

The Marginal Public: Marginality, Publicness, and Heterotopia in the Space of the City

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Abstract

This thesis explores the experiences of an urban population who are considered to exist at the social margins of society, but who paradoxically spend much of their time in urban public space. Often referred to as ‘street people,’ the issues they face, such as homelessness and drug addiction, become public issues. In this thesis, I introduce and develop the concept of the *marginal public* to refer to this population, exploring their experience of the city not through the lens of their marginalization but through their relationship to the spatial and social realms of urban life. I explore the ways in which the marginal public, through their visibility and presence in the city, are not marginal to urban life but deeply embedded in it. Their marginality is lived simultaneously yet in contestation with dominant ways of being. This manifests in the marginal public’s relationship to others in the city, as well as through debates about the placing of facilities that serve them which I explore through the unsanctioned supervised consumption site of Overdose Prevention Ottawa (OPO). Finally, through the concept of heterotopia, I explore the margins as places of otherness as well as possibility.

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Introduction: In the Space of the City

Along Bank Street in Ottawa, there was a man in a wheelchair who I would sometimes pass. His body seemed limp and weak, and more than once I heard him yelling at people. There are certain ‘street people’ that I pass who affect me more than others, and he was one of them. I didn’t know how to interact with him. I think I felt more pity for him than others, and this made me uncomfortable. One evening, I was grocery shopping with my family; we left the store, my husband and I carrying bags and the girls running ahead of us. They bounded out onto the sidewalk, and the man in the wheelchair was there facing the doors, holding an empty cup in his hand. He looked up as the girls raced out, and made a face, in fun, as if to say, ‘These kids are crazy!’ His response to my girls struck me, and I smiled at him, shaking my head, as if to say, ‘Yep. Crazy kids.’ Then he looked me in the eyes and said directly and sincerely, “You are so lucky.”

This is an example of many interactions between me, my daughters, and a city population that lives distinctly in public, yet is paradoxically marginalized, and they have always given me “the sensation that something is happening – something that needs attending to” (Stewart 2007, 5). This sensation is rooted in how these experiences contrast with social and political assumptions regarding the place of this population—whom I call the “marginal public” – in the city, and the social boundaries that are thought to exist between them and other urban subjects. It is also rooted in the ways this population is generally represented, as ‘public issues’ or statistics that need fixing, and yet, their presence has significantly contributed, in meaningful and positive ways, to my urban experience. Following this, I propose a conceptualization of marginality in the city which illustrates the ways urban life, as lived between strangers, does not exclude marginality to the margins. This thesis contributes to understanding the

marginal public's particular interactions with urban life, through an anthropological reconceptualization of marginality.

The Marginal Public

In this project, I explore the experiences of a population who, for various reasons, and in various ways, are considered marginalized, that is, the processes by which their experience of the social, economic or political realms of urban life are marked by some form of deprivation or exclusion. This population is sometimes referred to, in the social services, as 'people who are street involved'. These are 'street people' who are routinely present in urban spaces such as parks and sidewalks, living much of the time in public, yet at the same time they remain at the social margins, at times ignored or unseen, at other times the target of punitive or exclusionary measures by the municipal government. The marginal public are not always, however, street people, or literally homeless. They may be housed, yet their experience of urban life is marked by precarity. In general, their situations are some combination of economic instability, housing insecurity, drug or alcohol addiction or mental illness. Their circumstances mean that they participate in urban life in ways that most people do not. Because of this, their presence and the facilities that serve them, are contested in public discourse, debated in community associations, business associations, municipal and provincial legislatures, news media, and community meetings. These disputes are over the placing of facilities such as homeless shelters, or the funding of services such as supervised consumption sites¹ where drug users can access clean materials and medical help in case of overdose, which are the objects of NIMBY attitudes that aim to exclude them from urban life.

¹ These sites operate for medical purposes under federally granted exemptions from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA). Historically they have been referred to as supervised injection sites (SIS) or supervised injection facilities (SIF) but exemptions are increasingly including the inhalation of substances as well.

I propose the term *marginal public* to refer to this population that, through circumstances that have taken them outside the public norm, embodies a particular urban reality and relationship to the city. The decision to conceptualize this population is important, because as Michael Warner writes (2002, 12), to define publics has “fateful consequences for the kind of social world to which we belong and for the kinds of actions and subjects that are possible in it.” I find the concept of marginal public significantly helpful in the analysis of my fieldwork. In developing the term, however, I refer less to the scholarship on ‘the public’ and instead to the connotation of ‘publicness.’

In his lecture “The Problematic Public: Revisiting Dewey, Arendt, and Habermas” (2013), Craig Calhoun highlights that the term ‘public sphere’ could more literally be translated from the original German to mean ‘publicness’, which introduces a spatial element in the formation of spheres of public life. Left implicit in Habermas’ work on the public sphere, Calhoun writes, is that cities form one of the central infrastructures of the public sphere. The built environment of the city, such as markets and street corners, are spaces central in the development and maintenance of public life. In these urban spaces, publicness emerges as an integral part of urban life; connection is embodied in the gaze of another and the public emerges in this way between and in the company of strangers (Calhoun 2013). It is a means of connection “based on visibility and access” (Splichal 2018, 2). Public interest, Calhoun notes, may not be the same as government interest: it is through publicness that public interest is constituted “by shared engagement” in everyday urban life (Calhoun 2013, 72). *Public* here “refers to the good we potentially seek together”, while *the public* “calls our attention to a body of people rather than a mode of connection among them” (Calhoun 2013, 73); further, *publicness* refers to the actions that establish “connections among its participants, shaping shared culture and institutions” (Calhoun 2013, 73). I use ‘marginal public’ in this way, with the word *public* meaning not only a particular population, but the shared engagement

between them and strangers through *publicness*. Read in this way, the marginal public is not entirely marginal but constitutive of the public of the city through the gaze of a stranger or interaction with a child.

Facts and Presences

I draw on observations and interactions with the marginal public in Ottawa, Ontario, a city of nearly a million people. A municipality in its own right, the city is also Canada's capital, and its identity is strongly tied up in the organization, politics, and image of this national identity. The standard of living is undoubtedly tied to the opportunities and stable jobs that come with being the country's capital; the city has the second highest family income among Canadian cities (City of Ottawa 1). Of course, this fact isn't representative of everyone's life in Ottawa. In 2017, the city reported that 7,530 individuals sought emergency shelter, with an average of 1,180 people sleeping in shelters each night. That same year there was an increase in families experiencing homelessness; the numbers rose to 236 (Willing 2018). Nor has Ottawa been unaffected by the opioid crisis; 64 people died in 2017 from suspected opioid overdoses; this was a 60% increase from the previous year (Delamont 2018).

Quantitative determinants treat the marginal public singularly, as objects and facts. These statistics tell us something about the marginal public in Ottawa. They are *addicts* and *the homeless*, they loiter and are considered deviant. The statistics of homelessness, the numbers of opioid deaths, have little effect for most people; they are just static numbers on a page, and as I think through an alternative way to approach the marginal public, I am inspired by Lisa Stevenson's work in *Life Beside Itself* (2014) where she explores the ways the Inuit were and are treated as facts by the Canadian government, as objects of biopolitical interventions. Facts calmly contribute to life as it proceeds; they are "uncontested," writes Alex Betancourt-Serrano (quoted in Stevenson 2014, 32). Even more so perhaps when the facts are about those at the margins of society, which Merrill Singer writes are "places where desperation is intended to be quiet,

undisturbing, and unimportant (Singer 2006, iv). Looking at marginality in the city, however, through publicness, offers an element of its reality that cannot be measured but is rather felt, embodied, and thus confronted. It was the *presence* (Stevenson 2014), not a horrifying statistic, of the man in the wheelchair that caused me to wonder about him, which gave me the sensation that something needed to be explored. While facts make problems approachable and manageable, Stevenson draws on the work of Cora Diamond who writes that presences “unseat our reason” (quoted in Stevenson 2014, 30). These are what take hold of us, those moments, experiences and interactions that become burned into our memory, or are imagistic Stevenson’s words. The image is “that which has a hold on us *even after* its informational and symbolic meaning has been decoded” (Stevenson 2014, 36). The goal of this thesis is to articulate what characterizes the presence of this man, that is, to *decode* his presence and reality in the city. This, I believe, is important, because of the way people like him are dealt with as facts, statistics, and problems in municipal governments and at the level of neighbourhood organizations, but in the space of the city, through publicness, the facts of his urban reality present a new realm of information. Instead of the static results of marginalization, I aim to articulate the ways in which the marginal public engage with agency in urban life. Yet before I *explain* the intentionally paradoxical term ‘marginal public,’ I want to *show* it with two images, or presences in the city.

One: From my position inside the bus shelter on an unseasonably cold and windy day in October, I watched a small Inuit woman, carrying a stuffed backpack, arrive in front of a Shoppers Drug Mart and take her position about 15 feet from the entrance. She appeared to be in her fifties, but moved slowly and deliberately, which made her look older. She held out a Tim Horton’s cup in one hand and stood quietly, hardly acknowledging the people who passed, but keeping her head up, a quiet plea to be noticed and given some change. From the corner across the street was the unmistakable sign of street fundraising solicitors, or canvassers, their bright red vests, these ones with Amnesty International’s logo on the back,

a warning to pedestrians to be ready for some sanctioned harassment on the street and to perhaps fake a conversation on their phone to avoid it. They were all young, perhaps university students, and I watched as one of the girls, wearing a toque over two long blond braids sticking out on either side, crossed the street to the corner at the entrance of the Shoppers. She moved with the same optimism that was written on her face; she was smiling, but perhaps too much. She looked at the Inuit woman who stood just a few feet to her right and smiled at her. Then the girl began her work, waving enthusiastically as people approached her, using her hands in elaborate gestures to communicate a welcome and friendly environment, never once reducing her smile, even though in the 15 minutes I watched, no one stopped to talk with her. Eventually, she seemed to give up, and crossed back to the other side of the street. After exchanging a few words with her colleagues, she walked away, maybe to find another corner with a little more luck. When my bus finally came, the Inuit lady was still there, standing quietly, and patiently holding her cup.

Two: On a summer day, my daughter Hazel and I passed a man panhandling at Flora and Bank Streets. He was blowing bubbles, and so we stopped to enjoy them. He said he had found the bottle of bubbles just a little way down the sidewalk and thought, ‘Why not?’ As we chatted, he tore off some pieces of the newspaper he was sitting on and began wrapping up the bubble wand and bottle. Then he handed them to Hazel. I said he didn’t have to do that, and he said that she would enjoy them more than he did and made a joke about being too old to play with bubbles anyway.

The Aesthetic of Rhythms

Henri Lefebvre too spoke about presences as “the ensemble of meaning” (2004, 33) when diverse things come into relation with each other. He discussed this in his posthumously published work *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (2004), proposing rhythmanalysis as a methodological

tool to observe everyday life in the city. Rhythms exist anywhere there is an “interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy” (2004, 25). The city is thus perhaps rhythmical in nature, the convergence of a multitude of energies – be they biological, psychological, social, or material – in space and time. Rhythms are marked by repetition – the repeating of movements, situations and differences. There is “[no] rhythm without repetition in time and space” (2004, 16). While the city is “a space of encounter and surprises, of openings to difference” (Harvey 2004, 12) its experience is also marked by routine, schedule, and repetition. Presences of the city, however, are not always apparent, and Lefebvre reminds us that not everything clearly reveals itself. Necessarily a rhythmanalysis is in tune with that which may not be stated.

I did not incorporate rhythmanalysis as a methodological tool in the analysis of my material for this project, but as I moved about the city gathering that material, I was always attuned to everyday rhythms in relation to my own; the rhythmanalyst always serves as the “metronome” (Lefebvre 2004, 29). I felt the rhythms of the city, and those rhythms came to be text on these pages. To draw on the words of Teresa Brennan (2004, 1), the atmosphere of the city literally got into my writing. Just as rhythms in the city are repeated and felt, through the tone of my writing, the pace and repetition of my words, I hope to evoke the feel of the city.

