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Nonviolence and Power in the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union

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Abstract

The Ottawa Panhandlers' Union's use of nonviolent action provides a useful case to examine the relationship between nonviolence, power and truth. Dahl, La Boétie and Foucault's theories of power provide different perspectives from which to analyze the use of nonviolence by the OPU. Dahl and La Boétie's theories of power as capacity and consent respectively focus on the OPU's ability to force others to take particular actions, and choice in compliance in scenarios imposed by others. Alternately, Foucault's theory of power allows an examination of the union members' positions within power relations, and how tacit social understandings construct their knowledge of themselves and others. When the OPU's use of nonviolence is seen in this light, addressing positions within power relations, and identifying the tacit social understandings that construct them, become important elements in understanding nonviolent action.

Keywords: *Nonviolence, Power, Foucault, Truth, Panhandlers*

This is what we're striving to do, it's to change events not through the actions of our hands, but to change events by changing ourselves. It's that struggle which brings about that change.

- Philippe

Introduction

Those with the courage to use nonviolence in the face of great power asymmetries cannot help but inspire. Gandhi's nonviolent campaigns against the British, the protests of the Burmese monks, or Martin Luther King Jr.'s campaign for civil rights all faced powerful, well armed opponents and yet they chose to use nonviolent methods in their attempts to achieve social change. These non-violent actions inspire, but they also call into question our assumptions about the relationships between action and power. Much of the literature on nonviolence tends to be historical, strategic or typological, if not theological. Few works address the mechanisms of power by which nonviolence functions, and fewer still do so by analysing the roles of truth and non-coercion in nonviolent action. Though Gandhi argued that his was a method of experimenting with truth, works analysing a relationship between nonviolence, power, and truth are scarce outside of philosophical or theological circles¹.

By studying the activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union (OPU) this research examines the relationships between nonviolence, power, and truth. Associated with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) the OPU supports and advocates for street-affected people. The OPU undertakes various activities, including nonviolent occupations, protests and civil disobedience. The OPU's formal goals are very fluid and are continuously revised by its members. Hence, to explore power and nonviolent action, I rely on the accounts of the members of the OPU of their perceptions and experiences of themselves, city officials, the police force, and of the public at large. The case of the OPU is ideal for an examination of the relationship between power and truth because of the asymmetry of the power relationships between the panhandlers and other groups they try to influence.

To illuminate the role of power in their nonviolent activities, I apply three conceptions of power to the accounts of the members of the OPU. Namely, I invoke Dahl's conception of power as capacity, La Boétie's conception of power as consent, and Foucault's conception of power as a dynamic between social relationships and tacit social understandings. These three theoretical approaches lead to very different interpretations of the role of power in the nonviolent action of the OPU. Each of these theories of power reveals a different aspect of the OPU's use of nonviolence, though Foucault's theory is the only one that addresses the dynamic between power relations and truth. Although I leave open the possibility of integrating these theories, I conclude that they offer very distinct

¹ For instance, while Juergensmeyer (2005) and del Vasto (1974) discuss the importance of the concept of truth to the use of nonviolence, they do not tie this to theories of power. Similarly, Kurlansky (2008), Wink (1998, 2003) and Hanh (1993) discuss spiritual understandings of nonviolence; though they do not connect these understandings to theories of power. One exception of note is Steger (2006) who has compared the work of Gandhi to works on power by different political philosophers.

analyses of the nonviolent action of the OPU with Foucault's theory seemingly offering the most useful understanding of the relationships between nonviolence, power and truth.

In Chapter One, I outline existing theories of nonviolence and power. Theories of nonviolence are most often distinguished by typologically drawing different lines between violence, nonviolence, and action. To address these differing definitions, I examine nonviolence in terms of specific components of social action. I then discuss three important theories of power and their implications in studying nonviolence. The interpretations differ because these theories focus on very different components of social action. In short, I introduce Dahl, La Boétie and Foucault's respective conceptions of power and how they can be applied to analyse nonviolent action. These theories serve as frameworks for the analysis in subsequent chapters.

In Chapter Two, I explain my methodology for studying these phenomena in the OPU. In short, I employ semi-structured interviews and field observation to gather the perceptions and experiences of nonviolence and power of the members of the OPU. I then use coding tools borrowed from grounded theory, relying heavily on the work of Strauss & Corbin, to interpret this data and relate it to theories of power discussed in Chapter One. The value of the experiences and perceptions of the members of the union cannot be overestimated. Though I have applied theories of power from the literature on the subject to analyse their experiences, the perspectives of members of the OPU provide the foundation for this work.

Chapter Three describes the structure and activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union. In this chapter, I rely heavily on the accounts of the members of the union to place this description within the context of their lived experience. Using the coding procedures described in Chapter Two, I organize the union's activities into three categories of action: organizational activities, support-advocacy and mass mobilization. While the OPU, as an organization, is not nonviolent in principle, many of their activities are examples of nonviolence, and I discuss how different definitions of nonviolence would categorize their activities. Chapter Three serves mostly as a descriptive account of the activities of the OPU, and the analysis of the role of power follows in the subsequent chapters.

Chapters Four and Five focus on analysing the role of power in the nonviolent action practiced by the OPU. These analyses are based on the conceptions discussed in the preceding chapters. In Chapter Four, I apply Dahl's theory of power as capacity and La Boétie's theory of power as consent to the activities of the OPU. These theories focus primarily on the role of action in achieving a difference between a perceived problem and a desired goal. As such, these analyses of the activities of the OPU focus on the abilities of the union to impose an objective over an opponent, or the importance of granting or withdrawing consent from a strategy imposed by another.

In Chapter Five, I apply Foucault's theory of power as a dynamic between power relations and tacit social understandings in an analysis of the activities of the OPU. I also explore the major differences between this analysis and those presented in Chapter Four. Foucault conceives of power as a dynamic between the norms and privileges of social relationships and tacit social understandings that construct these relationships. For Foucault,

power plays a constructive role in the creation of social circumstances and subjects within society. This conception of power provides a rich understanding of the potential role of nonviolent action in reframing power relations, reconstructing the tacit social understandings that circumscribe them and how these processes can bring about social change by affecting how subjects relate to each other and themselves.

Chapter One: Nonviolence and Power

In this chapter I examine the existing work on nonviolent action and power to determine how differing conceptions of power alter the focus of analyses of nonviolence. Firstly, I discuss the definition of nonviolence. Important to this definition is the distinction between nonviolence and the concepts of non-action and violence. Additionally, I lay out the importance of the distinction between the pragmatic and principled schools of nonviolence, including their differing rationale for nonviolent action as well as their differing conception of nonviolent strategy. Secondly, I engage with literature from three important schools of thought in power studies: Dahl's conception of power as capacity, La Boétie's conception of power as consent, and Foucault's theory of power as a constructive social force. These conceptions of power call for very different analyses of action. Moreover, I outline how different authors have engaged with these conceptions of power to identify different arenas of violence and nonviolence. Of these, I focus on commonalities between Foucault's analysis of power and principled definitions of nonviolence. In chapters Three, Four and Five I apply these concepts to the activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union.

1.1 Nonviolence

Nonviolence does not lend itself to simple definition as many related concepts discussed in its literature are themselves ill defined. There are many definitions used to describe nonviolence in the literature, including: "a technique used to control, combat and destroy the opponent's power by nonviolent means of wielding power" (Sharp 1973: 4); actions which "refrain from the intentional infliction of physical and psychological injury on persons" (Steger 2003: 13); and "Satyagraha, 'grasping onto principles', or 'truth force'" (Juergensmeyer 2005: 3). These definitions often share common component concepts such as action, violence, and truth. Yet, these concepts also elude simple definition, as evidenced by the debate surrounding their respective meanings. For example, many authors, including Sharp (1973) and Schock (2005), argue that nonviolence is a form of action distinct from passivity or forms of institutional action. Similarly, a large body of work exists on violence, and it is not clear where the line between violence and nonviolence lies. Still another great debate surrounds the relationship between ends and means in the practice of nonviolence. The resolution of these debates is beyond the scope of this study, but it is important to be aware of them when considering a definition of nonviolence.

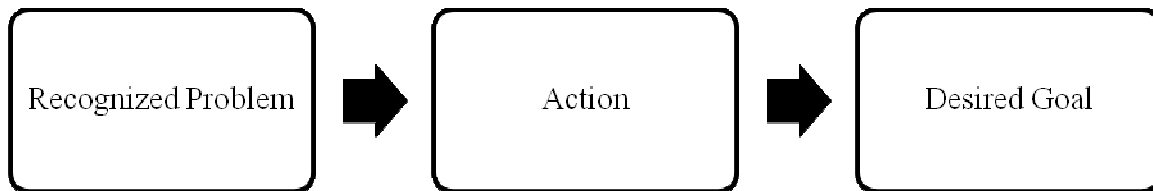
Many authors have provided diverse and varied examples of nonviolence that seem to defy common definition. In *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, Sharp (1973) lists over 198 types of nonviolent action, and argues that there are likely many more, limited only by the imagination of nonviolent practitioners (114-115). Other authors have studied specific cases of nonviolence. For example, Ackerman & DuVall (2000) document examples of nonviolent

action from the general strike in Russia in 1905 to economic boycotts during the campaign against Apartheid in South Africa. Schock (2005) cites nonviolent movements including marches and protests in Burma and the distribution of banned newspapers in Nepal, among others. The wide range of activities described as nonviolence makes an uncontested definition of nonviolence seem unfeasible. Yet, a discussion of common characteristics within the many definitions of nonviolence, and the different interpretations of these characteristics, offers the best understanding of the range of activities commonly described as nonviolence.

Central to the definition of nonviolence is the concept of action. For instance, Schock's (2005) first two criteria in his discussion of nonviolent action is that it requires the recognition of a problematic situation, and a decision not to accept it (13-14). In fact, Schock (2005) distinguishes nonviolence from inaction and passivity by using the term "nonviolent action" (6-7). Here, many authors argue that nonviolence is distinct from pacifism in that nonviolence is a form of active resistance rather than any sort of acceptance, compliance or inaction (Schock 2003: 705; Sharp 1973: 64-65). Unlike pacifism, nonviolence is a method of action that seeks to act on the behaviour of others (Sharp 1973: 7). Nonviolence is not equivalent to acceptance or compliance, since nonviolence seeks to alter or resist a current situation or problem. Though himself a pacifist, Thoreau (1966) makes a similar point when he contrasts those who obey 'as clay' to those who practice conscientious disobedience (226). Here the key element of nonviolence is that it is action taken to oppose or alter a situation that another is attempting to impose.

The distinction between nonviolence, acceptance and passivity is clarified by considering the relationship between recognizing a problem, action and goals (see Figure 1).

Figure 1- Components of Social Action



As argued above, nonviolence is often defined as a form of action that attempts to address a particular social problem, and as such has three components: the recognition of the problem, action, and the desired result. Unlike acceptance, nonviolence requires the recognition of a situation deemed unacceptable. Since acceptance deems a situation unproblematic, a diagram of acceptance would lack "Recognition of a Problem", and thus the next two steps. Similarly, while passivity may recognize a problem, it would lack "Action" even if its proponents did desire a specific result. Meanwhile, a definition of nonviolence as action would require that it include all three steps. Obviously, this same sequence defines all social activism, nonviolent and otherwise.

Another characteristic used to define nonviolence is that it typically does not occur within official and institutionalized avenues for political action. Schock (2005) argues that nonviolence does not include institutionalized or state-sanctioned modes of dissent such as voting or petitioning (7-8). In this definition of nonviolence, while nonviolent campaigns may be mixed with strategies such as voting, letter writing or compromise, these are not in themselves forms of nonviolence. Instead, he argues that nonviolence occupies a realm of non-institutional political action similar to that occupied by violence (Schock 2005: 15-16). This follows on a previous assertion that nonviolence is not necessarily legal (Schock 2003: 705). Of course, this argument risks disqualifying some forms of nonviolence that are allowed by official institutions. For instance, some states abide civil group protests and marches, yet Sharp (1973) includes this as a form of nonviolence (152). In fact, though Sharp (1973) makes a similar argument that nonviolence is often not state-sanctioned, he is less absolute of the exclusion of some institutionalized forms of nonviolent resistance (67). For example, Sharp (1973) includes the creation of alternative institutions as an example of nonviolent action (398), although the operation of institutions is clearly not non-institutional. Likewise, Sharp (1973) also cites returning medals or honours as a form of nonviolence (171), although such action may technically occur within the perimeters of an established system. Here, the lack of consensus in the literature prevents a clear definition of nonviolence; while some authors insist nonviolence only occurs outside of officially sanctioned institutions, others state that nonviolent protest may occur within such institutions.

In the literature, nonviolence is most often defined as a strategy in conflict that does not resort to violence (see Ackerman & DuVall 2000: 4; Burrowes 1996: 97; del Vasto 1974: 4; Steger 2003: 13). Despite the centrality of the definition of violence to a definition of nonviolence, there is little consensus on the definition of violence. At the most basic level, violence can be defined as simply physical or psychological harm (Steger 2003: 13). However, this definition can be significantly expanded. For instance, Galtung (1969) proposes a definition of violence as, “the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual” (168). Using this definition of violence, he argues that social structures that deprive individuals or groups of potential benefits commit ‘structural violence’ (Galtung 1969). Similarly, Žižek (2008) proposes an even broader definition of violence which includes ‘symbolic violence’ through language’s inherent imposition of a universe of meaning (2). Each of these considerations expands the scope of the definition of violence, some even redefining the arena in which violence may occur, which complicates the task of arriving at a simple definition of violence.

Different authors note both advantages and disadvantages of the absence of a universal distinction between violence and nonviolence. Galtung (1965) recommends a typology of violence, with several sequentially more inclusive definitions of violence which can be used based on the required level of refinement (235-236). Nojeim (2004) similarly attempts to circumvent this obstacle by placing activities on a continuum between ‘pure violence’ and ‘pure nonviolence’ (9). He argues that in practice whether a particular action ‘is’ violent or nonviolent is not as important as the intention of the individual performing the action (Nojeim 2004: 9-10). Leaving the question of the distinction between violence and nonviolence aside allows the opportunity to investigate these intentions. Kurlansky (2008), on the other hand, disagrees, arguing that the absence of an affirmative definition of

nonviolence obscures and marginalizes the meaning of nonviolence by limiting the concept to that which it is not (5). He states that “while every major language has a word for violence, there is no word for nonviolence except that it is not another idea” (Kurlansky 2008: 5). Sharp (1973) hypothesized that the negative definition of nonviolence might endure because it reinforces the assumption that violence is the natural state of politics (65). Nevertheless, the differentiation between violence and nonviolence remains much debated.

1.2 Pragmatic and Principled Nonviolence

There are two distinct schools of thought within the discourse on nonviolent action. In this study, I adopt Weber’s labels for these two schools, ‘pragmatic’ and ‘principled’ nonviolence (Weber 2003: 250), though these same categories go by different names elsewhere. These schools differ primarily in their understanding of the intent that underlies the use of nonviolence and the role of coercion. The pragmatic school of nonviolence suggests that nonviolence is simply an efficient way of achieving an end (Weber 2003: 258). On the other hand, the principled view of nonviolence argues that nonviolence is inherently more moral than violence, and should be used for that sake (Weber 2003: 261). Moreover, according to Nojeim (2004) adherents of principled nonviolence tend to adopt nonviolence as a way of life (25). Both understandings of nonviolence describe similar actions, but they provide markedly different explanations for the motivations and mechanisms that underpin them.

The school of pragmatic nonviolence considers nonviolence a more efficient alternative to the use of violence in a conflict. Those who advocate pragmatic nonviolence do not do so because they believe it is inherently more moral, but instead because they believe it is more effective (Nojeim 2004: 27). For instance, Sharp (1973) has suggested that nonviolence is simply an alternative method of acting in a conflict (112). Here nonviolence is treated principally as a tool, or a means to an end (Weber 2003: 258). As such, pragmatic nonviolence tends to make use of a relatively restricted definition of violence which refers only to the physical and psychological harm of others (Dudouet 2008: 7). Despite recognizing the possibility of the effective use of nonviolence, the pragmatic school shares similar understandings of the dynamics of conflict as realist schools of strategic studies where the goal is generally understood to be the defeat of the opponent (Dudouet 2008: 7). Thus, with pragmatic nonviolence, the intent of action is entirely the achievement of a particular goal without the use of violence.

In contrast, principled nonviolence tends to be justified on moral grounds and is more concerned with moral questions of truth. Unlike pragmatic nonviolence, principled nonviolence is seen not simply as an efficient tool, but as a morally obliged way of life (Burrowes 1996: 99; Nojeim 2004: 25-26). In essence, advocates of principled nonviolence argue that one should use nonviolence because violence is wrong. Moreover, while pragmatic nonviolence tends to define violence as physical and psychological harm, principled nonviolence uses a broader definition of violence which includes any form of coercion (Iyer 1991: 314; Juergensmeyer 2005: 29). Central to this conception of nonviolence is the requirement on principle that not only an opponent not be harmed, but also that he/she is able to freely choose (Juergensmeyer 2005: 29). The concept of non-

coercion implies a role of nonviolence in demonstrating resolutions of conflict rather than imposing them.

An important element of demonstrating resolutions to conflict involves the role of nonviolence in shaping truth. Gandhi argued that all positions in a conflict have their own underlying ‘truths’ which are ultimately reconcilable (Juergensmeyer 2005: 19). Steger (2006) points out that Gandhi held very nuanced understandings of truth, at once maintaining the multi-faceted nature of truth as well as the conviction of the usefulness of a search for a normative truth (342-343). These views manifested in practice, as Gandhi saw truth as something that must be explored in the social arena (Steger 2006: 343). Though a relativist, Gandhi insists that truth was something that is discoverable in practice; which became the foundation for his principled understanding of the practice of nonviolence.

Principled nonviolence is seen not only as an effective means to an end, but also as a synthesis of means and ends. For instance, Juergensmeyer (2005) argues that nonviolence presents not just an efficient mode of conflict, but a method of conflict transformation (5). Gandhi called this methodology *Satyagraha*, or ‘truth-force’ (Kurlansky 2008: 7). According to Iyer (1991), Gandhi saw the essence of *Satyagraha* in attempting to bring the opponent over to one’s side (301). This is done by honestly evaluating one’s own position, as well as the opponent’s position, and devising a solution to the problem that respects the fundamental truths of both positions (Juergensmeyer 2005: 9-10). Once such a solution has been discovered, the nonviolent practitioner implements the solution directly as her/his means of engaging in the conflict (Juergensmeyer 2005: 54-55; Wink 1987: 56). While this is done, the solution/tactic is constantly re-evaluated, in dialogue with one’s opponent when possible, and adjusted when necessary until the conflict is resolved (Gandhi 1966: 165). What differentiates this method from other methods of action in conflict is the requirement that the opponent should not be coerced into accepting the solution but instead should be allowed to freely choose it after seeing it in practice (Wink 1987: 66). In other words, principled nonviolence seeks to transform conflict not by merely achieving victory, but by using the ‘truth’ of the desired ends as a means to bring the opponent on side.

Although the distinction between principled and pragmatic nonviolence may play a relatively minor role in practice, it does suggest the importance of an understanding of power in an understanding of the dynamics underpinning the functioning of nonviolence. Many authors argue that while the distinction between pragmatic and principled nonviolence lies in the conceptions of the actors, the techniques used by both methods are often quite similar (Dudouet 2008: 8). For example, regardless of their definition, both schools of thought are likely to consider marches and sit-ins examples of nonviolent action. However, some methods of pragmatic nonviolence would be excluded from a principled understanding of nonviolence because of principled nonviolence’s requirement of non-coercion. For example, while economic boycotts would certainly be included as examples of pragmatic nonviolence, this would likely not be considered principled nonviolence if the economic hardship of the boycott caused the boycotted population to give in to a resolution that they would not have otherwise chosen. While these differing definitions of nonviolence provide a useful guide to understanding the debates surrounding a typology of action of nonviolence, they do not provide a practical understanding of how nonviolence works. To do this, I turn to the

discourse surrounding power, and how different authors have applied this to nonviolent action.

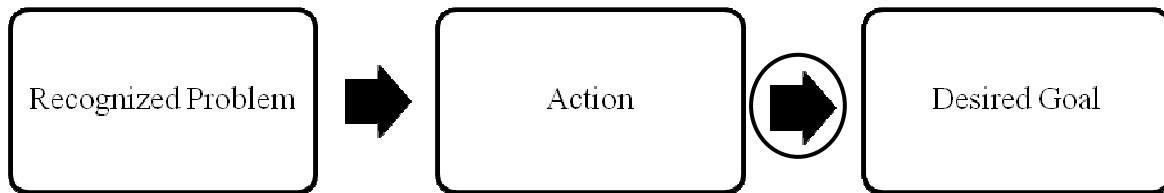
1.3 Capacity and Consent

While defining nonviolence tends to be reduced to typologies and spectrums of action, different definitions of power truly alter the analytical framework that one applies to social action, violent or nonviolent. Widely defined, the question of power is one of influence on, or control over the actions of others, though more specific definitions differ considerably. Among these, I focus on Dahl's theory of power as capacity, La Boétie's theory of power as consent and Foucault's theory of power as a constructive social force. Each of these theories of power shifts the analysis of nonviolent action through differing understandings of the locus of power in action. Dahl (1957) locates the focus of analysis with an actor's achievement of a specific influence on the actions of another. Conversely, La Boétie (1998 [1548]) shifts this focus to the role of consent of those over whom an actor wishes to exert power. These first two theories of power share much in common (Hindess 1996: 1) and as such will be treated here together. Though I use the works of Dahl and La Boétie as examples of their respective conceptions of power, they represent wider bodies of work on either conception. While authors from the power as capacity and consent perspectives disagree on the locus of power in the analysis of social action, both hold similar understandings of social action itself.

