preferred social identity it dismisses their identity almost entirely. Ted talked about passersby not acknowledging his presence and how he felt about this treatment:

> That's the only thing that really pissed me off the worst about people is that when their driving up they don't look at you. Okay it's a form of weakness that I can't stand okay because they can't even show me respect to acknowledge me and that pisses me off. I'd say, "hey baby or hey wake up you got a human being here dude."

Respondents commonly referred to this type of treatment as humiliating because the lack of validation but they also often feel insulted that passersby are not returning the respect that respondents try to give passersby. Harvey explained how he would like to be treated by passersby whether or not they give him money:

> With some respect you know, there's sometimes when I'll be out there you know and when they'll pull up to the light. And I'll wave and man just wave back you don't have to give me no money. Just know that I'm there but sometimes man when I wave to them they'll just look at me and don't smile or nothing. At least smile or wave back or something. But besides that I wish everyone would just show me the respect I'm trying to show to them.

The difficulty in dealing with the "non-person" treatment from passersby as opposed to the exclusionary practices employed by law enforcement and downtown businesses is greater for respondents because it is seen as more personal. There is no option for panhandlers to discount the inattention of passersby as an action that is part of a larger institutional discrimination in the way that they can with exclusionary treatment from law enforcement and businesses.

Identity Work

Identity work is a set of activities that respondents in this study use to create, present, and maintain identities they prefer or their "personal identities" (Snow and Anderson, 1987). As stated in chapter two, "identity work" is made up of four components: acquiring and arrangement of settings and props, management of appearance, associative work with individuals or groups and identity talk. Interviewees indicated that they use the identity work components outlined above to cope with informal and formal sanctions. Respondents acknowledge that the "social identities" (Snow and Anderson, 1987) attributed to them by society are incongruent with their own "personal identities". They use identity work mechanisms to form "social identities" closer to their desired "personal identities". "Social identities" are identities attributed to others and based on appearance, behavior, location and time of action so respondents work to manage these aspects of their lives to create and present a positive identity to the public.

Respondents revealed that they take into account the locations where they will panhandle and the props they use to help them in their work. Interviewees discussed the importance of managing their appearance and their emotions. Informants stated that they valued the relationships they were able to form and worked to maintain those associations. And, respondents used talk to create positive histories, to make the best of their current situation, and to imagine hope for the future.

Acquiring and Arrangement of Settings and Props

Respondents in this study stated that their decisions on the matters of choosing surroundings and props could affect their treatment from both the informal and formal

sectors of society. First, the location panhandlers choose to carry out their work may heighten or diminish the chance of police sanction in the form of arrest or citation. Location may also be a determining factor for the differing types of treatment they receive from the general public. Informants revealed that they take these questions into account when deciding where to ask for money. In addition, the men and women interviewed revealed that they realized the benefits of using props through observation or the direction of other people who panhandle. Props help respondents in their work collecting money and they may serve as tools that respondents can use to help manage their identity. Most of the respondents use a prop of some kind and interviewees choose the prop that fits their work and identity management needs best.

Respondents in this study primarily concern themselves with the location where they ask for money and the use of a sign as a prop. Beyond their primary concerns, informants reported that the time of day, and time of year (e.g. whether it is a holiday season), and props such as pets or musical instruments motivate passersby to react more positively to them and to give more money than perhaps they would have if the panhandler did not have those props. Respondents stated that during the holidays passersby generally treat them better and give more, supporting previous research (Duneier, 1999). Informants also reported that the time of the day sometimes affects who gives them money. During the daylight hours most reported that every type of person would give but at night women were less likely to give than men would. Respondents believed this was the case because women were likely more cautious around people at night than men are.

The panhandlers in this study used a sign to aid them in their work but some spoke of other props that when used helped them receive more assistance and better treatment from passersby. One respondent said that she received more and was treated better when she asked for money with her puppy than if she did not have her pet along. Another respondent who uses a guitar said he would likely have more trouble with law enforcement downtown and not treated as well by passersby if he did not have it while asking for money. Still, respondents most common concerns regarding the issue of settings and props were establishing a good location at which to work, frequently changing their location and using a sign to help them work.

Informants indicated that by engaging in panhandling at areas within but on the fringe of the downtown boundary they are less likely to be harassed by police or business owners. Respondents also told me that they find it beneficial to move from location to location throughout the day so as to avoid negative interactions with police officers. Also, most respondents reported panhandling at intersections rather than panhandling passersby on the sidewalk. Their position at intersections makes face-to-face interactions with passersby less likely to occur. Limiting interactions with people on a face-to-face level decreases the chances of problematic interactions. Regarding the props they choose to use in their work, most respondents reported that they "fly a sign" or ask for money through the use of a sign. They present these signs to motorists waiting on stoplights at intersections, a practice that some feel is less stigmatizing because in their opinion they are not actually "asking." Overall, they choose to panhandle near the city's downtown boundary, change their panhandling location often and request aid by "flying a sign".

Below I examine respondents' data dealing with their choices regarding location and props.

As described above, respondents are cognizant of the police presence in the downtown entertainment district and the problems they are likely to encounter if they panhandle in that area. Therefore, respondents through observation, trial and error and information gleaned from other people who panhandle have developed a sense of the locations surrounding downtown where they are less likely to face formal social controls in the form of the police and where the intensity of negative interactions with passersby are diminished. These locations surrounding the downtown entertainment district do help lessen troublesome interactions with the public but the leniency they are afforded from police is perceived by respondents to rely on periodic movement from one area to another. In other words, respondents believe that if they panhandle in one area too long they will increase their chances of having problems with police officers. Respondents have developed this strategy because of their observation of normal police routes and because of officers' asking them to move on. After asking Jim how well he got along with the local police he described the strategy of moving from one location to another on a consistent basis to avoid the police:

> I go to different areas of the city, I move around, move around. I'll go, me and my lady will be over here on Sixth and I'll be over here on the island or I'll be over here on sixth street or I'll go to Mopac and change the whole setting. I'll be on the island over there or go over in the middle. The more spots you have to go to the least you have to worry about getting arrested, keep moving.

While he finds it useful to change location often Jim feels like the most important way he can avoid confrontation with police is by staying away from the downtown entertainment

district. Next he talked about avoiding that area because of his perception that police have

increased patrols and enforcement there:

"This area they don't really sweat it much. Way out, as long as we're away from
downtown that's why you see us way over here."

Informants' aversion to the downtown entertainment district partly stems from this

apparent increase in police presence and partly from the stigma attached to panhandling

in that particular area. Shelly talked about how her and some friends noticed that around

Christmas in 2001 the police intensified their presence in the entertainment district and

how at that time those who panhandled there moved away from the area:

> That's where everyone used to panhandle right there. They used to make a
> lot of money down there at nighttime, uh especially on a Saturday or a   .
> Friday. But I mean we would go everyday, on night we would go down
> there and just panhandle. But every since Christmas, Christmas was the
> last time everyone started going down there. But now everyone's gone out
> mostly to the suburbs to make money because it's gotten so hot so with
> cops in that immediate area.

Panhandlers also avoid downtown because of the stigma attached to those who

congregate there by others that are homeless and others who panhandle. To the people I

interviewed panhandling downtown is representative of other more degrading conditions

or actions such as substance abuse or drug dealing. Respondents spoke of the drug

dealers and those using drugs in the entertainment area and most attempted to distinguish

themselves from these types of people. They differentiate themselves through

"distancing" (Snow, 1987) and by physically avoiding areas where people engaging in

these activities gather. Lynda talked about her reason to avoid the entertainment district:

> I don't go downtown, cause if you'll notice further down Sixth Street
> there's a lot crack dealers, dope dealers. I don't go down there because I
> don't mess with that stuff or with people that do.

Lynda expressed her feelings about the downtown entertainment district after I asked her if she ever panhandled down there. She stated that she does not go down there because she does not want to be associated with drugs or drug dealers. Interviewees also implied that panhandling in the entertainment district, which requires face-to-face interactions with passersby, is more degrading than using a sign at intersections bordering central downtown. Face-to-face interactions with passersby can be difficult for panhandlers and the people they approach so these interactions can lead to negative perceptions of panhandlers (Duneier, 1999; Lankenau, 1998). Respondents I spoke to who "fly signs" on the boundary of the entertainment district who have tried approaching passersby on the sidewalk expressed a distaste for these face-to-face interactions. Ted's reaction to my question regarding panhandling in the entertainment district is representative of the majority of respondents:

"Oh, I won't walk Sixth Street, I won't try to walk up to the residents you know I don't try hit people up, only on the corner."

Ted said they does not try to "hit people up" and implied that "flying a sign" is a different act that is less intrusive. Most of the people I interviewed viewed panhandling downtown in a much different light than standing at an intersection with a sign. While all respondents revealed being publicly harassed in some way they indicated that passersby' attacks are more difficult to endure on an intimate level. The difficulty of these types of interactions for panhandlers arises because of the nearness to the passersby and the protracted interaction between the two actors. Asking someone for money walking nearby heightens the intensity of "inspection draw" (Gardner, 1995) or scrutiny from passerby and increases the time for passerby' response to a panhandlers' request. If

passersby' responses are negative, as they often are, panhandlers must endure the exploitation, evaluation or exclusion from people for an indefinite span of time on a personal level. Tim described his feelings about approaching passersby for money and a technique he has developed to shorten the interaction:

> I don't do it often but I do it enough to really, I feel I guilty about it sometimes where I don't ask like I used to anymore. It's like I could read a person's face, oh no here he comes you know what I'm saying so I just speak and keep going.

In addition to respondents' aversion to asking for money from passersby on a face-to-face level many also feel that by doing so they put themselves in a position to receive a citation for aggressive panhandling by police. Asking for money from passersby whether they be in a car or walking down the sidewalk is not by itself a violation of the aggressive solicitation ordinance. Nevertheless some respondents believe asking for money from someone in the entertainment district will lead to citation. When I asked Steve if he would panhandle in the entertainment district he responded by saying:

"No, shoot you wouldn't last five seconds. You would have a cop arrest you."

Therefore, panhandlers primarily avoid panhandling pedestrians for fear of arrest as much as for their protection against degrading encounters with passersby.