The Urban Public

To refer to other urban citizens, I use the term ‘urban public’ with the word *public* meaning not only a particular population, but, as in the concept of the marginal public, the shared engagement between them through *publicness*. Urban public then, drawing on the literature on publicness, does not have the characteristic of a “we” (Fennell, 2015, 26), as with publics bound by discourse. These publics have been understood as “an expansive, voluntary, and open-ended relation among strangers” (Fennell 2015, 26). The

urban public, on the contrary is notably not voluntary, but for one's decision to live in a particular city. Members of the urban public do not always get to choose with whom share they share publicness. At the same time, despite the many ways that urban relationships are marked by difference (Fincher & Jacobs 1998), the urban public remain connected through publicness in the space of the city.

Studying Marginality

A significant body of social science literature highlights social and spatial ways that marginality is manifested, illuminating certain aspects of the marginal public's experience of the city. Stigmatization has been influentially defined by Erving Goffman (1963) as the social process that deems certain attributes undesirable and thereby makes people with these attributes unacceptable. Goffman explains that stigmatization also involves a relationship between attributes and stereotypes, whereby the presence of one stigma may lead to other assumptions. As Goffman notes, we "tend to impute a wide range of imperfections on the basis of the original one" (1963, 5). Furthermore, the ways in which people are identified as different based on certain attributes leads to the stigmatization of whole groups. Takanashi (1997) explores socio-spatial stigmatization, or how the perceived danger and disorder projected on certain people extend to the spaces and places they frequent, including the facilities that offer them support. Her research offers an explanation for the NIMBY syndrome: human service facilities, such as homeless shelters, mental health facilities, needles exchange programs or supervised injection services, for example, come to embody the stigma of the people they serve; "stigmatization of persons and places are...mutually constitutive of community rejection" (Takanashi 1997, 904). Which services are accepted and which are opposed, she writes, says a lot about who a community finds acceptable and unacceptable. While her work dealt with the specific societal crises of homelessness and HIV/AIDS, her findings are

broadly relevant to debates around services for the marginal public (as are Goffman's ideas on stigma relevant to the social exclusion the marginal public experience).

According to Takanashi, there are three main dimensions of stigmatization for her population: non-productivity, dangerousness, and personal culpability (1997). Non-productivity stems from society's privileging and acceptance only of paid work in the formal labor market, thus people who cannot work for lack of housing, proper documentation, or mental or physical health problems become stigmatized. Dangerousness, the second dimension of stigmatization, is not only related to the unpredictable nature of people living with drug-related or mental health related issues, for instance, but also due to the perceived criminality of certain groups of people. The stigmatization of drug users and the social and health service facilities that assist them are intensified due to the illegality of drug use and the criminalization of those who engage with these activities. People experiencing homelessness, may also be associated with criminality. Takanashi notes that the perception of homeless people as criminals "has been institutionalized through local ordinances banning activities engaged in by homeless persons" (1997, 908). Legal convictions of homeless people often relate to public nuisance, trespassing, or participating in the informal economy (Takanashi 1997), activities that do not necessarily correspond to dangerousness but that increase *perceptions* of dangerousness nonetheless. Personal culpability, the third dimension of stigmatization, involves the perception that people are responsible for their precarious and liminal circumstances, and thus are to blame. These perceptions stem from the problematization of societal issues such as drug use and homelessness as moral failings (Musto 1999; Courtwright 2001). Stigmatization, this suggests, often stems from an ignorance or misunderstanding of the ways people are marginalized by structural processes.

The structural roots that create the margins – such as class, racism, capitalism, global macro-economic forces, and the neoliberalization of urban space – are often used as cause and explanation of

marginalization (Lancione 2016). These structural causes do play into the lives of my interlocutors; the marginal public, I recognize as being marginalized in various ways. Marginalization emphasizes what is done to someone, framing a seemingly passive relationship between the person and the process – and in that it adopts a degree of victimhood. These representations of the margins are often diminished to narratives of suffering, exclusion, and dispossession, singularly defined against the dominant, which I conceptualize as the ruling norms of society by which the marginal public are judged and by which they measure their own lives (how I understand the dominant in the lives of my interlocutors is further elaborated in Chapter 1). I aim to offer a different and nuanced way of seeing marginality in the city, however, one that “makes evident both the constraining, oppressive quality of cultural exclusion and the creative potential of rearticulating, enlivening, and rearranging the very social categories that peripheralize a group’s existence” (Tsing 1994, 279). I seek to explore the spaces and experiences the marginal public come to inhabit through their ways of being in the world, as active participants in urban life. I aim to liberate marginality as a mere consequence of marginalization and approach it as it takes form as an experience (Stewart 3023, 518) where it is difficult to contain within strict quantifiable and categorical boundaries. My observations and conversations with members of the marginal public lead me to question whether marginalization linearly produces a singularly defined marginal experience of the city.

While I aim to rearticulate how the margins are perceived, I do not deny that the margins exist. To pretend that my interlocutors experience the city the same way as anyone else would be disingenuous to their realities and further to their own perceptions of their experience. They know, better than anyone, that their experiences are not ordinary. In no way am I trying to romanticize life at the margins of the city, but instead my aim is to “[widen] the scope of what we look for when we approach life [at the margins] in the first place” (Lancione 2016, 20).

The Space of the City

Boundaries proliferate, creating categories by which the city, and the world at large, is organized. Friends and strangers. First class and economy. Private and public. Rich, middle class, and poor. Dominant and marginal. The categories of urban and rural guided the early study of cities, due to the many ways that urban life contrasted with the traditional rural ways of living. City and country were “regarded as two poles of reference to one or the other”, offering a way for humans to arrange themselves (Wirth 1938, 3). It is as points of reference that dichotomies are so useful, to refer to what something or someone is by what it is not. This mode of self or space-making can be explained within the literature on abjection, “the othering processes through which the individual attempts to define and protect his or her identity” (Navaro-Yashin 2012, 147; see also Julia Kristeva 1980). Ultimately divisions between ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘you’ or ‘I’, ‘good’ and ‘bad’, ‘clean’ and ‘dirty’ are mutually constituted, and yet they are used to create boundaries that separate.

Urban space is organized and categorized this way. Policies and zoning regulations work to define and control the intended uses of urban space, treating it as a form of capital which can be manipulated to increase its economic potential (Harvey 2006). Similarly, urban renewal and beautification projects aim to increase the appeal of neighbourhoods or streets, to increase real estate and attract the capital of residents and consumers. Those who have the economic means to participate in consumption find a place in the city, while those who do not, the “dirty or disorderly” (Sibley 1997, 5) become objects of exclusion, pushed to less desirable margins, past the boundaries by which a city, neighbourhood or community defines itself.

And yet, despite the literal concreteness of urban space, which imposes seemingly unwavering and unshifting qualities, urban life transgresses the boundaries that the organization of space aims to set. While Henri Lefebvre critiqued the capitalist intentions guiding the planning of urban space in the *The*

Production of Space (1992), his project was equally concerned with how the constraints of space could be overcome through the power found in “everyday life” (1992, 8). He took a “holistic approach to the city” (Purcell 2014, 145), exploring both the fixed and shifting meanings of space. To undertake this analysis, he created a “conceptual triad” (Lefebvre 1992, 33). The first two address the how the materiality of space is perceived, and the capitalist intentions for that space conceived. Lefebvre did not, however, see this production as a script that must be followed. My interest is in the third of Lefebvre’s triad, spaces of representation which refers to the characteristic of space that transcends the intentional and assumed use of a space (Lefebvre 1992). Spaces of representation highlights the way life is lived in a space, regardless of the intentions of those who designed it (Merrifield 2000); in other words, the materiality of space is produced, while the *meaning* of the space is constructed through ways of being (Laszczkowski 2016).

While space may be planned and conceived with singular purposes, with goals of exclusion and segregation, “our actual experience of the city...gives hints of what differentiation without exclusion can be” (Young 2008[1990], 165). The possibilities of encountering difference in the city is vast and this is a characteristic of urban living that has been celebrated. James Conlon believes heterogeneity is what gives the city its life, whereby people who are radically different are forced to share the same space (2008, 201). In a similar vein, Richard Sennett noted that urban dwellers are “people in the presence of Otherness” (1990, 123). Political theorist, Iris Marion Young wrote that the most important aspect of city life is the “being together of strangers” (2008, 164). From these perspectives, it could be argued that it is the margins which define urban life because strangers and otherness are peripheral to one’s own existence.

Despite the difference and otherness that characterizes the urban, all the urban public are “forced to confront [urban space] in exactly the same way” (Harvey 2006, 20). Harvey illustrates this through a poem by Charles Baudelaire titled “The Eyes of the Poor”, in which Baudelaire’s lover complains about a poor family she sees standing outside the “dazzling” café in Paris in which they are dining, and she asks that

the proprietor send them away. Though the poor family was in the public space of the boulevard and the café is not entirely private, the woman's actions reveal that the entitlement people feel they have to space depends on the position from which they view it. But the poor family could not evade the grandeur of the boulevards, nor could they ignore it, notes Harvey (2006). Baudelaire seemed to be making a statement about how we should confront the 'other' in the space of the city, questioning how two people in love could think so differently. Harvey reflects on this interaction as an example of the "contested character of public space and the inherent porosity" of the boundaries that are thought to exist in it (2006, 19). Urban life can exceed the categorization and segregation of space and people because urban space, especially when it is explored through publicness, introduces a level of commensurability in the simple fact that it is shared.

Sociospatial Debates, Sidewalks, and Living with Addiction

I conducted fieldwork for this project at multiple sites in Ottawa, between September 2017 and September 2018. My first focus was on the sociospatial debates that have occurred in recent years over the placing of social and health services in Ottawa's central neighbourhoods. The ByWard market area, for example, is near the centre of government and Ottawa's downtown. It is a popular tourist destination in the commercial centre of the historic Lowertown neighbourhood, and it also houses a major concentration of social services: the Salvation Army Booth Centre, Shepherds of Good Hope, and Hope Outreach Shelter. In February 2017 Mayor Jim Watson expressed his hope that one of the three shelters would move somewhere else (Pearson 2017). In 2018, a local business owner launched a petition online called 'Save the Market' calling for the dismantling of the cluster of shelters in the neighbourhood, citing that the presence of the shelters, and more specifically the people who access their services, was a detriment to local businesses (Osman 2018). The petition collected over 2,600 signatures before it was

taken down due to strong criticism. The Salvation Army Booth Centre is in fact slated to close as soon as a new 350-bed facility can be opened; this has been proposed for the more peripheral Vanier neighbourhood. There too, it has been met with opposition by residents.

Supervised injection sites came to the fore of public discourse when, in 2017, overdose numbers spiked dramatically in Ottawa, and yet calls for action seemed to fall on deaf ears at the municipal level. The drug using community and the service providers who support them grew frustrated. Then, in the middle of August that year, the city experienced an exceptionally deadly week. Four people died from accidental overdoses within days of each other; they were all community members (the term used to refer to people who use drugs) associated with the harm reduction programming at a community health centre in Chinatown, a neighbourhood west of Ottawa's downtown. Two lived in the same building; one was the mother of a 10-month-old baby. This tragedy prompted 12 community members and service providers to respond to the overdose emergency in the city. On August 25, 2017, under the name Overdose Prevention Ottawa (OPO), they arrived at Raphael Burnet Park, a pocket park at the corner of St. Patrick and Cumberland Streets in Lowertown. With limited and basic supplies, just some drug using equipment and some tents in which to offer services, they began operating Ottawa's first supervised consumption site and ignited intense public debate over the place and presence of the marginal public. I elaborate on OPO and the opioid crisis in Chapter 1; the site and the debates around it formed a major focus of my research. I went through OPO's volunteer training and worked four nights at the site. I joined an OPO rally at City Hall during which dozens marched on the office of Mathieu Fleury, the city councillor for Ward 12 Rideau-Vanier, which includes the Lowertown neighbourhood. Despite continued invitations from OPO, Fleury did not visit the site once. Neither did the mayor, Jim Watson.