Firstly, the theory of power as simple capacity rests on the concept that power exists inasmuch as one has the ability to achieve something. This theory of power was first laid out by Dahl (1957) who stated that "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do" (202-203). Bachrach and Baratz (1962) later argued to amend this definition to include preventing someone from doing something they wish to do (948). This view defines power as a manifest ability that one can possess to a quantifiable degree, measured by one's ability to achieve a particular goal (Hindess 1996). Hindess (1996) further notes that this, "implies that the wishes of those with more power will normally prevail over the wishes of those with less" (2). This theory sees power simply as an ability allowing one to do something, measured by the resultant difference between a recognized problem and an actual result.

When applied to the components of social action depicted in Figure 1, Dahl's conception of power as capacity focuses on a specific relationship between components. Specifically, this theory of power focuses on the relationship between a particular activity and the achievement of a desired goal (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 - Focus of Power as Capacity



Here, the recognition of a problem is taken for granted, as is the role of the other in consenting or resisting a particular action. An analysis based on power conceived as capacity is focused on the ability of an actor to achieve a particular result. In other words, a question that would address power conceived as capacity would be: “Does an actor achieve his/her goals?”

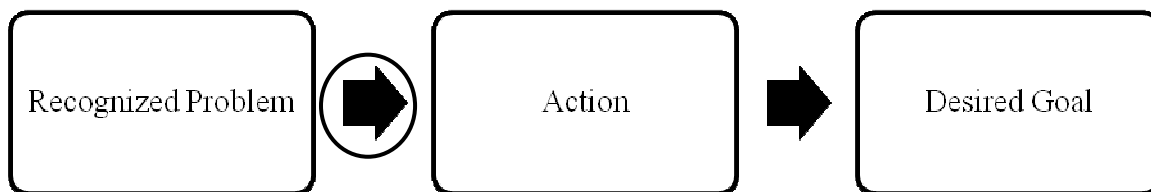
When applied to action, the theory of power as capacity tends to judge the power of action based on its efficiency and the abilities of the actor, and the factors that increase or decrease this efficiency. On one level, such a definition of power could be taken as a truism. For instance, Galtung (1965) points out that any action must be both biologically and physically possible before it can be undertaken to achieve anything (230). However, when considering the distinction, if any, between violent and nonviolent action, this theory of power does surprisingly little. Steger (2006) argues that political realists largely adopt this definition of power, especially where violence is considered its primary vehicle (334-335). In the case of violence, the mechanisms of power could include the capacity to mobilize weapons, the ability to manipulate threats and fear, or the ability to prevent others from mobilizing such tools or threats. Clearly, advocates of nonviolence would not see violence as the primary vehicle of power. When examined with this conception of power, however, nonviolence differs from violence only in its techniques, not in the role of power. For instance, Sharp (1973) defines social power as “the capacity to control the behavior of others, directly or indirectly, through action by groups of people, which action impinges on other groups of people” (7). Nonviolent mechanisms of power conceived as capacity might include the mobilization of shame or tactics preventing others from mobilizing violent force. Nevertheless, in all instances a capacity-based understanding of power examines both violence and nonviolence in terms of their ability to exert an intended influence over others.

In contrast, a second theory of power defines power by not only capacity, but by the right to act based in the consent of those subject to the power (Hindess 1996: 10-11). This element, argued by La Boétie (1998 [1548]) among others, shifts the locus of power from the top of hierarchical structures to the populations that support them. He argues that “you can deliver yourselves if you try, not by taking action, but merely by willing to be free. Resolve to serve no more, and you are at once freed” (La Boétie 1998 [1548]: 196). Here the locus of power rests not in the ability of those of greatest capacity to achieve obedience, but in the obedience of those subject to power based in the legitimacy of the use of that power. By adding the element of legitimacy to the element of capacity, this theory of power also brings into question the characteristics of consent. Lukes (1974) argues that power is not simply the ability to force another to do something they do not wish to do, for it plays a role in how

people can willingly choose to do something that might be against their ‘objective’ interests (23). Digeser (1992) notes that here Lukes suggests that there is a distinction between real interests and held interests, and that power plays a role through social structures in generating this difference (983).

In the case of power conceived as consent, the focus of analysis is not on what enables an individual to achieve an end, but instead what underpins their motivation to (not) take action. Returning to the components of social action seen in Figure 1, the role of power in this instance would be located in the relationship between the recognition of a problem and action (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 - Focus of Power as Consent



Instead of analysing the ability of an actor to achieve a particular end, this conception of power focuses on the support of a particular situation by actors who consent to it. For instance, a question that would address power conceived as consent would be: “What makes an individual or group obey another?” Alternately, in the case of nonviolent action, this type of analysis would focus on the role of actors in changing particular circumstances by withdrawing consent.

Again, while a consent based understanding of power does not necessarily provide a clear distinction between the role of power in violence and nonviolence, it seems to provide a better understanding of the role of power in certain methods of nonviolence. Sharp (1973), a pragmatist, states that it is this bottom up nature of power that explains the efficiency of nonviolence (8). Advocates of nonviolence often understand the distribution of political power to be based in the consent of those who are governed (Burrowes 1996: 86). This theory of power explains that since power rests with the governed, power can work through nonviolence by the withdrawal of consent. Sharp (1973) posits that advocates of violence and nonviolence are divided by their understanding of the nature of power as emanating either from the authority of leaders or from consent from below (8-9). This point is reiterated by Ackerman and DuVall (2000) who state that “the greatest misconception about conflict is that violence [capacity] is always the ultimate form of power” (9). For example, the mechanisms of this conception of power in nonviolent action could include the refusal to obey authorities, or undermining the legitimacy of rulers. However, this distinction between violent power and nonviolent power seems imperfect as it is at odds with La Boétie’s (1998 [1548]) argument that consent can easily be withdrawn violently, through violent popular uprising, for example (193). While this conception of power does not necessarily differentiate violence from nonviolence, it does provide a more useful understanding of one possible role of power in nonviolent action.

Power based on the capacity to impose a situation on another relies on a certain element of coercion to be effective. Similarly, the theory of power based on consent still implies a struggle between two opposing interests, in this case the interests of one actor to impose a situation and of another to withdraw consent. Inasmuch as principled nonviolence is purported to operate through the exploration of truths that transform conflict rather than coerce opponents, the object of this action is not just the willingness of the other to consent but the actual interests which separate opponents. Gandhi's method of experimenting with truth did not imply the manipulation of perceived interests in opposition to real interests, but instead real reconciliation between truths. By exploring the role of power in creating truths, Foucault offers some conceptual tools that can help better understand how such nonviolence works.

1.4 Foucault and Power Relations

Michel Foucault's analysis of power departs significantly from those based on capacity and consent. His theory of power has two important dimensions. The first, relationships of power, examines the reversible matrix of relationships between people. The second, episteme, treats the relationship between knowledge and power, and how this relationship contextualizes power relations. For Foucault, there is a dynamic relationship between these dimensions which characterises the distribution of norms and privileges, and the range of action available, within social relationships. Although Foucault was fundamentally less concerned with the nature of power than he was with the question of how power is exercised, his understanding of the workings of power is intimately related to his conception of power.

Foucault defines power as, "a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions" (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: 220). In fact, Foucault is resistant to reifying power, especially if this leads to a conceptualization of power as something that may be possessed (Foucault 1980: 98). He argues that "power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (Foucault 1990: 93). Foucault sees the analysis of power as "an analysis of the tactics and strategies by which power is circulated, how the body is penetrated and how subjects represent themselves as a consequence of power relations" (Barker 1998: 29). Of course, this definition of the analysis of power employs several concepts which must themselves be defined, notably the concepts of power relations, subjects and the strategies of power. Each of these concepts has important implications for Foucault's analysis of power, and must be properly defined to understand his meaning.

Firstly, Foucault argues that power is manifest through power relations. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) state that for Foucault "power is a general matrix of force relations at a given time, in a given society" (186). In general, Foucault sees these relationships of power as fluid and changeable (Hindess 1996: 101-102). This is a nonlinear model of power in which power acts through all areas of society. Barker (1998) underlines this point by arguing that "every specific individual occupies various positions in networks of power [...] power cannot therefore be a permanent one-way exchange, it does not flow down uniformly from the more powerful to the less powerful – it circulates between bodies" (28). Here

Foucault's conception of power is of a situational relationship rather than an ability which one possesses.

Freedom is an essential aspect of Foucault's description of power relations. He argues that there are two important elements of power relationships, "that 'the other' [...] be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a wide field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up" (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: 220). Therefore, central to Foucault's concept of power, both parties must have some degree of freedom to act. He goes on to state that "where the determining factors saturate the whole there is no relationship of power" (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: 220). In other words, Foucault does not recognize situations where one person is absolutely obliged to follow one, and only one, course of action as an instance of power. To this he adds that there is always the possibility of resistance in relationships of power (Foucault 1990: 95). As he sees power as a relational matrix, he argues that power tends to not collect at specific loci, but instead is inherent throughout society (Foucault 1990: 96). As a result, Foucault's concept of power insists that while power acts on actions, those situated within power relations always have some degree of freedom to choose and to resist.

The second important component to Foucault's understanding of power is the construction of subjects through episteme. Digeser (1992) explains that for Foucault, "subjects are understood as social constructions, whose formation can be historically described" (980). This historical formation of subjects is the result of the creation and transformation of episteme, understood as "a certain tacit knowledge that gives order to the world" (Haugaard 2002: 183). In essence, this understanding argues that the role of power is a productive force that generates truths that order social (power) relations (Haugaard 2002: 182). Perhaps the most obvious example of this is Foucault's concept of power/knowledge. While conceptually differentiated, Foucault argues that power and knowledge are mutually productive, each creating the other (Barker 1998: 25). This force acts by constituting discourse within society and producing subjects with specific values, goals and understandings of social relations (Digeser 1992: 980). The implication of this is that one can never step outside of power relations since one cannot step outside of the power saturated truths of knowledge (Haugaard 2002: 182). However, just as Foucault maintains that power relations are not static, he also recognizes a reversible dynamic between episteme and the creation of subjects.

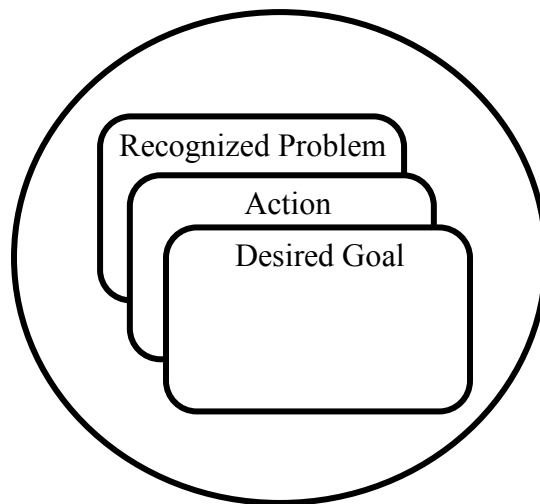
Foucault (1990) states that "power relations are both intentional and nonsubjective" (94). He argues that while power/knowledge acts with a rationality of its own, this rationality is not a linear result of calculations by actors in society (Foucault 1990: 95). Although he concedes that individual subjects certainly take actions with specific goals and intents, the ultimate results of these actions on power relations are summed nonsubjectively with the actions of others producing an episteme with rationalities all its own (Foucault 1990: 95). Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) explain this by citing Foucault who said that "people know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does" (187). This is not to say that people cannot be aware of the dynamics of their actions and episteme, but instead to say that the legacy of one's actions is not linearly related to the force of episteme or their intentions when acting. As

Heller (1996) points out, Foucault still maintains that subjects have the opportunity to resist within power relations (85). As a result, Foucault's analysis of power suggests a complex interplay between the motives of individuals, and the overarching force of power relations.

The final important element of Foucault's analysis of power is the strategies of power. In fact, for Foucault, when considering power the most important question is not who has power, but instead how is power manifested (Foucault 1988b: 103-104). He cites three ways that the concept of strategy is traditionally employed: as a means to an end, as actions with regard to the expected actions of others for advantage, and as procedures in confrontation to deprive opponents of victory (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: 224-225). However, Foucault's analysis of power focuses on the role of power in constructing subjects, and the strategies that allow this.

In contrast to theories of power as capacity and consent, Foucault's conception of power has a more integrated understanding of the relationships between recognized problems, action and desired goals described in Figure 1. For Foucault, neither recognized problems nor desired goals can be taken for granted. Instead, Foucault argues that there is a mutually constructive relationship between all three components of social action (see figure 4).

Figure 4 - Focus of Analysis of Power Relations



In this conception, subjects within power relations are constructed by episteme, which is in turn affected by the actions of these subjects within power relations. While Foucault might separate these components of social action for analytical purposes, he sees them all as important and interrelated factors in understanding the role of power. When applied to nonviolence, Foucault's conception of power asks how tacit social understandings bound the range of action available to subjects within power relations. Therefore, the focus of a Foucauldian analysis of power is at the level of episteme and power relations, rather than perceived problems and goals.

Two specific examples help illuminate the role of power in constructing subjects within power relations: government and domination. Firstly, the concept of government demonstrates the role of technologies as vehicles for constructive power. Foucault uses the term 'government' to refer to the general regulation of conduct, rather than the institutional ruling of state (Hindess 1996: 105). As such, he uses the term equally to refer to the government of self, and of the family as much as government by the state (Hindess 1996: 105). Moreover, he argues that it is not the state itself that is important, but instead the study of the strategies and instrumentalities by which it is effectuated (Hindess 1996: 109). Again, this is to say that power is manifested through various instruments and technologies rather than due to a particular 'power structure'. Foucault (1995) claims that one of the most important applications of such technologies is in discipline as a form of (government) power (137-138). Discipline, as a form of power, seeks not just to control potential actions, but also to increase specific capacities of the body (Foucault 1995: 138). Here, Foucault understands power as a productive force which not only regulates, but creates subjects who act in a desired way.

Foucault is careful to distinguish between strategy and violence, demonstrating the line between the two with the concept of domination. Here Foucault recognizes that power does not always manifest in the free interplay of subjects, as the range of action of subordinated subjects is sometimes very restricted. Hindess (1996) cites Foucault as defining domination as "those asymmetrical relationships of power in which the subordinated persons have little room for manoeuvre because their 'margin of liberty is very limited' (Foucault 1988a: 12) by the effects of power" (102). Nevertheless, he maintains that while the relationship may be unbalanced, it is still a relationship of power so long as the subordinated subject has the freedom to take some action, even if it is to commit suicide or to kill the other (Foucault 1988a: 12 cited in Hindess 1996: 102-103). For example, even in an asymmetrical relationship of power, a subordinated person who is still able to speak is able to (re)define that relationship to some extent.

In support of this reasoning, Foucault conceptually differentiates relationships of power and violence. He argues that while power acts upon actions, "a relationship of violence acts upon a body or upon things" (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: 220). In other words, while power forms and influences subjects, violence seeks to reduce subjects to objects. Barker (1998) states that "violence emerges out of a desire to fix and congeal power relations, by freezing the transfer of power between bodies and then intensifying the stability of whatever 'relation' is left" (40). He continues to explain that this desire to congeal power relations stems from a "disjunction between self and other" which seeks to "reduce the possibilities of plurality of what is to be" until power cannot operate when "everything is reduced to the same irreducible death/obliteration-state" (Barker 1998: 40). This is not to say that relations must be either of power or violence, but instead that each is a distinct form of experience with different rationalities and manifestations (Barker 1998: 38). This differentiation between power and violence allows for a much more nuanced understanding of the roles of each, as I will return to later.

1.5 Possible Expressions of Nonviolent Power

Although Foucault's theory of power cannot be seamlessly integrated into theories of nonviolence (For instance see Steger 2006), he does provide useful concepts for further exploration of the role of power in nonviolence. Other theories of political power focus on either the capacity to control or the importance of consent, while Foucault's analysis goes beyond this to explore power's role in creating subjects with capacity and consent. His articulation of the presence and possibility of choice and resistance allow for a better understanding of the possible mechanisms of nonviolence. Similarly, his conceptual differentiation of power and violence helpfully allows the separation of these phenomena in the analysis of violent and nonviolent action though his conception of power is not necessarily divorced from violence. While not equivalent, Foucault's consideration of power and knowledge shares considerable similarities with Gandhi's concept of 'truth force'. Just as advocates of nonviolence suggest that nonviolence acts in the arena of (re)defining concepts of truth in conflict, Foucault describes power as acting on and through the arena of truth. As a result, there seems to be fertile ground for comparison between these two schools of thought.

Foucault's concept of power relations focuses on a level beyond both capacity and consent. He argues that power is not something that is repressive, but instead something that is productive (Danaher, Schirato, & Webb 2001: 63). Foucault states that:

Even though consensus and violence are the instruments or the results, they do not constitute the principle or the basic nature of power. The exercise of power can produce as much acceptance as may be wished for: it can pile up the dead and shelter itself behind whatever threats it can imagine. In itself the exercise of power is not violence; nor is it a consent which, implicitly, is renewable. It is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: 220).

Power, for Foucault, is involved in the creation of subjects through a mutually reinforcing construction of truth and power (Danaher, et al. 2001: 64). This goes beyond models of power based on capacity or consent because it describes the locus of power relations to be beyond the individual agency of the rulers or the ruled. Violence itself, by this definition, is understood to be a tool, but not the underlying logic of power. Similarly, while consent might authorize or accept power, it is not the mechanism of power. Instead, power acts on actions by constituting subjects within power relations, and it is perhaps by addressing these power relations that nonviolence operates beyond coercion.

Although Foucault conceptually distinguishes between power and violence, he does not exclude the possibility that violence can play a role in power relations. Barker (1998) notes that though Foucault differentiates between relationships of power and relationships of violence, this is not to minimize the possibility of violent relationships (38). Steger (2006) comments that Foucault tends to see power as a form of installing violence in discourse, and resistance as a form of combat between discourses (340). Here the definition of violence once again plays an important role. Different definitions of violence lead to the

consideration of different spectrums of action. Also, while some understandings of nonviolence consider coercion violent, others do not. Therefore, the distinction between violence and the dynamic between episteme and power relations is dependent on the scope of the definition of nonviolence employed. Both Foucault's (2003) statement that "politics is the continuation of war by other means" (15) and Sharp's (1973) statement that nonviolence is an alternative "weapons system" (112) provide remarkably ambiguous examples of distinctions between power, violence and nonviolence.

Foucault also argues that power is manifest primarily through the construction of truths which form power relations. Haugaard (2002) states that episteme is a tacit social knowledge that circumscribes power relations (183). Episteme, therefore, orders truths which in turn circumscribe the range of actions available to subjects within power relations. Kurlansky (2008) points out that the construction of truth is mobilised in such a way with conventional understandings of the concept of nonviolence. He argues that nonviolence itself is delegitimized by regimes of truth that negatively define it in language (Kurlansky 2008: 6). For example, he contrasts nonviolence and war by asking, "if we lived in a world that had no word for war other than *nonpeace*, what kind of world would that be?" (Kurlansky 2008: 6, italics in original). Here, a Foucauldian understanding of power and truth helps illuminate how power through truth can modify our understanding of methods of resistance.

The concept of truth also provides an interesting contrast between the work of Foucault and Gandhi. Foucault sees a mutually productive relationship between power and knowledge (Foucault 1988b: 106), while Gandhi focuses on the exploration of truth as a source of power (Steger 2006: 342). Steger (2006) argues that Foucault's analysis would admit that Gandhi's experiments in truth could create new power relations and thereby new 'truths', but would be critical of claims that this would make them more 'true' (340). Nevertheless, there seems to be a favourable comparison to be made between Foucault's concept of power/knowledge and Gandhi's concept of Satyagraha or 'truth-force'. Steger (2006) points out that "viewing resistance and power as correlative elements, both Foucault and Gandhi cherished political struggles and transgressive practices as ways of self-creation – the opening of new spaces in which a variety of discourses challenging oppressive 'normalcy' can flourish" (341). Both Foucault and Gandhi seem to recognize an intimate relationship between truth and power, while they differ on the nature of truth.