The majority of respondents choose to panhandle at intersections with the use of a sign. Panhandlers hold a sign up for passersby waiting in traffic to read. The signs often express the panhandler's condition of homelessness and interviewees said they have used signs that are humorous, religious or those that simply ask for help. Respondents revealed that they prefer to use these signs to collect money and other forms of assistance from people for two reasons, informants feel that by "flying a sign" they limit the problems arising from interactions with passersby and are less likely to draw the ire of the police.

In addition, respondents feel that by using a sign they are not really *asking* for money from passersby. Rather they believe that by presenting a sign which details their condition they are allowing passersby a chance to help them should they decide to do so.

Informants stated that if they use a sign to collect money or assistance from passersby in their cars at intersections rather than approaching people on the sidewalk they limit their chances of enduring problematic interactions with the public. The people I interviewed seemed to understand that the difficulty between themselves and passersby arising in a meeting on a downtown sidewalk stems from the proximity of the two actors and the span of the interaction. Therefore, the people I spoke to use the barrier of car windows and the time constraints of a traffic light to ease the discomfort of the interaction for both themselves and passersby. Shelly explained how her location at an intersection allows her to get her message across without approaching people or impeding their travels:

> Yeah, I feel more comfortable flying a sign because I feel like um, I feel like when you're panhandling they have to pay attention to you because you actually go up to each person specifically and ask them for money. And like I said, when I fly signs I stand up in the corner of the streets and I ask for money and I won't walk up to each window or whatever. People, if they want to give me money they'll holler at me. Or like when for instance they'll set there like five cars down and I'm in the front asking for money and the light turns green and the fifth car pulls up to me they got their hand out the window and they'll give me the money and everything.

This strategy also allows panhandlers to break the inattention of passersby (Lankenau, 1999) without causing much discomfort. Furthermore, this tactic lessens panhandlers' necessity to break the inattention of everyone he or she comes into contact with because asking for money at intersections dramatically increases the volume of people panhandlers will likely encounter relative to asking for money on sidewalks. Informants

discussed the idea that by asking for money in this manner passersby do not have to even acknowledge them whereas if they approached passersby on foot they would force the individual or group to acknowledge them. Respondents described this as a positive aspect of asking for money at intersections despite their previous indications that the lack of acknowledgement from passersby is the worst treatment they received from passersby. Dave explained why allowing passersby the opportunity to ignore him can be a benefit to his work and relationship with the public:

> Because then you're giving them an option you know they don't, they don't even have to acknowledge you really. But if you walk up to them one way or another they have to acknowledge you or blow you off and most people have a tendency to get paranoid or they feel like they're threatened in that type of situation.

Dave described how his decision to panhandle at intersections instead of approaching people walking by lessens the likelihood for an uncomfortable encounter for both himself and passersby. This finding seemingly contradicts respondents' feelings about being publicly excluded but there are distinctions between the two experiences. The inattention that falls under the category of exclusionary public harassment (Gardner, 1995) is the "non-person treatment" (Goffman, 1963a) that results from passersby' fear or their "blasé' attitude" (Simmel, [1903] 1971). The inattention Dave talks about above is "civil attention" (Goffman, 1971), a courtesy extended to most of the people we encounter on a daily basis that allows acknowledgment without extended interaction. This distinction is discussed more below in this section.

This type of panhandling approach is interesting because it is unique from the descriptions of panhandlers in the available literature. Snow and Anderson (1987) distinguish begging from panhandling by describing the former as a passive approach and

the latter as an active approach. Lankenau (1999) goes into greater detail to examine

active panhandling or what he calls "panhandling repertoires." He states that these

panhandling routines are designed to break the inattention of passersby. The type of

panhandling most of the respondents reported engaging in is a combination of what Snow

and Anderson (1987) refer to as passive begging and Lankenau's (1999) description of

routines designed to break the inattention of passersby. Panhandlers that take this

approach are passive solicitors who allow passersby to give them "civil attention"

(Goffman, 1971) but draw attention to themselves and more importantly their plight

though the use of sign. Panhandlers use a sign to describe their plight to passersby so that

if a passerby wishes he or she can choose to help the panhandler. Respondents indicated

that using a sign helped them deal with formal and informal social sanctions. However,

the primary use of the sign is to ease interactions between themselves and passersby.

Respondents routinely told me that they use a sign in order to curtail negative

interactions with law enforcement. Hugh explained that he feels by using a sign he is less

likely to get into trouble with the police:

> I just started flying a sign like two and a half weeks ago, you know. I used
> to ask people, ya know. I used to walk around but since the laws are kinda
> hard on panhandlers and stuff like that I figured that well maybe it's not
> bad after all ya know.

A misconception many of the respondents revealed about the laws regarding panhandling

were possible restrictions in the way a request was worded, either written or in the verbal

form. These panhandlers believed that they could not by law "ask" for money in any form

so they chose to use signs that stated their condition, humorous quotes or whatever as

long as money was not directly requested. Upon asking what type of panhandling

approach works best J.J. stated that "flying a sign" is the best way to panhandle because

the police are more lenient. However, he also revealed that he believes it is illegal to ask

for money even if written on a sign:

"Well see with a sign you don't get messed with by police as long as it doesn't ask for money."

Some respondents felt that they would stay within the bounds of the law if they only

stated their neediness and did not ask for money specifically. Moreover, panhandlers felt

that by displaying the sign they are providing passersby an opportunity to help out if they

wished. Denny claimed that he felt as if he was staying within the bounds of panhandling

laws and that those laws do not prevent him from receiving help from someone willing to

provide it:

> I was over at Oak Hill but the sign says by the grace of God this is me and
> not you. And uh I did alright with that sign but the cop gave me a ticket
> and took the sign away. Which I wasn't asking for any money but just
> because somebody gave me some they said I was panhandling. And I
> wrote that sign so it would not be panhandling but just because I'm
> homeless doesn't obligate me to refuse a gift.

Denny might have received the ticket because he was standing too close to the

intersection. Simply receiving money is not restricted by the aggressive panhandling

ordinance. However, from Denny's perspective, he believes that by using a sign he is not

really asking if the request is not clearly stated in print.

Respondents' use of a sign in their work asking for money on the streets is on its

surface a prop that is used to ease interactions with passersby and an attempt to adhere to

the current laws on panhandling. However, respondents claimed that using a sign allowed

them to avoid two important parts of the panhandler/passersby interaction. Respondents

stated that the sign allowed them to avoid attempting to break the inattention of passersby

and most felt that the signs prevented them from actually *asking* for money. Therefore,

somehow "flying a sign" diffuses much of the stigma arising from the panhandling

interaction in the minds of respondents. Despite their obvious "stigma symbols"

(Goffman, 1963b), the signs being the most prevalent, panhandlers attempt to conform to

societal norms while engaging in deviant behavior. Respondents' preference to use a sign

while asking for money stems from their desire to afford fellow citizens the same "civil

attention" they desire (Goffman, 1971). As I discussed in chapter two "civil inattention"

is a courtesy extended to the mass of people we have passing contact with on a day-to-

day basis in which we acknowledge their presence but continue on our way. However,

the non-person treatment reflects the lack of this courtesy in which we fail to

acknowledge the person or persons before us (Goffman, 1963a).

In my interviews respondents' seemingly provided contradictory statements

regarding their feelings toward passersby' inattention of them. They lamented about the

lack of acknowledgement from passersby and then told me that using a sign allowed

passersby to not acknowledge them but the contradiction lies only in the semantics.

Respondents recognize passersby' want of obscurity within the urban flow of downtown

areas and wish for that themselves so using a sign is a comfortable compromise allowing

both actors that courtesy while still serving the purpose of approaching people and

requesting help. According to Goffman's analysis of stigma, (1963b) the sign perhaps

serves as a symbol of "disclosure" (Goffman, 1963b) for the panhandler in which he or

she is advertising their stigma to passersby. While the panhandler possess other stigma

symbols (Goffman, 1963b) that also serve to characterize them, the sign identifies the

individual as someone who is discredited rather than someone who could be

discreditable. The respondents are managing their identity by placing it out on a sign for

all to see so there is no confusion and little room for further interpretation. Therefore, the placard is a symbol stating the plight of the person which limits the amount of information necessary for passersby' scrutiny or "inspection draw" (Gardner, 1995) and implies the wish for aid from passersby.

Management of Appearance

Another aspect of "identity work" that emerged from the interview data is "management of appearance" (see Snow and Anderson, 1987). Panhandlers are involved in a reciprocal process in their interactions in which they negotiate the many facets of identity and social merit (Clark, 1997). Appearance plays a large part in these societal negotiations and so it is an important characteristic passersby use to assess a panhandlers' neediness or worthiness. Panhandlers are aware of this type of scrutiny or "inspection draw" (Gardner, 1995) and they must choose how to manage their appearance to suit their identity without minimizing their "sympathy margin" (Clark, 1997) given to them from passersby.

Respondents' data regarding the management of their appearance were concentrated around two themes: a willingness to provide or accept services to or from the public and the employment of "emotional labor" strategies (Hochschild, 1983). The data demonstrate that there was little concern for respondents over their physical appearance in regards to its use in presenting their identity. Most informants stated that they dressed as comfortably as they could given the weather conditions and wore good shoes because of the time on their feet. Only one respondent stated that he tried dressing in a certain way to increase the amount of money he could collect but was uncomfortable doing so. After I asked him if he dressed in a certain way to aid his panhandling Steve

recalled wearing clothes that could identify him with a Vietnam War veteran despite the fact he was not a veteran:

> I put on a, a guy gave me an American shirt and uh these bell bottom pants and uh a jacket that says Vietnam on it. I put all that on and it still didn't help. I just wore it, I felt a little out of place.

Another respondent claimed that being clean was a detriment to receiving help from passersby but his statement was countered by other respondents who said they liked to stay clean and shaven but claimed no such neglect. Their physical appearance was not a primary concern of respondents nor was what other items they might have with them. When I asked informants if they brought anything along with them to help them with their work they simply replied that besides their signs they just carried what they owned except in the rare cases they had somewhere to store belongings. More important than their dress or accoutrements to respondents is the way they appear to the people who they come into contact with daily.