A second focus of my research was on public spaces of Ottawa, particularly sidewalks of central streets. I spent time observing and talking with panhandlers along Bank and Elgin Streets, which run

parallel through downtown. I also spent time along Rideau Street, which runs parallel to the ByWard Market and the city centre mall. Of particular interest was the corner of Rideau and Nelson Streets where supervised injection services had recently opened at the Sandy Hill Community Health Centre (SHCHC). In addition to observations of life on the sidewalk, I draw on conversations I had with panhandlers (or ‘panners’, using street language; the verbs ‘pan’ or ‘panning’ are also used by my participants, and this language is used throughout my writing). These conversations took place while my participants were panhandling and lasted for 15 to 20 minutes each. I was sensitive to the effect of my presence. As one panhandler said to me when he denied my request to chat with him because I would not pay him, “I’m working here.”

Finally, in the spring of 2018, I was part of a film project about living with addiction in Ottawa and I draw on six audio-recorded semi-structured interviews I conducted for that project. Interviewees ranged in age from their mid-twenties to sixties and included men and women who were using, or had in the past used, a range of different drugs, principally heroin, crack cocaine, and alcohol. Where the interviews took place was left up to the interviewees, with the goal of having conversations in an environment that was comfortable for them; therefore, I spoke with the participants of the project in various locations – on the University of Ottawa campus, at a participant’s home, and at a social service centre. Participants were recruited through social contacts, and an information session that was given about the project at the Odawa Native Friendship Centre in the Lowertown neighbourhood.

Doing Fieldwork at Home

The vignette with which I began this chapter is just one example of the kinds of interactions I have had moving about urban centres, particularly while living in Edmonton and Ottawa, over the last few years with my daughters Rose and Hazel who are now 7 and 4. These experiences strongly influenced my desire

to carry out this research. Further, my role as a mother has affected my positioning as a researcher; my urban experience and this project have been guided by my daughters' ways of being in the city. James Fabian writes that "our past is present in us as a project" (quoted in Cohen 2007, 109) and it should be made clear that my past experiences and my subjectivity as an urban mother was not shed in any part of this research. I came to this research with that experience and lived it throughout my fieldwork; I live in the neighbourhood that I conducted fieldwork, and many observations and encounters I had with people in the city occurred when I was with my daughters. There were times I brought them along on my research as well. These were intentional excursions to Rideau Street. We would take the #14 bus and get off at the corner of Nelson and Rideau. On one side is a Loblaws grocery store, on the other the Sandy Hill Community Health Centre and it is a busy intersection, where diverse groups of people interact. We would get some snacks from the grocery store, and since the summer of 2018 was extremely hot, sometimes we would buy popsicles. Outside the Loblaws are a couple benches and great big planters, the sides of which are always occupied by people sitting. The planters are usually full of garbage and cigarette butts, but we would find a clean place to sit, the girls would eat their snacks, and we would miss four or five buses on purpose as we watched the world go by.

What I have found so wonderful and beautiful about anthropology is that I can address questions that I developed while experiencing the city with my daughters. To address these in a project of this capacity has been rewarding, but my implication in my research also means that there are shortcomings which also stem from my position as a member of the urban public. Doing research at home required that I take on a dual subjectivity – that of community member and researcher – at once. There are a few panhandlers and street people in Centretown that I have been crossing paths with for most of seven years. They sit panhandling in the same spots and walk the same streets collecting bottles as they did when I first arrived in Ottawa. While I initially thought that these would be the people to which I would gravitate to

undertake my research, I found that when I ‘arrived in the field’, so to speak, there was an element of discomfort in approaching them for an intentional conversation after all this time for the sole purpose of doing research. During my master’s seminars, my professors would refer to the ‘violence of anthropology’, and at the time I did not fully understand what they meant. And then I found myself in the field and realized that approaching people who I had shared urban space with for years was something I just could not do. I suppose this is a contradiction in my research, for while I aim to address the ways in which boundaries are complicated in the space of the city, I was not able to transgress the boundary between me as an urban dweller and me as a researcher.



Rose and Hazel watching urban life on Rideau Street

In Chapter 1, *The Contested Space of Marginality*, I explore marginality as it is lived alongside the dominant. Marginality is not merely an experience marked by exclusion or liminality, I argue, but rather is characterized by being at odds with dominant society or what is ‘normal’ in the lives of the marginal public. That marginality is lived alongside the dominant introduces a contested element to its

experience: “disputed, contended for, made an object of contention or competition”; “to contend, struggle or fight for”; “to bear witness”; “to deny” (Oxford English Dictionary). These meanings are evident in debates over the placing of services for the marginal public in the city, but they are also manifest in various ways in the lives of the marginal public as they contend with their circumstances which place them at the margins and their continued identification and engagement with dominant society. My interlocutors recognized the ways in which their lives differed from most other people. Some used the phrases ‘regular population’ or ‘normal society’ in ways that situated their experiences outside of the norm. At the same time, they contested their place at the margins to defend their place and participation in the dominant. Despite the ways they position themselves within the dominant, they are forced to confront the urban public through their marginality because that is the singular way in which they are governed, usually as objects of marginalization or ‘public issues’. Through the testimonies and experiences of the marginal public – such as Angie who deals with the guilt of being both an addict and a mother, or Matt who struggles with an opioid addiction in the suburbs – it becomes clear that marginality is an experience marked by contention: at odds with one’s relationship to oneself, with other members of the urban public, and with societal norms, which leads the marginal public to feel, and sometimes literally be, out of place.

In the second part of Chapter 1, I explore the contested space of marginality in the city as it is played out in disputes over urban space. I draw on Overdose Prevention Ottawa’s (OPO) unsanctioned supervised consumption site to highlight the ways in which the needs and rights of the marginal public are set against the ideals of the urban public. These debates are rooted in the stigmatization of people who use drugs, and thus the facilities that serve them, and both become the target of community opposition.

The marginal public come to spend much of their time in public spaces of the city, and in Chapter 2, *Lives in Public*, I explore the various ways they are made visible in the urban environment, the consequences of which are central in understanding their experience of the city. Public space is meant to

be used transiently and in a private way so to maintain one's anonymity in the city; the presence and behaviours of the marginal public notably transgress these expectations. Consequently, they are governed in ways that respond to their lives in public, with considerable consequences to them. Urban design strategies and policies aim to exclude them from public space. I also discuss the visibility of the marginal public through the social and interpersonal implications of being seen or looked at by others in the context of panhandling. Through observations and conversations with the marginal public which I draw on throughout this chapter, I conclude that the visibility of the marginal public ultimately makes them vulnerable in spatial, social, and political realms of urban life, and compounds their already contested space in the city.

In Chapter 3, *Possibilities at the Margins*, I explore the space of marginality in the city through the concept of heterotopia (Foucault 1986), a place that is *other*, that contests and contrasts dominant relations in society. The margins, as places that are also defined by their otherness, I argue, contain a heterotopic capacity, which I explore through a continued look at Overdose Prevention Ottawa's unsanctioned supervised consumption site. Being at the margins of institutionalized harm reduction allowed OPO's organizers to offer harm reduction according to its founding philosophy (Smith 2012) as a social movement, contrasting the policies and motivations of harm reduction as a health policy. The care that OPO offered to its guests exceeded goals of public health; OPO was a space where drug users were trusted to take care of themselves, and each other; where drug use was not pathologized but normalized. The activism around the site of OPO influenced the long-awaited opening of Ottawa's first sanctioned supervised consumption site, and once it opened its doors, OPO's illegal site shut down. The work of OPO, however, continues through its commitment to the project of destigmatizing drug users and calling for the decriminalization of drugs. This is not only the work of OPO; for most of the people living with addiction with whom I spoke, they were motivated to speak with me to help change the view of people

like them who use drugs. This is not an easy thing to do, because for the marginal public to contest their place at the margins and claim their place with the dominant ultimately requires that they make themselves visible.

Chapter 1: Marginality

On a warm fall day, Hazel and I sat on the sidewalk near the Dollarama on Elgin Street chatting with Frank, a panhandler, whose toque lay before him. The pedestrian traffic was light, but constant. As someone approached, Frank would pull his toque in towards him out of their way, and then once they had passed, he would move it out a bit farther, but when someone else approached, he'd pull it back in close, sometimes almost under his legs. He kept talking to me as he did this, and his actions seemed an unconscious reaction to his position sitting on the sidewalk; it communicated a feeling of 'being in the way' amidst all the movement around him. While this seemed reasonable, it also seemed counterintuitive within the rationale of panhandling: didn't he want people to see the toque and feel compelled to put money in it?

Frank's economic situation required him to panhandle. The sidewalk is a very central space in the city, and while Frank was just one of many people on it that day, his use of the sidewalk was much different from the rest. Sitting on the pavement set him at odds with the dominant rhythms around him. When Frank moved his hat out of the way of pedestrians, he was performing the tension that is created between two competing ways of being in the city – one of panhandler, and one of urban dweller. In other words, the economic need that led Frank to sit on the sidewalk as a panhandler did not negate the values he held as a member of the urban public. He was acting like most people do, conscious of the space he was using in relation to others.

It is circumstances, usually social or economic, which forced all my interlocutors to confront the city in ways outside the norm. They recognized how their situations differed from what is normal, and explained the circumstances surrounding them. They recognized how their circumstances were marked by their exceptionality from the norm, that is by being unusual or atypical. Responding to the exceptionality of their lives, whether it be addiction, poverty, homelessness, or trauma, brought the people I spoke with into a

relationship with the urban that placed them at social margins. They used phrases like ‘regular population’ or ‘normal society’ to situate themselves outside of these. At the same time, they defied their marginality, defending their participation in ‘normal society’ despite the exceptional circumstances which altered their relationship to it. In this chapter, I explore the margins and the dominant simultaneously in the ways my interlocutors negotiated their positions in each, and through the sociospatial debate over Overdose Prevention Ottawa’s (OPO) supervised consumption site.

The Contested Nature of Marginality

The language of marginalization and thus marginality is often framed as an experience of exclusion from the dominant. In these theories, marginality is characterized as a product of structural processes which results in a fixed experience that exists outside of dominant culture, creating a life that is ‘other’ to what is ‘normal’. In the lives of my interlocutors, this is not incorrect. Measurably and quantifiably, most of them were excluded from certain aspects of urban life. Many lived in precarious living situations, or they did not have anywhere to live. Equally difficult were their financial situations, which brought some to panhandle, or their addictions, which were the consequence and cause of pain and trauma in their personal lives. These situations certainly excluded them from many ‘normal’ ways of participating in urban life, such as contributing in the market economy and the labour force. Theories of marginality as a liminal experience (Park 1928), however, acknowledge how those at the margins remain also connected to the dominant. These theories are premised on a person’s partial participation in both the margins and dominant culture, but importantly they do not fully experience either. They are, drawing on Victor Turner’s definition of liminal “neither here nor there...betwixt and between” (Turner 1969, 95).

Following the lives and testimonies of my interlocutors, however, I believe that marginality creates a situation of being ‘here *and* there’. For the members of the marginal public that I spoke with their marginality

is lived in tandem with their own participation in the dominant. The concepts of marginal and dominant, I argue, are not experienced as two poles dialectically set apart or mutually exclusive. Rather, the dominant and the margins are lived and contended with at the same time, marking the marginal public's experience not as liminal but as a plurality marked by paradox, which Gilles Deleuze defines as the "affirmation of both sense or directions at the same time" (Deleuze 1993, 39).