Moreover, Foucault's concept of episteme seems to reconcile well with some concepts of the social force of nonviolence put forth by some advocates of principled nonviolence. Foucault (1990) argues that while power operates with a rationality of its own, there is no individual subject directing it (94-95). In short, power for Foucault operates at a societal level, influenced by individual actions yet at the same time not directly determined by them. This network based understanding of power bears a striking resemblance to Wink's (1998) theological explanation of how 'spirit' guides groups and institutions (23-24). Wink (1998) argues that nonviolence can act to transform dominating spirits within institutions by applying positive action (112). Both of these theories suggest that power acts through a societal force; called spirit by Wink and episteme by Foucault.

Foucault sees resistance as inherent within relations of power because freedom is an essential element of his definition of power relationships (Heller 1996: 83). He also prescriptively proposes a specific methodology to address and change power relations. Haugaard (2002) states that Foucault's theory suggests that "social critique is [...] an attempt to undermine relations of domination by showing how the crutches of legitimacy of modern truth and impartial judgement are simply a reflection of social relations saturated with power" (182). This bears a remarkable similarity to Wink's (2003) description of nonviolence, which he argues, functions not as a form of coercion but as a method of utilizing the constraints of culture to expose injustice and domination (14-16). Though Foucault does not necessarily see resistance as a nonviolent venture, the similarity between Wink's nonviolent methodology and Foucault's suggests that there is a certain commonality in their functioning.

This overview of nonviolence and power provides the basis for the analysis in the rest of this study. In Chapter Two I discuss the methodology used for gathering data on the perceptions and experiences of the use of nonviolence from the members of the Ottawa Panhandler's Union. In Chapter Three I draw upon the distinctions between different typologies and definitions of nonviolent action to situate these motivations and understandings within the context of the literature. Likewise, I adopt the distinctions between the pragmatic and principled definitions of nonviolence to separate nonviolence from violence by either harm or coercion respectively and further contextualize the experiences and perspectives of the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union. In Chapter Four, I use Dahl and La Boétie's theories to analyse power within these activities in terms of capacity and consent. In Chapter Five, I make use of Foucault's theory of power as an alternate conceptual tool for understanding the workings of power in the nonviolent action of the OPU. By identifying the types of activities employed by the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union, and comparing analyses based on Dahl, La Boétie, and Foucault's conceptions of power, I am able to examine the different activities of the OPU from different conceptual angles.

Chapter Two: Methodology

The goal of this study is to explore the perceptions and experiences of the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union as they relate to nonviolence and power relations. In this chapter I present and discuss the data collection processes of non-structured interviews and field observation and the tools I have borrowed from grounded theory to interpret this data. These tools include open coding to identify concepts within the data, axial coding to draw together similar concepts, and selective coding to draw linkages between groups of concepts and relate them to the theoretical approaches outlined in Chapter One. Moreover, I address some of the ethical concerns I faced when designing this project and how accommodating them influenced this study. Lastly, I discuss how the data gathered through this methodology were analysed, and show what precautions were taken to ensure that this analysis is true to the perceptions and experiences shared by the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union.

Charmaz (2008) defines grounded theory as "a set of flexible analytic guidelines that enable researchers to focus their data collection and to build inductive middle-range theories

through successive levels of data analysis and conceptual development” (204). Grounded theory offers tools to move from the data collected through interviews and field observations to analysis with a greater degree of abstraction while ensuring that these conclusions remain faithful to the perceptions and experiences of the participants in a study. In subsequent chapters, to ensure that their perceptions are heard within this work I include a great deal of direct quotations from the interviews. In this manner, and by remaining self-conscious of my own influence, I examine the perceptions of the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union and develop analyses that remain relevant to those perceptions.

2.1 Research Questions

I began this study with one primary and two secondary research questions. The primary question deals with the overall topic of the study, while the secondary questions aim to investigate segments of this overall topic. Since hypotheses in qualitative inquiry are expected to emerge from the research process, falsifiable hypotheses were not appropriate for this study (McNeill 1990, p. 65).

Primary Research Question

- What can the case of the Ottawa Panhandlers Union illuminate about power and the use of nonviolent action?

Secondary Research Questions

- How do the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers Union perceive and experience their location within power-relations?
- How do the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers Union perceive and experience the use of nonviolent action within these power-relations?

2.2 Duration of study

This study was initiated in February 2009 when I first contacted a member of the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union to inquire about the possibility of performing this research with members of the union. Interviews and field observations occurred over a six month period beginning in August 2009 after the project was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee and ending in February 2010 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 - Timeline of Study

February 2009	August 10 2009	August 22 2009	September 2 2009	September 12 2009
First contact with OPU Agreement in principle to participate	Attendance of OPU meeting	First interview with Philippe	Interview with Jane Scharf	Second interview with Philippe
September 23 2009	October 21 2009	November 11 2009	November 13 2009	February 5 2010
Interview with Guillaume	Attendance of mediation process	Interview with René	Interview with Hubert	Interview with Maxime

Interviews were scheduled based on the availability of members of the OPU, and as such were irregularly spaced. Field observations had to be done when the OPU engaged in observable activities, and thus were also done on an ad hoc basis. All names used in this study are pseudonyms, with one exception, to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. Jane Scharf, a founding member of the OPU, requested to forego her right to anonymity in this study and to be identified with all quotes and actions attributed to her.

2.3 Sampling

Sampling in this study comprised the identification of interviewees as well as the identification of instances of OPU activity to observe. Firstly, I made use of purposive, snowball sampling to identify potential interviewees. Snowball sampling involves first identifying several potential interviewees, and then asking them to identify other potential interviewees (Berg 2004: 36). I contacted a core member of the OPU in February 2009 by email and phone to determine if participation in the study was feasible for the union and its members. The individual that I contacted indicated that it was possible to find willing participants. I sought interviewees from among the main organizers of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union, some of whom no longer actively panhandle, as well as from within its general membership. I then asked the interviewees to identify subsequent interviewees who might be interested in participating. Because of the small population involved in this study, approximately 25-30 members (Smith 2006), it was possible to access a significant portion of the group. Six members of the union, or approximately 20% of the total membership of

the OPU at the time of the study, were willing to be interviewed. An additional two members of the union were referred to me for interview, but I was unable to establish contact with these members. Purposive sampling limits the generalizability of findings to the greater population (Berg 2004: 36). However, since in this study I sought only the perspectives and experiences of members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union and not to generalize to other nonviolent organizations, or the larger panhandler population, the sample population did not need to be representative of these groups.

Instances of nonviolent action for field observations had to be sought in a more opportunistic manner. Due to the possibility of legal complications inherent in nonviolence, and to minimize the chance of unintentional harm, I did not attempt to instigate any instances of nonviolent action whatsoever throughout the course of this study (see Appendix B). Therefore, it was necessary to seek opportunities for field observation as they presented themselves. Naturally, these precautions limited the number of nonviolent activities I was able to observe; however, I was able to attend an OPU meeting on August 10th, 2009, as well as a mediation to which the OPU was party on October 21st, 2009. This method of ad hoc sampling is extremely opportunistic, and as such these observations played a relatively minor role in the final findings of this study.

2.4 Interviews

This study also makes use of non-structured interviews to gather data on the perceptions and experiences of the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union. These interviews are of two different sorts: casual conversations during field observation (discussed below) and more formal interviews with members of the union. The non-structured interviews were set up with members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union separate from field observations. Whereas field observations were employed to put the actions of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union in some context, the non-structured interviews sought to draw out the perceptions and experiences of the group's members.

In general, non-structured interviews do not follow a standardized interview schedule or question format (Berg 2004: 80). In this study, interviews explored the topics of power relations and nonviolence following a general list of interview topics. I chose an unstructured format for the interviews to maximize opportunities to explore emerging interviewee perceptions with probing and follow up questions. Creighton (2007) suggests that openness can allow the discovery of unanticipated lines of inquiry. Moreover, by leaving room for unplanned questions I was able to make use of echoing follow up questions which repeated the information given by the participant in order to illicit clarification. This study was limited to seven interviews among six interviewees by the availability of willing members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union, and the time available to both myself and the interviewees. Individual interviews were limited to approximately one hour. In the one case an interviewee, Philippe, requested more time and a second interview was arranged on a different occasion.

Berg (2004) suggests that interviewing involves an interplay between the social presentations of both the interviewer and the interviewee not unlike dramatic performance

(76-77). Goffman (1959) also describes how people create fronts to manage the impressions that they wish to convey to public audiences (17). In this light, since the interviewees were aware of the reasons for the interviews, it is not unreasonable to assume that they likely responded to the interview questions in light of how they wished to be perceived. McNeill (1990) echoes this by stating that it should be the goal of the researcher to go beyond the fronts presented to outsiders to develop authentic understandings (79). Berg (2004) suggests that developing good rapport is an important element in moving beyond these fronts presented by interviewees (99). He argues that this does not indicate that there are no boundaries between the researcher and the interviewee, but merely the development of positive feelings between the two (Berg 2004: 99). I attempted to develop rapport with the interviewees through being attentive and showing empathy. Berg (2004) also suggests that good rapport can be developed by 'looking the part' (100). While he stipulates that simply dressing appropriately cannot guarantee success, he underlines that much of the literature suggests that the visible characteristics of the interviewer greatly influence the perceptions of interviewees (100). Therefore, I also attempted to minimize the perceived socio-economic gap between the interviewees and myself by dressing in a casual manner for interviews and field observations. This tended to simply include jeans and a T-shirt or sweater depending on weather conditions.

While these strategies to minimize the social distance between interviewer and interviewees are certainly important, they have limits. As Foucault argued, one can never step outside power relations, and this was extremely apparent as I interacted with members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union. Certainly, every participant in this study was aware to some extent of a disparity between our socioeconomic situations. Despite my efforts to minimize these disparities and to promote a comfortable rapport with members of the union, many aspects of my demeanour, knowledge base and disposition were simply beyond control. Moreover, just as I attempted to fit in with my surroundings, participants in this study also seemed to modify their behaviour to develop rapport with me. Goffman (1959) argues that such representations are a normal phenomenon in everyday life. Although I made my best efforts to be as unobtrusive as possible so as to minimize the extent to which I altered the findings of this study, human beings are constantly making decisions about what they wish to share with others and it is likely that every participant in this study consciously or unconsciously decided what they wished to share with me.

The technical aspects of data collection and storage were standardized across all interviews. The interviews were recorded using a Samsung Q1 MP3 player, supplemented by note taking. In the case where one interviewee was not comfortable being recorded note taking substituted completely for audio recording. I transcribed the recordings, along with analytical and self-reflective notes, as soon as possible after each interview.

2.5 Field Observation

Field observation played a peripheral part in this study. McNeill (1990) notes that it is not always possible to understand the contexts of people's actions with interviews or surveys (69-70). Thus field observation was used in this study to document the actions of the members of the OPU, and to place those actions within a context. Yet, while the Ottawa

Panhandlers' Union has used nonviolent action several times since its formation (see CBC 2008; Smith 2006), there were no opportunities to observe similar events during the period of study. Some of the past instances of nonviolent action by the OPU have been documented by local media outlets (for example, Campbell & Gray 2004; CBC 2008; Kohler 2003), and I have used these sources in some cases to supplement my understanding of the time and context of events. Nevertheless, there was an opportunity to observe an OPU meeting and a mediation to which the OPU was a party. Of course, these were not necessarily examples of nonviolence, but they did provide opportunities to further explore the perceptions and experiences of the members of the union. As Creighton (2007) notes, the realities of field observations can benefit from being flexible to emerging circumstances (381-382). For instance, Berg (2004) notes that during field observation, a researcher may overhear discussions or be able to ask questions from bystanders (172). This type of casual discussion contributed to the data gathered by observation, and occasionally it was brought up by interviewees in subsequent interviews. For example, my interviews with Hubert and Maxime occurred after the settlement of the mediation I attended; therefore I was able to follow up on their perceptions of this event.

Berg (2004) suggests that since it is impossible to observe everything that is occurring at a given time and place, it is important to focus observations on specific subgroups, events and topics of interest and then slowly expand observations over time (168). As the primary focus of this study is the perceptions and experiences of nonviolence and power relations of the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union, these perceptions and experiences were the starting point for observations in the field. From there, I expanded my observations to include other events, actions and circumstances related to these topics which presented possibilities of deeper understanding. For instance, when I attended the OPU meeting in August 2009, I began by observing the activities of the members in attendance and their dialogue with each other and other bystanders. In time, I expanded my observations to include the activities of others nearby, and the characteristics of the meeting location.

The immediate strategy for gathering data during field observations was the collection of field notes during field observations. Berg (2004) argues that the most important element in creating accurate accounts is generating accurate field notes (173). He continues to describe different strategies for collecting field notes, including writing notes in the field, keeping mental notes, and gathering more detailed notes immediately upon leaving the field (Berg 2004: 173). I made use of a combination of these strategies in an attempt to gather data as accurately as possible. Where appropriate, I recorded activities, the event chronology and personal observations in field notes. When note taking was not appropriate, or personal interaction was required, I kept written notes limited to 'cryptic jottings' (see Berg 2004: 176), or used only mental notes. Berg (2004) suggests that 'becoming invisible' can help avoid changing events through his/her presence (162-163). By minimizing note taking during non-public events, such as the mediation, I attempted to avoid differentiating myself from others in the field (Stoddart 1986: 109-113 in Berg 2004: 163). However, Berg (2004) notes that researcher invisibility can lead to "accidental misidentification" or "learning more than you want to know" (165-166).

Immediately after leaving the field, I compiled detailed and comprehensive notes about the events observed during field observations. McNeill (1990) insists that such notes should be written up as soon as possible after the event, before the researcher goes to bed at night (77). This is intended to help to avoid loss of information due to the limitations of memory (Berg 2004: 176). Berg (2004) also suggests that the accuracy of information may be effected by discussions with others before recording detailed notes (177). Therefore I avoided discussing field observations with my thesis supervisor until after detailed notes had been compiled. Berg (2004) distinguishes between descriptive, analytic, and self-reflective notes (174). I made use of all three types of notes by adding analytic and self-reflective notes in a separate notebook while typing up field notes. These notes were subsequently coded for analysis along with the transcripts of the interviews.

2.6 Analysis

The goal of this study is to explore the perceptions and experiences of the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union as they relate to nonviolence and power relations. I have attempted to remain faithful to these perceptions and experiences by using open, axial and selective coding to move from the data collected by interview and field observation to further analysis. Open coding was used to bring out the concepts present in the data, while axial coding was used to explore the relationships between these concepts and those discussed in the existing literature. Selective coding was then used to draw out relevant analyses from these relationships. These three types of coding allowed me to move from the data gathered from interviews and field observation to levels of greater analytical abstraction, and to relate concepts that emerged from the data to the theories found in the literature.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) define open coding as “the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (101). They go on to describe this process as one whereby notes or transcripts are broken down into their component phenomena, which are in turn labelled with appropriate concepts (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 105-110). These concepts are then grouped together within categories of similarity to expose emerging relationships between the labelled phenomena (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 113-119). In effect, this represents the first step in my analytic method. I have taken the transcripts and notes produced during interviews and field observations, broken them down into their component events, happenings and phenomena, and labelled these with concepts appropriate to what they describe. For example, during the process of open coding, I identified several sorts of activities undertaken by the OPU and I labelled these based on the nature of the events. For instance, when Jane Scharf described a confrontation with the police, I labelled this event as ‘civil disobedience’ using a concept borrowed from the literature on nonviolence.

In conjunction with open coding, I employed axial coding to develop the categories which emerged from the data and explore their relation to those already present in the literature where relevant. Axial coding is a process by which the concepts identified during open coding are grouped together based on common categories or axes. Axial coding and open coding are not sequential procedures, but instead are pursued alternately until new concepts or relations do not add substantially to the analysis (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 136).

Axial coding allowed me to group the concepts which emerged during open coding into logical categories. Again, Strauss and Corbin (1998) explain that “the purpose of axial coding is to begin the process of reassembling data that were fractured during open coding” (124). This is done by exploring conditions under which phenomena emerge, as well as exploring the relationships between phenomena along their previously identified dimensions (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 130-136). For example, during the process of axial coding, I associated ‘civil disobedience’ within a larger category of ‘mass mobilization activities’. This allowed me to associate ‘civil disobedience’ with a group of similar mass mobilization activities of the OPU. This type of category provides much of the organization of the following chapters.

Finally, selective coding was used to integrate categories into theory. Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe selective coding as “the process of integrating and refining categories” into theory (143). They explain that this process involves taking the concepts discovered in open coding and grouped together using axial coding and selecting a central category (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 146). All other categories are then related to this central category in the context of theory (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 148-158). In this way I assessed the relationships within the categories elaborated in axial coding to determine the relationships between the concepts and a central category. In this case, I related categories of OPU activity, such as mass mobilization and support-advocacy, with the theories of power of Dahl, La Boétie, and Foucault. Moreover, since Strauss and Corbin (1998) stress the importance of validating theory once it is refined (159), I returned to the raw data to ensure that the emerging theory was relevant to the material in question. Selective coding allowed a final level of abstraction to explore the theories that emerge from this study of nonviolence and power relations in the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union. This exploration of the relationships between the concepts identified during open coding and the categories elaborated during axial coding formed the basis of the analysis found in Chapters Four and Five.

2.7 Reflexivity

In this work I have attempted to produce a presentation of the perceptions and experiences of nonviolent action and power relations that is as true as possible to the perceptions of the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union. Since I have been the primary conduit for these perceptions and experiences, I have done my best to identify myself within the findings. During the analysis phase of this study, I produced not only notes analyzing the material, but also notes analyzing how my own perceptions and biases might be influencing the analysis. Moreover, throughout this work, I have done my best to make explicit these analyses as they pertain to the role of my own perceptions in the collection of data. It is my hope that this process ensures as much as possible that this work reflects the perceptions of nonviolent action and power-relations as experienced by the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union.

Naturally, the method of analysis chosen for this study places me as researcher in a central role in the collection, compilation and analysis of data. McNeill (1990) remarks that even in collecting field observations, the researcher must interpret which events are relevant and which are not, meaning that data is collected based on the judgement of the researcher

(78). This selectivity is present even in direct accounts of the members of the OPU, as it is I who asked the questions and coded the data for concepts and categories largely based on the phenomena I am interested in studying. This effect can never be completely eliminated. What researchers can do is to discuss as best as they can their influence on their data in the production of their study. Berg (2004) describes this process as reflexivity arguing that researchers cannot simply relay what they understand as facts, but “must make use of an internal dialogue that repeatedly examines *what the researcher knows* and *how the researcher came to know this*” (154 italics in original). To do this, the researcher must reflect on her/his attitude upon entering the field, her/his voice in field notes and the final product, as well as her/his motivations for conducting the research and how all of these effect her/his findings (Berg 2004: 154-159). I have attempted to maintain awareness of my relationship to the data gathered by conducting reflective analyses of my attitudes before entering the field, maintaining self-reflective field notes alongside other notes, and explicitly detailing my attitudes, perceptions and position in relation to the subject matter within this work.

Finally, McNeill (1990) notes that “the people who have been studied will probably be interested in what is said about them, and this may affect what the researcher writes” (80). He suggests that this presents an ethical issue in deciding what to include in the final product, and what to omit (McNeill 1990: 80). I have striven to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants in this study, except where they have requested otherwise, but this issue goes beyond the question of confidentiality. To ensure that all the findings are as true as possible to the perceptions of the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union, I have used echoing questions to confirm ambiguous information gathered during interviews, and sought out interviewees during the duration of the field work to confirm emerging trends. For instance, when one interviewee stated that participation in OPU activities is empowering for its members, I responded by asking, “How is participation in OPU activities empowering for its members?” In one case, I took advantage of a second interview with a participant to check my understandings of his perspectives. I have indicated where I am speaking in my own voice so as to avoid misrepresenting any participants in this study.

To conclude, the methodology adopted for the study attempts to delve into the perceptions and experiences of the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union. Data about these perceptions and experiences were gathered using both non-structured interviews and field observations. Thereafter, I analyzed these findings using coding methods borrowed from grounded theory. Since my interpretations reflect my own perspectives, I have attempted to validate my analyses by returning to the original data to ensure that my conclusions hold true to the perceptions and experiences that members of the union shared with me. Lastly, I used a great deal of direct quotation in subsequent chapters to convey as much as possible about the details and circumstances that surround the perceptions and experiences of the members of the union.

Chapter Three: Nonviolence and the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union

The field observations and interviews I conducted with the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union revealed a great deal of information about the activities of the union. In this chapter I explain the structure of the OPU and give some background on its formation. Based on the accounts of the members of the union I then present the different activities that the OPU has undertaken. These activities include organizational activities, support-advocacy and mass mobilization. Each category of activity addresses a specific type of issue, and many examples from the experiences of the union members are given to clarify the distinctions between the different activities. Some of these activities are clearly examples of nonviolent action, while others are not. Nevertheless, enough of the actions undertaken by the OPU are clearly nonviolent to allow an exploration of the role of power in these activities based on different conceptions of power outlined in Chapter One. In the following two chapters I analyse the perspectives and experiences presented in this chapter using the three conceptions of power presented in Chapter One. In Chapter Four I present analyses based on the capacity and consent conceptions of power, while in Chapter Five I present an analysis based on Foucault's conception of power.