Panhandlers are constantly facing the scrutiny of others who are trying to decide if he or she deserves their sympathy, indifference, or outrage. As I stated above passerby' inspections (Gardner, 1995) determine the amount of sympathy panhandlers will receive from them (Clark, 1997). Therefore, panhandlers attempt to project an appearance that will most likely afford them a greater margin of sympathy for the largest number of passersby. Interviewees in this study work to project an identity of a person who helps others and accepts whatever help is offered to them. Respondents also strive to project an image of a person who shows deference and temperance even in difficult circumstances.

Panhandlers often ask for help getting a meal but according to respondents there are some people who really only want money and if offered a meal they would not take it.

The respondents I spoke to do not want to be characterized as one of these people, so when passersby offer help in a form other than money they accept it. Shelly talked about reaction to being offered a meal:

> I'll tell them if they could help me out with money for food or if they prefer just to buy me food, because that's fine too. Because a lot of people um, a lot of people use money on drugs, a lot of money on alcohol. But see I don't smoke or I don't drink so you know what I'm saying. And I'll actually tell them if you want you know I'll go with you to go get the food you know what I'm saying.

Shelly does not want to project the image of a person panhandling only for money that may be used on drugs and alcohol, she wants to demonstrate that she needs help and will accept what is offered to her. If a person offers to buy her food but asks that she come with him or her so they can insure that their money is used on food she will accompany them. Respondents often write on their sign that they need a job. Some passersby ask them why they are in a homeless situation or what they would need to get out of homelessness. Often passersby and business owners offer temporary jobs or leads on jobs in lieu of giving them money. Dave talked about being offered some work and his belief that other panhandlers who "fly a sign" will not take advantage of opportunities such as the one offered to him:

> I've had multiple job offers and done multiple jobs. Move furniture, I've done many things. Like a guy picked me up the other day said 'I'm moving to Elgin and you know, I've got my stuff in an apartment over here and we got to move it over here. We have to make about three loads and the stuff is too heavy to move by myself do you really want to work?' Because most signers aren't going to work if you ask them or they're going to refuse to work and he says 'do you mean what your sign says?' I grabbed my bag and jumped in said, "let's go."

Respondents also spoke about their willingness to help others in need when they can. Providing aid to others helps them manage an appearance of an individual who may

deserve more sympathy than another panhandler who seems unwilling to help others. Jim summed up this attitude:

> It's just like when somebody helps me out and I see somebody in trouble
> I'm going to help them out. I'm going to pull out of my pocket even though
> I made it I'm going to give it to them.

Jim indicated that he is worthy of helping out because he will in turn help out others when he can. Occurrences in which respondents were able to help someone were usually in the form of a chance encounter with a passerby in trouble. Often these occasions were preceded by car trouble for the passersby. For example, respondents described helping fix flats and push cars off the road. Often, upon helping passersby in their time of need respondents said the received money for the help. Harvey talked about one such , experience:

> I'll walk around and there was sometimes where I was just walking. Like
> one time I took off to Riverside and a dude broke down and man he was in
> the middle of the road so I pushed him out of the road and he gave me $20
> to get him out of the road.

Through accepting help in whatever form it is offered and in turn offering help to others respondents are working towards widening their "sympathy margin" (Clark, 1997). The panhandlers interviewed do so through their portrayal of a reciprocal member of society who does not abuse the compassion of givers. By managing their appearance in this way they position themselves for future reward if not immediate reward by projecting a favorable image of themselves to passersby.

Chris discussed how he found a cell phone and returned it to the owners who gave him some money and food but who also told him they would be more likely to give to him in the future:

> I just found a cell phone right here in the corner, a guy lost his cell phone and I found it. This was about three and half weeks ago. I found it about a week ago. The battery was dead in it. Well yesterday I ran into a battery charger, I charged it up and I went through the phone book and I got his mom and dad's phone number so I called them today and ya know, I arranged for them for after they got off work to come and get it. They gave me six dollars for it. You know they're working stiffs, the man told me he checked his bank account and he didn't have anything in it. The wife gave me six dollars and can of coke and four packs of crackers and said 'this is all we can do for you' and he says 'I've seen you somewhere'. I says yeah you seen me flying on the corner up there and he says 'you're right' and he said 'you know I never gave before but next time I see you and I got some I will.'

This management of appearance strategy is an effective way for respondents to maintain a favorable "social identity" while preserving a positive "personal identity" (Snow and Anderson, 1987). Another management of appearance tactic informants' employ is deference, an approach that neglects an individual's "personal identity" but helps maintain and create a good "social identity."

Like people working in the service industry, panhandlers often face people who are uncaring and degrading towards them. Those working in the service industry manage or control their emotions to increase reward and minimize degradation, a tactic Hochschild termed "emotional labor" (1983) and a strategy used by panhandlers as well. The data indicates that panhandlers engage in "emotional labor" to skillfully combat degradations of self while they ask for money from passersby. Respondents in this study most commonly utilized "emotional labor" skills after passersby' refusal to give money. Informants stated that they respond to such refusals as positively as possible to

demonstrate that the passersby' rejection does not bother them. It is important to

demonstrate this affability to the passerby who snubbed the panhandler and to others who

might be observing the panhandler's reaction. The respondents' goal in these incidents is

to present and create a view of compliance, gratefulness and deference to avoid greater

sanctions and increase chances of reward.

Interviewees stated that they respond to passersby' nonverbal refusals, which

primarily come in the form of inattention, by ignoring passersby themselves or by waving

hello and moving on. Respondents' most common response to verbal refusals from

passersby is to thank them and tell them to have a good day. Lynda explained her feeling

about someone choosing not to give money and her reaction to these people: ,

> I mean he don't have to, there is no need in that if people want to help you
> they will help and if they don't I tell them to have a nice day and thank you
> anyway.

Lynda is demonstrating that she respects passersby right to be left alone and her response

to thank them anyway is indicative of being grateful for any help she may receive.

Respondents also acknowledged through descriptions of their reactions to passersby who

reject their requests that they do it in part because that incident may play a part in future

interactions. Hugh explained why it important he appear positive no matter the passersby'

reaction to him:

> I just tell them, "God bless you I love you anyway, you take care have a
> nice day" and I give that. I used to be a salesman man and I used to make
> over $40,000 a year so I know how to, how to you know what I'm saying.
> Gotta be aware of my customers man.

Hugh describes people who give to him as "customers" and refers back to when he was a

salesman, an indication that he sees panhandling as a type of work and that passersby'

rebuffs are part of the job. Respondents implied that by reacting well to a refusal today

could result in people giving them money tomorrow. H.I. explained this thinking:

> No, I just talk if they don't have any money sometimes you know they will
> see you the next day and give you a five or if you treat them like a prick
> they won't.

While respondents report using these skills of deference to help them in the collection of

money and minimizing of sanctions they also use these skills to deal with the degradation

they are often exposed to. Therefore, also seen as part of the job are the types of public

harassment endured by panhandlers that I discussed above.

In addition to engaging in deference, informants described how they utilized

"emotional labor" skills to deal with harassment as well. Instances of exploitative public

harassment sometimes result in retaliation from the exploited panhandler but the more

likely response is one of acceptance. Respondents explained that avenging the

exploitation of them is desired but the result of that vengeance would likely contribute to

negative labels from passersby or even lead to arrest. However unfair passersby'

perceptions may be in cases like this it is understood among respondents that injustice is

a part of asking for money on the streets. Chris discussed how he chooses to handle

exploitation:

> The best way to handle that is to be as pleasant as you possibly can. You
> know if you're going to turn around and give them the finger and cuss
> them out or throw something back at them. First of all it just shows
> everybody else around what an asshole your are and the second thing is
> there's so much animosity in this world that uh I don't need to add to it
> you know.

By accepting a passersby' exploitative harassment Chris was not viewed by other

passersby as someone to be feared or avoided. Like the acceptance of exploitative public

harassments respondents have become accustomed to accepting and ignoring evaluative

public harassments as well. Most of the time respondents indicated they simply tried to

ignore evaluative statements directed at them such as "get a job" or "you bum" yelled by

passersby. However, some stated that they have developed "recipe responses" (Gardner,

1995) such as "do you know of one" in response to "get a job" but most often

respondents try to respond as positively as possible and move on. In response to

exclusionary public harassment most respondents react to this treatment by embracing the

desire to be left alone, the right of the business to refuse services or the duty of the police

to do their job. Hugh took this attitude when answering a question about passersby'

desires to be left alone:

> Well, not really not really I mean if they don't want to be bothered I don't
> try to pressure them you know what I'm saying, because I'm trying to keep
> the peace. I'm not here to disturb the public or nothing like that and I'm
> pretty much sure the law can appreciate that. It's just like one bad apple
> can spoil the whole bunch you know it's that type of scenario and that's the
> reason why they enforce a lot of laws like that. Because they don't want
> people, the general public to be harmed by people that are going through
> hard times and stuff like that.

The data indicate that the most common reaction to these types of degradations is one of

deference. However, the negative treatment and harassment takes its toll on even those

skilled at managing emotions. The majority of respondents admitted that they have

occasionally failed to control themselves in reaction to degrading acts. Respondents

indicated that these failures often occurred early on in their experiences asking for money

in the streets, saying that they had to learn to handle this treatment.

Harvey talked about responding negatively to a passerby who cursed at him back when

he started panhandling:

> I threw the bird at him when he drove off, I didn't do it while he was there
> while the light was red but as soon as he turned off I said hey and threw
> the bird at him. But now I mean, now when people curse at me I wouldn't
> never disrespect nobody man.

Respondents also stated that despite their experience managing emotions, they have had

experiences in which they did not control their responses. However, experiencing

harassment that is particularly threatening was the most common reason cited by

respondents for a departure from composure. Interviewees recalled instances in which

they have been physically taunted or challenged to fight and when faced with dilemma

they decide not to back down. Denny admitted that he occasionally reacts to passersby

that become aggressive with him:

> It depends sometimes I ignore them I try to ignore them. Sometimes I, you
> know if you've been having a really lousy day and your stomach's
> growling you've been out there for three hours and you've got a buck and
> quarter so far. And somebody drives by and gets up in your face you
> know, you're liable to go right ahead and get right back in their face. I've
> had people sit around and shoot up their mouth and when I stand up to
> them they'll slam on the brakes and jump out of their vehicles. That don't
> fly with me I'll drop my pack and my sign whatever I'm holding pull my
> shirt down. I don't run, people get back in their cars and they leave. They
> think they can come out here and jump on you and they are going to get
> mouthy with you and you're going to turn and run but a lot of guys will
> but I won't.