Marginality is generally conceived in its relation to the dominant (Williams 1977); there can be no periphery without a centre, after all (Harvey 1973, 16). That the experience of marginality is entwined with dominant culture is not my point of argument, however. Rather I want to say something about the relationship between the marginal and dominant. When I refer to the dominant, I mean the dominantly held ideals and values that govern society and by which most members come to be measured and ruled (capitalism and 'the elite' present exceptions to this rule) (Williams 1977). Hegemony, however, refers to the way that a society is not only ruled by force – such as the punitive measures taken to control the marginal public in urban space (more on this in Chapter 2) – but also through ideas (Bates 1975, 351). The values and ideals of dominant society are one way by which the marginal public measure their experience and judge themselves, as well as the lens through which they know they are judged by others. In this way, they participate in the dominant, even if it informs their exclusion. Their path towards marginality, however, also removes them from what is dominant in their lives, by which I mean what they see as normal and familiar. Thus, by 'dominant', I also mean this personal point of reference by which my interlocutors measured their own situations. For example, people addicted to illicit drugs are judged and penalized by society according to hegemonic values, but they also can measure how their addiction has altered their existence; their addicted lives stand in contrast to the lives they lived before, and the lives of others.

Marginality is not experienced singularly, resulting in mere exclusion, but manifests in the tension created through its differentiation from the dominant, complicating one's relationship to the physical and social space of the city, and no doubt complicating the personal lives of those affected. Marginality is marked by contention, because the dominant and the marginal do not easily exist in harmony. Marginality is "disputed, contended for, made an object of contention or competition", with other iterations referring to 'contest' as bearing witness, or "to deny" (Oxford English Dictionary). While Frank's actions on the sidewalk were a literal manifestation of the competition between the multiple ways that he confronts urban life, for others I spoke to the tension was not visually obvious but was made evident in their comments about their circumstances. This was tragically clear in a conversation I had with Angie, who is in her early thirties and one of the few people I spoke with who was currently homeless and living the realities of an intense drug addiction. She came in the room where we were conducting the interviews at the Odawa Native Friendship Centre, briefly accompanied by a staff member who introduced her. Though other people I interviewed seemed nervous when we first met, Angie acted as if she was uncomfortable in her own skin, let alone the room.

Reflecting on the cyclical nature of her addiction, Angie said that both her parents had been addicts. She spoke about her addiction with resignation, as if it had been an inevitable characteristic of her life, and she wondered if she had been "taught how to be an addict." Perhaps for this reason, Angie was wounded by and refused to accept representations of "addicts" as morally deficient, though that did not eliminate any guilt and regret that she felt, which was viscerally evident on her face and in her voice. Her addiction was a product of a multitude of life circumstances and tragedies, and now, she says, the same thing was happening to her son, who was under the care of child protective services. "I hold a lot of guilt because I'm a mom." Guilt is an indelible trait of motherhood for most. But did she mean she has a lot of guilt because she is a mom who is a drug addict? Or because she is a drug addict who is a mom? What I

mean to convey is that Angie lives two lives: one as a drug addict, the other as a mother. She contends with the guilt as it thrives in each separately and is compounded by the guilt present in the other. While Angie's reality as a mother is not manifest in how she cares for her child, it manifests in guilt for how she does not.

Drug users inhabit the very same world that we all do (Singer 2006, 5) in many of the "normal" ways, however the experience of drug addiction creates exceptional circumstances that take them beyond the ordinary. "Currently I'm sleeping in an abandoned truck, which is totally different from what I'm used to, ya know?" As Angie said this, she began to cry. Addiction does not create an 'other' life that separates Angie from what she knows to be normal, but it does create 'another' one, which competes with that which she knows and believes to be normal. Even as she sleeps in an abandoned truck, Angie is still the mother of a little boy. In what follows, I explore marginality as it is lived alongside and in negotiation with the dominant, resting in the fact that something can be two things at once.

Matt: At Odds with the Place He Calls Home

Kanata is a quiet suburb of Ottawa, 22 km from the city's centre. Large old trees line the streets, wide-open fields offer space to play soccer and for dogs to run. The streets are quiet and clean. It is snubbed by urbanites for being part of urban sprawl, but the neighbourhood's history reveals a place that was once a central part of urban development, and Canada's communications technology plan. It was referred to as the Silicon Valley of the North; but in 2000, the dot-com bubble burst, and in 2001, Kanata was amalgamated with Ottawa, moving it from a city in its own right to a designation of 'suburb'. Despite what Kanata used to be, today it is one of Ottawa's largest suburbs, the home of the Canadian Tire Centre where the city's NHL team plays, and a reviving tech industry. Still, it reflects the cookie cutter ideal that

has led to urban sprawl, the periphery of the city spreading ever further as people seek a detached and quiet home life.

Matt grew up and still lives in Kanata. He was the first participant in the project about living with addiction, and we were meeting at the University of Ottawa campus. A little past our scheduled time, I began to worry he wasn't going to come. Then I received his text. He was on campus, he said, but couldn't find the Social Sciences building. After some back and forth, we realized he had gone to the Lees Campus, which is at the far south end of the university's main campus; he had got off the bus too soon. I gave him directions and told him I'd wait for him at the Laurier bus stop. Half an hour later, as I stood where we had agreed I'd wait for him, he approached me from the opposite direction. He had walked the rest of the way. As we walked together to the Social Sciences building, we talked about his bus trip confusion. It was not lost on either of us how far he traveled for the interview, and that two of the city's recently opened supervised injection sites were just blocks away from the university campus. Matt recognized his distance from these services as a disadvantage. There are no community supports, no harm reduction services for people like him in Kanata. All these services exist near the centre of the city where drug use, and particularly public drug use, is seen as a problem.

Matt lives in the space of the conventional version of an urban life – a house with a yard in a quiet neighbourhood. He's lived there his whole life and he likes it. "It's a nice little town", he said. This is the epitome of a stable and secure life in Canada, the place people go to escape from the perceived disorder and grit of city centres – the spaces most commonly associated with drug use in the city. In this section, I explore Matt's experience of opioid addiction in the space of the suburbs. While he lives a version of a stable urban life, his addiction in the space of the suburbs contests the ideals and image of his neighbourhood. The fact is, however, that the opioid epidemic is raging in neighbourhoods such as his.

Opioid Crisis in Canada

In a country of just over 37 million people, the rates of overdose deaths in Canada are staggering. In 2016, there were 3,017 opioid-related deaths, about 8 deaths per day. In 2017, this number rose to 11 deaths per day. The numbers of deaths in the first nine months of 2018, indicate that 2018 was deadlier still (Government of Canada 1). Most of these overdose deaths (yearly numbers hover around 90%) are considered accidental. These people did not intend to die but were victims of an increasingly tainted street drug supply and the synthetic opioid fentanyl has been attributed for many of these unintentional deaths. First synthesized in 1960, fentanyl is a frontline treatment for terminal cancer pain, and is combined with other medications for surgical anesthesia. Fentanyl is much cheaper to make than heroin, and is also 25-50 times more potent; carfentanil, one of its better-known analogs, and has also been found in the street drug supply, is 100 times stronger than fentanyl. Drugs other than opioids have been increasingly laced with these substances. A spike in overdoses in Ottawa in March 2019 was largely attributed to tainted cocaine (Payne 2019).

The lacing of drugs with fentanyl and carfentanil present a very real threat to all drug users, and while these substances are a contributing factor to the overdose crisis, there is a particular history that has led to a general increase in opioid addiction and physical dependence. Recently, journalists have uncovered the complicit role of the pharmaceutical industry in the current opioid crisis (Meier 2018). While creating and marketing opioids to the medical industry as effective pain relievers, they obfuscated their addictive nature. Pharmaceutical companies have been remarkably free to lobby for their products, and perks for physicians such as meals, trips, and speaking fees have been shown to increase opioid prescribing (Hadland et al. 2018). Recently, the Canadian government announced its intention to restrict the marketing of opioids by pharmaceutical companies, recognizing in the announcement that Canada has the second highest use of opioids and legal (over)use of opioids, and their marketing and distribution has

played a role in the crisis (Government of Canada 2).

The city of Ottawa saw a dramatic increase in opioid related deaths in 2017. Overdoses attributed to opioids increased by 60% over the 2016 numbers. The rates of overdose deaths in Ottawa out-paced those of the province; the numbers for Ontario showed a 45% increase from 2016 (Delamont 2018). As in most cities, Ottawa's harm reduction programs are focused on the central neighbourhoods where *public* drug use is an issue. The opioid crisis, though, extends far beyond the streets of downtowns, even cities, and is affecting people in small towns and rural communities as well (Jozaghi & Marsh 2017). Matt was testimony to the overdose numbers suggest about the "hidden crisis" (CTV News Online) of addiction in neighbourhoods like his. In the week leading up to March 30, 2019, for example, five people died of overdoses in the Ottawa area, most were from towns surrounding of the city (Gillis 2019). Today in Canada, hospitalization from overdoses in small towns is more than double numbers in urban centres (CTV News Online). And yet, few of the over 30 supervised consumption sites operating in Canada are located outside of urban centres (Government of Canada 3). Matt believes that harm reduction services aren't available to him because people don't see drug use where he lives. Everyone is in their houses, including those using, and so the urban public is not confronted with the reality of the opioid crisis.

"It's tough to be a drug addict anywhere," Matt said, "but it's a little bit more tough because there's no drop ins." The already difficult experience of opioid addiction is compounded for Matt by being far removed from other services that would help him use more safely. Even the Site Van, a mobile harm reduction service in Ottawa that offers services to people outside Ottawa's central neighbourhoods does not go as far as Kanata. To use the service, Matt would have to travel by bus to a more central transit centre, which was a hassle on a regular basis and made him feel exposed.

Instead, he found ways to make do on his own, to use as carefully as possible without harm reduction services. Before Matt learned that he could buy syringes from the pharmacy, he shared needles

with his friends regularly. Matt said that within this risky situation the protocol was that whoever was “probably the most clean” would go first. “When you got to start making decisions like that you know this is not a good thing for your life”, he admitted. He bought spoons which he used exclusively for his drug use and used cigarette filters or the cotton from Q-tips instead of the micron filters made for intravenous use that he would have used if he could have accessed the Site Van. “It works,” he said reluctantly, “but it’s not sterile. And if you get the wrong cigarette filter, some have fiberglass or charcoal in them, so you have to be careful what brand of cigarettes you use. There are so many sketchy things.” Matt was forced to contend with his addiction within the suburban context, a reality that makes him an anomaly in what is imagined of the people who live in his neighbourhood, despite what the statistics show. Living in the suburbs, a space that is attributed with security and safety, in fact made his drug use measurably less safe because of his inability to access harm reduction services, which are generally clustered in central neighbourhoods. The conceptual and spatial relationships between marginal and dominant intertwine in Matt’s situation. The suburbs, at the physical margins of the city, form a central ideal to a secure urban life. Downtown, the physical centre of the city, is marked by being a space where drug use is public, and thus has services for those who live at the social margins.

Even though Matt had chosen the location that we would meet, I felt bad for how much time it had taken him to get there and I told him I appreciated him coming. He didn’t seem bothered by it though. Perhaps living in the suburbs, people get used to traveling greater distances to what they need, I wondered out loud. But Matt offered another explanation for his ambivalence. He said he had traveled farther before: he’d walked miles to score drugs: “[Addiction] takes you to such crazy lengths that you never would have thought possible.”

Navigating the Margins

In the fall of 2018, posters started popping up around Centretown. They were simple, just black text printed on 8x11 white paper taped on poster poles and light poles around the neighbourhood.