3.1 The Structure of the OPU

The Ottawa Panhandlers' Union is a union associated with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). According to Jane Scarf, this association officially began when the IWW passed a motion in 2004 to allow a special category for panhandlers at her initiative as a homelessness advocate. This special membership allowed panhandlers to join the IWW as card carrying members and participate in meetings, albeit without voting rights as they were exempt from paying dues. As part of this special membership, Scarff arranged to have members of the IWW volunteer to provide contact information to the panhandlers in order to direct them to resources if they required support. In late 2004, the OPU was elevated to the status of 'full shop', granting its members full voting rights with the IWW as members began paying optional monthly dues as their situations allowed. Since that time, members of the OPU have been regarded as full members of the IWW.

During the interviews, members of the OPU described rationales for the existence of a Panhandlers' Union, and for its association with the IWW. Firstly, as Philippe, put it, "the OPU exists in order to assist its members in coming together for their mutual protection." He added that historically this has been the purpose of unions: "a way for members of the working class to gather for mutual aid and protection." Four out of the six members that I interviewed in this study identified a rise in their experience of police violence as the primary motivation for the creation of this union. Secondly, some members described the rationale for the OPU to be included in a larger trade union like the IWW. For example, Philippe stated that panhandling, like other jobs, "serves the function of helping the people that possess those jobs to survive and nothing else." While the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union exists independently as a union, its association with the IWW is also due to the ideology of the IWW.

The IWW is a largely decentralized organization with some fundamental principles yet largely independent 'shops', or member unions. The IWW (2001) states in its principles

that member shops should be non-political and should be democratic in their organization (18-19). The OPU has adopted these IWW organizational policies in its governance. The Ottawa Panhandlers' Union is a technically non-hierarchical organization where all members have an equal vote in all decisions while no members have the authority to make decisions on behalf of the union. Decisions are made at monthly meetings which take place at a fixed time and place. At these meetings, members take turns filling roles associated with running the meeting, such as secretary or chairperson. Similarly, no official or permanent positions exist within the union for particular roles outside of meetings. Instead members are selected to fill specific roles, such as spokesperson, only when circumstances arise. Like the IWW, the OPU is a strictly non-political organization, representing the interests of the members and not particular political movements.

In other respects, especially in terms of membership, the OPU is organized independently of the IWW. The membership of the OPU is extremely fluid. There is no mandated level of participation to be a member, nor are there rigid criteria for qualification. Philippe explained that participation in union or panhandling activities is not as important as, "be[ing] part of the street life in Ottawa." He continued by stating that, "most of our members earn at least part of their income from the street itself, which is really how we define membership in the OPU. Of course, there are also people who are members who in the past have been in that position [...]" Moreover, many of the members of the union are part of a transient population, and thus do not participate on a long term basis. Philippe added that, "it's very rare that we'll have two meetings in a row with the same people." As a result, levels of participation vary significantly by member and over time.

In practice, the interplay between structural non-hierarchy and the fluidity of membership results in a balance of accommodations. While no member has authority over others, there are core members who are the most able to participate on an ongoing basis. As one of these stable members, Philippe stated that a risk of this participation imbalance is that some members will have a greater influence on the union's activities. He added that he attempts to avoid exerting too much control over the union by abstaining from some votes and checking his participation in some discussions to allow others more opportunity to participate. The IWW (2001) also notes that part of the goal of the voluntary nature of its non-hierarchical organization is to act as a check for excessive control by central members. Since members who do not feel heard are not likely to remain with the union, unresponsive leaders are unlikely to retain many members to lead. Philippe added that the fluid and transient nature of the union membership also brings benefits. He suggested that, "part of the strength of the OPU is that we come from different parts of the street, and different parts of the community, and so rather than being one homogeneous group there's a certain level of heterogeneity going on which adds to its strength." Moreover, he argued that transient members are able to bring the skills they developed as part of the union to other communities as they travel. While some aspects of the OPU's structure may seem inefficient, the members see these aspects as essential to their objective of inclusion.

3.2 Activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union

The activities of the OPU fall into three general categories. Firstly, all members of the union have the opportunity to be involved in organizational activities. For instance, this type of activity includes decision making, planning and recruitment. Secondly, the bulk of the activities of the OPU revolve around support-advocacy activities. These activities tend to involve the demonstration of support by small groups of members for other members in need, on behalf of the union. Thirdly, there are the more public mass mobilization activities which tend to involve many members of the OPU, and focus on generating public awareness or promoting social change. These three types of activity do not occur in isolation, however. Often, they are undertaken in concert, or sequentially as part of a continuum of escalation. Nevertheless, their differing operations and objectives allow organization, support-advocacy and mass mobilization to be conceptually separated for the purposes of analysis.

Organizational Activities

Organizational activities are an ongoing part of the OPU and involve most of its members. As the OPU is a non-hierarchical organization, all members can play a role in the decision making and planning aspects of the organization. For instance, when asked to describe his role in the OPU, Guillaume stated that:

I'm a member, which is to say that since the OPU is a membership of equals, I'm a member right? I do secretary, I do chair every once in a while at meetings, but we're a very loose organization; we don't have a formal hierarchy. I just do the same things that any other member does. We actually try to get people... part of what the OPU does is teach, and what we're teaching is organizational skills so that our members are able to draw other people into the OPU, or not depending on what they want to do. There's no pressure to do so.

He continued to state that this participation mostly involves attending meetings, and participating in planning activities. René echoed this statement saying that he makes an effort to be an active part of every meeting. I witnessed this type of activity when I attended an OPU meeting on August 10, 2009. Only two members of the union were in attendance at this meeting because it was moved to accommodate a holiday on August 3rd. Yet, I observed that these two members engaged other street-affected people in discussions about the union and its purpose. Similarly, Philippe argued that all members of the union may take part in its operation regardless of their life situation. For example, he cited the case of one member who, despite suffering from a severe alcohol dependency, writes press releases for the union on occasion. Clearly, organizational activities are inherently integrated with other OPU activities like support-advocacy and mass mobilization. These latter activities require members to decide what to do, plan how to execute them, and organize this execution.

Support-Advocacy

The support-advocacy activities of the OPU follow from the support initially given by members in other branches of the IWW to panhandlers when the OPU was a special shop. Scharf noted that when the OPU was first formed as a special category within the IWW, members of the IWW volunteered to give their contact information to members of the OPU if they required assistance. She stated that these members would then, “go down to the police station, or wherever they were, to document their story or to help support them in their situation.” Philippe added to this comment by stating that:

All that’s really necessary in a lot of these cases is for someone to actually care, and for these official organizations to be aware that someone cares about them. You would be amazed at how quickly some of these problems disappear once the people that are causing these problems are aware that there’s someone actually watching.

In general, this type of support-advocacy activity is relatively small in scope and takes place on short time frames.

However, according to Philippe, support-advocacy activities represent the majority of the work done by the OPU based on time commitment. He argues that, “protest is less than one percent of what we do [...] the actual work, the meat and potatoes work, of the OPU happens every day in perfectly ordinary circumstances.” These activities tend to involve small numbers of OPU members, typically only one or two, who demonstrate support for other members on behalf of the union. In the examples related to me, the members engaging in this type of activity were those in what I perceived as the most stable life situations. Philippe confirmed this by stating that, “the more active members tend to be the people that come from a street background but aren’t actively on the street now themselves. And this is mainly because they are the only ones that are stable enough to attend meetings all the time.” In contrast, the members receiving the support tended to be those in unstable situations, or who were experiencing other difficulties. Philippe gave two examples of this type of situation:

One of our members was in [...], that is the jail. He was being held there, I’m trying to remember exactly what he did this time. It’s one of our members that’s always in and out of jail. This time he was denied the use of his wheelchair. He was in the general population there, and he literally had to crawl to the bathroom on his hands and knees. He [...] can’t walk [because of a disability], he’s in a wheelchair. And the jail said that his wheelchair could be used as a weapon, and he could not allow him to have his wheelchair. He complained to us, and we went down to the jail, that is myself and a member of the GMB, the General Members Branch of the IWW. The two of us went down together to talk to the ... I guess they were deputy wardens, to get them to do something about this. Now, what they said is they were perfectly prepared to move him to a medical cell, which essentially means he would be put in isolation with no one to talk to, no radio, no television, no access to

reading material; which is simply not an option. A person should not be literally tortured for having a disability, and we told them that that is not an adequate solution and that denying him the use of his wheelchair was, well we believed it was unconstitutional. They admitted to us, yes it probably is unconstitutional, but they said that they couldn't see any possible solution. So we suggested, "Well, he can't be the only person in the prison system in a wheelchair, there's got to be prison-safe wheelchairs." They said, "We'll check to see if such things were available." But in the meantime we told them, "We're going to give you one week to rectify this situation. If he does not have a wheelchair in that time, we're going to put a picket line outside the gates of your jail and we'll warn you that there are certain unions that forbid their members from crossing picket lines."

So we began organizing to have the picket line outside of their jail, to block the gates of the jail. And two days before our line in the sand, his lawyer got a call saying that he was being released. They actually pressured the courts to release him from jail rather than deal with... [a possible picket]. Because, like one of the solutions we offered is that all you need to do is to hire someone to be outside his cell with a wheelchair who is prepared to go in whenever he needs to use it. Bring him wherever he needs to go, and then go back outside the cell again. But they weren't prepared to pay someone to do nothing but stand outside the cell and hold his wheelchair for him. [...] This is one of the examples where we didn't actually have to do anything. It took us an hour on the bus to go down and chat with them. We spent a little bit of time organizing to actually get people down to the picket line, and I think when they realized that we were going to have a sizable crowd out there and that we were likely to get significant media attention for something like this, they just buckled.

In another instance:

One of our members has a degree in engineering from the Soviet Union. He came to Canada and he's been trying to update his degree. Apparently, they don't accept his degree here. So he's been trying to update his credentials. The problem is he's schizophrenic so he often becomes unstable and he ends up in the street. Sometimes he ends up being locked up in one of the hospitals when he goes off his meds. He was locked up in [a healthcare facility] when he contacted us. He had been taking classes at Ottawa University and [the healthcare facility] did not want to let him go to his classes because they didn't want to be responsible for what he did, or might do, or whatever. Now they weren't holding him against his will. He had been brought in an ambulance, unstable. They had got him on his meds, stabilized, but they were keeping him at the hospital. And what they told him essentially was, "Yes you can leave, but then you're back on the street again." And he didn't want to do that. He wanted to stay in the hospital, wanted to be stabilized. But he also needed to go to his classes and that's what they were

not prepared to do, was to let him stay there and allow him to go to his classes.

So he contacted us, and we went down to the hospital and our intention was to explain to the doctors that we were prepared to have a member of the OPU go with him. We had someone who had volunteered to go with him to his classes. They would escort him back and forth, it was OK with the professor for this person to sit in on the classes and this person would ensure that nothing happened. And we could not talk to the doctors; they did not want to talk to us. So we sat there, I think it must have been five or six hours, trying to find someone who would be willing to talk to us. Finally, we managed to button hole the doctor who was in charge as he tried to escape from the ward at the end of his shift. And the doctor was very nervous, and when we told him that we were Wobblies, and I showed him my Wobbly credentials, the doctor clearly knew what the IWW was because the first thing he said was, “We’re being very respectful of his religion. We haven’t...” you know... “No, no. We’re not here to tell you you haven’t been respectful.” We explained to him what we wanted, and he said, “I’ll discharge him right now, let me get the papers.” And we said, “No, no. We don’t want him discharged. All we want is for him to be able to go to classes.” So he went with us to talk to our member, and we discussed the issue, and they agreed to it on the spot. They didn’t even want to talk to us, but when we got them to talk to us, they had no problem with what we were proposing.

In both situations, one member of the OPU was experiencing a difficult situation and the other members of the OPU attempted to resolve it. According to Philippe, the members of the OPU tend to lack the informal support structures taken for granted by other members of society, such as family or friends with means. He added that support-advocacy activities attempt to address a lack of access to support. He states that:

The only difference between a person that is not on the street and a person that is on the street is that a person that is not on the street has a family, has a support structure to support them. A person who has no support structure, the first time they miss a rent payment they’re homeless. Whereas a person who has a family, they might not like it but they can always move home again, or they can ask for a loan from a brother or a sister or a cousin, an aunt or an uncle. [...] So we’re dealing with people who don’t have this kind of support, who don’t have someone looking over their shoulder to care for them. So the OPU is really a kind of family for people.

He continued to point out that, “often the amount of support is insignificant; it would be very easy for almost anyone else to acquire, but impossible for someone on the street [...]” Although it requires very little effort, he suggests that this represents the most common activity of the OPU because its members lack support from others in this area.

Mass Mobilization

Mass mobilization is distinct from support-advocacy because it tends to involve many members of the OPU and attempts to raise public awareness or effectuate a social change. Although members of the union suggested that these actions are relatively uncommon compared to support-advocacy activities, mass mobilization tends to be more dramatic. In consequence, mass mobilization was the most likely activity to appear in the media (see Campbell & Gray 2004; CBC 2008; Kohler 2003), and was widely discussed during interviews. Several members of the OPU stated that the union stages regular marches and protests every May 1st. Over the course of the interviews they also cited three unique instances where the OPU and its predecessors have used mass mobilization. First among these was the “Homeless Action Strike” in 2003-2004 which included a nonviolent occupation of the National Convention Centre underpass, and a march and an occupation of the Ottawa City Hall lawn. Secondly, in 2006 the OPU staged an occupation of an Ottawa Police Station. And in 2008-2009 the OPU staged direct action against the fence erected beneath the National Convention Centre underpass, followed by a lawsuit against the City of Ottawa, which was eventually settled through mediation. With the exception of the second protest under the National Convention Centre underpass and lawsuit, each of these activities is easily identified as some form of nonviolent action. Moreover, responses from the members suggest that mass mobilization attempts to address broader issues that support-advocacy activities cannot address. While Philippe argued that the union is not an activist organization, in that it does not seek to “change the world”, he and other members of the union describe mass mobilization activities as attempts to address broad issues that affect the majority of the union’s membership. Thus, mass mobilization differs from support-advocacy activities not only in the number of members involved, but also in the scope of the issues addressed.

A mainstay of the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union’s activity is the staging of protests and marches in Ottawa. Members of the OPU explained to me that in general marches and protests take place on a yearly basis, at a standard time and place. They continued to state that these activities aim to generate media attention for issues that affect their membership as a whole. However, I perceived that they also seem to be undertaken to generate more generalized media attention. The members of the union focused on their experience relating to the police during their descriptions of these protests. While some members felt that police presence made these protests more risky, others noted that over time the police have become more permissive in their regulation of nonviolent protests. Other members drew focus to their own personal circumstances which often proved to be an important obstacle in participation in these activities.

The Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union stages a yearly march or protest on May 1st. May Day (May 1st) is a common date observed by organized labour, and as a union and part of the IWW, the OPU observes this day as well. Both Hubert and Maxime held that the OPU never fails to organize some type of activity on May 1st of every year. Guillaume continued to point out that typically the OPU begins its marches at the Ottawa Human Rights Monument, often, though not necessarily, leading to Ottawa City Hall. Once at the destination, these protests tend to involve speeches, and communication with the media. The reason for

establishing a standard meeting place is to establish predictability and maximize the possibility that the more transient members of the OPU are able to attend.

In general, the objective of such action tends to be the generation of public or media attention for a specific issue. For instance, Philippe suggested that protests are primarily a method for generating media attention stating that, “Generally, the only times we protest are when we’re looking to get media attention for some specific issue. We found that the only guaranteed way to get media attention is to do something public and mildly naughty.” Scharf cited on such example when, “there was a protest at City Hall about [the Mayor’s] comment about homeless people continuing like pigeons and seagulls,” and what she described as a resultant increase in violence against homeless people. Maxime added that calmly explaining their objectives and complaints to passers-by is an important component activity of marches and protests for members of the union. He argued that while some protests had only a few members of the union able to attend, even these protests are able to attract the attention of passers-by, some of whom stay to show support when the purpose of the action is explained to them. Therefore, the objectives of marches and protests tend to be threefold: attracting media attention, responding to specific issues that affect the OPU membership, and raising awareness among the public.

The members of the OPU also communicated several obstacles they experienced in their use of marches and protests. For example, some members cited elevated friction between the police and protesters during marches and protests. One of Maxime’s primary recollections of such events was the tension between the police and the protesters. He stated that at one protest he witnessed a near collision between a police vehicle and a protester. Maxime added that this gave him the impression that the police intended to instigate violence from the protesters that could legitimize taking more forceful enforcement action. In contrast, Scharf noted that she observed a significant change in the police’s response to marches over time. She pointed out one case where:

[...] we shut down Rideau Street for the bus and they wouldn’t touch us. We didn’t have any permits, and we didn’t give them any advanced warning. We walked right down the street and stopped the traffic all the way from Rideau, you know the bridge at Vanier, all the way from there to City Hall. And then we never thought they’d let us into City Hall, so we didn’t even have a plan for what to do when we went in. They didn’t even try to stop us. They knew we were coming and let us walk right in.

She ascribed this change in police behaviour to their lack of success in convicting protesters for taking part in protests. In another case, while Guillaume claimed that he has participated in some marches with the OPU, he admitted that he has not attended as many as he would have liked. He stated that:

Well I’ve taken part in marches. I was part of the protest against [the Mayor], the first one. I missed the second one, though I wanted to be there. I just wasn’t feeling well. Marches in the rain when you’re already sick are not good. [...] I tend to be sick a lot, I’m on ODSP [Ontario Disability Support Program] for a reason.

In this case, the personal circumstances of this member of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union seem to have been a greater obstacle to participation in marches and protests than the possibility of police violence. This experience was echoed by René who explained that he was not able to attend several protests because of schedule conflicts. Yet, despite these obstacles, the OPU continues to hold protests and marches every year.

In large part, the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union holds regularly scheduled protests and marches every May 1st. While the accounts of some of the members cited poor dynamics between the police and protesters, other members argued that this has improved over time. Other accounts of this type of action focus on the limits placed on participation by the everyday circumstances of many of the members. Though still examples of marches and protests, three special examples of mass mobilization emerged during this study. They included the Homeless Action Strike in 2003-2004, the occupation of a police station in 2006, and activities protesting a fence under the National Convention Centre underpass in 2008-2009. Addressing special circumstances, these activities did not keep to the normal May 1st schedule. As such, they are treated separately here.

3.3 The 2003-2004 Homeless Action Strike

The first mass mobilization associated with the OPU took place from 2003 to 2004 and was called the "Homeless Action Strike". This action included two parts, the "Bridge Squat", a sit-down under the National Convention Centre underpass in 2003, and the "Tent City", an occupation of the Ottawa City Hall lawn. Both these actions occurred before the official formation of the OPU. Yet, Jane Scharf credited them in part for the development of the union saying, "The Panhandlers' Union began after the protest under the bridge in April [2003]". Scharf led the protest under the National Convention Centre underpass, and many street affected youths also participated. Scharf's description of this protest focused on the interaction between the police and the protesters. She stated that this protest was intended to draw attention to a lack of affordable housing for street youth:

Well, initially, the protest under the bridge, I pretty much went with one other gentleman, that was taking more of a supportive role, like he wasn't in the press or the computations or whatever. That I pretty much initiated on my own. I called it Homeless Action Strike. I gave up my apartment and I was protesting, you know whatever, to draw attention to it. And people, mostly young street people, joined up. I would convey what I'm doing, how I'm doing it, and what I think the results... They started seeing significant results. Like right away. When I started, the way they used to supervise under the bridge is every hour, around every hour, they would come down and kick everybody out. And they would just go right away. Because if you gave any resistance they would arrest you, kick you or do something. So that was pretty much the case.

When I started they came down to do the sweep and I would say, "No, I'm not leaving, I'm protesting." They would, "ah wah wah wah," and I'd say, "No. I have a right, I have a permit." I actually had a permit at first, and I'd

show them the permit. And they would “ahh” scoff at it, and they’d be really insulted that I was daring to say ‘No, I’m not leaving” right? At first everybody left and I’d just be standing there. But after a week or so there was a group of punks there, and one of them said, “I have rights.” And he sat down, but really tentatively, wasn’t sure how this was going to go. As soon as he said that, all the other punks sat down. They didn’t say anything, they just sat down really quietly. Didn’t even look up. But making definitely a statement that they have rights also and they’re sitting, because the cops just said “Leave”. And they had told me, “Ah your permit’s been cancelled.” And I couldn’t check because it’s four thirty so you have to leave anyway. So I said, “You can’t cancel my right to protest, it doesn’t even matter if I have a permit. I’m staying here anyway. I have a constitutional right and blah blah blah.” They ended up saying, “Ok, well we’re going to call this in, and we’re going to be back. And we’re going to do this, and we’re going to do that.” And they left and they never came back. And everybody’s like, “Yes!”