Even though interviewees stated that they sometimes meet violent or lewd behavior with

similar behavior the majority display deference. Respondents generally work to manage

their appearance by demonstrating that they will accept help and likewise offer help to

those in need. They also employ their "emotional labor" skills to maintain a favorable

"social identity" when dealing with frequent rejection and sometimes harassment from passersby, business owners, and law enforcement.

Associative Work with Individuals or Groups

Another way that panhandlers engage in identity work is through "associative work with individuals or groups" (Snow and Anderson, 1987). Utilizing this strategy panhandlers increase their social status by conforming to social norms and by associating with higher status groups (Milner, 1994). Panhandlers are encouraged to conform to social norms through formal and informal sanctions levied against them. The respondents strive to conform through their choice in settings and by way of emotion management. These practices help lessen the stigmatization on them as well as maintaining and establishing relationships with people higher in the social strata. These regular interactions with people who occupy higher status groups represent "tie signs" (Goffman, 1963b): a connection to higher social standing. Respondents spoke of established links with certain passersby, police and business owners. I examine the data regarding these connections between respondents and these groups in this section.

The data regarding connections with passersby that give to them often or people that they referred to as "regulars" was discussed frequently. Respondents indicated that they have certain regulars that come by and give them money on a consistent basis and inferred that these transactions are beneficial for both sets of actors. Informants stated that their regulars get satisfaction out of helping them out.

Ted told me he has a set of regular givers so I asked him why he thought they

consistently stopped to help him, he indicated they do it because it makes them feel good

about themselves:

> Yeah, you know they get a bump out of it, they get a rush, they get
> themselves a little piece of joy, happiness and a feeling of contentment.
> They know that they are doing something nice for somebody.

Respondents indicated that they feel like they have a relationship with their regulars, one

that is as important to them as it is to the respondents. After asking him to talk about his

relationships with passersby Jim talked about the connection he has with his regulars:

> It's like a relationship you know what I'm saying. They meet you certain
> days you know what I'm saying. And all this money they've been giving
> me for all this time I know I've had about 13 regulars for a long time. And
> they would hate to see me go because we're real close you know and they
> help me out a lot you know.

Informants indicated that their regulars provide something more important than money to

them. Their regulars give them the feeling that someone is concerned about them and that

concern is more important than what these regulars give. Harvey stated that one regular

of his gives him money each time she sees him but that she does not have to because of

the way she treats him:

> There is this old lady how drives a Grey Marquis. Every time I see her
> man, I could see her three times in one day and she will give me a dollar
> every time though. They don't have to give me no money, these folks,
> when they treat me good.

Similarly, Shelly emphasized the idea that the concern of one of her regulars provided her with something she valued more than money or food when I asked her to describe her best experience while panhandling:

> My best experience, uh it has to be people who come back and find you later you know and then tell you that they thought about you a lot, you know. Like for instance there is this one lady over there off of Olen and 183 and uh, she came and visited me for about a month. And she came and visited like probably about five times and every time she went to the grocery store, and brought me back food and brought me back some clothes. That is when she saw my puppy and brought something back for my puppy. And she just kept telling me that I touched her and everything so that was a really cool experience.

Interviewees also described their regulars as friends if there is some commonality between the two. Common links that seemed to bond passersby and panhandlers that a few respondents cited were race and veteran status. Harvey talked about developing a friendship with some regulars who like him are fans of the rap group *Bone*:

> There are these three big Mexican dudes you know and they like *Bone* and I like *Bone* and I mean, see what it is that is why I click with them. And it was like I'm up there and how I got to know them really good was I'm off the ramp and I'm hearing *Bone* so I walk over there and say, "man I'm jamming with you." They say, 'you know Bone' and I say, "come on now you'll." I ain't lying $5 every time, good people man. Those are people I click with.

This tenuous tie that is felt by respondents may be an indication into why respondents list passersby closer to them in social standing as those most likely to give. When asked if they could describe the type of person most likely to give the most common responses indicated that they believed those with less money were more likely to give. Common responses to this question were statements that "blue collar workers," "poor people" and "middle-class people" give but "rich" or "wealthy" people rarely give. Respondents' estimates may be accurate or their estimates may be influenced by their perception that

those closer to them in status understand better and thus are more likely to give. Hugh

explained to me that he believes mostly poor people give money to him and that people

of higher classes are unwilling to give:

> Well, mostly poor people, mostly poor people believe it or not mostly poor
> people. People that are high class you know, their nose up in the air you
> know they got sense of entitlement. They feel above it all you know, feel
> like they can look down on you.

> [Interviewer:] So you think most people who give to you are poor?

> Yeah right, most of the people are poor and it surprised me you know
> what I'm saying because people usually in the same situation can relate to
> it. You know what I'm saying they are the ones most likely to give point
> blank you know because they feel they walked a mile in my shoes. Don't
> condemn me unless you walked a mile in my shoes and evidently they see.
> where I'm coming from.

Respondents covet their regular givers and tend to align themselves with these people as

their friends or people they have developed relationships with. Furthermore, their

perception of the people willing to provide aid to them is of someone who is more likely

to understand their current plight.

Interviewees also claimed associations with police officers and to a lesser degree

local businesses. The interview data indicates that some informants have relationships

with police officers and local businesses that routinely show them compassion through

providing aid. However, overall the relationship between respondents and police and

businesses is one based on conforming to the rules set by the officer or business owner.

Interviewees did identify positive relationships with police officers that routinely helped

them out.

Lynda talked about an officer to gives her money for food regularly:

"There is one officer gives me a dollar everyday and I go down to 7-11 and get me a hotdog."

Respondents also spoke of their ties with law enforcement in ways that implies pride of their positive relationships with these people. Interviewees spoke of police officers and others of similar standing giving them money. Chris who directs drivers to open parking spots for "tips" bragged of parking people in these positions:

"You know and I've parked police officers and I parked a judge once. I've parked a lot of fireman and uh you know all of them, uh they tip me."

Denny implied similar pride at his experience serving on a downtown improvement group that was established by the city to provide a safer downtown:

> I was a regular attendee on uh on judge Elizabeth Earle's downtown
> community conditions council and yeah I consider her entire staff to be
> very good friends of mine. They are good people down there.

However, the most common relationships with police that respondents described were relationships based on their conformity to the officers' rules. The understanding interviewees have with most officers is that their relationships will remain positive as long as they stay within the constraints laid out by the police. Jim explained receiving a warning about the aggressive panhandling ordinance from a police officer he identifies as his friend:

> Well, about a month ago a friend of mine told me, a police officer, I met
> him panhandling on the street. He told me, he says 'Jim, I don't want ever
> to arrest you for doing what you are doing because I know what you do
> and you can't help it because you have cancer.' You know what I'm
> saying, (he said) 'if I could I'd give you the world man because you're my
> friend you know.'

A few respondents spoke of business owners with whom they felt they had good relationships. These business owners would offer them occasionally odd jobs or give

them food from time to time. However, like their relationships with the police, the most

common arrangements described by respondents were associations based on their

continued conformity to the rules outlined by the business owners. Shelly described a

local business that does not mind if she panhandles outside their storefront:

> There's a few places for instance where [a local music store] is downtown.
> I have a few, I can just base it upon on the ones I've had experiences with.
> At [a local music store] they let me set outside their place and panhandle
> you know and it's understood that I can sit out there and everything so
> they're cool with it whether the cops are or not. They let me sit out there.

However the majority of respondents indicate they maintain good relationships with

business owners if they agree to leave the storefront when asked, do not steal from the

store and keep the bathrooms clean if they are allowed to use them. J.J. talked about a

downtown bar owner who asked he and his friends to leave the sidewalk in front when he

opens the up the awning to the street:

> Which I was okay with us, we didn't realize that business was open
> because it's been like open sometimes and closed half the times. We just
> usually sit there where I was sitting, sometimes he opens that up and if
> he's opened up then we can't sit there. We kind of got an agreement with
> him he don't mind if he's not open.

Respondents' associative work largely depends on their conformity to the law of law

enforcement and local businesses but their relationships with regular givers offer them

the opportunity to connect with actors of a higher social status. The people I interviewed

endeavor to connect with people of higher social standing so they can expand their own

"social identity" (Snow and Anderson, 1987). These connections include respondents'

"regulars" and some police officers that show them compassion. However, their

commitment to conformity in regards to social norms is the overriding reason

respondents remain in good standing with local businesses and law enforcement.

Identity Talk

The fourth aspect of identity work is the verbal production and assertion of personal identity or "identity talk" which includes three interactional strategies: "distancing," "embracement" and "fictive storytelling" (Snow and Anderson, 1987). The first strategy, "distancing," is made up of three sub-strategies "associational distancing," "role distancing" and "institutional distancing". Respondents in this study used "associational distancing" to differentiate themselves from panhandlers who are substance abusers. They used "role distancing" to separate themselves who panhandled aggressively. Interviewees also strived to distinguish themselves from panhandlers who only panhandled to get money for drugs or alcohol, their statements regarding these distinctions bordered on "associational distancing" and "role distancing". However, respondents made few declarations about distancing themselves from institutions besides the occasional statement that they did not want to be involved in the homeless services system. The next strategy, "embracement," is made up of the embracement of certain roles, social relationships or beliefs. The people to whom I spoke embraced the work role, often saying that they would rather work than panhandle. Informants also indicated that they embraced relationships with other panhandlers whom they shared space and resources with. Respondents may have used fictive storytelling (see below) to embellish their pasts, talk of the receipt of expensive items and large donations from passersby, claim of meeting famous people while panhandling and state that in the future they expect to acquire certain employment or move on to a better place.

Interviewees often attempted to distance themselves from panhandlers who abuse drugs and alcohol. It seemed important for respondents to assert to me that they did not

use the money they received through panhandling for drugs or alcohol. Hugh stated that

he uses the money he receives for beneficial things and not for drugs or alcohol:

> Whatever people give me I use that towards housing you know, towards a
> roof so it's all for a good cause. You know what I'm saying it's not for
> nothing like drugs or nothing like that.