*Injurs do exist – doesn't mean people do
CRACK –
hospital worker 'work hard
much respect and love
I love eating food .
Life does get expansive to
budget
I dont love the ideal of asking
people for money for food –
People might look high if they
don't eat lots of food –
--fightng from passing out
aint no joke*

The author does not deny that circumstances have taken him out of societal norms. He's a hard worker but can't hold a job because of an injury. He loves food, positioning himself with most people, but he can't afford it. He doesn't like panhandling and claims his sobriety to defend himself against assumptions he knows people make about him. This is a complicated position to be in, defending his position in dominant society from his position at the margins.

Marginality is contested because it is the attribute by which one's life comes to be defined by the rest of society, but what is perceived is never wholly representative of someone's life. Panhandling is a stigmatized activity, for example, serving as a "hook on which all failings [can] be hung" (Staples 2007, 170). The author of the poster defied the perceptions of him as a drug addict, stating that when someone is hungry, they look high. Even more stigmatized than panhandling is drug addiction; not only did the author of this poster differentiate himself from people who use drugs, but so did nearly every other panhandler I spoke to. At the same time, people living with addiction are also fully aware of how they are

judged, and in fact they judge themselves by the same measure, all the while contesting their place at the margins. In this section, I explore how the marginal public claim their participation in regular urban life, while navigating their positions at the margins.

Recognizing their place at the margins

My interlocutors knew how their lives differed from other people and from the normal ways of living. Matt recognized how his experience with addiction set him outside what was normal. He said that sometimes he was able to “do a normal life” but those stints of sobriety had never lasted long, and eventually he would go back to living a “crazy drug addicted life.” Referring to this life, Matt said, “It’s really, really scary, cause what you’re doing is illegal and everybody is telling you that you’re wrong, you’re disgusting. I’ve actually been called a disgusting human being for being an injector. It’s like, yah, gee thanks. I didn’t feel bad enough, you know.” Catherine has lived with an addiction to crack cocaine for over ten years. When I spoke to her, her use was only minimal and intermittent, and she was pursuing a graduate degree. She spoke about how her drug use made her feel set apart from everyone else. “I think when you’re using,” she told me, “you sometimes feel dirty and unfit to be around people who aren’t using – the regular population. It makes you feel really bad. Maybe the people around you aren’t giving you weird looks and they aren’t stigmatizing you specifically, but you still feel like shit because you know you’re unclean and that what you’re doing is horrible.” Jacob was the only panhandler I spoke to who was experiencing homelessness. When I asked him where he spent the night, he motioned with his hands, as if he were prying open a door. He’d found an office building he could get into. While not insignificant, it is a small victory among all the challenges he faces. “It’s just really hard,” he said, recognizing the exceptionality of his situation.

Matt, Catherine, and Jacob understand the exceptionality of their circumstances, and these statements show a level of self-reflection that the marginal public are rarely given credit for. In policy and media, people in their positions are often treated as deviant objects in society, problems that need to be fixed, *as if they don't know* that their circumstances differ from normal ways of being and transgress social and legal expectations of urban life. The lives of the marginal public, marked by very personal struggles, are spoken about as 'issues' *as if they can't hear* this discourse, and as if they cannot be part of the solution in their own lives. "I know I have a drug addiction," Matt, from Kanata, said, "but I don't want to be a fucking asshole about it." He told me this as he spoke about the importance of harm reduction services for people like him. He wants to manage his addiction as responsibly as he can, he just needs to be able to access these services. And he spoke about the Site Van, and that there are rules about where they will and will not meet people. Matt told me this, not to complain about the rules, but to highlight the constraints he has of accessing the services from Kanata. One place they won't meet clients is near schools. "No shit!" Matt agreed. "There's kids there, man. I don't want kids being exposed to this." As Frank moved his hat out of the way of pedestrians that day I sat with him on Elgin Street, he seemed to be apologizing for the space he occupied; he knows he's in the way. Elaine, a woman that Rose, Hazel and I befriended along Rideau Street was smoking as we chatted one day. She saw the girls looking at her cigarette as it hung out of her mouth. She responded to them saying she always tells kids not to smoke or drink and to stay in school. Then she laughed, "I tell them, 'Don't do what I do. Do what I say.' If you smoke," she said, "you'll end up like me. If you don't go to school, you'll end up like me." Though perhaps a very simplistic interpretation of her circumstances, the point is that she recognized that her life is not a desirable one to emulate.

Claiming their place in the dominant

On my way to campus one morning, I saw a girl outside the Happy Goat Cafe. She sat as many panhandlers do, with her head down, looking at the ground or at her hands, her legs were crossed in front of her and her hoodie was up over her head. I said hello, and she looked up at me. I recognized her as someone I had seen around Centretown, always with a man who was a guest at OPO's site. He dresses well, usually in a blazer, and his swagger makes him memorable. As I sat next to Carmen on the sidewalk that day, I noticed him across the street leaning against the handrail of a church's steps. I made a point of not paying any attention to him, despite my curiosity and even trepidation about the way he seemed to be supervising her. Instead I listened to her as she told me how she came to be doing what she was doing.

When Carmen had just one more credit to complete before graduating with a teaching degree from Carleton, there was a house fire in which she lost everything. Growing up she was a ward of the state, and because of this, she said, getting a new ID has been difficult. She had been sleeping on friends' couches ever since. She said that people often assume that someone like her is a drug addict, but she's just trying to make money to buy food for herself and the two cats she is watching for a friend.

Carmen was not the only panhandler to pre-emptively defend what she was doing. The first time I sat with Frank, I hadn't even asked a question before he said that "the first thing" I needed to know was that he only panhandles for food. He spoke in a way that conveyed he wanted to 'set the record straight'. Before anything else I might want to know, he seemed to say, I needed to know this first: He lives in an apartment in Orleans, part of a housing assistance program, and receives money each month from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), but it is not enough, so he comes downtown to panhandle about four times every two weeks. "You know," he told me, "I don't like doing it, but I have to." He was on the street for awhile, staying at shelters downtown. At the shelter, he said, everyone was doing drugs,

especially crack cocaine. “I did do it, I admit it,” he stated apologetically, in a way that sounded as if he was giving up information that I had finally got him to admit.

So much of what the panhandlers I spoke with told me, I didn’t ask about. In my conversations with Frank and Carmen, they steered the conversation towards their legitimate reasons for panhandling; most others I spoke with did the same. Their pre-emptive defense does not come without warrant. A number of the panhandlers I spoke with told me that often people pass them and say things like “Get a job” or “You’re garbage.” Don, who was panning on Bank Street, told me he’s seen parents pull their kids to their opposite side, to deter them walking near him. Carmen told me that sometimes people put their hands out to her as they pass, in a way she described as saying ‘Down, dog.’ My analysis is not whether I think my interlocutors are telling the truth about why they panhandle or not, or whether they do use drugs or not, but rather that their interaction with me was framed in the way they feel they are perceived as panhandlers, specifically as drug addicts, and that they thus have to defend themselves against this. They know too well how they are perceived by other people, but their engagement with me also seemed to be framed by self-judgment. I did do it, Frank said, in a way that he was also admitting this to himself. He knows how it looks and he’s not happy with himself either.

The panhandlers I spoke with made sure to separate themselves from drug users; they recognized the increased stigma projected on people living with addiction. Those living it also knew the stigma they faced, and they defied views of addicts as morally deficient; it was circumstances as well that contributed to their situations. Matt said that most of the people he knows that are addicted to drugs are “just looking for someone to talk to.” Angie said that she didn’t choose to be an addict. It was a choice in the beginning, she admitted, to “not feel those feelings,” to numb herself to some pain, but its not a choice anymore. “It’s a habit,” she said. “There’s nothing moral about it.”

There is a distinction between one's character, and the circumstances that require one to act in different ways than most people in the city. Both panhandlers and people living with addiction communicated how they were not that different than anyone else. "You know why I pick this spot?" Don asked me rhetorically, as I sat with him at the corner of Bank and Somerset. "Because I can see that corner," he said pointing across the street, "and that corner, and that corner." Three corners on that intersection, he explained, were pokestops; his kids had got him hooked on Pokemon Go. Circumstances placed the people I spoke with in a unique position in the space of the city. They deny their positions as being morally deficient, even though they recognize the exceptionality of their lives. The relationship between the marginal public and the city is a consequence of their circumstances, which set them against the norm, despite their identification and participation in the dominant. No one likes panhandling, this was made clear, but their circumstances left them no choice.

On hearing that I was a graduate student in anthropology, Carmen said she'd taken an anthropology class in university and really liked both anthropology and sociology. She said she read a book by a sociologist about dating once; his name started with a 'G', but she couldn't remember it. Did I know it? she asked. I didn't. As we chatted, a customer stepped out of the Happy Goat Café, handed her a plastic cup of water and a to-go container. Carmen said thank you, and the woman went back inside. Carmen immediately drank the water and then opened the container, revealing a breakfast sandwich. She lifted the top of the English muffin to see what was underneath, and upon seeing it was an egg, she dropped the muffin top and told me she didn't eat eggs. "You hungry?" she asked, holding the container in my direction. I told her I didn't eat eggs either and we both kind of laughed.

The Contested Space of Overdose Prevention Ottawa

I arrived at a rally outside City Hall where about 50 people gathered. People were taking turns speaking to the crowd about their overdose experiences. One man said that he didn't have much education and suffered from mental illness, so he could not understand the bureaucracy that surrounds safe injection sites. That he couldn't understand why Ottawa had yet to open a supervised injection site was not the fault of his lack of education or mental illness, however; no one at the rally, organized by Overdose Prevention Ottawa (OPO), could understand it either, and that is why the crowd was large and loud. The illegal site had been operating for three weeks, and other than threats that they would be shut down by the police, the City has not engaged with their demands for more action in the face of the overdose emergency. "You talk, people die!" people chanted towards City Hall. The anger and frustration of the crowd was palpable, and yet the focus was on maintaining peaceful interactions as we walked into the building. All that could be heard were dozens upon dozens of footsteps as the crowd walked to Councillor Fleury's office to deliver 600 letters calling for the opening of a sanctioned SIS in the city. Empty naloxone kits, which OPO had used to save peoples' lives in the weeks it had been operating, were also delivered to Fleury's office. An assistant met the group, and said that Fleury was in his office, could not speak with them today, but could arrange a meeting with a smaller group. One of the organizers reminded the assistant that Fleury could not be occupied with something else, as they had booked an appointment for this time. Time went on. Everyone was encouraged to text Fleury messages, and his number was handed out. Within minutes everyone texting received notifications that their numbers had been blocked. Anger grew. "Fleury, there is blood on your hands!" someone yelled. Nearly an hour later, the crowd turned and left, but they were not resigned; this time they did not walk quietly. Chanting together, protestors yelled, "Ho ho, hey, hey. O-P-O is here to stay!" They would not cease setting up tents in a park until the City began offering the necessary life saving services for people who use drugs.

While OPO received strong support, opposition to the site also grew quickly. During a news broadcast on CBC Radio Ottawa, a woman from the Lowertown neighbourhood commented about OPO's services: "I fully support that we have to have harm prevention within this city, but not in a public park, not where children could be exposed to it" (CBC Ottawa Morning). Ottawa's mayor, Jim Watson similarly condemned the site, saying that the park was an inappropriate place for the service, and it should be given back to the children in the neighbourhood. The truth was, the park could only be considered a park by its zoning designation; it was rarely used, especially in the way that parks are imagined to be used for play and picnics. Public drug use in the neighbourhood over the years had resulted in the benches being removed. Not even a garbage bin remained on that forgotten patch of grass. Through the appropriation of the space by a group marked by marginality and deviance, however, the park all of a sudden became relevant (Cenzatti 2008).