Over time they got more confident. And the police started to be all, “OK, fine.” It’s a very long story, and I don’t want to keep going on because it’s very convoluted with all the ins and outs of it. But they tried various tactics to try to discredit us, tried to intimidate us, tried to divide us, tried every kind of strategy you could possibly imagine they tried it all and failed. At the end of the day we got stronger as a group. And more naturally consensus basis, you know? People understanding what we were doing, how we were doing it. You could see and feel the power in it. There’s power in it, nonviolence. If we would have shown any signs of violence they would have loved that. They were even trying to pretend that there was in order to give cause. Like in court they tried to say that there was all this crime being committed down there, and they had to end up rescinding it because there... it was not true. But they would have loved that because that gives them cause to enforce all their power, right? We weren’t giving them that cause so the young people saw the power in that.

About half way through, about the end of August, this probably the highlight of my life: it about one thirty in the morning I had left because I used to go, at least I’d try to, sometimes it’d be weeks, but I’d try to get away just for one night. But I had a cell phone and I wasn’t far so I could come back if there was a problem. I had left, I was gone for a couple hours and one thirty in the morning they called me and said, “The police are here, and they’re shutting us down, they’re telling us we all have to leave.” And I said, “I’ll be there in about ten minutes.” And they decided, I didn’t tell them, they decided that they weren’t going to do anything till I got there. So, when I got there, they said, there was about fourteen riot police in full gear and pumped up: they get all this energy and they’re all “Ererer” like this [pumping arms]. And they were making the stance that, “Everybody has to leave the area now or you WILL BE ARRESTED!” [emphasis]. And really ‘bah’ like that eh? And everybody did daisy chain and said, “This isn’t Nazi Germany, we have the

right to protest.” I mean, it wasn’t funny, we didn’t know what was going to happen. They could have come and started banging heads, you’re really risking. But they did it. The majority did it. There was about, I’d say about twenty-five people there that night, and about nineteen did it. A few went off to the side because we never said... like there was no requirement that anybody had to do anything or whatever, everybody made their own choices all the way along. So if they didn’t want to do it they didn’t have to do it. But they did it.

Then one of the cops said, it was the cop that was in charge, says, “OK Jane, I want to talk to you over here for a minute.” So I go over and he goes, “Ok, we want you to move everything from this side over to that side so that they can clean there.” I said, “You got riot police to do that?” And he’s “grr.” So I yelled, “They’re backin’ down!” Like that [cupping hands to mouth], screaming like this, and he’s like “don’t tell them that” and everybody’s just “Yay, Yay, Yay!” And then the cops just all dispersed and left. There was a man walking through that saw that, he was so impressed that he bought everybody a hamburger at the McDonald’s and brought it back. And everybody moved over and the City cleaned the other side. We never resisted cleaning anyway, there was no need. You don’t have to have riot police for that. I mean, come on, riot police! I made a complaint after, and they said, “Well... they were just in the area for something else going on on Rideau Street and they just came down to be, whatever, to lend a hand with that situation.” I mean, come on, fucking fourteen riot police in helmets and bulletproof vests. And they looked really ominous with “Raaa,” you know, pumped? And they come over, “Leave the area now! Or you will be arrested! Now!” You know really energetic? Then after that, the atmosphere on the street changed really dramatically. Really what I consider solidarity. Real solidarity existed. When I got arrested, there were a group of girls that continued, and they were risking arrest and doing all kinds of stuff. It was pretty cool.

This action thus included a nonviolent occupation, civil disobedience, and negotiation with the police. The occupation of the area under the underpass seems to conform to Sharp’s (1973) definition of a nonviolent occupation (388). The subsequent refusal to comply with police directives when told to leave the area constitutes an incidence of civil disobedience. Moreover, the presence of negotiation throughout the event is notable for its consistency with Juergensmeyer’s (2005) description of the nonviolent method wherein nonviolent practitioners constantly re-evaluate their position and that of the other side to find a mutually acceptable solution (22-23). In this case, such a solution was found when the protesters allowed the cleaning of the area while remaining at the location. It is also important to note that this action seemingly did not follow any support-advocacy activities, suggesting that the two types of activities do not always follow one from the other. In fact, here the stated objective was to raise awareness about a particular issue, the availability of adequate housing for poor youth, rather than to resolve a specific difficulty for just one member of the union.

In 2004, Scharf and others continued the Homeless Action Strike and organized a nonviolent occupation of the Ottawa City Hall lawn that they dubbed “Tent City”. Again, this action included a nonviolent occupation as many street-affected people attended and refused to leave City Hall. During this action, there was a march led by the protesters down Rideau Street, which blocked traffic and occupied the lobby of Ottawa City Hall for some time. Scharf described this event stating that protestors remained on the lawn of Ottawa City Hall for a number of weeks, adding:

We have the footage, raw footage actually, of homeless people storming City Hall demanding that [a taskforce on homelessness] of the Mayor. And before they left they got it. There was some confrontation and everything with the police before that occurred [...] they gave them an assurance of a meeting with the Mayor at the end of that protest, and they got a meeting with the Mayor. It was very public, the press were attending and they reported everything. I believe they met twice.

Here Scharf’s recollections of the event focused primarily on the results of the action. She went on to describe how she attributes the action at the ‘Tent City’ with the creation of a Homelessness Taskforce by the City of Ottawa to address the issues raised by this protest.

Other members of the OPU focused on the interactions between the police and the protesters when describing this event. Philippe’s recollections of ‘Tent City’ centred on the interactions between the police and protesters in the context of the normal environment of mass mobilization on the street. He stated that:

During the camp at City Hall, there were certain members of the homeless camp who were believed to be colluding with police, that is they were talking to police in private, they were accepting gifts from the police, and these people were talked to by members of the street community and they were warned that they were not to collaborate with police. I mean there were no specific penalties mentioned, but on the street, you know, you rat to the police, you get a reputation, as a rat, you get beat up. The street has its own laws, it has its own code and there’s nothing we could do about it even if we wanted to.

He continued to state that it was not uncommon for the police to send infiltrators into the group to attempt to locate leaders and determine their political affiliations, remarking, “of course they were completely stymied because there were no leaders. No one was in charge: it was a group of people on the street who came together for a single goal, who chose to work together [...]”. Here the environment of mass mobilization with street-affected people is made clearer. Philippe points out that this activity occurred without centralized decision making, meaning that organic regulation of interactions between police and protesters emerged, and that this regulation was not necessarily nonviolent.

3.4 The 2006 Police Station Occupation

In 2006, the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union initiated a protest in response to the actions of a particular police officer. Unlike the protests in 2003-2004, this action did not aim to raise public awareness or promote a broad social change. Instead, this action attempted to respond to the perceived misconduct of a particular police officer. The protest began with a march to the police station, a demonstration demanding the resignation of the officer in question while negotiating with the police. A month later, the protesters returned and staged a nonviolent occupation of the lobby of the police station making the same demands. Philippe described to me his experience as part of this protest:

In fact, if I were to give any one person credit for the growth of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union, it would have to be Officer Barns². Barns was well known for his predilection for dragging street kids into parking lots and putting the boots to them. Him and his partner Banner. Barns is this huge steroid case. He's got this massive upper body, and a very violent man. Not a very nice man. At one point when we had finally had enough, we organized the street kids, we all marched down to the police station, we occupied the street outside the police station and shut it down, that was on May Day 2006 I believe. So for one hour we held the street, and the street kids, without even being prompted began chanting "Barns resign!" We warned them that they better get rid of Barns or we'd be back, and they didn't and we were, exactly one month later to the day we marched on the police station.

There was a massive, massive police presence. We were warned by the police labour negotiator, who generally deals with us on these issues, he told us that that was our warning: that if we did this kind of thing again they would simply arrest all of us. We only got about thirty people that day because everyone else who wanted to show up was intimidated away by the lines of riot cops. They had lines of bike cops just standing in a row to intimidate people underneath the bridge because they knew that people would be coming from downtown to the Human Rights Monument. They had paddy wagons... they actually had a water cannon truck driving by on the street. We noticed afterward that they had a bus full of riot cops standing by. It was just a massive police presence to try to intimidate us. And the fact that nonetheless we got thirty street kids to show up tells you how much they believed in getting rid of Officer Barns.

So this time we actually went into the police station and we occupied the lobby and we refused to leave. One of our members was arrested. They waited until I went outside to arrest him. When I came back I asked the Officer why our member had been arrested he said "He swore. He created a disturbance". Right. I told the officer, I looked him right in the eye and said

² The names of these officers have been changed to protect their anonymity. Any resemblance of this description to actual Officers Barns or Banner past, present or future with the Ottawa Police Service is entirely unintentional.

“That’s bullshit” and all he did was turned his head. So we refused to leave until they released our member, and of course they had to keep hundreds of police standing around doing nothing with their thumbs up their ass. So they eventually released our member, which was nice. And they got rid of Barns. They didn’t fire him, they actually promoted him to detective because it’s easier to promote a cop than to fire him. But that’s fine, we don’t care as long as he’s off the street, as long as he’s not beating people up we don’t care what they do with him.

Scharf added to this description, saying that a major step in the resolution of this conflict took place during the negotiation with the police:

There was a protest at the police station, and a collective complaint, which is not really allowed in the process. But they consented to allow a group complaint as a negotiation in the protest. They wanted us... they wanted everyone to go away. “But we’re not going away, we have serious issues.” They sent a spokesperson out to say, “OK, what will it take?” “OK, we’re concerned about this one individual and we want him out of there, people are afraid to make individual complaints, because the process usually involves just the individual complaints, so we want to make a group complaint. We want everybody to be able to put their complaint in at one time and the police department to deal with it like one complaint. He had to go away and get permission, when he came back they said, “OK, you can do that.” And everyone’s like, “Alright! Yeah, yeah!” and left the area.

This protest involved not just civil disobedience, and a nonviolent occupation, but also a march, much like the activities involved in the 2003-2004 protests. In addition, like the protests in 2003-2004, negotiation with the police played a key role in the process of the action. However, unlike the pervious protests the objective of this action was not to bring about a broad social change. Instead, this action was intended to respond to a specific perceived problem, namely the violence of a particular police officer. Nevertheless, just like other mass mobilization activities, this protest involved many members of the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union organizing around an issue.

3.5 The Fence and Lawsuit

In 2008, the City of Ottawa erected a fence restricting access to the area under the National Convention Centre underpass. Members of the OPU felt that this was an unjust removal of a secure place for homeless people to gather, and decided to take action. In this case, the OPU took two distinct actions, neither of which was clearly nonviolent. Firstly, a member of the OPU cut the lock off the fence, allowing others access to the area. Secondly, the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union filed a lawsuit against the City of Ottawa. In 2009, the OPU and the City of Ottawa participated in mediation and successfully resolved the legal action. These events have motivated the OPU to look for an opportunity to develop their own drop in centre to facilitate better organization and allow an alternative space to congregate.

The initial action taken by the OPU in opposition to the fence was to cut the lock off the fence and enter the area. Such action fits with Sharp's (1973) definition of a nonviolent invasion where, "a group of nonviolent volunteers deliberately and openly enter a forbidden area in order to demonstrate their refusal to recognize the right of the controlling regime or agency to exercise sovereignty or control over that area or to use it for a particular purpose" (382). Although only one member cut the lock off the fence, other members accompanied him and supported this action. This action did not cause harm to others, but it should be noted that the destruction of property is not considered a nonviolent act in broader definitions of nonviolence. In this case, Philippe defends such action by stating that, "I don't see it as possible to be violent towards property. Property doesn't experience pain, you can't hurt property." Ultimately, though, the member of the OPU who cut the lock was arrested and imprisoned for a short duration for this act.

Despite the apparent failure of the nonviolent invasion to remove the fence, this action was not taken in isolation. After the attempt to simply enter the area, the OPU filed a lawsuit against the City of Ottawa. Philippe points out that this situation reveals the flexibility of the OPU to pursue different types of action when this presents a strategic advantage:

Both the City and the BIAs [Business Improvement Area] are aware now that we're perfectly willing to use force to take down that fence. They allow us this avenue [legal action], because this is an avenue where they feel strong, where they feel some measure of confidence. If they don't allow us that, then they know that the alternative is to deal with people at night creeping in with bolt cutters, and that they have a lot more difficulty dealing with.

Maxime added the OPU lawsuit against the City of Ottawa included many complaints filed by local panhandlers about the erection of the fence, and that this was the role most members of the union played in this activity. He stated that filing the complaints against the fence was "about as involved as I've gotten in any of the legal battles." In fact, most of the members of the union did not actively participate in the proceedings of the lawsuit as this was primarily handled by an outside lawyer.

On October 21, 2009, representatives of the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union met to attempt mediating their difference out of court, which they successfully resolved. I was fortunate enough to be invited to this mediation and was able to witness the proceedings³. During this process, the members of the OPU again made clear that legal action is but one of the strategies they are willing to attempt, including more direct action. Once the mediation had been successfully resolved Maxime credited this resolution to the high number of complaints that were elicited by the erection of the fence. Of course, legal action itself is not a form of nonviolent action as formal institutional action is excluded from most definitions of nonviolence, as seen in Chapter One. So while it was undertaken in

³ All members of the mediation process, the author included, agreed to respect the confidentiality of the mediation process and the terms of its settlement. As such, I will restrict my observations here to a discussion of the mediation process as it applies to the use of nonviolent action, without revealing details about the negotiation itself.

concert with nonviolent activities, the OPU lawsuit and mediation with the City of Ottawa are not themselves examples of nonviolent action.

Subsequent to the resolution of the lawsuit, members of the OPU have suggested that the union will now attempt to establish its own drop-in centre. In the wake of the events surrounding the erection of the fence under the National Convention Centre underpass, Maxime suggested that the OPU was attempting to establish a “store-front” where it will be able to operate. He hoped that in the future such a location would allow the OPU to become more involved in community improvement activities, to increase the public recognition of the organization. René added such a location would not only allow the OPU to better organize, but also to do so with more freedom from police molestation. Such a new establishment would in effect be an example of the creation of alternative social institutions (Sharp 1973: 398). Whether such an institution would provide a service which would complement or compete with existing drop-in centres for the homeless is not apparent.

3.6 The Importance of Nonviolence in OPU Activities

Determining the importance of nonviolence in the overall strategy of the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union may be nominal at best. As stated in Chapter One, definitions of nonviolence often rely on concepts such as violence and action which are themselves inherently difficult to define and highly disputed. Moreover, definitions of nonviolence often depend on the intentions and motivations of those employing the action. While the members of the OPU can be fairly easily labelled as either ‘pragmatic’ or ‘principled’ as these concepts were defined in Chapter One, this sort of labelling adds little to the analysis of nonviolence in this case as the members of the union generally participate in the same activities. Several of these activities are clearly identifiable as examples of nonviolence, while others are more debatable. Nevertheless, enough clear examples of nonviolence, by some definition, exist within the activities of the OPU for it to provide a useful case for the examination of the role of power in nonviolent action.

As an organization, the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union is not nonviolent by definition. Many members of the OPU stated that the union leaves open the possibility that it might pursue any type of activity. In fact, some members of the union openly stated that they support the use of violence in some circumstances. For example, Hubert said that, “I don’t want to go and say I’m against violence, because I’m not. My personal opinion about violence is that it’s a tactic that sometimes can be deployed and sometimes cannot”. Similarly, Guillaume noted that his personal perspective on choices in types of action was that, “There’s various methods that can be used, and you generally start with the softer approach and use harder approaches as they’re non-responsive.” For his part, Philippe defined the stance of the union not as nonviolent, but as anti-violent:

I would say that the OPU is not necessarily a nonviolent organization but an anti-violent organization. [...] well, a nonviolent group would be a group that is dedicated to the use of nonviolence, whereas the OPU is not necessarily dedicated to nonviolence. We’re dedicated to the elimination of violence, period.

In each case, the members of the union do not define the OPU as a nonviolent organization, but instead as an organization that happens to use nonviolence given present circumstances.

While some members of the union clearly see nonviolence as a pragmatic choice, others chose nonviolence based on principle. For example, Philippe very much opts for nonviolence purely as an efficient choice at the moment. He argued that:

The state exists because they have a monopoly on force. They are simply the best at organizing violence. If any other group was better at organizing violence they would be the state instead. So the state at any given time is the group which is best able to organize violence. To wage war against such an organization with naked force is suicidal and stupid.

In contrast, other members of the OPU supported the use of nonviolence for principled reasons. René compared the use of nonviolence to the following of moral laws. In addition, Maxime stated that nonviolence is a method for achieving and maintaining “the moral high ground.” Jane Scharf as well cited moral imperatives in justifying the use of nonviolence, suggesting that she believes in nonviolence on principle.

Ultimately, regardless of their motivations, the union members tend to agree to adopt the same methods in practice. Despite the mixture of members who chose nonviolence out of principle and out of convenience, all the members of the union have acted together in their various activities. The organizational, support-advocacy and mass mobilization activities of the OPU all seem to conform to the most basic definitions of nonviolence, and to varying extents some activities continue to conform to more restricted definitions of the term. Therefore, while it is still important to understand the debates involved in defining nonviolence, and how these debates apply to the activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union, these debates do not change their actual practice of particular actions.

The activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union demonstrate a wide variety of uses of nonviolence. As a non-hierarchical organization, the OPU seems to exemplify the mutuality and non-coercion essential in some definitions of nonviolence. These principles seem also to be present in the support-advocacy activities of the union members. Jane Scharf and other members of the OPU have engaged in mass mobilization activities since before the official formation of the OPU which eventually led to the official formation of the union. The OPU has continued this strategy as a formal organization. However, many members of the OPU maintain that it is not an essentially nonviolent organization, and that its members reserve the right to choose violent activities in the future. In practice, regardless of the different pragmatic and principled leanings of the members of the union, they tend to adopt a common type of action. In the next chapter, I explore how Dahl’s and La Boétie’s conceptions of power as capacity and consent lead to different analyses of the role of power in these activities.

Chapter Four: Capacity, Consent and the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union

In this chapter I apply Dahl's and La Boétie's theories of power conceived as capacity and as consent to the accounts given by the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union. As seen in Chapter One, conceptions of power based on capacity and consent focus on the ability to achieve an end, and the role of those subjected to power in consenting respectively. Following Dahl's (1957) definition of power, "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do" (202-203). From this perspective the focus is on the role of 'A' in influencing 'B'. La Boétie (1998 [1548]) shifts the focus of analysis to the role of 'B' in either accepting to act, or withdrawing consent. Both theories understand power in a conflict between actors' interests.

Since this is a study of the perceptions and experiences of the members of the OPU, and not a work on the conditions of the poor or the homeless in Ottawa, in this chapter I focus on the motivations of the members of the OPU, and their perceptions of problems and goals. In the accounts given by the members of the union, many of the examples given dealt with getting others to do things they would not otherwise do. Alternately, the members of the union also gave accounts of instances where the OPU attempted to influence outcomes by giving or withdrawing consent. These accounts provide valuable insight into the motivations of the members of the OPU, and their perceptions of the circumstances they wish to alter and the goals they wish to achieve.

It is important to note that there are different types of information presented in this chapter, each with different relevance to this study. Firstly, the accounts of the members of the union represent lived experiences of life on the street, and the use of nonviolent action. In the previous chapter I took these accounts as data upon which I base my understandings of the activities of the OPU. Members of the union also presented their own understandings of the role of power within their use of nonviolent action. These understandings provide invaluable insight into the strategic thinking and motivations of the members of the union. Not only does this allow an investigation of the intent behind the actions chosen by the members of the union, it also supplements my own analysis of possible roles of power. In addition, applying theories of power based on Dahl, La Boétie and Foucault's work to further analyse power in these accounts does not discount the understandings of the members of the OPU based on their lived experience. It rather provides a fuller understanding of the possible roles of power in the different activities of the OPU.

Many of the descriptions of power given by members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union elaborated on the present circumstances that the members wished to change and the goals that they desired to obtain. Through the axial coding process described in Chapter Two, I was able to locate these perceptions within the components of social action seen in Chapter One (see Figure 1). Furthermore, when describing the use of nonviolent action, the members of the union tended to explain these activities either as a means to obtain a goal, or to focus on the usefulness of being able to withdraw consent through these activities. Members tended to describe the circumstances they wished to change, and the goals they wished to achieve in similar fashions; however, when describing the role of power in nonviolent action their responses differed. Some accounts described the role of nonviolence in imposing a particular course of action on an opponent, while other accounts centred on

nonviolence as a way to oppose domination by others. In other words, these accounts focused on the role of power as represented in Figure 2 and Figure 3. Still other parts of their accounts did not fit within either of these paradigms, seemingly describing power as neither capacity nor consent. Yet, all of the accounts of power offered by the members of the union were grounded in their perceptions of problems and goals and the relationships of actions to sustaining or changing these problems and goals.

4.1 Perceived Problems and Desired Goals

Although the underlying motivations of the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union were very diverse, they tended to fall into three distinct categories. Within these categories, the major focus tended to be a particular social circumstance or injustice, with either explicit or implicit goals attached to these perceived problems. Firstly, a primary complaint among the members of the union was injustices they experienced within their relations with the police. Secondly, circumstances surrounding experiences of poverty and perceived problems with social-institutional responses to poverty were also common among the members of the union. Finally, many of the members of the union also stated that unfair negative stereotypes that conditioned their relationship with the public and government were strong motivational factors for action. While not all members of the union cited each of these general categories, these problematic circumstances and goals related to changing them were extremely important in their evaluation of their activities.