Informants would indicate that they believed many panhandlers used money for drugs or

alcohol but that they were different from those types of people. Shelly discussed

panhandlers using money for drugs or alcohol but insists that she is not one of those

people:

> A lot of people use money use money on drugs and lot of money on
> alcohol but see I don't smoke or I don't drink so you know what I'm
> saying.

In Snow and Anderson's (1987) research on the homeless in Austin they found that some

homeless people disassociated themselves from the homeless as a general category and

others disassociated themselves from specific groups of homeless persons. The people I

interviewed did not attempt to distance themselves from the category of homeless but

they did disassociate themselves from specific groups such and from specific roles of

homeless persons. Hugh and Shelly attempted to disassociate themselves from the group

of homeless persons who abuse drugs and alcohol above.

Respondents showed contempt for aggressive panhandlers and like distancing

(Snow and Anderson, 1987) themselves from substance abusers they stated that they

were different from these people.

Harvey indicated that he believes some panhandlers use aggressive tactics to make money quick but that he is willing to show some patience:

> They shouldn't do it you know what I'm saying. You shouldn't make
> nobody give you no money you understand. A lot of people feel if they do
> the aggressive solicitation, they figure that they can make money quick. I
> got patience, I got patience man. If I got to stay out there three hours to
> make $10, I'll do it.

Some interviewees questioned the extent of the ordinance but stated that they understood and agreed that passersby should not be threatened. H.I. told me he received a ticket for panhandling at a bus stop and was a little confused by it but said he realizes that panhandlers should not pressure passersby:

> If it's law they probably got a reason for it. I thought it was kind of strange.
> that you can't panhandle on a bus stop but people be having their change
> and you kind of be pressuring them. Maybe that's it but I don't pressure.

When I asked respondents their feelings about the aggressive solicitation ordinance the common response was that they agreed with the law if it is fairly enforced. Interviewees also stated that the law is good because aggressive panhandlers reflect poorly on all panhandlers. Chris indicated that the law is good if it gets the aggressive panhandlers off the street:

> Well, I can understand you know the aggressive panhandling law it's, you
> know it's good because somebody who is out there doing wrong makes it
> hard for everyone else. And like I said before it's those people's money
> and they can do what the hell they want.

Harvey, H.I. and Chris distanced themselves from the role of aggressive panhandling above (Snow and Anderson, 1987). They distanced themselves from this role by speaking out against aggressive tactics, describing themselves as someone who does not use aggressive tactics and by supporting the aggressive solicitation ordinance.

Respondents spoke with disdain about panhandlers that they feel only use the money they make from panhandling on drugs and alcohol. They used "associational distancing" (Snow and Anderson, 1987) to differentiate themselves from substance abusers and they utilized "role distancing" to imply they use the money gained from panhandling for needed items so they meld the two distancing strategies into one. Dave talked about abuse such as this and then maintains he uses his money wisely:

> Excessive abuse you know, maybe on the same corner six or ten times a day even if they make $50 or $60 dollars they'll still be on the same corner. They spend it as quick as they get it, on booze on whatever you know and they don't buy no food, no cigarettes even though they smoke. They're always asking me for cigarettes because the first thing I buy is food and cigs.

Informants' feelings about people who panhandle for money to buy drugs and alcohol are similar to their feelings about panhandlers who use aggressive tactics. Respondents believe that these panhandlers change the perception of them, despite their differences, in passersby' minds. Steve expressed his disapproval of these groups of panhandlers and their actions because of how it makes other panhandlers look:

> A lot of them are dishonest that do it, you know. They're saying they're hungry and the next thing you know you seeing them running down to the dope dealer or the bar or the liquor store and that messes it up for people like me that are honest trying to get something to eat. Because they see them too you know they see them walking into a store and come out with a sack they can't hide a sack you know.

Dave and Steve disassociated themselves from substance abusers and distanced themselves from the tendency of some panhandlers to use the money they receive only on alcohol or drugs. I discuss this as role distancing (Snow and Anderson, 1987) because their emphasis is on distancing their use of the money from those that use the money on drugs and alcohol.

Respondents used embracement (Snow and Anderson, 1987) to express their approval of and connection to the social identity associated with certain roles and relationships. Interviewees discussed the role of being someone with a good work ethic in several interviews. They often stated that they would rather work than panhandle and at times recollected on their previous working experiences while we were talking. Several respondents combated passersby' evaluative harassments such as "get a job" which highlights their status as a failed worker with a strong embracement of the work role. Harvey projected this attitude to me:

"I've always worked man I got the working man's hands I mean I've worked man you know and I said the sign thing is new to me."

Harvey talked about having a strong work orientation as others did this finding is consistent with findings from Snow and Anderson's (1987) study of the homeless in Austin. They stated that the majority of the people they interviewed expressed a strong work ethic but like in this study they found that respondents typically worked less than full time at minimal wages. Interviewees indicated that they felt better about themselves when they were able to take the occasional odd job and did not have to rely on panhandling as much. Denny explained why he prefers painting addresses on curbs for residents over panhandling:

> Because I don't like flying that sign. I prefer that I make everything that I
> need through work painting address numbers on curbs and driveways and
> that's what I prefer to do.

Denny engages in what Lankenau (1998) describes as "sidework." Some of the panhandlers Lankenau interviewed were similar to Denny in that they primarily identify themselves with the "sidework" they do and not panhandling.

The people I interviewed indicated that they embraced the relationships they have formed with other panhandlers who they share space with. Respondents talked about the need to share corners with other panhandlers so everyone gets a chance to make some money. Shelly talked about this understanding between the panhandlers in her area:

> When you fly signs most people want you to share and take turns and everything. After you have been there for a few hours someone else wants a turn because they want to make money too. So I guess we all try to get along together you know. It's the best thing to do I guess.

Respondents routinely used the term "family" to describe their relationships with other panhandlers they share time with. They describe a trial period in which the person is assessed for his or her cooperativeness upon completing that trial period the panhandler becomes part of the group. Jim discussed how the group he panhandles with now was initially unsure about him until he had been with them for a while:

> Right, but basically now that we all know each other that was when I first got over here, so I had to get in the groove with them, you know what I mean. Now they all know me and they treat me like family, they treat me like a family you know. We all stick together that's basically how it goes.

Chris indicated that when someone new moves into the area he or she is encouraged to cooperate and if they do not the group makes it difficult for that person:

> Yeah, we all especially in this area here on these corners we all try to work together and when somebody new comes in here and doesn't try to work together they're in for a hard time. Because we will work against them. until they realize the only way you're going to work out here is to work together, you know.

Shelly, Jim and Chris talked about sharing with their friends, looking out for one another and working together. This type of associational embracement is one found by Snow and Anderson (1987) in their study as well. They described findings of respondents

identifying themselves as people that willing shared resources and interviewees' claiming the protection of one another.

Snow and Anderson (1987) conceptualized "fictive storytelling" as stories of a person's past, present and future that have a fictive character to them. They stated that to say these stories are fictional to varying degrees is not to imply that they are complete fabrications. They described the types of fictive storytelling as embellishments of the past and present and fantasizing about the future. They determined whether certain narration should be deemed fictive by looking for contradictions to interviewees' stories. They talked with respondents an average of 4.5 times each so they were able to note narrative contradictions. Snow and Anderson (1987) also used observations between interviews to note contradictions, for instance in a case of a person who claims to work full time they would take note of seeing him or her panhandling or intoxicated during the day. And they cited contradictions between current situations and future projections such as in the case of a disheveled homeless man claiming to have a high paying job waiting for him.

In this study I did not have the advantage of interviewing an individual more than one time and I did not observe any respondent engaged in an activity that contradicted their accounts of their present situation. I cannot offer contradictory evidence to the respondents' stories; therefore, I present these findings as potential embellishments to the respondents' past and present and possible fantasizing about the future. Throughout this section I purposely use caution when describing interviewees' data because of my inability to contradict their statements. Still, I contend that these data are important examples of the fictive storytelling conceptualization offered by Snow and Anderson (1987).

Respondents may have used identity talk to embellish their pasts in our interviews. They talked about coming from families of high status or occupying positions of high standing in the work force. Ted talked about the home where he grew up and his mother and father's occupations:

> I come from a nice family. My father was a chemist and my mother was in real estate and our house looked like a museum. It's all nice and decked out. It's provincial and I was raised in a very, very, very nice family. My father is Armenian and my mother is Mexican.

After telling me he chooses to be homeless, Harvey explained that he would not have to be homeless because of his family's wealth:

> Yeah, you see the thing about it is I wouldn't have to be homeless while I'm down here because everybody, well expect my baby sister, little , brother and his six year old and little brother Darrel. Besides them four all other seven of the family they have big money, good jobs, pretty houses all this and all that you know. My mom, she just won a settlement back in 1998 she got her hand cut off in the thing and she got 1.4 million from it.

Harvey's statement about his family's wealth is highlighted by the 1.4 million-dollar settlement his mother received because of a work-related accident. Two respondents stated that they graduated from college but others stated they graduated from technical or specialty schools that would ultimately provide them with secure employment. For example, Steve talked about excelling in culinary school:

> I went three months at culinary college in Fort Worth. I passed it with AAA I got an A+ they rate you like they do a restaurant A, C, B, D, AAA, CCC and BBB that's how clean the restaurant is that's how the head cook rates.

Respondents often stated that before becoming homeless they were employed in high paying jobs. In a quote I presented above Hugh explained why he treats passersby well

whether they give him money or not. He alluded to a previous job in which he earned

$40,000 a year:

> I just tell them, "God bless you I love you anyway, you take care have a
> nice day" and I give that. I used to be a salesman man and I used to make
> over $40,000 a year so I know how to, how to you know what I'm saying.
> Gotta be aware of my customers man.

When speaking of their present situation informants regularly told of instances in which

they received large amounts of money, nice clothes (e.g. a leather jacket in one case) or

met someone famous. They described rewards gained from panhandling in order to form

a positive personal identity in regards to their current social identity. When I asked how

much money he makes panhandling Priest told me of getting large amounts of money

from passersby on occasion:

> Recent times I think the best I've ever done is about a hundred bucks, that
> was around Christmas time. Now over the years the best lick I ever got in
> my life was $328.