One cold October night, I arrived at Raphael Burnet Park just before 5PM. A couple other people stood around, near or under some trees, which offered the only orientation of where to congregate given the lack of park amenities. In the cordial and reserved process that often begins social encounters between strangers, it was eventually established that the few people milling about the park were there to volunteer that night. Introductions were made and comments about the weather offered a first step in the conversation – recently OPO was forced to shut down due to high winds which threatened to blow down the tents, but tonight, at least, it wasn't windy. Weather was, though, just one of the hurdles OPO had recently faced. A couple weeks before an incensed neighbourhood resident spread 400 pounds of horse manure over the park just before volunteers arrived at the site. The volunteers that night cleaned up as much as possible and opened anyways, showing commitment to their cause and people who use drugs, and defiance to their opposition.

Soon the van, carrying all the supplies needed to create the site, arrived. It entered the community centre's parking lot that was adjacent to the park and backed up to the edge of the grass. Someone opened the back doors and everyone, like a well-oiled machine, started transforming the park into a safe space for people to use drugs. Four tents were erected, one person at each pole to raise the roofs. These were connected with tarps to create as much privacy as possible for the guests of the site. Bins filled with harm reduction supplies were labeled for each tent. The set up comprised the Gallery, an injection tent with 8 spaces; Tokyo, a tent with up to 20 spaces for inhalation consumption; and the Greeter Tent, where volunteers handed out snacks, water, juice, clothes, sterile drug using equipment, and naloxone. Each night this same routine was performed by 8 – 10 volunteers,² just a fraction of the nearly 200 volunteers on OPO's roster, of which I was one.

Volunteers were positioned in each tent with specific roles, and the rotation of positions always included a group of volunteers who would walk around the surrounding areas of the park with biohazard containers looking for discarded needles along buildings, in alleys, and under trees. The needles were picked up because of the potential health and safety threat they present but picking up the needles achieved more than just removing this threat; by removing the needles, volunteers were removing the visible and material evidence of public drug use in the neighbourhood. In *The Affect of the Syringe* (2010), Nicole Vitellone explores the ways the object of the syringe was employed in a community's discourse around crime prevention and urban regeneration. She found their opposition to services for drug users was based on the "*perceived* criminality of the syringe user rather than the *actual* incidence of drug-related crime" (2010, 872, emphasis mine). By giving drug users a safe space to use, OPO was removing public drug use from the streets; by picking up syringes, they not only removed the actual risk they posed to the public, but the perception of danger, and thus the danger of the people who used them.

² Importantly, OPO made sure that at least half of the volunteers each night were people with lived experience, that is those who have lived or do live with an addiction.

Picking up syringes from the streets removed the perceived dangers of drug users, but at the same time, the site of OPO remained highly visible. It was the visibility of their service, I argue, that made it an easy target of opposition. OPO's tents were not easily missed and were evidence of people who inhabit the social margins. Lyn Lofland (1998) wrote that 'problems' in society are intensified when they emerge in public space, and that visibility in public "gives special and meaningful ammunition to the foes of these problems - in fact, increases their capacity to define them *as* problems" (Lofland 1998, 132; emphasis in original). Debates around facilities such as supervised consumption sites and homeless shelters are on one level public debates about the very personal struggles of individuals who come to be contested objects in society because the exceptionality of their lives sets them apart. Consequently, they come to live their lives in public, and they become visible in the space of the city. In the next chapter I explore this element of the marginal public's relationship to urban life.

Chapter 2: Lives in Public

Zesty Market is a 24-hour convenience store at the corner of McLaren and Elgin Streets. It hasn't changed since I first moved to the neighbourhood seven years ago. The signs that line the windows are fading. There are two doors into the store, but one is not used and is set back from the street. This spot has been popular with panhandlers over the years, as the nook provides room to be comfortable away from the movement of pedestrians and shelter from the wind. Often couples will sit here panning together. When no one sits in this spot, flattened cardboard boxes or thin blankets remain as evidence of their presence; almost always there are discarded cups or bottles left in the corner.



Wish you would of waited not sure where you went but want back, back to the house then here...long story of why I took so long, was really looking forward to chillin and relaxing NO DRAMA Before starting our day.

McDonalds or Dollar Store

*Wasn't making anything gone to [illegible] ...phone has no time I need to go soon
Call about ROOM
Love you*

The flattened cardboard box in this photo is not only evidence of panhandlers having been in this spot, but the messages written on it provide a mirror into the lives of those who were here. I don't know if the conversation was around where to pan next (MacDonald's and the dollar store are both common locations on the street), or if the conversation was around where to get something to eat, but in either case,

it shows dialogue between two people whose lives are lived out in public. With the lack of phone minutes, as the message states, this cardboard was a medium for conversation in a place to which the sender knows the recipient will return. This photo illustrates the visibility of the marginal public in the space of the city.

Being with others and thus being visible to them is an inherent characteristic of urban life, yet the normal ways of moving about the city protects the privacy and solitude of the urban public (Tonkiss 2003). Public space is generally used temporarily; private space is where the urban public is meant to dwell. Thus, the urban public moves through the city in view of each other, but not long enough or in ways that we become conspicuous and known. The marginal public's relationship to the city contrasts this, which is poetically captured in the following passage quoting an urban outreach worker in an essay by Tom Hall (2010, 60):

If you think about the city centre...there are some people there who are more or less invisible. You see them all the time but you might not notice them. In some ways it's like they don't belong. But they do. They do belong there. In fact they're there all the time, more than anyone really....Everyone else – ordinary people, going to work and shopping and going home again, and tourists, or whatever – they're like a blur really. It's like if you took a film and speeded it up, those are the people that would disappear....The ones you're left with, the ones who aren't moving are there all the time...

This chapter is about the implications of being in the space of the city *all the time*. The lives of the marginal public become embedded in the social and material fabric of urban life through their conspicuous and enduring presence, which carries social and political implications.

Urban Governance and Spatial Control

To be in the city is to be 'in public', but the appropriate way to behave in the city is not public at all, but rather to embody privateness, to remain anonymous and be inconspicuous. Mitchell Duneier writes that when people are "public in their behaviour" they are accused of being indecent and therefore "fit the

delinquent stereotype” (1999, 170). Lives lived in public, therefore, is a problem in the city and is addressed through spatial control and urban governance.

Jane Jacobs’ phrase ‘eyes on the street’ has long been called upon when discussing the importance of lively and busy streets to maintain order and safety in neighbourhoods (1992[1961], 54). This is a form of social regulation that comes from knowing that one is likely always being watched by some other member of the urban public at any given time, and in Jacobs’ context, the result was positive: eyes on the street meant safer neighbourhoods for everyone. Social regulation exists in more overt forms of governance, however; in fact, it was through the development of cities that “societies developed ideas about how to discipline life through space” (Pløger 2008, 52). Space as a biopolitical disciplining apparatus, categorizes and organizes the population in order to increase health and security; separating and segregating the good from the bad, the healthy from the sick, the normal from the abnormal (Pløger 2008, 61). This is not sheer domination (Foucault 2007[1997], 155), rather the efficiency of governance relies on the “subtle integration” of “coercion-technologies” by which subjectivity is shaped and “self-technologies” by which subjects shape themselves (Foucault 2007[1997], 155).

When subjects do not conduct themselves in certain ways, governance becomes coercive through law enforcement, policy implementation and spatial control.¹ In Ottawa, for example, the use of parks is prohibited between 11pm and 5am and is enforced through Bylaw #2004-276 (City of Ottawa 2). Loitering laws give cause for police to arrest people of the marginal public “simply for being around” (Rosenberger 2014; see also Takanashi 1997). The Ontario Safe Streets Act, for example, is legislation that makes unauthorized ‘public solicitation’ in “a manner that is likely to cause a reasonable person to be concerned for his or her safety or security” (Legislative Assembly of Ontario 1999) subject to fines. The ambiguous language of the legislation, however, opens the possibility for any form of panhandling to be penalized. The people who are issued fines under the Safe Streets Act, for example, are overwhelmingly those

experiencing some form of economic precarity, and critics have condemned the act stating that is criminalizes homelessness (O’Grady, et al. 2013).

Cities also employ design strategies to deter the marginal public from public space (Takanashi 1997). These anti-loitering technologies or “homeless deterrent technology” (Rosenberger 2014) manifest as benches without back rests, and benches with arm rests, which make comfortably sitting for long periods or sleeping on them impossible. These technologies function as punitive measures, addressing the marginal public’s distinct way of being and living in the city.



Bench near Elgin Street Public School

The regulations and design technologies that control urban space are meant to force everyone in the city to align with the expected and appropriate ways of being at the appropriate times, and thus there are consequences for all the urban public. When benches were removed from some of Edmonton’s downtown streets when we lived there, we had no where to sit when Rose needed to rest her little legs, or if Hazel needed to breastfeed. In a pinch though, a mother with two children is generally welcome to have a seat inside a private establishment if needed. The marginal public, not accommodated in public space,

are generally less welcome in private space, and so the control of public space has greater ramifications for them. Despite the ways they are deterred, the exceptional circumstances of the marginal public lead them to use space to suite their needs. Near Elgin Street Public School there are benches with arm rests that line a path near a tennis court. The location is still popular as trees offer shade and the location away from the main streets provides an element of privacy. In the summer months, I routinely see members of the marginal public sitting on the grass, drying their sleeping bags, blankets and clothes, reading and eating.

The control of urban space is motivated, at least in part, by its economic potential (Harvey 2006). As neighbourhoods are renewed to increase their appeal, those who have the economic means to participate in consumption find a place; those who do not have these means are forced out of the economic, cultural and political centres to less desirable margins. The designers and enforcers of strategies such as these, and the urban public in general, should take stock, however, because Harvey warns that we lose our “sense of obligation” to the people with whom we do not come into contact (2005, 22). In other words, “who we ‘happen’ to see regularly” influences who we think of as citizens (Bickford 2008, 214).

Invisibility

To articulate the reality of the marginal public’s unique relationship to the city, I draw on that which is “ethnographically visible” (Farmer 2004, 305), and this chapter, which focuses on lives lived in public, is necessarily rooted in that which can be seen. But it is important to acknowledge that which is not physically visible in the lives of my subjects – the structures of marginalization which lead them to have this experience of the city in the first place. Colonialism, criminalization, dispossession through the child welfare system, are just a few of the ways my interlocutors were made powerless through institutionalized forms of violence. This violence is embedded in the social, political, and economic fabric

of a society and “wrecks havoc on vulnerable categories of people” (Bourgois & Schonberg 2009, 15). The marginal public’s relationship to urban life is the manifestation of various forms of subjugation and stigmatization. These invisible forces cause people to lose the means by which we, as citizens, come to be seen as (officially) participating in society. I think of Carmen, the panhandler on Elgin Street that was interested in anthropology, who was without identification cards. Without these documents to say who she is to the government she is made powerless and invisible to the state. The political economy of people who use drugs is weakened, perhaps dissolved, through their criminalization. The disenfranchisement of the Indigenous and Inuit peoples who I spoke with can be traced to colonialism and the dispossession, both past and current, which they experience. These are all forces that are ethnographically invisible, borrowing Farmer’s words again, and which also make my ethnographic subjects, the marginal public, invisible in various ways. The focus of my project, however, begins where these invisible forces leave people in the city. I attend to the marginal public’s relationship to the city, in part a product of these invisible forces, and thus to what can be seen in the social and material realms of urban life.

Enduring in Public

It was true in my research what Duneier (1999) wrote, that it is people who are public in their behaviour that are accused of being indecent, but what also became clear in my fieldwork was that the people who fit the delinquent stereotype, those who are considered “urban outcasts” (O’Grady, et al. 2013) are the ones whose private lives endure in public space.