It is important to note, though, that while the motivations of individual members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union can be sorted into general categories, the organization itself does not identify its mission with any of the categories discussed below. Several members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union noted that the organization does not have an organizational mission or vision. Philippe stated that, "We're a union. We exist for the members and we're comprised of the members and we exist for the benefit of the members. Some good things have come out of that." While he went on to cite some examples of changes that the OPU has sought, here Philippe was pointing out that the OPU is not dedicated to changes more specific than 'the good of the members'. Hubert further explained this characteristic of the OPU by stating that, "It's different between the members too, eh? Because it's very loose knit. A lot of people join the Panhandlers' Union for their own reasons." Neither member was willing to state that the OPU sought a particular goal, because the objectives of the union are decided and continuously revised by the members. Therefore, while the categories of motivation presented in the following sections are relevant to understanding the perceived problems and desired goals of the members of the OPU, they are not found in all the members of the union.

Police Relations

Many members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union noted poor relations with the police as a problem that they wish to address. Descriptions of such problems by the members focused on the use of violence, discrimination, and unjust applications of law. In many cases, members of the union perceived these types of injustices as interrelated, describing links between discrimination, unjust laws, and violence targeting the poor. While

most members stated that they recognized the right of the police to enforce the law, their desired goals in this case centred around altering how the law is enforced, and in some cases, the laws themselves. Police relations are also very important to both the capacity and consent analyses of power as the police were often cited as one of the primary actors in the accounts of power by the members of the OPU.

Members of the OPU complained that police targeted the poor with violence in an unjust way. After explaining that the OPU is directed by the motivations of its members, Philippe added that:

[...] the OPU was originally created in direct response to rising levels of violence by police on the street. This violence was largely caused because the police were under pressure from City Hall to do something about the rising levels of visible poverty on the street, even though it's not illegal.

Similar perceptions of police violence were not uncommon among other members of the union. For instance, René also stated that he felt that the police were more violent when dealing with panhandlers than the rest of the public. Maxime added that he has been subject to violent searches by the police that he felt violated his rights. While the members of the union generally did not deny the right of the police to enforce the law, they felt that they were subject to a higher and more violent level of enforcement than the rest of the public.

The members of the OPU cited profiling and discrimination as important elements leading to the violence they perceived in their relations with the police. Maxime stated that he felt that the police target him because he looks poor, and because he frequents poor parts of the city. He explained that, "It's just a lot of the police in Ottawa, they police based on geography and how you're dressed. If you look a certain way they harass you. I don't know why." René made a similar claim, saying that the police will often stop him on the street and question him about his daily activities. He felt that this type of attention amounts to profiling based on his race and appearance. In short, while the most immediate concern of the members of the OPU was the experience of violence when dealing with the police, many members felt that they were more likely to experience harassment and violence because of discrimination.

Similarly, many members of the OPU stated that when relating to the police they perceived that laws were enforced differently with the poor. For example, Philippe cited one example of an interaction a member of the union had with a police officer:

We actually had the police officer tell one of our members, he had been called several times to talk to our member for panhandling, and at one point he actually said, "Look, can't you just go and sell some pot? If you sell some pot I won't bother you." Because the cop knew if you sell pot people don't care, right? They're not going to get calls like twenty times a day because someone's selling pot on the street.

The perceived problem in this instance is an uneven application of the law. Both Maxime and Hubert related similar experiences of instances when they were singled out by the police

for panhandling while they perceived that the police ignored more flagrant contraventions of other laws. Again, the problem that the members of the union perceived in the uneven application of the law related to discrimination against the poor.

The members of the union also state that they often find themselves subject to laws they find inherently unjust. They argue that laws related to panhandling are deliberately vague, making compliance more difficult and allowing the police liberal flexibility in applying enforcement. Hubert explained that:

The law states that aggressive panhandling is prohibited. Soliciting in an aggressive manner is what they'll write on the ticket, when they formally charge you. The problem with that whole idea or concept is that they don't lay out what it is to be aggressive.

He continued to explain that while panhandling is not illegal, due to the vagueness of the legislation, the police can still ticket panhandlers. For instance, the Safe Streets Act defines aggressiveness only as, "a manner that is likely to cause a reasonable person to be concerned for his or her safety or security" ("Safe Streets Act" 1999). Here the problematic circumstance perceived by the members of the union was not just the application of the law, but the justice of the law itself.

The goals described by members of the OPU associated with police relations related to the justice and application of the law. In some instances, members of the union were very clear about specific goals they wished to achieve with their actions. For example, in the case of the protest at the police station in 2006, Philippe stated very clearly that the OPU was attempting to address police violence by getting a specific police officer off the street. In other cases, the members' goals are less specific. Maxime stated that one particular change he was happy to see was that "that there are some members of the Ottawa Police and maybe even City Hall that kind of see our point." Although he linked this outcome to the OPU's existence, rather than a particular activity, this implies that one of his desired goals is to change the discriminatory attitudes of police and law makers. Here members of the OPU are motivated to act to bring about a particular change in the activities of police and lawmakers.

Poverty

Another problem perceived by the members of the OPU is poverty itself and the societal responses to poverty. Here, the perceptions of the members of the union focused on poverty as a situation to change. The OPU members cited poverty, and social-institutional responses to poverty, as one of the central injustices that they wished to address. Moreover, they pointed out that poverty is an important condition of their action as a union. For example, many members of the OPU remarked that aspects of their life situation, such as lack of resources, mental illness or disability, make participation in OPU activities more difficult. Although, it is important to note that while most members stated that they wished to change elements of the provision of social services, they did not cite their poverty as an issue they were protesting against. This type of motivation touches on the role of action in addressing a perceived problem, and the role of that problem in affecting action.

One of the most common problems identified by members of the OPU was poverty itself, and impediments to escaping this condition. Philippe argued that by fighting for the rights of panhandlers the OPU was attempting to increase opportunities for members of the union to gain access to resources, rather than promoting panhandling per se:

I've told the media constantly I don't want, and the Panhandlers' Union doesn't want, to see a panhandler on every street corner, that's not our goal. Our goal is to give people choices. We don't want to force people to toss money into some guy's hat. We want people to have that choice available to them. [...] All they [panhandlers] want is the opportunity to ask, and I don't think that that's an impossible request.

Maxime and Hubert echoed this sentiment, arguing that many people on the street face obstacles such as mental illness, or stereotypes which limit their ability to earn money in ways other than panhandling. While the OPU does not directly attempt to improve the wage earning skills of its members, its members perceived the context in which its members earn income as a problem to be addressed.

Some of the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union also perceived inadequate services for the poor as a problem to be addressed. For example, Jane Scharf cited a lack of adequate services for youth living on the street as a major motivation for initiating the protest in 2004. René also stated that he believed that social service institutions catered more to their own continuation than the needs of their clientele. Similarly, Maxime asserted that conditions living in shelters themselves were degrading, "It bothers me because it seems like they're almost trying to push us to steal, to hurt people, it's like they want us to lash out so they can lock us away once and for all. Even some shelters are bad for that." Here some members of the union stated that the present services available to the poor are inadequate, and they seek to change these through their action.

Another common experience among the members of the union was the impact of poverty on their participation in union activities. Guillaume pointed out that poverty limits the number of avenues the union may pursue. He stated that:

[...] if you want your government to do what you need it to do, you have to be in something like the OPU. You have to have a voice, because our only option... we don't have the money to throw money at these people, we can't lobby them.

Not only did Guillaume cite poverty as a factor in the type of action the OPU chooses, he implied that he is motivated to act by a perceived lack of adequate government responses to poverty. Philippe argued that one of the key benefits he perceived in membership in the OPU is solidarity. He explained that by working together, the members of the OPU were able to overcome obstacles presented by their limited resources by combining their collective skills. The limits imposed by poverty were described by the members of the union both as a condition of their action as well as a problem they wished to address.

Once again, the perception of poverty as a problem to be addressed was accompanied by both specific and general goals. In some instances, such as the protest under the National Convention Centre underpass, members of the OPU were seeking very specific changes to how services to the poor were provided. In other cases, the goals elaborated by the members were less specific. For example, Hubert explained his conception of the goals of the OPU by saying that, "It's not about keeping people on the street, like 'yeah, begging is good, everybody should beg.' That's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is that there's a better approach than trying to get rid of this problem." Without offering a specific change to societal approaches to poverty, Hubert argued simply that he would like to see different approaches attempted.

Dehumanization

A third category of perceived problems and desired goals relates to the experiences of dehumanization among members of the OPU. Foremost among the problems perceived by the members of the OPU under the category of dehumanization are the characterizations of the poor by public figures. For instance, many of the members of the union cited statements made by the Mayor of Ottawa which they perceived as degrading. As stated by Guillaume, "Our membership is everything that he [the Mayor] hates. I mean, he's called us pigeons. He's said that we're like seagulls and you have to take a shotgun to the dump once in a while to scare the rest." The six interviewed members of the OPU also cited hostile attitudes from public officials as an important problem. Philippe recalled a description of panhandlers sitting on the street by another public official: "'Poor people sit there. And you got one on this side, and one on the other side, and pretty soon you got dirty little bookends.' That's how they think of us: dirty little bookends." The members of the OPU generally described the negative attitudes of public officials as sources of many of the problems they perceived with relations with the police and social responses to poverty. As a result, they often saw changing these attitudes as a step towards solving more proximate problems.

Moreover, many of the members of the union stated that they experienced similar negative characterizations in their interactions with the public in general. In some cases, OPU members stated that they desired to affect these stereotypes as means to achieve other goals. Yet, many of the members described goals related specifically to the reversal of negative stereotypes for its own sake. Maxime stated that one of the problems he wishes to address is negative stereotypes from the public:

They [members of the public] see us as an eye sore more than anything. They want to be able to walk down the street and not have someone ask them for change. They want to be able to think that everything's all good, that everyone that wants to work can work.

Likewise, Scharf also described her perception that the public wished to decrease the visibility of the poor. She stated that, "the way they were trying to do it was just to scare everybody away from public view. You know, to scare them off onto the less public streets." In this case, the members of the OPU perceived that characterizations of the poor by the general public and the treatment of the poor that this evokes should be changed.

In both of these cases, the stated goals of the members of the OPU centre on reversing these negative stereotypes. For instance, Maxime suggested that, “if we could get [the Mayor] to suddenly one day go on the news, pull a press conference and come out in full support of the Panhandlers’ Union, that would be awesome.” He went on to suggest that one of his personal objectives to take advantage of the possible creation of a storefront location was to organize projects to improve public perceptions of the OPU. Guillaume also mentioned that expressing outrage with dehumanizing comments made by Ottawa’s Mayor was a primary goal of at least one protest that he attended. Dehumanization was also seen by the members as a root problem related to achieving other proximate goals, such as improving police relations with the poor and the circumstances of poverty. Therefore, while addressing official and public forms of dehumanization was an end in itself for many of the members of the union it was also linked to achieving other goals.

These motivations for the use of nonviolence, and the circumstances and goals that that action seeks to achieve are important for the analysis of power in the activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union. As seen in Chapter One, different theories of power approach the relationship between perceived problems, action and desired goals very differently. The accounts given by the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union also imply their understandings of the relationships between these components of social action and how they relate to the activities of the OPU. In some cases, the descriptions of nonviolence and its role in their conflict reflects a conception of power as capacity. In other instances, the descriptions of power given by the members of the union address the role of power in the withdrawal of consent. Consequently, in some instances theories of power as capacity and consent are easily applied. However, some elements of the accounts of the members of the union do not fit within these analyses, which is why another understanding of power is explored in Chapter Five.

4.2 Power as Capacity

As introduced in Chapter One, the theory of power as capacity focuses on the role of power in achieving an end. Once again, while many authors have written of power as capacity, Dahl’s (1957) definition of power which states that, “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do” (202-203) sums up this understanding most succinctly. An analysis from this perspective focuses on the role of action in achieving a difference between the initial circumstances and a desired goal attained by exerting influence over another. The analysis of this exerted influence tends to see coercion as the primary vehicle of power, either through strength or threat of harm. In the case of the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union this means the role of nonviolent action in improving relations with the police, improving conditions for the poor, and reversing negative stereotypes through methods that force others to alter their behaviours. In this way all three categories of action described in Chapter Three can be analysed for the role of power in terms of the OPU either achieving or not achieving its goals. While this study was not designed to ‘measure’ power in the sense of the degree to which different actors have achieved their goals, here I demonstrate how this conception of power defines actors and their interests and how those definitions affect the understanding of power in the activities of the OPU.

In Dahl's conception of power, the primary referents of analysis are the actors 'A' and 'B' who act and are acted upon respectively. In the case of the use of nonviolence by the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union, Dahl's formula might be rewritten to state either, 'the OPU has power over the police/public officials/the public to the extent that the OPU can get the police/public officials/the public to do something they would not otherwise do'. These roles may also be inversed. Depending on the particular instance of nonviolent action, the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union may be attempting to force others to do something, or others might be attempting to force members of the OPU to do something which they are resisting using nonviolence. In either case, the capacity to exert power would be measured by the ability of the actor 'A' to achieve influence over the other 'B' to a particular end. Therefore, in each case of nonviolent action, the role of power would be analysed in terms of which actor is able to further his/her desired goals in terms of getting other actors to do something, and the role nonviolence plays in forcing actors to do these things.

In the case of the support-advocacy activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union three relevant examples could be analysed from this perspective. Firstly, there is the case of the support given to the member of the union denied the use of a wheelchair in prison. This was a case where the members of the OPU perceived an unjust application of regulations targeting their membership. Members of the OPU attempted to get representatives with the prison to accommodate the needs of the union member. Since the members of the OPU were able to get the prison officials to accommodate the needs of their member, in this instance by releasing him from jail, the OPU would be said to have exerted power over the prison officials. The second instance, when members of the OPU successfully attempted to have a hospital accommodate the academic ambitions of another member, the OPU could be said to have similarly exerted power over the officials of a healthcare facility.

In a third example of support advocacy activities, the OPU demonstrated less power defined as capacity. This case, described by Philippe, involved a panhandler who was ejected from a grocery store. Philippe stated that he attempted to negotiate with the managers of the store as a member of the OPU, but was unable to secure the right to remain in the store for the panhandler. In this case, he was not able to get the manager of the store to do something that he would not otherwise have done. As a result, an analysis of the role of power in this case using a conception of power as capacity would determine that the OPU did not have power over the manager of the store.

Analyses of power as capacity in cases of mass mobilization activities are also easily done since most of the mass mobilization activities of the OPU had clear objectives in terms of actions they desired others to take. For example, the Homeless Action Strike initiated from 2003-2004 was an action that had very specific goals. In this case, Jane Scharf and others staged a nonviolent occupation of the National Convention Centre Underpass, and later of the lawn at Ottawa City Hall with the intent of getting public officials to re-examine services provided to street-involved youth. Again in this case, the OPU could be said to have demonstrated power defined as capacity as they were able to pressure public officials to implement the Homelessness Taskforce which evaluated the services available to the poor.

Conversely, in cases of mass mobilization undertaken in resistance to action taken by others, an analysis of power as capacity would reverse the roles of the actors. Although the

overall analysis of the Homeless Action Strike would define the OPU as attempting to force action by public officials, Jane Scharf's description of the confrontation between the police and protesters during the protest under the National Convention Centre underpass reverses these roles. In this case, the police were attempting to force the protesters to leave the underpass area, and their failure to do so would be an example of their failure to exert power over the protesters. Likewise, in the case of the mass protest at the police station in 2006, the situation could be said to be an example of both the OPU's ability to force the police service to take action with regards to a specific officer, or an example of the police's inability to force the protesters to leave.

Finally, there is the example of the OPU mobilization to protest the erection of the fence under the National Convention Centre underpass. This example again could represent either an attempt by the City of Ottawa to block actions of homeless people, or an example of action by the OPU to force public officials to reverse a decision. In the first formulation, the placement of the fence could be seen as an attempt to prevent the homeless from doing something they would otherwise have done. In the second formulation, cutting the lock on the fence and filing a lawsuit would be methods undertaken by the OPU to attempt to force the public officials to do something they would not otherwise do. However, in this case this conception of power provides an unclear evaluation of who exerted power over whom. Since the lawsuit ultimately resulted in a mediated settlement, neither party was clearly forced the other to do anything they would not otherwise do. Though, this may be understood as a balance of power or a strategic decision by both parties to get closer to a goal without achieving it. The conception of power as capacity does not seem to adequately describe the role of power in this instance because the goals of the actors did not seem to be completely mutually exclusive.

Power as capacity is also of little use in analyzing the organizational activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union. Indeed, the OPU does not undertake organizational activities to force members to do something they would not otherwise do. Though these activities may contribute to a more efficient exertion of power by the OPU over another body, they do not demonstrate this type of power itself. Similarly, the conditions of the members of the OPU, such as poverty, or negative public stereotypes, would be defined by this analysis simply as circumstantial factors related to perceived problems and goals, instead of manifestations of power.

This conception of power is also evident in some of the perceptions of power related by the members of the OPU. Many of the members of the union accounted for the role of power in the OPU's activities using terms illustrating an understanding of power as capacity. For example, Maxime cited his motivation to join the OPU as:

Anything they [the police] can do to marginalize us, push us off to the sides, out of sight, they're doing it. So I really like the idea of the Panhandlers' Union and that's why I joined right away. [...] It's good to be able to push back every now and again, because let's face it; we spend a lot of time getting pushed around.

Here Maxime described the role of the OPU in terms of a struggle for control over the treatment of panhandlers in everyday life. By describing the activities of the OPU in this manner, he laid out the dynamic of power between the police and the OPU in terms of opposing actors attempting to force the other to do things they would not otherwise do. Scharf also used terms implying a conception of power as capacity. She stated that:

They [the police] like that population [the homeless] the most, because repercussion for violence against those individuals is the least likely to occur. Because they're the least capable of holding somebody accountable. You know what I mean, no one listens to them and they don't have the letter writing skills some times.

Again, in this description, Scharf describes the role of power in terms of one actor being able to influence another to do something or to accept a condition.

The conception of power as capacity was also evident in the perceptions of action as it related to goals within the membership of the OPU. Guillaume argued that he saw power in the activities of the OPU since, "The only way to get government under you is you have to embarrass them... You have to make them look bad if they don't do what you want them to do. It's effective right?" In this description, Guillaume focused on the role of specific activities to force government to accept a specific outcome. Likewise, René argued in favour of nonviolent activities by citing examples of "concrete victories" the OPU has won concrete victories with nonviolence, such as the settlement of the lawsuit against the City of Ottawa. Once again, the referent for the role of power is described in terms of the achievement of a desired goal, and forcing others to accept an outcome they would otherwise avoid.

4.3 Power as Consent

In Chapter One I described how La Boétie's theory of power as consent posits that the power of 'A' rests in 'B's willingness to comply with 'A'. Theories from this perspective hold that the power of the rulers is contingent on the consent of the ruled, which is fostered by the legitimacy of the rulers' authority. As such, an analysis from this perspective focuses on the role of 'B' in supplying or withdrawing consent from 'A' in a particular system. In the case of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union, such an analysis looks at attempts by public officials and/or the police to make the members of the union comply with particular directives and the role of nonviolent action in withdrawing consent when these directives are perceived as unjust. Again, in this case this study is not designed to measure the efficiency or power of nonviolent action understood in these terms. Rather I examine the usefulness of this theory in describing the understandings of the members of the OPU and their experience of nonviolent action.

Power conceived as consent focuses on the role of those subject to power in consenting to do what others want them to do. Just as in the case of power conceived as capacity, there is a tremendous emphasis in this type of analysis placed on the importance of perceived problems, action and desired goals. Yet, unlike an analysis of power conceived as capacity, this type of analysis reverses the analytical focus to look at the initial circumstances

which lead 'B' to either consent or not. When applied to the case of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union's use of nonviolence, this type of analysis generally casts the OPU as the withdrawer of consent from another actor attempting to impose a course of action. Here I also examine the role of legitimacy in determining whether an actor decides to consent to the imperatives of another or not.

In terms of the support-advocacy activities, for instance those at the jail or healthcare facility, this type of analysis might reverse the understanding of who is acting in each situation compared to the analysis based on capacity. For example, in the case of the support-advocacy activities of the OPU at the jail, this type of analysis would look at the OPU's role in consenting to the conditions that the jail wardens were attempting to impose. In this case, when they perceived the conditions as illegitimate and unjust, the members of the OPU withdrew their consent, and began making plans to have others withdraw their consent as well. As power conceived as consent places the locus of power with those asked to obey, the explanation offered in this situation would be that since the members of the union were unwilling to obey, the prison officials were unable to exert power over them. Similarly, this theory of power would state that the similar outcome of the OPU confrontation with the healthcare facility officials was also a result of the withdrawal of consent. Since the members of the OPU were not willing to consent to the arrangement proposed by the healthcare facility, these officials modified their plan of action to one that the members of the OPU would consent to as legitimate.