Respondents stated that they received money from celebrities at times. Jim told me he

received a large amount of money from Stevie Ray Vaughn's brother:

> Stevie Ray Vaughn's brother came by, he had a red truck a really nice
> looking truck. He came by he said, 'you hungry' (I said) "yeah I'm hungry
> why you want to help me out?" (he said)'I just might do that,' he pulled
> out his wallet and gave me a $100 bill. I said, "thank you and drive back
> and come on and talk." He said, 'you have a nice day now.'

Respondents talked about plans for the future that would put them in a much better place

than their current situation. The most common were descriptions of future employment

and of their impending departure from Austin to more attractive areas.

Chris explained to me that he thinks he has a job lined up that will allow him to get an apartment again:

> Yeah, I'm fixing to make a change. Now I got a little information the boss has probably a got a job that is south of San Antonio. And if I can get him to put me on that, I could stay in a motel you know. The company will pay part of it and that will give me a real good chance to make some money. So when I come back to Austin and we get another job here in Austin I'll be able to get a place.

Respondents often talked about leaving Austin so they could access help from family members, get better benefits or leave simply to get out of the area. Priest talked about moving to California or following the rainbow gathering festivals:

> I'm ready to pick up my disability check tomorrow and move on out to California. I'm ready to go out on the Internet and drum up, hit a search engine and find out where the next rainbow gathering is going to be in this area and just travel and go with the rainbow. Because I'm not a home guard!

Interview data on identity work employed by panhandlers indicates that respondents use the strategies of distancing, embracement and fictive storytelling to assert positive personal identities. They use distancing to affirm who they are by explaining who they are not and how they behave by differentiating their actions from those they find disdainful. They use embracement strategies to avow their belief in the work ethic. Embracement was also used to describe the communal role they undertake with other panhandlers rather than going at it alone. They may use fictive storytelling to embellish their lives before becoming homeless, speak of successes had while panhandling and to communicate their aspirations for the future.

Summary of Findings

The findings demonstrate that the panhandlers in this study experienced many forms of public harassment. The exploitative public harassments interviewees faced while being unpleasant and sometimes putting them in danger appeared to be the easiest harassment type for them to deal with. Informants' data describing the evaluative and exclusionary public harassment practices they experienced emerged as the most important degradations influencing their "self concept" (Snow and Anderson, 1987). Their "self concept" is affected by a negative "social identity" attributed to them, an identity that is often incongruent with their "personal identity" or meanings attributed to their self.

Interviewees described the damaging effects of being treated as a "non-person" (Goffman, 1963a) and how an increase in formal social controls surrounding panhandling downtown has further excluded them and affected their work. Respondents indicated that they felt particularly degraded by passersby who treat them as a non-person. They commonly stated the lack of acknowledgement from passersby was the most difficult harassment they had to deal with. Being treated as a non-person is an exclusionary public harassment practice in that denies or dismisses the opportunity for respondents to have an identity in society. However, this practice is also an evaluative public harassment practice because the decision not to acknowledge interviewees indicates the worth they hold to passersby. Most of the respondents also spoke of the increased formal social controls surrounding panhandling in the downtown entertainment district. Interviewees believe that panhandling in the entertainment district brings with it more punitive sanctions than it does on the fringes of the downtown area where most of my interviews occurred.

Evaluative public harassment practices that respondents face are damaging in that these evaluations are indications of the "social identity" (Snow and Anderson, 1987) that has been attributed to them. Passersby that yell at them to "get a job" or insult them about their homeless status cause respondents humiliation because they do not see themselves in that light. Questions regarding the truthfulness of their requests or their validity of their character are also damaging to their "personal identity." The association between panhandlers and substance abuse or criminality that is sometimes assumed and verbalized by passersby and police is another particularly discrediting attribution to respondents. Respondents feel like they are generally treated well and that only a few people would yell at them or verbalize their doubts regarding their true intentions. However the constant scrutiny or "inspection draw" (Gardner, 1995) from passersby', police officers' and business owners' are perceived by interviewees as negative assessments of them.

Respondents cope with the public harassment practices I described above by employing the "identity work" strategies of acquiring and arrangement of settings and props, management of appearance, associative work with individuals or groups and identity talk. Interviewees revealed that being cognizant of the formal sanctions of panhandling in the downtown entertainment district they choose locations outside of that area. They also consistently move around so as to not draw the ire of police officers that may protest prolonged panhandling in one area. Most respondents use a sign to panhandle, a practice that is viewed as less emotionally taxing for both them and passersby because they do not have to approach and ask for donation. Interestingly interviewees indicated that they do not feel they are asking for anything when they use a sign. They feel that presenting a sign describing their condition they are giving passersby

an opportunity to help if they want to. Displaying a sign at intersections rather than approaching passersby eases the stigma on panhandlers by allowing passersby to employ "civil inattention" (Goffman, 1971), a courtesy acknowledgement extended to strangers in passing. This activity also serves as a symbol of "disclosure" (Goffman, 1963b) or an advertisement of stigma that implies the wish for aid from passersby.

Informants work to manage their appearance by displaying a willingness to accept aid in any form and a willingness to provide help if needed. They strive to demonstrate to passersby that they are not just soliciting money that could be used for other things such as drugs or alcohol and that they are truthful in their requests for help. In addition, respondents employ "emotional labor" (Hochschild, 1983) to control their emotions in light of the degradations they face from harassers. However in some cases interviewees admitted that they are not able to control their emotions, especially when physically threatened. Respondents utilized associative work with individuals and groups to help maintain and advance their "social identities" as well. Conformity to social norms is a part of this "identity work" component and as evidence of their emotional control and realizations of prohibited behavior and locations they work to comply with these norms.

Another strategy used that is under this "identity work" component is the regular interactions they maintain with passersby and police. Their relationships with people of higher status constitute "tie signs" (Goffman, 1963b) or connections to groups who help their "social identities." Finally, respondents use "identity talk" to distance themselves from panhandlers who abuse alcohol or drugs or those who aggressively panhandle. Informants embraced the work ethic in our interviewees and took pride in their communal type relationships with other panhandlers they share time and space with.

Fictive storytelling may have been employed by respondents to embellish their family and employment histories. This strategy may have also been used to describe large donations received while panhandling in addition to stories of famous people they met while panhandling. Speaking of their futures interviewees talked about aspirations of future employment and relocations to more desirable places.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The idea for this project came after the city of Austin passed an aggressive

solicitation ordinance in 2001. This ordinance is similar to those passed in other U.S.

cities referred to as "quality of life" laws (Dworin, 1996), which are implemented in an

effort to curb "chronic street nuisances" (Ellickson, 1996). These ordinances have a direct

influence on the homeless population. A major goal of this study was to learn about the

affect these laws had on the homeless in Austin and in particular on homeless

panhandlers. Realizing that formal social control means such as ordinances and laws are

only partly responsible for enforcing social norms I also anticipated examining the

informal social control methods panhandlers faced. Then, I expected to examine the

different ways in which homeless panhandlers deal with the stigma and the resulting

social sanctions they face from the formal and informal sectors of society.

This qualitative study was designed to explore eight research questions related to

the social sanctions homeless panhandlers in Austin face, especially in regards to the

passing of the aggressive solicitation ordinance. In addition, this research focused on the

stigma faced by panhandlers and the means by which they dealt with it. I examined the

coping mechanisms panhandlers used to preserve their identities or the "identity work"

they employed.

The sociological literature has examined the scope, characteristics and causes of homelessness. In the 1980s, homelessness became a more visible social problem (Wright, 1998) and one that continues to grow as the most recent national estimate argues that over 800,000 people are homeless (Burt, 2000). Studies indicate that the homeless population is diverse, including single men, women, unaccompanied youth and families make up the population. The homeless who panhandle make up between eight and seventeen percent of homeless people (Burt, 1999; Stark, 1992). Researchers examining the causes of homelessness generally agree that structural inequities within society help to explain the increase in the number of homeless people and that individual disabilities or failures are additional contributors to someone becoming homeless.

Past research also examines the societal attitudes about homelessness was also covered in the review. Despite the claim by some that society has undergone a loss in sentiment in recent years (Goodman, 1989) large-scale opinion surveys present findings to the contrary (Link et al. 1995; Toro and McDonnell, 1992). Research on public attitudes about encounters with homeless persons or panhandlers show that interactions are problematic for both groups (Duneier, 1999; Lankenau, 1998). Passersby' responses range from disinterest, distrust, discomfort and fear.

Informal and formal social controls are employed to deal with the problems resulting from disconcerting interactions between panhandlers and the public. Informal social controls are used to show disapproval or discourage behavior outside the social norm. These are actions taken by society in which social exclusion and humiliation are used to curb improper behavior. Formal social controls are also implemented to enforce social norms or accepted types of behavior and exclude persons from certain areas. In

Goffman's theoretical work on "behavior in public places" (1963a) and on stigma

(1963b) he claims that those who break social norms face reprisals in the form of

disapproval or rejection. Extending from his work, Gardner (1995) defines categories of

these types of reprisals or as she calls them "public harassments," which include

exclusionary, exploitative and evaluative practices.

Due to the problems rising out of interactions with passersby and the social controls

they face panhandlers learn to adapt their work and employ coping tactics. Panhandlers

learn to adapt their "work" to changing public attitudes and policing tactics. Given their

"stigma symbols" (Goffman, 1963b) of appearance and action and the fact that they work

among "mixed contacts" panhandlers cannot hide their stigma so they employ strategies

to manage their emotions and identity. Panhandlers use "identity work" (Snow and

Anderson, 1987) in an attempt to bring their "social identity" closer to their "personal

identity" or view of themselves.

Findings from the interviews revealed that respondents experienced several types

of public harassment. Those categorized as exclusionary and evaluative emerged as the

most significant to respondents. Interviewees indicated that being treated as a "non-

person" (Goffman, 1963a) by passersby is particularly degrading because of the social

rejection and the implication that passersby' negative evaluations of them. Respondents

also claimed that an increase in formal social controls surrounding panhandling

downtown has further excluded them and affected their work. Informants revealed that

evaluative public harassment practices were difficult to cope with because they are

indications of the "social identity" (Snow and Anderson, 1987) that has been attributed to

them. Insults from passersby, questions of their truthfulness, and the associations between

them and substance abuse or criminality are all discrediting attributions respondents reported.