On a Saturday morning in August I am walking north up Bank Street. Compared to the week days, the energy is calmer. The streets are not empty by any stretch. Bank Street is similarly busy on the weekend as it is during the week, but on Saturday or Sunday, the movements and behaviours of people make it *feel* like the weekend. Couples are out strolling, coffee cups in hand, but parents and children wearing white

karate suits walk faster to make it in time for class. People are carrying grocery bags and yoga mats, stocking the fridge in preparation for another busy week of work. The majority of people go relatively unnoticed, ascribing to the same behaviours and uses of space as most everyone else; their presence is fleeting. Not everyone, however, is moving along the sidewalk in this way. There are two women sitting at the corner of Bank and Somerset, on the east side of the street, selling second hand jewelry. On the other side of the intersection, in front of the Independent sits a man in a wheelchair. I see no other panhandlers as I walk all the way to Slater.

Leaving my appointment, it is noon. Now, there is a man, perhaps in his late twenties, sitting at the Starbucks entrance at Bank and Slater. As I wait for the bus, he gets up, and holding on to his tattered Tim Horton's cup, walks south down Bank. He holds the cup between his thumb and index finger; it looks light, maybe empty. The bus comes, and I get on. As the bus makes its way south on Bank, I see him from the bus window as he arrives at the Tim Horton's at Cooper. He sits down and puts his cup out in front of him.

I see a different person, a man in his thirties, sitting now where the women selling jewelry were earlier. One of those women now sits across the street in front of the Independent. Just around the corner from her, on the stoop of an old entrance into the store is another woman. As the bus continues south, I see someone panhandling in front of Staples; this is the first time I have ever seen someone panning here. The man is probably in his early thirties; he's wearing a pink muscle shirt and khaki shorts. A ball cap lays open in front of him. The man in a wheelchair who I had seen in front of the Independent earlier is now panning in front of the LCBO (liquor stores in Ontario are government run and called by the acronym of Liquor Control Board of Ontario). Though most had shifted to different nearby locations, over a span of two hours, the people I first saw panhandling on the sidewalk remained within a short section of the street.

The presence of the marginal public in urban space endures, despite numerous actions to dissuade them. Maybe they are not sleeping on benches due to anti-loitering technology, but they still stretch out on the grass nearby. They panhandle, despite the risk of penalties, but with a consideration of how they present and interact with others. They might not verbally solicit for change, but their quiet hats do the asking instead. Their exceptional situations often require them to remain in public, for lack of a place to go or with the hope of earning some money. Thus, their presence becomes embedded in the material and felt experience of the city. The messages written on the cardboard box in the opening vignette of this chapter offer a glimpse into a mere moment in time, but the presence of the box itself communicates the enduring public characteristic of the people who sat there, as do the regularly seen Tim Horton's cups, milk crates or blankets that are left in other empty doorways. These are the kinds of artifacts of the marginal public that maintain their presence in the built environment of the city, even in their absence. It is not, however, only inanimate objects that come to be part of the urban environment, but sometimes the presence of certain people come to be part of the felt experience of a street.

In the summer of 2018, I was going through Ottawa news archives online, reading stories about panhandlers, homelessness, and the marginal public in general. I clicked on a search result, a 2014 article from the Ottawa Citizen, and a photo of a woman I once knew filled my browser.



The caption under the photo read, “*Nancy, a panhandler on Elgin Street, was given a pair of socks on Thursday, January 2, 2014 by the outreach van that goes around looking for homeless people to transport.*” (Photo credit Bruno Schlumberger, *Ottawa Citizen* January 3, 2014).

I came to know Nancy in 2013. Rose was just learning to walk and as we moved about our neighbourhood at her pace, following her curiosity, she became a magnet for conversations with panhandlers and other members of the marginal public. Nancy and a couple of her friends would hang around one of the churches on Elgin that offers programming and lunch for women in need. Nancy was the youngest of the group, and the most outgoing; never could we see her and not stop to chat. One day when we ran into her, she picked up Rose and gave her a big kiss. Rose looked slightly startled – Nancy’s big smile was punctuated with missing teeth and her breath smelled of alcohol – but she wasn’t scared; Nancy wasn’t a stranger to her. Another time, Nancy pulled an old pacifier out of her backpack; faded images of Winnie-the-Pooh were still visible on its surface. She wiped it off on her pants and popped it in Rose’s mouth. My initial horror faced to curiosity: who had that old pacifier belonged to that it meant so much to Nancy to be one of the few possessions she carried in her backpack?

We eventually moved to the west side of Bank Street and our lives rarely brought us to Elgin, and so Nancy was not part of our lives anymore. Later, we moved to Edmonton, but moved back to Centretown two years later, in 2018. Elgin Street was once again part of our daily life. I saw the same bottle collectors, some of the same panhandlers, and as I walked the street and the weeks and months went by, I kept waiting to see Nancy again too.

It had been almost a year since we moved back to Ottawa and I was walking down Elgin one summer afternoon for an appointment. I saw a woman about half a block ahead of me slowly moving her bare feet to push the wheelchair she was in. I had seen her over the months on Bank Street, but not routinely. As I neared her, I could see she was wearing a jacket over a hospital gown, her black hair cut,

as if it had been done abruptly, just above the ears. And then, as our paths crossed, I recognized her. It was Nancy! But my excitement quickly faded to confusion. She looked so different from the energetic woman I had known a few years before. I kept walking, because I was in a hurry, but I also needed time to process what had just occurred. I had been waiting for that reunion since moving back to Ottawa, but it did not happen as I had imagined. Almost an hour later, I made my way back up Elgin, and saw Nancy again, within the same block I had seen her earlier, but this time she was being pushed by a young woman, another familiar face from the streets. I passed them, and then on second thought, doubled back. “Hello, Nancy?” “Yes?”, she said. Her voice was laboured. I told her that years ago, my daughter Rose and I had known her, and that I was happy to see her again. “Oh,” she said, staring blankly, then, “Do you have any change?” I said I didn’t. Then the young woman, looking down the street to the next block said, “That fucking white guy’s there.” I looked and saw a man sitting in front of the MacDonald’s. I asked if they were looking for a spot to pan. They were, and I let them continue on, telling Nancy it was nice to see her again. She nodded politely, though I don’t think she really heard me. I have not seen Nancy since that day, but as I walk along Elgin, I feel her presence, not because she is there, but rather because she is not.

Seeing and Being Seen on the Sidewalk

I asked every panhandler I spoke with what they have noticed when children pass them on the sidewalk. I was curious about this because of my personal experience walking about the city with my daughters, and also for the fact that children pass panhandlers sitting on the sidewalk at eye level, which is an immediacy that most adult urban dwellers do not experience. Most adult urban dwellers must ‘look down’ at panhandlers to make eye contact, which comes with its own discomfort. In fact, one cold December day at the University of Ottawa campus, I saw a man sitting against a light pole, near a hotdog stand, at a busy pedestrian crossing right in the middle of campus. Dozens of students streamed past him,

and I heard him speaking as I waited to cross from the other side of the street. Then he yelled, “Somebody help please?!” Through the crowd I saw that a woman had stopped. They spoke for only a moment before the man stood up to continue the conversation. The phrase ‘see eye-to-eye’ is often used to convey agreement. Meeting the gaze of another person, communicating understanding or acceptance, is understood through literature on recognition as well. Thus, to speak with someone from a disparate eye level is ethically, not to mention physically, uncomfortable. I was sensitive to this as I spoke with panhandlers. I felt what Nancy Scheper-Hughes says about the work of ethnography: “[seeing, listening, touching, recording can be, if done with care and sensitivity, acts of solidarity” (1995, 418). For this reason, I asked all the panhandlers I approached if I could sit down beside them on the sidewalk to talk. They all said yes.

One day, I sat down with May at the corner of Elgin and Gilmour. May is an Inuit woman with a big smile and gentle voice, and she responded to my question about the presence of children with an immediate response, and a smile. “They see me,” she said. Earlier that day, I sat down to chat with Jacob on the sidewalk outside the Dollarama on Elgin Street. He was in his mid-twenties and was the only panhandler I spoke with that was experiencing homelessness. He was quiet, and his voice was soft and laboured. As I began my question about what he has observed when children pass him, he nodded his head strongly and then said directly, “They don’t break eye contact.” I asked what he does when this happens, and he said he looks away, motioning with his head. And when I asked how come, he was quiet, and then he started to cry.

Seeing and being seen cannot be escaped in the city (Harvey 2004), and while this is a normal part of life for the urban public, being seen has consequences beyond the literal sense. This is generally captured in the anthropological literature on surveillance (Lyon 2007; Haggerty, et al. 2011), in which seeing is a form of discipline and security. Notably, children are not in a position to discipline, but

regardless of their lack of power, that they see panhandlers is still an act of engagement and apparently one of some significance to those who are seen. May said, “They see me” and Jacob was affected by their gaze. The figurative meaning of ‘being seen’ is taken up by Axel Honneth (2001) as a starting point for his work on recognition. To ‘see’ someone in this sense is more than visibly perceiving them but to perceive them as individuals with social significance. On the other hand, people can be ‘not seen’ as the following section elaborates; though pedestrians literally see panhandlers, they are often overlooked or ignored intentionally. Recognition’ is used to identify the struggle of groups of people to gain identity and dignity in society (Honneth 1992) and this is true for some members of the marginal public I spoke with. People addicted to illicit drugs, for example, express a desire to be seen as more than ‘addicts’ but as people worthy of care and respect, a desire that aligns with the greater project of destigmatization (more on this in Chapter 3). They want to be *seen* differently. So while the literature on recognition may be applied to some of my research, my arrival at the concept of ‘being seen’ is not through recognition, per se, but rather builds on Honneth’s discussion of the figurative meanings of visibility and invisibility and the ramifications of this in an interpersonal context on the sidewalk.

Jane Jacobs described the sidewalk as a site of a daily improvised choreography (Jacobs 1961), which is dependent on recognizing and reacting to the presence of each other in the city. We have to see other pedestrians around us in order to not bump into them, to know when to slow down, when to speed up to pass a slow walker. The eyes, and particularly our sight, are important in this daily choreography. Privacy and solitude are maintained, but the urban public are normally very aware of the other people around them. Erving Goffman called the normal way urban dwellers see each other *civil inattention* (1963, 86). Civil inattention is performed by giving a stranger “enough visual notice to demonstrate that one appreciates that the other is present” (1963, 84). This is a “courtesy” (1963, 86) that is performed for no other reason but to treat those who are visible as participants in urban life. In this way, it allows

“copresence without commingling, awareness without engrossment, courtesy without conversation” (Lofland 1998, 30). Perhaps these are the gazes that Calhoun (2013) refers to when he speaks about the connection that is made between strangers. Publicness is more than just being visible to each other but communicates respect and trust in each others’ presence; it is about *seeing* one another.

Civil inattention is a normal way to interact with strangers in the city, but it is usually only maintained when the urban public remain inconspicuous. At any time in the urban milieu, there are exceptional or irregular situations which may demand more attention from us, bringing us out of civil inattention into more explicit and conscious engagement. Goffman refers to the instances that transgress civil inattention as “extreme impropriety” (1963, 87), and while this may be true for other situations – car accidents or public episodes of psychosis, for example – I do not refer to panhandling as such, if only because I have seen the respectful and inconspicuous way in which most people panhandle. I do, however, recognize the exceptionality of panhandling as a transgression of social norms. I also can recognize many positive, or at least neutral situations in urban life which demand that civil inattention be transgressed. If, for example, I am walking with my daughter, and in the moment we pass a stranger on the sidewalk, she does or says something amusing, the stranger and I may exchange a smile, recognizing the moment as a shared experience.

While panhandlers are often passed by and their appeals for change unheeded this does not mean they are not seen; on the contrary. I have observed many pedestrians divert their course even slightly to avoid walking into someone panning. In cases like this, the panhandler has obviously been seen, because of the effort to not walk over them, but the pedestrian maintains their gaze forward, continuing a conversation maybe, not missing a beat. Panhandlers are ignored, or as Goffman writes “studiously not seen” (1963, 87), and thus are made socially invisible.