In the case of mass mobilization activities, this type of analysis is best suited to explain the role of power in the civil disobedience undertaken under the National Convention Centre underpass in 2003 and at the police station in 2006. In both these cases, the police attempted to force the protesters to leave and were unsuccessful. In other words, the police were unable to get the protesters to do something they would not otherwise do. When power is conceived in terms of consent it rests with those asked to do something. In the case at hand, the protesters who did not recognize the legitimacy of the police's demands did not consent to leave as ordered. This situation exemplifies the distinction between the conceptions of power as capacity and consent. While power conceived as capacity would argue that the police could have made use of their ability to remove the protesters by force, the conception of power as consent argues that to have power the police must command consenting obedience from the protesters. As the protesters did not consent to the demands of the police, they determined the outcome of this power struggle.

In the instance of the protest at City Hall in 2004, a similar analysis still holds. In this case, the protesters did not recognize the legitimacy of the services offered by the City to the homeless. Here they were not only attempting to impose an undefined solution, but were attacking the legitimacy of the status quo. Presumably the officials would have wished the protesters to abide within the existing system. Since the protesters would not consent to do this, the officials were forced to explore other options. By establishing the Homelessness Taskforce, the officials were able to create an outcome with enough legitimacy for the protesters to consent.

The view of power as consent also has little to say about the OPU's organizational activities which can perhaps enable its members to better withdraw consent. For example,

by recruiting more members, the effective scope of the consent withdrawn in the union's other activities would increase if more people participated. Likewise, through adequate planning, the organization could foster its legitimacy, perhaps making its other activities more effective. For example, if the organization is seen as more legitimate than its opponents, third parties would be more likely to withdraw consent from the dictates of the opponent. However, as the conception of power as consent still understands power as a function of someone attempting to make another do something, until someone attempts to impose an action on the other, it offers little in the way of analysis of such activities.

It is likely that many members of the OPU chose specific activities as means to address perceived problems through conceiving power as a matter of consent. Indeed, many of the accounts of power given by the members of the OPU described their perceptions of power as consent. For example, Philippe states that in, "all of our activities, essentially what we are doing is saying, 'No. No we won't. No we won't go home and die quietly. No we won't become invisible so we won't be seen on the street.'" This perception of the role of power clearly falls within a consent-based understanding. Here Philippe is suggesting that the activities of the OPU withdraw consent from impositions from outside actors.

4.4 Nonviolence, Capacity and Consent

These two theories of power explain the role of power in the nonviolent activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union within their respective conceptions of power. Both capacity and consent conceptions of power make use of essentially the same formula of power interactions, namely an actor attempting to make another do something. The difference between these conceptions is in where they locate power within this interaction. The conception of power as capacity focuses on the abilities of 'A' to make 'B' do something, whereas the conception of power as consent focuses on 'B' and the role of her/his obedience or lack thereof. As these conceptions of power locate power on opposite ends of the same interaction, they can be combined to describe a two sided dynamic of power. This dynamic describes a particular way of understanding the activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union.

Many of the accounts of nonviolence from the members of the union described these actions as attempts to force others to do something they did not want to do. These accounts described nonviolence as a method of mobilizing shame or inconvenience to force others to submit. For example, in the case of the union member in the jail, the union threatened to inconvenience the officials by placing a picket line at the jail. In the case of the tent encampment at Ottawa City Hall, public shame was used to force public officials to take action. In effect, these accounts stressed the importance of coercion in at least some of the activities of the OPU. Moreover, the success of these nonviolent activities relied in large part on the capacities of the union and its members to effectively be inconvenient or shaming, for instance.

However, members of the OPU also stressed the importance of nonviolence in taking advantage of the necessity of consent in the dynamic of power. In the accounts of the members of the OPU, this necessity of consent was invoked to describe the effectiveness of the union's activities as well as the limitations of the capacities of others. For instance, the

use of nonviolence was often described in terms of a search for an acceptable option. In the case of the activities at the prison and healthcare facility, much of the negotiation involved searching for options which both groups could accept. In addition, the apparent restraint of the police in during mass mobilization activities seems to suggest that the question of legitimacy in their actions is important. In the case of the confrontations between the police and protesters both under the National Convention Centre underpass and at the Police Station, the police seemed to have ample capacity to simply impose their will on the situation. That they did not suggests that part of their decision making process includes consideration for their legitimacy in the eyes of others. These others may have been the protesters themselves, but the police may also have been concerned that their actions appeared legitimate in the eyes of members of the general public. Here, nonviolence could be said to be taking advantage of the need of the police for the consent of the people over whom they exert power.

Taken together, these perceptions suggest that many members of the OPU see both capacity and consent as aspects of the role of power in nonviolence. Their accounts of nonviolence often intermixed descriptions of power as capacity and consent. Take for example Philippe's account of the support-advocacy activities involving the member at the prison. On one hand, he suggested that the capacity of the union to mobilize a picket line in front of the prison forced the officials to find a solution they would not otherwise have looked for. On the other hand, the success of a picket relies on the unwillingness of other union members to obey directives to cross it. Similar combinations of perceptions of power as capacity and consent can be found in the accounts of the members of the OPU. This suggests that the conceptions of power as capacity and consent can perhaps best be understood as pieces of a whole interaction.

The perceptions of the members of the OPU suggested that the organizational activities of the union also exemplified the role of power, but this is not necessarily evident using a conception of power as capacity or consent. Some members of the OPU focused on the importance of these organizational activities as empowering activities for the members of the union. For example, Philippe stated that simply participating in an organization like the OPU is a significant achievement for some of the members as it allows them to develop skills for the future. Hubert also noted that participation in the OPU fostered a spirit of support which can help members improve their personal lives. These observations suggest that organizational activities play a role in the development of capacity in the members of the union, or in better enabling the members to exercise their capacities in aggregate. In terms of power conceived as consent, inasmuch as these activities help foster the legitimacy of the organization, or expand its membership, they can expand the disparity between the legitimacy of the OPU and other groups. Nevertheless, as these activities do not involve anyone attempting to make others do things, power conceived as capacity or consent is not truly involved. While participation in these activities might increase the capacities of members of the union, power in the conception as capacity does not exist unless it is exercised towards an end. Similarly, as the organizational activities of the OPU do not imply a condition to be accepted, there is no question of power as consent.

Theories of power as capacity and consent also seem to be difficult to apply to the nature of the problems and goals of the actors in conflict. Both of these conceptions of

power take for granted the perceived problems and desired goals of the different groups. Yet, in some accounts of the members of the union, the goals of the union changed over the course of some of its activities. For example, during the nonviolent occupation of the police station, the protesters began by demanding the resignation of an officer, but were satisfied by his promotion. Likewise, over the course of the mediation I observed that the representatives of the OPU changed their offers to the other party. On one hand, these changes can be explained as a search for acceptable options while fundamental problems and goals remain the same. The method of removing the officer from the street was negotiable, the OPU desire that he no longer work on the street was not. Although these theories can explain the dynamic between actors attempting to control each other towards differing goals, they do not seem to address how those actors come about their goals or see particular options as legitimate.

Neither of these conceptions of power touches on the question of truth in the practice of nonviolence. As seen in Chapter One, truth is a fundamental element in many principled understandings of nonviolence, including that of Gandhi. In fact, members of the OPU suggested that the objectives of some of their activities were to affect others' perceptions of truth. For example, some members stated that they participate in the union in part to change public perceptions of panhandlers and the homeless. Equally, the May Day protests not associated with a particular cause often had no other goal than to communicate the grievances of the union. These goals could be associated with increasing or decreasing legitimacy for particular laws, practices or groups, but as neither of these cases involves someone attempting to make another do anything, there again seems to be no question of power as capacity or consent. In these cases, these activities suggest that nonviolence does have some relationship to the perception of truth, though these conceptions of power do not recognize this as power. To understand the role of power in the construction of perceived problems and desired goals we must turn to Foucault.

Chapter Five: Power Relations, Episteme and the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union

In this chapter I apply Foucault's conception of power to the nonviolent action of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union. As seen in Chapter One, Foucault defines power as "a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions" (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982, 220). Unlike conceptions of power as capacity or as consent, Foucault uses the term 'power' to refer to a social dynamic rather than a force that can be possessed or exercised. Therefore, in the Foucauldian sense, power relations are understood as a dimension of social relationships circumscribed by tacit social understandings referred to as episteme. In turn, the dynamic between power relations and episteme constructs subjects, individuals who occupy specific positions within a matrix of social relations. This conception of power provides a very different frame of analysis for the activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union.

In a Foucauldian perspective, the important element of the analysis of power is not influence exerted over others, but instead the role of tacit social understandings (episteme) in circumscribing interactions between actors (power relations) through the construction of subjects. The perceptions and experiences of the members of the OPU have suggested a number of ways in which social understandings circumscribe interactions between panhandlers and the police, public officials, and the general public. Additionally, through

the use of Foucault's concept of discipline, I focus on ways in which the members of the OPU are constructed as subjects within power relations. I then apply Foucault's conception of power to examine the role of the nonviolent activities of the OPU in repositioning members of the union within power relations and reshaping episteme. Lastly, I will compare the results of the Foucauldian analysis with those based on the conceptions of power of Dahl and La Boétie. This comparison reveals that Foucault's conception of power accounts for crucial aspects of OPU experiences and activities that the approaches discussed in the previous chapter could not do.

5.1 Positions within Power Relations

As discussed in Chapter One, Foucault approaches power as a non-reified concept with two important, mutually constructive elements: power relations and episteme. For Foucault, the concept of power relations describes a complex matrix of social relationships in which subjects may occupy different positions. Different positions within this relational matrix comprise different sets of norms and privileges that shape the range of action of subjects. The second component of Foucault's conception of power, episteme, refers to the tacit social knowledge that circumscribes power relations. Neither power relations nor episteme are tangible phenomena, and as such, Foucault argues that power is not a tangible phenomenon that can be possessed but instead a force that permeates all social interaction. Therefore, I analyse the role of power in experiences of the members of the OPU by examining the norms, privileges and ranges of action of the members of the union in different relational positions, as well as the social knowledge that seems to support these relationships of power. The focus of this analysis is the role of power in defining the terms of social relationships, rather than locating the role of power with particular actors.

The members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union described many different positions they occupy within power relations, specifically in relationships with the police and the general public. These descriptions offered a great deal of insight into the privileges, norms and ranges of actions conferred by these different positions within power relations. Moreover, while many of the members of the OPU felt comfortable generalizing some characteristics of relations between panhandlers and other groups, these characteristics are grounded in specific contexts and should not be understood as defining rules of relations between these groups. This Foucauldian analysis of the perceptions and experiences of the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union provides insight into the dynamics of power in the interplay between the OPU and other groups.

Firstly, as seen in Chapter Four the members of the OPU often described their relationship with the police⁴ as very asymmetrical and often involving physical violence. In fact, in the perspectives of the members of the OPU, this relationship could be described as one of domination, in Foucault's sense of asymmetrical power relations. Nonetheless, the members of the OPU also described some areas in which they were able to influence this

⁴ Foucault uses the term police to describe a form of social regulation associated with power. However, in this analysis I avoid using 'police' in this way to avoid confusion. All references to 'police' in this study refer to Police Officers or the Police Service.

relationship. This relationship of power therefore seems to be dynamic, and not one of complete police control.

Maxime, for instance, explained that he has been the target of searches by the police. He added that during one such search, he was physically assaulted by the police when he asked about the motivation for the search. Similarly, Philippe explained that some police officers tend to single out homeless youth and beat them, as in the case of the police officer described in Chapter Three. Jane Scharf reiterated this point, adding that, “They [the police] like that population [the homeless] the most, because repercussions for violence against those individuals is the least likely to occur.” In other words, the norms and privileges of the relationship between panhandlers and the police seem to favour a much greater range of action for the police. These perceptions of the relationship between the police and panhandlers often focused on the ability of the police to commit violence against panhandlers.

Many of the members of the OPU perceived that they were more limited in their range of action within power relations compared to the police. For example, Maxime pointed out that the police often send infiltrators to gather information on the activities of the OPU. He added that the OPU could not respond in a similar way by sending infiltrators to gather information about the activities of the police. The difference in the actions available to the police and the panhandlers is not simply a question of resources, though. Not only does the OPU not possess the resources to infiltrate the police service, but such action would not be permitted within the social understandings that would circumscribe such actions. Likewise, Philippe noted that while members of the police service are permitted to use violence against members of the panhandling community, if members of the OPU attempted to respond in kind they would simply be arrested, or killed. Once again, this demonstrates the asymmetrical nature of the relationship between panhandlers and the police.

Nevertheless, the norms and privileges within the power relationship between the police and the members of the OPU are not entirely one sided. For example, René noted that the police are limited in their ability to use violence on homeless people by the visibility of these actions. He cited the prevalence of cameras in society as a factor that increases repercussions for police officers who flagrantly use violence against panhandlers. Here, social knowledge defines the range of action available to police officers within power relations as well. I also noted that episteme did not dictate the actions of police officers, but instead circumscribed the range of actions within power relations. For example, Scharf stated that, “Other police are serious about wanting a city that’s safe and drug free and where people have safe appropriate places to live. And they’re working just as hard as any other conscientious individuals are to that end.” Maxime echoed this perspective, arguing that some police officers will look the other way when enforcing solicitation laws. The range of action available to subjects in these two groups is circumscribed by the social knowledge that defines the norms and privileges of their respective positions within power relations. Yet, both groups of subjects still have freedom to make choices within these relationships.

The relationship between panhandlers and the police also illustrates the importance of position within power relationships. For example, Philippe cited an instance when a police officer told another member of the OPU that the police would receive fewer complaints

about the member if he were selling marijuana instead of panhandling. In a Foucauldian analysis, this is not an example of simply changing allegiances, but instead an example of the importance of one's position within power relations. Here, being a panhandler and being a drug dealer represent different positions within power relations with regards to the police. In each case there is a different set of tacit social understandings that circumscribe the range of actions within power relations. Changing positions within power relations thus plays an important role for subjects in this case, as different sets of privileges and norms accompany these different positions.

A second type of relationship described by many of the members of the OPU better demonstrated Foucault's understanding of power as a force present throughout power relationships. In this case, the relationship between panhandlers and the general public was the focus of the accounts of the panhandlers. These relationships were characterized by both fear and minimization. On one hand the members of the OPU cited examples of how interactions with the public during panhandling demonstrated the public's fear of panhandlers. Other accounts by the members of the union cited examples of how the public attempts to minimize panhandlers and dismiss them. In this case, the relationship between panhandlers and the general public is best understood, following Foucault, through the role of power in circumscribing the norms and privileges within relationships without necessarily constituting a situation of domination for one group or the other.

Many of the members of the OPU observed that members of the public often feared them and avoided interactions with them. Maxime gave one example of this which simultaneously points to the importance of positions within power relations:

There was some lady and with her two little kids. She was at the bus stop; he [a panhandler] had her cornered in the corner of the bus stop. If you were to see him from far away, not heard what he was saying, you'd assume he was mugging her. But really he's asking her for change. His demeanour and everything else, just the way he was asking, was very threatening. Well, I went in there and I dragged him right out of the bus stop [...] This lady was terrified, her kids were terrified. And that's the sort of thing that makes us look bad. But nobody's going to notice that I'm a panhandler.

In this example, it is important to note the role of position in distribution of norms and privileges within power relations. First, panhandlers are described as persons to fear, an understanding reinforced by the actions of one individual. However, though himself a panhandler, Maxime perceived that his range of action was greater because he did not occupy the position of panhandler within power relations in this instance. While fear seems to be an important product of social understandings in this example, it is also possible to see the importance of position within power relations, as well as the change in the norms circumscribing interaction in different positions.

In contrast, many of the members of the OPU cited public minimization of the homeless as another reality of their experience of power relations. Philippe stated that he feels that many members of the public attempt to ignore panhandlers to assuage their guilt about occupying higher levels of social status:

[...] people object to panhandlers because their very existence implies a sort of criticism of them, that they haven't done enough. [...] This is why they're forced to blame the panhandlers themselves, because if the panhandlers are not to blame for the situation, who is?

In this case, Philippe perceived that general social understanding (or episteme) shapes how the general public relates to panhandlers. He suggested that a tacit social understanding of the relationship between panhandlers and the (in)action the public circumscribes how the public reacts in interactions with panhandlers. Similarly, Maxime argued that his interactions with the public were often determined by general social understandings. For example, he stated that on one occasion an individual assumed that he was asking for money when in actuality he asked for the time of day. Once again, the relationship between panhandlers and the general public seems to be circumscribed by tacit social knowledge, while the resultant power relations do not seem to grant 'power', in the sense of capacity, to either group.

Neither of these situations represents a situation of complete domination. Foucault argues that power relations are never entirely one sided, and they imply resistance. Within these relationships, there is a range of action, and the possibility for resistance, even when they are asymmetrical. Maxime pointed out that especially in situations of extreme domination there is the imperative to resist:

Our only other choice is to just lay down and take it. If we just lay down and take it we're just going to keep taking abuse. It's not like they're going, 'Oh, you finally get it, you're worthless. Ok, we're going to leave you alone.'

This statement supports Foucault's contention that there is always an element of freedom within power relations. Just as Foucault argues that within power relations people remain agents with the freedom to make choices, Maxime pointed out that complete acceptance of an imposed way of perceiving themselves would reduce panhandlers to a position less than that of a subject. Even in asymmetrical power relations, Foucault argues that subjugated people have some role in participating in those relations other than simply being victim to them.

In both these examples, the distribution of norms and privileges in these power relations is not clearly one sided. While it may be a truism to say that the social contexts of action change in different situations for different people, here the Foucauldian analysis argues that these changes are the product of power. In the case of relations between the police and panhandlers, while the range of action of panhandlers is much more limited than that of the police, it is tacit social knowledge, not an inherent capacity of members of the police that circumscribes both their range of action. Similarly, power relations between the general public and panhandlers do not determine which group will obtain desired goals at the expense of the other. Instead power plays a role in circumscribing the range of action of either group within their relationship through tacit social understandings. Foucault's explanation that power relations are not static and that power does not collect at specific loci within power relations is helpful to understanding how dynamic these relations are in the case of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union.

5.2 Discipline and the Construction of Subjects

Foucault argues that power acts on individuals in society through discipline by shaping them as subjects. Discipline, in this context, refers to the constructive character of power to build the capacities of subjects to govern themselves in specific ways. In other words, particular social structures and characteristics of social relationships shape how individuals relate to themselves as subjects. In the case of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union, the accounts of the members of the union reveal a number of social structures which discipline subjects within power relations. Discipline can be seen in the circumstances which accompany the practice of panhandling, the conditions experienced by individuals living on the street, and the discourse of public officials. Moreover, some accounts of the members of the OPU touched on possible roles of discipline in shaping other groups within power relations, such as the police.

In the case of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union, discipline's role in constructing subjects can be seen in the construction of panhandlers as subjects through panhandling activities themselves. Maxime noted that panhandling on the street involves assuming an identity as a panhandler, and that this is reinforced through interactions with the public. He states that:

[...] these are the guys that get the money because they present themselves as, 'I'm just a pathetic mess. I can't do anything for myself.' [...] It's basically people saying you have to look as pathetic as possible or I'm not going to give you anything. They want you to be beyond help before they'll help you.

He added that when he requires money, he often must alter his appearance to look less well-off to be able to earn money through panhandling. Although many of the members of the OPU perceived that members of the public cast the homeless with negative stereotypes, in this instance Maxime opted to maximize his income from panhandling by living up to these stereotypes. The range of action in this position within power relations encourages panhandlers to relate to themselves in a particular way. By adopting this role within social understandings, this tacit social knowledge is reinforced. This also exemplifies Foucault's argument that power is intentional and nonsubjective. While no agent required the production of panhandlers as subjects in this way, the positions circumscribed by episteme create subjects which reinforce episteme.

The experiences of panhandlers living on the street also demonstrate the role of discipline in constructing panhandlers as subjects. In this case, interactions with life circumstances on the street also construct specific ways of interacting with self. For example members of the OPU perceived that the shelter system reinforced specific ways for the homeless to relate to themselves. Philippe noted that the lack of support for the homeless reinforces self-destructive habits in homeless populations. Two other members of the OPU cited the experience of living in homeless shelters as an important factor in assuming the role of a homeless person. Guillaume argued that:

This is what shelters do, is they dehumanize. They completely remove your dignity. You have no control over anything. Everything you do, whether you want to stay home and sleep, whether you're forced out onto the road, whether you're allowed to have coffee at this time of the day, whether you can eat at this time of the day: it's all controlled by the institution.

Maxime added that "They say they're helping, but it's kind of insulting the way they help you. [...] the guys that work there [at a shelter] they will insult you to your face and if you try to stand up for yourself at all you're barred." In these perceptions of staying in a shelter, both Guillaume and Maxime describe a specific position within power relations which they occupy.

While theories of capacity and consent might explain these experiences in terms of the ability of shelters to dictate the actions of the homeless, Foucault's analysis explores the role of power in shaping the homeless as subjects. Here, the experience of staying in a shelter is not simply one of unpleasantness, but one in which 'dignity is completely removed' and individuals are not allowed to stand up for themselves. These experiences seem to be examples of discipline constructing specific ways of being within the homeless population. The distribution of norms and privileges within the relationship between homeless people and shelter staff encourages the homeless people to relate to themselves in specific ways, which in turn reinforces the tacit social knowledge that circumscribes power relations. This is a relationship between power and knowledge whereby each helps construct the other and the ways in which homeless people in this situation understand themselves as subjects.