Respondents use "identity work" to cope with these public harassment practices. They choose locations in the city where panhandling is tolerated rather than face increase formal and informal sanctions. Most interviewees panhandle through the use of a sign because it allows them to advertise their condition without approaching people and provides an opportunity for passersby to help. Interviewees indicated that they work to manage their appearance and emotions while in public to assert a positive "social identity." In order to manage their emotions respondents use "emotional labor" (Hochschild, 1983) in much the same way as people working in the service sector do. Informants talked about utilizing associative work with individuals in higher status positions help increase their own social standing. These relationships constitute "tie signs" (Goffman, 1963b) or connections to higher status groups. Finally, interviewees used "identity talk" to distance themselves from panhandlers they who were aggressive or substance abusers. They also used this strategy to embrace the work ethic and spoke of their cooperation with other panhandlers. They used fictive storytelling to embellish their personal histories and present situations and to fantasize about future employment or relocations.

Strengths of Study

The strengths of this study came in large part from the literature I reviewed. First of all the review of past research on the topic of homelessness and panhandling is thorough and reveals the many different perspectives researchers have taken while examining panhandlers. Furthermore, my review of the research by Lankenau (1998) and

Taylor (1999) provided me with examples of studies very similar to this one. I particularly benefited from their methodologies when constructing my own. My prior experience working with the homeless in Austin also helped me to initiate conversations with potential interviewees and to encourage them to participate in the interview. The semi-structured interview perhaps provided the most benefit to this study because its design allowed respondents to reveal unanticipated data that demonstrated much about their experiences. Interviewees' data regarding the experiences they had while panhandling was particularly useful because so much was derived from their accounts of the treatment the receive and their descriptions of how they dealt with certain situations.

Limitations of Study

The limitations of this study were primarily due to the small sample size, time constraints and the limited experience of the researcher. Only fifteen people were interviewed so the data derived from interviews is not representative of the entire population of panhandlers. In addition, due to time limits associated with this study I was only able to interview respondents once. This disallowed me from making determinations on whether or not respondents were using fictive storytelling in their identity work by citing contradictory statements the way Snow and Anderson (1993) did. Finally, my lack of experience conducting qualitative interviews may have limited the quality of data collected. My skills at following up on interviewees' responses improved with each interview conducted. As I gained more experience conducting interviews I was better able to prompt respondents to describe in greater detail about their experiences and feelings towards panhandling thus producing better data.

Policy Implications

Throughout my interviews I learned that even though many respondents had

heard of the aggressive solicitation ordinance few knew the specifics of the law and many

were confused by its scope. Some interviewees believed it was illegal to verbally request

money from passersby and most did not realize the restrictions against panhandling near

a marked crosswalk for instance. Despite their confusion, all realized and understood the

prohibition of aggressive behavior towards passersby but the minor stipulations of the

ordinance were largely unknown or misunderstood. Also, it seemed that when

respondents did receive aggressive solicitation tickets the officers failed to fully explain

to them way they were in violation. Perhaps the police department can better educate the

homeless on the specifics of the law through outreach at homeless service organizations

and through their patrol officers who encounter panhandlers on a daily basis.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study revealed much about homeless panhandlers in Austin there are

still many things to explore sociologically. First, this project was restricted to the

downtown area of Austin. Future researchers should interview panhandlers from other

areas of the city so their experiences could be compared. It is likely that the experiences

of panhandlers who ask for money downtown have different experiences from those who

panhandle at intersections outside the urban core and those who panhandle in the

university area. Another consideration in future research would be to specifically

examine panhandlers' use of signs. During my interviews respondents stated that they felt

"flying a sign" was not really asking for money. This belief and the comfort panhandlers felt from using a sign should be examined further. Future research into this area may be able to reveal why using a sign is perceived by panhandlers to be less stigmatizing than other forms of panhandling. Finally, I interviewed two women who panhandled downtown and their experiences were often different than those of male panhandlers. Future research should examine the treatment of women panhandlers, which could demonstrate an analysis of a group stigmatized on two levels, gender and status.

Summary

After a short discussion covering the beginnings of this study, the research, questions and overall focus of the research I provided a synopsis of the literature review and findings above. Then I examined the strengths of this study, the limitations of this study, the policy implications and offered recommendations for future research. The extensive literature review, my past experience working with the homeless and the semi-structured questionnaire all benefited this study. This study was limited by the small sample size, the time constraints, both necessary for the timely completion of the project, and my limited experience in qualitative research. Throughout the interviews respondents indicated a lack of knowledge regarding the specifics of the aggressive solicitation ordinance and that when ticketed for the violation police officers failed to fully explain the reason for the ticket, a potential policy implication coming from my findings. In future research I would recommend: extending the research area to include other parts of the city in addition to the downtown area, specifically looking at the use of signs in panhandling and focusing on the experiences of women panhandlers.

APPENDIX A
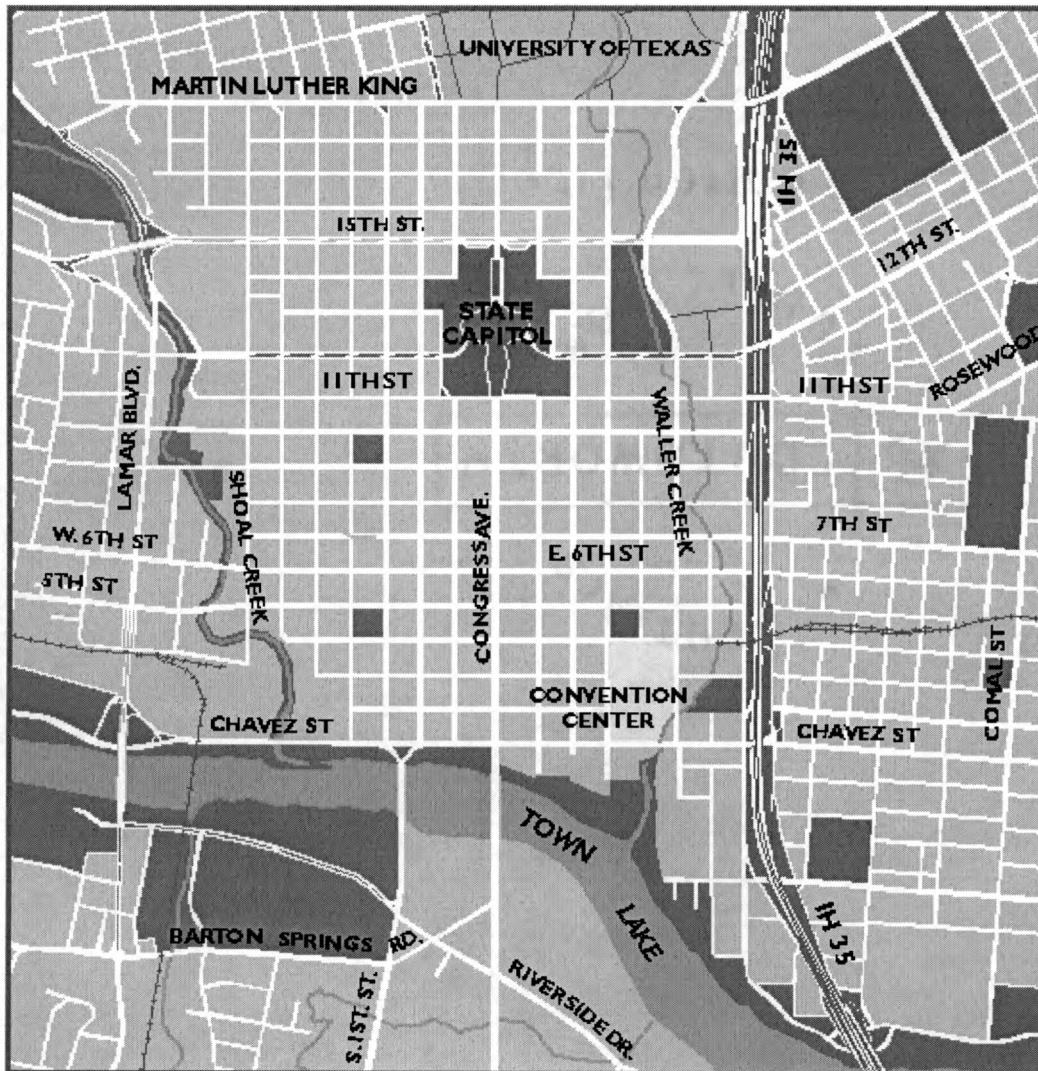
APPENDIX B

Consent Form
A Study of Panhandlers in Austin, Texas

You are invited to participate in a study of those who ask for money on the streets of downtown Austin, Texas. I am a student at Southwest Texas State University in the Department of Sociology working on my graduate thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because I encountered you asking for money on the street and learned, upon asking, that you were currently without safe and adequate housing. You will be one of 15 subjects chosen to participate in this study. I will ask you questions about your experiences, for example, how other people treat you when you ask them for money, and how this treatment makes you feel.

If you decide to participate, you will take part in a one-on-one in-depth interview with me. The interview will be conducted in a nearby coffee shop or restaurant and will be tape-recorded. The interview should take no more than one hour of your time. The possible risk to your participation is psychological harm from describing/re-living past events and interactions that may have been negative or damaging. You will receive a monetary benefit of $10 as compensation for your interview and the loss of time that could be spent collecting money. At the end of the interview I will give you a copy of this form. A list of agencies providing services you may need is provided on the other side of this form.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain strictly confidential. When I describe the information obtained an alias or false name will be used in place of your true name or identity.

If you decide to take part in the interview, you are free to stop the interview at any time. You don't have to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable. If you have any questions, please ask me. If you have any additional questions later, feel free to contact the sociology department at Southwest Texas State University.

