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Nonviolence and Power in
the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union

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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 Lurther 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 circles[1].

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 possibK+6Ba(W9x6K498Bp(W:x86K6:] !"cWK5+x4+4CW33Bf(W7x9+446Bp(W3x+++6Bp(W

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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 mem

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

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" 9 h ï ù 2–CS' i | 69+37B5(7B769+37B0(W:x869+37B5(WKx47947Bs(W3x6599+37B

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

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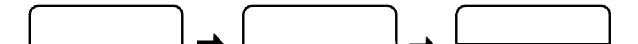
1.3 Capacity and Consent

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 insomuch 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.

Figure 2 - Focus of Power as Capacity

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

Recognized Problem → Action → Desired Goal

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. Insomuch 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

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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

1.5 Possible Expressions of Nonviolent Power

Although Foucault's theory of power cannot be seam

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

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 mem

Figure 5 - Timeline of Study

Interviews were scheduled based on the availability of members of the OPU, and as such

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 perceptionx7:K8KBt(WKx7:K8KBa( ] !7:649Ba(4x::475B (W443x333Bo(W:x865594Bn(W:xx81C3x659W

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 o9Bo(W:x86ffffff

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

Axial coding allowed me to group the concepts which emerged during open coding into

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 explorat

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.

3.2 Activities of the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union

The activities of the OPU fall into three general categories. Firstly, all members of

Support-Advocacy

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 organizingha ozlio s   o 7Kx659K5Bt(W.

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Mass Mobilization

        Mass mobilization is distinct from support-advocacy because it tends to involve many

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.

In 2004, Scharf and others continued the Homeless Action Strike and organized a nonviolent occupation of the Ottawa City Hall lawn

"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

most members stated that they recognized the right of the police to enforce the law, their

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

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

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

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'

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 tsirs wh   nin bmod3Kx7KK3Be( ] W:x:x5K+Bt(WKioWKxxx

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 form 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 s

use of nonviolence was often described in terms of a search for an acceptable option. In the

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

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 as 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 onk:+3+Be(4++Br(Kx47947Bc(4x::6ton t:9Bt(WKx7:K8KKx4866Bn(39-

[...] 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

5.2 Discipline and the Construction of Subjects

Foucault argues that power acts on individuals in

This is what shelters do, is they dehumanize. They

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

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

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

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 dyn

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 tBU(:x78::xxxxx

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

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