A similar role of knowledge as a constructive force is evident in the discourse of public officials cited by members of the OPU. For example, the comments by public officials equating panhandlers to pigeons or to "dirty little bookends" mentioned by Philippe and others describe a particular social understanding of the position of panhandlers in social relations. Guillaume added that this type of view of the homeless is also seen in the media, who often portray homeless people in a negative light. In both cases, this discourse is an example of, and creates, general tacit understandings that frame the power relations between homeless people and the general public. For instance, Philippe characterized some of the officials dealt with by OPU members during support-advocacy activities as:

officialdom who don't understand that these are human beings that need to be treated with the same respect as any other human being. [...] They see that a person is poor, the person is homeless, and as far as they're concerned they can do anything they want with them.

In other words, the stereotypes present in official discourse not only frame the range of actions within power relations, but also construct what the homeless are seen to be within episteme.

Such understandings of what the homeless 'are' are also internalized by the homeless themselves. Philippe noted that:

When you live on the street, you often end up joining what's called a street family. That is, an affinity group of people that hang out together and watch each other's backs. And unfortunately, often this group is extremely regressive in the sense that rather than building on each other's strengths, they tear each other down according to each others' weaknesses.

Once again, as people living on the street play a role within power relations, this reinforces a particular way of relating to themselves that further contributes to tacit social understandings. Here subjects respond to discipline to internalize what the homeless 'are'.

Members of the OPU also described situations in which relations with the police can be seen as forms of Foucauldian discipline as well. For instance, Jane Scharf noted that before she initiated a protest under the National Convention Centre underpass, "the way they [the police] used to supervise under the bridge is every hour [...] they would come down and kick everybody out. And they [homeless youth] would just go right away." The fact that these youth would leave immediately without protest demonstrates their tacit understandings of their position within power relations in a Foucauldian analysis of power. Moreover, it suggests that they have internalized certain aspects of being a homeless subject through this method of discipline. Once again, it is possible to see the mutually constructive relationship between the episteme that circumscribes power relations, and the role of power relations in constructing episteme.

Three members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union also noted that similar forms of discipline shape how police officers might see themselves. Both Philippe and René noted that the police service is a hierarchical organization, suggesting that this influences their understanding of power relations. For example, Philippe stated that, "they lose visibility of certain other types of power. For example, they don't seem to have a very clear understanding of the dynamic of mutual aid." Scharf added that the nature of policing as a profession which allows the use of violence likely encourages police officers to be more violent than other professionals. In both instances, there is a similar argument made which supports Foucault's assertion that power relations construct specific types of subjects. As police officers assume particular positions within power relations, they adopt particular ways of relating to themselves that in turn reinforce the tacit social understandings circumscribing these power relations.

These examples are best understood in terms of Foucauldian discipline as a force that constructs the subjective values that circumscribe the relationships between panhandlers and other members of society. Here, a Foucauldian analysis looks beyond the perceived problems and desired goals of action to analyse the role of power in shaping the context of power relationships that in turn circumscribe the range of action of these subjects. This is not to say that being homeless is a condition reducible to a constructed subjectivity. There are certainly other factors that contribute to homelessness. For example, Guillaume noted that "impoverished people, generally the homeless and so forth, tend to be there because [...] they have some form of mental illness." However, such circumstances lie beyond the scope of this study. What is not beyond the scope of this study, however, is the role of power in constructing subjects, and how those self-understandings shape the positions one can occupy within power relations.

5.3 Power Relations and OPU Activities

As discussed in Chapter One, Foucault's analysis of the relationship between knowledge/power allows for an analysis of the role of nonviolent action in reshaping conceptions of the truth. Some authors argue that nonviolence does not force another to do something, but instead exposes the terms of power relations, and challenges the legitimacy of these terms within a social context (see Gandhi 1966; Juergensmeyer 2005; Wink 1998). For Foucault, power and knowledge are linked as they mutually construct the tacit social understandings circumscribing social relations. The case of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union exemplifies the (re)construction of subjects through organizational activities. The support-advocacy and mass mobilization activities of the OPU also demonstrate methods in which power relations are recast through redefinitions of subjective roles. By applying Foucault's analysis of power to these activities, the focus of analysis shifts from achieved results to the process of constructing the tacit social knowledge that circumscribes social action.

Firstly, all members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union can participate in the organizational activities of the union. Most members of the union perceived this sort of activity as one that is inherently beneficial to participating members. Philippe argued that:

They [OPU members] gain something themselves from belonging to an organization, and it's not simply them contributing to an organization. So in the case of the OPU we have members who've been able to stabilize their lives as a result of belonging to the OPU. That sense of pride and accomplishment that comes from being part of the organization, from learning the skills associated with being able to organize, it has a very positive effect on people's lives.

He added that, "with the OPU what we're trying to do is to create a street family which is positive, so that they can accentuate each others' strengths rather than each others' weaknesses." Hubert also added that the OPU helps to, "engender entrepreneurial spirit for folks who are on their last leg. [...] A lot of people who get an experience like that end up getting off the street." In short, both union members here argued that simply being a member of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union changes OPU members as subjects.

In terms of Foucault's analysis of power, this change can be understood in terms of discipline. For example, while the discourse of public officials provided dehumanized conceptions of panhandlers, participation in OPU activities is described here as constructing alternative understandings of what panhandlers 'are'. In other words, by participating in organizational activities, members of the OPU are able to reconceptualise themselves as subjects within episteme. This also implies that episteme does not simply reinforce static power relations, but has a dynamic reciprocal relationship with subjects who can engage and change social understandings.

Beyond simple participation, the support-advocacy activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union interact with the episteme and power relations not only with the members of the union, but with others as well. These activities seem to play a role in

repositioning members of the union within power relations. For example, as discussed in Chapter Three, Philippe noted that prison and healthcare facility officials dealt with the OPU members based on their understandings of the norms and privileges that circumscribed the members' positions in society. In terms of Foucault's conception of power, the tacit knowledge of the officials is the impediment to the treatment the OPU would like the members to receive.

In this sense, the support advocacy activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union reposition the members of the union within the officials' tacit social understandings. For example, Philippe suggested that in these situations, "The OPU is there to tell them they do have an organization." Therefore, these activities seem to recast the role of the OPU members from 'homeless people' to 'union members'. Philippe adds that, "In a case like this, with a person trapped in a [healthcare facility] or a prison, we want to be that family that they don't have." This strategy essentially recasts the union member within power relations in two ways. Firstly, this activity repositions the individual within power relations for the other person in that relationship. Moreover, this support acts as an alternate form of discipline, reconstructing the union members as subjects. Scharf supported this view saying, "The panhandlers really like it, even the special status, because it gave them a little edge with the police. It showed that they were supported if they had that card." In terms of Foucault's conception of power, this edge likely came from the repositioning of the union members within power relations, and reconstructing their view of themselves within those relations. The mass mobilization activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union seem to work in a similar fashion as the support-advocacy activities in defining the tacit social knowledge within power relations. Moreover, these activities, more than the others, seem to expose the terms of power relations in such a way as to challenge normal responses.

The four cases of mass mobilization activities undertaken by the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union demonstrate these aspects of Foucauldian power. Firstly, the yearly May Day protests of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union seem to attempt to act directly on the tacit social knowledge of the general public. Maxime stated that one of the main outputs of these protests is that, "It shows that we can be organized. [...] We protest just to let people know we're out here, we can be organized, and we do have our own ideas about things." This suggests that the target of these protests is to alter the general public's knowledge of panhandlers. Of course, Maxime added that this is done through talking to members of the general public who witness the protests in a calm manner incongruous with their present tacit knowledge of panhandlers. The target of this action is, in a word, episteme.

Members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union also noted that the particular methods of these protests take advantage of the terms of power relations. For example, René argued that using nonviolent protests, as opposed to violent protests, is more advantageous because it does not grant social legitimacy to authorities to use violent enforcement methods. In other words, while the power relations between police and panhandlers were described by the members of the OPU as asymmetrical, these power relations are still circumscribed by tacit social knowledge that, in this case, limits the range of action of the police. This is not to say that in all circumstances, or in all societies, similar tacit knowledge would circumscribe action in the same way. However, in this case, the members of the OPU have noted that episteme limits the range of action of the police to respond with violence to nonviolent

protest. Other protests undertaken by the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union also demonstrate this role of Foucauldian power.

Specifically, the Homeless Action Strike of 2003-2004 demonstrated the role of tacit social understandings in circumscribing power relationships. For example, Jane Scharf noted the importance of tacit social understandings in circumscribing the actions taken by the police during this protest. While she describes a confrontation between the protesters and riot police, she also notes that:

In my case I was already in my 40s, my late 40s when I was doing it, so this old crazy lady, it doesn't lend itself to the head knocking they were used to doing right? And plus, homeless people, once it got established in the media, there was quite a bit of sympathy.

In this case, Scharf occupied a specific position within power relations circumscribed by specific social norms that limited the police's range of potential action. In this description the tacit social knowledge of the police officers circumscribed their possible actions without any intervention by Scharf.

Scharf also noted, though, that nonviolence in this instance did have an effect on the self-conceptions of the individuals taking part in that nonviolent action. She explained that before the protest under the National Convention Centre underpass homeless youth would leave the area without protest when ordered by the police to leave. However, she states that, "Once they start to identify as a group and say, 'No, I have rights. I think I have rights,' and sat down, that was a turning point for the street itself." Here, the change she is remarking, in terms of a Foucauldian conception of power, is a change in how the youth engaged in this nonviolent protest understood themselves as subjects. Whereas the youths initially perceived themselves as subjects obliged to obey the directives of authorities, their compliance with this norm ended as they reconceived themselves as citizens with rights. While power conceived as consent would label this simply a withdrawal of consent, Foucault's conception of power identifies the transgression of the accepted norms as the reconstruction of a subject.

Likewise, the occupation of the Police Station in 2006 demonstrated the role of episteme in circumscribing power relations associated with nonviolent action. René argued that in this instance the ability of the police to respond with violence was once again circumscribed by their tacit understandings of their range of action within power relations. While the police were physically capable of using violent enforcement methods, or simply arresting the protesters, this did not happen because of the terms circumscribing the role of police in this position within power relations. René suggested that respect for public perceptions of conformity with the law by the police is an important term of police-panhandler relations of power. He continued to state that the omnipresence of cameras at public protests like the occupation of the police station limit the ability of the police to respond violently.

Finally, the protest activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union in response to the erection of the fence under the National Convention Centre underpass again demonstrate the importance of tacit social understandings, and changing these tacit understandings within

both subjects. For instance, unlike the protests that preceded it, when a member of the OPU cut the lock of the fence, he contravened one of the general social understandings that circumscribes action in society, namely not to destroy public property. Meanwhile, the police were able to arrest this individual without transgressing any norms as this is a privilege of the police within their normal relationship with panhandlers. Although Maxime argued that this action was undertaken in part to demonstrate that, “people hold their property in higher regard than human beings,” since this activity was not done in a highly public way this message seems to have had little effect on the larger episteme.

In contrast, the successful resolution of mediation between the OPU and the City of Ottawa, and the future plans of the OPU seem to suggest a role of power in affecting the self-perceptions of subjects. During the mediation, both parties constantly re-evaluated their positions in light of their discussions. I cannot determine the extent to which these discussions altered the internal tacit understandings of the parties, though much rhetoric was displayed by the parties seemingly to place each other in specific positions within power relations⁵. Once again the importance of discourse in positioning subjects within power relations circumscribed by episteme seems to be evidenced. Moreover, after the negotiations, Maxime noted that he wished to move forward in the future to perform community work from a potential storefront location. He stated that, “You can’t say we’re bringing down the neighbourhood. ‘You guys are ruining the neighbourhood.’ No, we’ll be cleaning up the neighbourhood.” Once again, the object of this action seems not to be a specific result, but instead a change in the tacit understandings of the general public, which is a significant departure from conceptions of power as capacity or consent and their focus on perceived problems and desired goals.

5.4 Three Conceptions of Power

Foucault’s understanding of power presents a very different focus of analysis of the activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union than the conceptions of power as capacity or consent. While the conception of power as capacity argues that power is the ability to impose an action on another, Foucault’s theory argues that power constructs subjects in a way that shapes their range of action relative to others. Similarly, while the conception of power as consent suggests that power rests with the agent agreeing to do something, Foucault’s theory of power argues that what subjects do is contingent on tacit social understandings that circumscribe the norms and privileges in social relationships. Following Foucault we are led to focus on aspects of the nonviolent action of the Ottawa Panhandlers’ Union that the other two conceptions do not consider. For instance, a Foucauldian analysis focuses on the construction of subjects through the role of episteme. This consideration allows a better understanding of how these tacit understandings might also be mobilized to circumscribe action, or changed through action.

Foucault’s analysis of power allows a better understanding of the dynamics of power in the nonviolent action of the OPU because it focuses primarily on the role of tacit social understandings in circumscribing power relations. The conceptions of power as capacity and

⁵ All parties to this mediation, the author included, signed a waiver agreeing to respect the confidentiality of the mediation and its participants. In order to respect this agreement, I have limited my observations here.

consent take for granted or ignore the role of these understandings in shaping action. Therefore, when capacity and consent theories of power address activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union such as their occupation of the police station, they reduce this analysis to whether and how one party is able to force the other to do something. Meanwhile, Foucault's concept of episteme suggests that the role of power is not limited to what parties are able to do, but how they understand their range of action within circumscribed power relations. Thus, this analysis focuses not just on which actors did what, but their understandings of what they are able to do within specific power relations.

The Foucauldian conception of power also allows a more nuanced understanding of the different actions available in different positions in a matrix of power relations. In the case of the support-advocacy activities undertaken by members of the OPU, negotiations with officials at a prison and a healthcare facility helped to reposition other members of the union. When they first interacted with these officials, these union members were understood as 'homeless people' within their position in power relations circumscribed by episteme. Over the course of the negotiations, the union members were recast as 'union members' and their range of action within power relations circumscribed by episteme expanded, opening up new possibilities of interaction with the officials. In contrast, theories of power based on capacity or consent tend to reduce this dynamic to simply a question of which actors successfully achieved their desired goals.

Finally, Foucault's theory of power provides a useful understanding of the role of power in altering the tacit understandings of subjects, while the other theories ignore this entirely. Conceptions of power as capacity and consent simply take for granted the interests of the actors in conflict, and measure the level of power of each based on their ability to achieve these interests. However, a Foucauldian analysis looks at the formation of these interests through the construction of subjects by episteme. In this case, the construction of alternate definitions of panhandler or homeless person play an important role in determining what actions these individuals can take within their own understandings of power relations. Moreover, this process also defines a role for nonviolent action in reconstructing these understandings.

Conclusion

The accounts of the members of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union reveal the importance of the theoretical perspective employed to understand power in nonviolent activities. As the OPU acts within a context of power asymmetry, it provides an excellent case to examine the connection between nonviolence, power and truth. By examining the relationships between the problems perceived by the members of the OPU, and the goals they wish to achieve, it is possible to analyse the role of power in their activities. Moreover, by examining the members' experiences of nonviolent action, it is possible to explore dynamics of power that set out common conceptions of power. When different theoretical understandings of power are applied to these accounts, they reveal different explanations of the role of power in the nonviolent activities of the OPU.

Although the activities of the OPU could be divided into the categories of organization, support-advocacy and mass mobilization, these activities were not always

clearly nonviolent. Moreover, when analysed with different conceptions of power, the dynamic that allows these activities to affect social change is very different. Dahl and La Boétie's theories focus primarily on the dynamic between actors who wish to make others do something they would not otherwise do. These analyses tend to lead to a focus on the relationship between perceived problems and desired goals, measuring power in the achievement of ends. Foucault's theory of power, on the other hand, focuses on the dynamic between power relations, tacit social understandings, and the production of subjects. This conception of power leads to an analysis of the dynamic relationship between actions and the social understandings that circumscribe power relations. When applied to the activities of the OPU, these different perspectives identify different relationships between the perceptions of the members, social understandings, and the nonviolent activities of the group.

The members of the OPU described many of their experiences with nonviolent action. Though the union is not a nonviolent organization in principle, in practice many of its activities fit general definitions of nonviolence. The organizational, support-advocacy and mass mobilization activities of the union all play significant roles in the members' experiences. The members' accounts of these activities reveal significant dynamics in their relationships with the police, public officials and the general public. In addition, these accounts describe many of the problems the members perceive, as well as the goals they desired to achieve. Many of the members of the OPU addressed the question of the power of nonviolent action in terms of how this type of activity can help generate specific desired results. Yet, in their descriptions of their experience of nonviolence, the members also suggested a connection between nonviolence and how they, and others, perceived themselves.

The theories of Dahl and La Boétie focus on opposite ends of a dynamic where an actor forces a second actor to do something the latter would not otherwise do. Thus, when seeking to explain the activities of the OPU, these theories tend to focus on two different components of a similar process. The former addresses the importance of nonviolence in achieving a particular influence over others, from forcing the police service to remove an officer from the street to forcing City Hall to address their policies towards homelessness. Conversely, the latter focuses on the role of nonviolence in obviating the importance of the members of the union when others attempt to exert power over them. This was most obvious in the cases where the union used civil disobedience, but it was also evidenced when public officials sought to find alternative solutions to disputes with enough legitimacy that they would be accepted by others. However, neither of these theories addresses the relationship between nonviolence and truth.

Foucault's conception of power, though, intimately relates concepts of truth and power relations. He argues that there is a dynamic, mutually constructive relationship between power relations, subjects within them, and their tacit social understandings. When understood in this way, it is possible to analyse the relationships between the members of the OPU, and the other groups they face, in terms of the tacit social understandings that circumscribe them. Moreover, when power is conceptualized in this way one can examine interactions between panhandlers, the public and institutions differently, in terms of the interactions that serve as disciplinary mechanisms that provide specific sets of social

relations that contribute to how the panhandlers and other groups relate to each other as well as to themselves.

In this light, the role of power in the nonviolent activities of the OPU is understood very differently. Specifically, three different processes emerge that demonstrate the relationship between the activities of the union and social understandings, or truth. First, many of the activities of the OPU took advantage of existing positions within power relations and the understandings that circumscribed them. This was seen in the restraint shown to Jane Scharf by the police who, constrained by their understandings of their range of action when dealing with women in their forties, did not beat her up during the protest under the National Convention Centre underpass. Similarly, though members of the OPU described the police presence during the protest at the police station in 2006 as quite formidable, their lack of violent repression suggests that their range of action may have been circumscribed by episteme. In these cases, awareness of the circumscriptions of their social positions allowed their activities to have an effect.

Secondly, many of the activities of the OPU seemed to reposition members within a matrix of power relations. This process was most evident in the support-advocacy activities of the union when its members found themselves in difficult positions. In Philippe's descriptions of his support of members at the prison and the healthcare facility, he described how the demonstration of support recast these members in the eyes of others. In both cases, the members shifted from being 'homeless people' to being 'union members' and in each case this seemed to alter the range of options considered by the officials. In these cases, the activities of the OPU repositioned its members within power relations.

Thirdly, many of the members argued that the activities of the OPU altered their self perceptions, and acted on others' perceptions of them. Here, the organizational activities of the OPU were often described as constructing specific capacities within the union members. Moreover, many members suggested that the use of protest was meant not just to communicate grievance, but also to demonstrate the capacities of the union members and to act on the conceptions others held about panhandlers. This process seems to offer the greatest insight into the possible relationship between nonviolence and truth. Through their nonviolent activities, the members of the OPU are attempting to address not just social circumstances, but the tacit social knowledge that circumscribes their position within power relations.

I have not attempted to reconcile these conceptions of power in this study. Although all three conceptions of power could be relevantly applied to the case of the OPU, it is unclear what this means. One possibility is that these conceptions describe different levels of power, each acting in a different area of social relations yet part of the same phenomenon. Alternately, Foucault's analysis seems to favour removing the label of power from capacity and consent, understanding these simply as such. In fact, these conceptions of power may remain useful tools for analysing social power because so much social action is predicated on these understandings of power. Further research into the relationship between our understandings of power, and the types and effectiveness of social action would certainly be of benefit.

While this study did not address the question of efficiency in the activities of the OPU it is clear that members of the union expressed differing opinions on the effectiveness of particular methods they have used, ranging from great conviction in its efficacy to great doubt in their influence. Certainly, the impact of the OPU's activities is related to the scope of the problems it addresses. In addition, social realities such as access to media or the conditions of living on the street also constrain members of the union. Yet, their accounts of nonviolent action reveal important processes in the use of nonviolent action that illuminate relationships between power and knowledge worth further exploration. When applied to the OPU, the Foucauldian conception of power suggests that nonviolent action, to be successful, might require awareness of the tacit social understandings that circumscribe power relations, how altering one's position within these relations would alter options available, and how one's actions would modify these understandings in one's self and others.

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