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate in this study. Your signature means that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time after signing this form should you choose to do so.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   Date

APPENDIX C

THE PLASTIC POCKET GUIDE

By House the Homeless, Inc. & UT-Austin School of Nursing
This guide was made possible by the support of the
Texas Dept. of Housing and Community Affairs (8/98)

SOCIAL SERVICES FOR THE HOMELESS

Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH)
411 W 2nd. St, 476-4357 • Mon - Fri, 6am - 4pm
*telephone / showers / laundry / fax
Salvation Army
501 E 8th St 476 1111 • Every day, 7am - 7pm
*telephone / showers / laundry
Caritas
308 E 7th St 472-4135 • Mon -Fri 8:30 - 5pm • *telephone
Life Works Street Outreach (Project PHASE)
3816 S 1st St, 482-9474
homeless youth and young adults up to age 23

PREPARED MEALS

Austin Baptist Chapel • 908 E. Cesar Chavez 474 2666
Hot lunches, 11am - 12:30pm daily
Foundation for the Homeless • 480-0005
Hot breakfasts Tues/Thurs • Showers, haircuts Tues
6am pick-up @ Salvation Army - 8th St./Neches entrance
Loaves & Fishes, Caritas Annex • 505 E. 7th St, 320-0270
Hot lunches, Mon - Fri, 11am - 12 30pm
Salvation Army • 501 E. 8th St., 476-1111 • Hot dinners daily, 4 30pm
El Buen Samaritano Episcopal Center
1919 S 1st St., 441-7977
Hot lunch, Tues,11am -12pm, Hot dinner, Sun,5 - 6 pm
University Avenue Church of Christ
1903 University Ave , 476-6088 • Hot breakfast,Thurs, 6 30am
Life Works Street Outreach (Project PHASE)
Hot dinner, Tues & Thur 4 30 - 7pm • call 482-9474 for location
homeless youth and young adults up to age 23

GROCERIES

El Buen Samaritano Episcopal Center
1919 S 1st St, 441-7977
Wed & Thur, 9am - 12pm, 1pm 4pm
Once every 30 days, social service agency referral required
CEACO • 1715 E 6th St., Suite 100, 472-5575
Mon - Fri, 9am - 6pm
Telephone for appt., social service agency referral required
Caritas • 308 E 7th St , 472-4135
Walk-ins 8.30am - Noon, or 1pm - 5pm
First come, first served
Baptist Community Center
2000 E. 2nd St., 478-7243
Mon - Fri, 8 30am - 12pm, 1pm - 5pm

EMERGENCY SHELTER

Salvation Army
01 E. 8th St , 476-1111 • Register after dinner (4 30-6 30pm)
Casa Marianella
for Spanish Speaking Refugees
821 Gunther Street, 385-5571 • Intakes 3pm - 8pm
If male under the age of 16, must be accompanied by a parent
Life Works Street Outreach (Project PHASE)
3816 S First St • 1-800 725-8336
homeless youth and young adults up to age 23
30-day emergency shelter • Open 24 hrs/day, 365 days/yr
Foundation for the Homeless
480-0005 • for people and their children • may have waiting list
Community Partnership for the Homeless
469-9130 • transitional housing for homeless male veterans
Cold weather shelter call 476-4357 (ARCH)

MEDICAL CARE

Salvation Army • 501 E 8th St , 476-1111
Medical Clinic, MAP & CAP cards available, free local phone
Mon-Thur 8am - 4 30pm, Fri 8am - 11 30am
Brackenridge Hospital
1601 E 15th St , 476-6461 (@15th & IH 35)
Austin/Travis Cty. Dept. of Human Services
Health Clinics • 469-2000
All clinics Mon-Fri 7 45am - 4 45pm,
appointment needed, call for MAP, CAP card sites
AIDS Services of Austin (ASA)
825 E. 53 1/2 St ,Suite 101 458-2437
Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic
2901 S Montopolis (#31 bus) • 389-1010
Mon-Fri 8am - 4pm • Bring proof of military service
Life Works Street Outreach (Project PHASE)
482-9474 • medical appts available
homeless youth and young adults up to age 23

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

ACCESS (MHMR) • 717 W 6th St., 478-5644
8am - 5pm daily by appointment,
walk-in 10:30am - Noon
Suicide Prevention/MHMR
24 Hour Hotline • 472-4357, TDD 703-1395
phone counseling, referral information
**Safe Place (formerly Center for Battered Women and
the Rape Crisis Center)** • 24 Hour Hotline 928-9070
Domestic violence, sexual assault survival center, shelter, referrals
Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES)
56 East Ave,(#1 bus) 454-3521, 24 hours
Austin Recovery Center (ARC)
1900 Rio Grande, 477-7776 • Call for appt. Mon-Fri 8am - 6pm
free drug and alcohol treatment
Alcoholics Anonymous
Support Groups 451-3071

LEGAL AID/ADVOCACY

Legal Aid for the Homeless • 476-4383
Clinic #1 - Mondays 6pm -7pm
Brook Elementary, 3100 E 4th
Clinic #2 - Wednesdays 6pm -7pm
Webb Middle School, 601 E St John
Political Asylum Project of Austin (PAPA)
1715 E 6th St., Suite 200, 478-0546
come in or call for appt • Mon-Fri 9am - 5pm
Women's Advocacy Project
Legal questions answered by phone - 478-1866
Family violence hotline- 476-5770
Also 1-800-374-HOPE • Mon - Fri 9am - 6pm
House the Homeless, Inc.
Meets at ARCH (see front), 1st Wed of each month
Call Richard Troxell, 476-4383
All homeless and other interested persons welcome!

FIRST CALL FOR HELP

A SERVICE OF UNITED WAY CAPITAL AREA

• • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

YOUR INFORMATION & REFERRAL
RESOURCE FOR

• food and clothing • shelter
• health services • education
• child, youth family and elder
services • special transportation
• support groups • recreation
• and many more topics

INFORMATION IS FREE and CONFIDENTIAL
(SE HABLA ESPAÑOL)

WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHO TO CALL...

324-1899

DENTAL CARE

Austin Dental Clinic
3000-A Medical Arts, 479-6633
Mon - Fri 9am - 5pm
By appt. only, need clinic card, Medicaid, or FC6 letter
(emergencies only) • Sliding Scale cost based on assessment
Manos de Cristo Dental Clinic
1201 E Cesar Chavez, 477-2319
Call Tues & Thur 9am - 4pm for appointments
For those WITHOUT Medicaid or Clinic Cards

OTHER HELPFUL NUMBERS

Austin Police Department Victim Services
480-5037, emergency 911
First Call for Help/ Capital Area United Way
323-1899 • Phone referrals only,
Mon - Fri 8 30am - 1pm, 2pm 5 30pm
Capitol Metro • 1-800-474-1201 bus route info

APPENDIX D

Introduction to the study and interview: I am interested in the experiences you face while asking for money on the streets and the ways you deal with these experiences. I have three main groups of questions regarding your work asking for money on the streets, your awareness of the "aggressive solicitation" ordinance, and on your relationships with the general public, downtown business owners, law enforcement and other panhandlers. Before asking these questions I need to ask you some basic questions about yourself.

Basic questions:
A. What is your age?
B. What is the highest level of school you have completed?
C. Are you homeless? If so, how long have you been homeless?

I. Panhandling Work
    A. Why did you start asking for money on the streets? How long have you done this?
    B. How do you dress when you "work" and what belongings do you take along?
    C. How much money do you generally make a day doing this? How do you normally ask for money? Do you change the way you ask depending on the person you're asking? If so, how?
    D. What is the best way to ask for money in your opinion? What type of person is most likely to give you money? How do you get a person's attention when they are obviously trying to ignore you?
    E. How do people treat you when you ask them for money? What is the worst experience you've ever had when you've asked for money? When you are treated badly how do you react?
    F. Do you see yourself doing this for a long time?

II. Awareness of "Aggressive Solicitation Ordinance"
    A. Do you know about the "aggressive solicitation ordinance"? If not, please let me explain the ordinance.
    B. If you were aware of this law, how did you find out about the ordinance?
    C. What is your opinion about the ordinance, please describe your feelings about it.
    D. Have you been directly affected by the ordinance? If so, how?
    E. Do you notice changes downtown because of the ordinance? If so, please describe what is different than before.

III.   Relationships
  A. How would you describe your relationship with downtown business owners? Have you ever approached or been approached by a business owner? If so, what about?
  B. What is your relationship with the Austin police and downtown rangers? Have either talked to you about asking for money on the street? If so, please describe what was talked about.
  C. Are you friends with other people who ask for money on the street? If so, please talk about some of these relationships.

APPENDIX E

Chris is a forty-four year old white man who has been homeless for four months. The highest level of school he completed was the 12th grade. He has been panhandling for four months.

Dave is a fifty-one year old white man who has been homeless since he was thirty-two. The highest level of school he completed was four years of college to obtain a bachelors degree. He has been panhandling for a year.

David is a forty-eight year old white man who has been homeless since he was twenty-eight. The highest level of school he completed was one and a half years of college. He has been panhandling for ten years.

Denny is a forty-seven year old white man who has been homeless since he was thirty-four. The highest level of school he completed was the 12th grade. He has been panhandling for twelve years.

Harvey is a thirty-one year old black man who has been homeless for four months. The highest level of school he completed was the 12th grade. He has been panhandling for four months.

H.I. is a fifty-one year old white man who has been homeless since he was fifteen. The highest level of school he completed was the 12th grade. He has been panhandling for ten years.

Hugh is a thirty-seven year old black man who has been homeless for four months. The highest level of school he completed was the 12th grade before attending trade school. He has been panhandling for four months.

Jim is a twenty-eight year old white man who has been homeless since he was fourteen. The highest level of school he completed was the 11th grade. He has been panhandling for twelve years.

J.J. is a twenty-eight year old white man who has been homeless for six months during this current stretch. The highest level of school he completed was one year of college. He has been panhandling off and on for ten years.

Lynda is a thirty-one year old white woman who has been homeless since she was fourteen. The highest level of school she completed was the 7th grade. She has been panhandling for one year.

Priest is a forty-one year old white man who has been homeless for thirteen months during this stretch. The highest level of school he completed was one year of college. He has been panhandling off and on for 20 years.

Shelly is a twenty-seven year old white woman who has been homeless for nine months. The highest level of school she completed was two years of college. She has been panhandling for nine months.

Steve is a forty-six year old white man who has been homeless for eight months. The highest level of school he completed was the 11th grade. He has been panhandling for six months.

Ted is a forty-eight year old Hispanic man who has been homeless for three months during this current stretch. The highest level of school he completed was two years of college to obtain his associates degree. He has been panhandling off and on for 25 years.

Tim is a thirty-one year old black man who has been homeless since he was twenty-nine. The highest level of school he completed was the 12th grade. He has been panhandling for two years.

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