From my position at a picnic table in Minto Park, I watch May panhandling at Elgin and Gilmour. In ten minutes, she receives change from three people. One woman wearing headphones walks past her a few steps, and then stops. She lifts her big purse up and begins riffling through it. Then she lifts one leg to prop her purse up higher so she can look even deeper into her purse. She loses her balance a couple times, placing her lifted foot back on the ground to catch herself, then lifting it again, continuing to search in her purse all the while keeping her back to May who is sitting just steps behind her. Finally, she finds what she is looking for, turns back, drops some coins in May's hat, and then continues on her way. This interaction raises questions about what the urban public's interactions with panhandlers mean. While the woman's feelings in the interaction are difficult to determine from observation alone, what is clear is that she went from keeping her back to May, a clear form of disengagement, to (literally) turning around and giving her money, which is arguably a concrete form of engagement. Maybe the woman felt awkward because she didn't know how to interact with May other than by giving her money, and so her generosity offered a tangible form of engagement and acknowledgment.

Giving money is just one of the ways that the urban public explicitly engage with panhandlers. When I pass panhandlers sitting on the sidewalk, I make a point to look at them, smile and say hello, to tell them I see them. This is an exceptional way for me to interact with strangers in the city. I have heard other people comment that they always say hello to panhandlers; even if they do not give them change, they aim to extend social inclusion. "I always say hello to them," a woman said to me upon hearing that I was doing research with panhandlers. "They're human too," she added. Arguably every other person we come across in the city is also human, but we do not greet every member of the urban public.

One of the times I sat with Frank, in the span of twenty minutes, two people spoke to him. First, a man stopped and made a comment about how nice the weather was. He was very friendly, and for a minute, because he said things like "my friend", I thought maybe Frank and he knew each other. The man

sorted through a bunch of change in his hand, pulled out a toonie, and handed it to Frank. “God bless you,” he said, and then he walked away. Later, a woman turned to Frank as she walked by. “God is going to do something good in your life,” she told him. Her head was turned towards him even as her body kept moving forward and she did not see a car backing up onto Elgin from the parking lot. She veered around the car just as it slammed on its brakes and kept going. Frank turned to me and muttered a joke about God doing something good in her life, considering she just narrowly avoided being run over.

Lofland points out that equality in the public realm is communicated by civil inattention, therefore “inequality may be communicated by its absence” (1998, 40). While it is obvious that averting one’s gaze from another person communicates inequality, I argue that overtly social behaviour with panhandlers also communicates inequality. These efforts are meant to draw panhandlers into social inclusion in the city, by bridging the inequality that marks the relationship between pedestrians and panhandler in the first place. This seems a normal way to react to the social position that sitting on the sidewalk implies; their presence demands a response. Ultimately, however, Frank was included only because he is excluded.

Exploring civil inattention and ‘being seen’ in the context of panhandling begs the question of *how* panhandlers are socially understood by pedestrians – as marginal to urban life or participants in it. The line is not clear cut. The urban public must confront the duplicity in the presence of panhandlers – that they are participants in urban life, but also that their experience is set apart. This tension is created because offering visual recognition (as is the normal and respectful way to exist alongside strangers in the city) cannot just communicate equal participation because the urban public feels that there is something fundamentally unequal about someone’s urban experience if they are sitting on the sidewalk.

Jacob didn’t say why he cried when he spoke about meeting the eyes of children, so I cannot say exactly but I think it stems from the unadulterated way that children perceive panhandlers, both literally and figuratively. They see someone sitting on the sidewalk, and that is a curious thing, and so they stare

(having not yet learned it is ‘rude’ to do so), perhaps trying to figure why an adult is sitting on the pavement. By visually acknowledging panhandlers in this way, children call out their marginal position on the sidewalk, and thus their socially marginal position. As the object of their stares, Jacob seemed to feel shame. May said, “They see me”, smiling. For her, it seemed like she appreciated being recognized and not made invisible.

Ultimately, the visibility of the marginal public creates a tension between the ethical sensibilities and the private lives of those in their presence. This is not an easy situation to navigate, and the previous discussion highlights that there is nothing any member of the urban public can do in a moment of interaction that will make a panhandler not marginal. This is not to say that the urban public should not extend sociality to panhandlers as a form of generosity; nothing my interlocutors said communicated that they did not desire for these interactions. They understand that their presence is out of the ordinary, and they are there because they need a response (ideally one shown monetarily). Their aim is to appeal to the sensibilities of the people who pass them. As much as the urban public tries to continue normally, the presence of panhandlers upsets the normal rhythm (Lefebvre 2004) of the sidewalk, demanding our attention, demanding a response, and ultimately calling upon our ethical selves.

Desiring Privacy

The contested and conspicuous nature by which many members of the marginal public exist in the city threaten their right to be “let alone” (Warren & Brandeis 1890); however, their enhanced visibility is not a way of being in the city that they choose, but it is rather a consequence of their circumstances. Not having a place to live their private lives ultimately leads them to lose their right to privacy. The normal way to exist in the city, privately in public, was a desire of many of the people I spoke with, but it was

difficult or impossible for them to attain. Still, through my research, the attempts to mitigate visibility were attempts to gain at least some level of privacy.

When OPO first began offering their services, they were committed to offer a space for safer drug consumption that also supported the dignity of drug users. One way they did this was maintaining as much privacy as possible. The tents that made up the Greeter tent, Gallery and Tokyo, as well as the spare tent in which supplies for the night were kept, were connected with large tarps, enclosing the tents together to form a kind of hallway between them. The privacy that the guests of OPO enjoyed contrasted with the public drug use many of them were forced to endure. The tarps soon came to offer more than privacy, however, but also protection from the verbal attacks of outraged neighbourhood residents.

In an alternative context, most of the panhandlers I spoke with sat with their heads down, looking at the ground or their laps, not engaging with people who walked by. A couple people told me that their disengagement with passerby is very intentional. They keep their cup or their hat visible and though they may greet people and wish them a good day, they do not explicitly ask for change. It might be a way for some to avoid the insults that they described, but for others it is an attempt to avoid attention from police and the penalties they are subject to for soliciting under the Ontario Safe Streets Act. That the goals of panhandling require that they be noticed, however, complicates their desire for privacy, and in their actions and behaviours I felt a tension between their wanting to remain invisible and needing to be noticed.

Federal exemptions granted to supervised consumption sites allow drug users to bring their illicit drugs into the sites without prosecution. This freedom, however, comes with a loss of privacy. These sites are designed to increase the visibility of the clients, to make sure they are not sharing drugs and that they are following protocols that guide their use (I further discuss the constraints of institutionalized consumption sites in the next chapter). Each client sits at their own booth, which is separated from the person next to them with dividers. They face large mirrors so that the supervising staff can see what they

are doing from behind them. Often there are cameras as well. There's "no privacy at all," Catherine, the graduate student, told me, but she admitted that saying that is a "privilege" she has since she is not using heavily. She knows that for the people who are accessing those sites, they don't have the privilege of privacy – to use on their own puts their lives at risk. At the same time, Catherine noted that people are "so entrenched in their use that they're not gonna care if somebody's watching or not." Addiction, Catherine seemed to be saying, made people forget that privacy is something they should care about.

Vulnerability in Visibility

What emerges from analyzing the visibility of the marginal public in the city is the vulnerability that is produced from living a life in public. This vulnerability is produced not because of the ways they are marginal to urban life, but rather because of the ways they are deeply connected and affected by the spatial, social, and political realms of the city. I, for example, go about the city in a way that adheres to spatial and temporal expectations using space in appropriately deemed ways and times. Nobody notices me; I engage with people I pass in ways that do not affect them. But for those people at the margins, who for one reason or another are not able to adhere to acceptable ways of being, what spaces they use, and how and when they use them are points of contention in public opinion and policy. And their interactions with the urban public carry deeper social weight. Marginality and its consequences are incredibly visible, and thus become a relatively normal part of urban life. When we see someone sleeping in a torn up sleeping bag on the sidewalk with their bare feet exposed to the cold wind, we keep walking because that is what one does in the city. But then, I feel the pull of my daughter's hand in mine, because she has slowed her pace and is looking back, staring and wondering why somebody is sleeping on the sidewalk.

Chapter 3: Heterotopic Potential of the Margins

It was a crisp October night, and I stood under the awning of the Greeter Tent at Overdose Prevention Ottawa's pop-up supervised consumption site. I was there to greet people as they arrived, and hand out drug using supplies, snacks, juice and water if anyone wanted or needed them. There were first aid supplies at the ready and of course numerous naloxone kits visible and available. As one of the volunteers on site that night, my official role was to support the care and safety of people who use drugs, but at this moment I was helping Randy, an outgoing, forty-something year old man, find a way to carve a pumpkin. None of the other guests had a knife for him to use, no volunteer either (and if anyone did it was likely against their better judgement or 'street smarts' to give it to him or anyone else). Eventually, Randy tracked down a plastic knife, and began carving out the top of the pumpkin. It was arduous work, and he attracted the attention of volunteers and guests; no one could hold back a smile or a laugh when they saw what he was doing, and I am not sure they were laughing with or at him for the seeming futility of his venture. The atmosphere was lighthearted and fun, nonetheless; this was, after all, a space where drug users could relax and 'be normal'. Randy finally cut the top out of the pumpkin and he proceeded to carve out the face. I served as his 'model'; the jack-o-lantern supposedly was made in my likeness. The joys of pumpkin carving within a space designed for the illegal use of drugs is surely a combination of activities rarely deemed possible.

In this chapter, I explore what is possible at the margins. Generally, the margins are considered for what they are not; that is, their substance is always judged in relation to the centre. Physical margins are set at a geographical distance from a centre, which is generally the hub of some importance, and thus these physical margins lack status for being set apart. Social margins are also often defined by their disparity from a dominant norm. When considered a consequence of marginalization, people at these margins are

considered to need rehabilitation to bring them from the deprived peripheries back to the centre (Staples 2007). Instead, in what follows, I look at the margins as a place of possibility, because of their distance from the centre. Think, for example, of the centre, the dominant, as a point, a small black dot that I mark at the exact centre of a white piece of paper. This dot cannot move from its spot. It is officially and securely the centre of the page. What is at its periphery? All that is beyond it; all the white of the paper, and even what exists beyond the paper's edge. The peripheries, or the margins, of this dot are vast and multiple compared to its fixed and singular state. The black dot will not change; the margins, however, leave room for differentiation. I hand my daughter the page and tell her to colour in what is left. The black dot is of no consequence to what colours she can choose. The black dot, in fact, may be coloured over.

Heterotopia, a place of otherness

In 1967, Michel Foucault gave a lecture titled *Des Espaces Autres* (Of Other Spaces) to a group of architects in Paris. Foucault began by stating that life is guided by sites of opposition, which are accepted as “simple givens”; the oppositions of private and public space, family and social space, cultural space and useful space, and work and leisure space all constitute what govern human relations (1986, 23). Where in the past, sites were defined by the sacred and the profane, contemporary space is defined by the *relations* among sites (Foucault 1986, 23), which is certainly apparent in the heterogeneity of modern cities. With this premise Foucault turned his focus onto sites “that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect” (Foucault 1986, 24). In a sense, this is what utopias do. They are spaces that have an “inverted analogy” (Foucault 1986, 24) to real space in society. Ultimately, however, utopias do not exist but for in our imaginations. Foucault instead turned his attention to the *real*

sites that have this “curious property”, and these are the sites Foucault calls *heterotopias*. Unlike utopias, heterotopias do exist in the real world, as “counter-sites” (1986, 24) to all the other real sites.

The concept of heterotopia has been taken up in various ways. From Harry Potter to social activism to shopping malls, the concept of heterotopia has been used by academics in literature, urban studies, architecture, and the social sciences. There has been debate about the Foucault’s true meaning of heterotopia (see Knight 2014 for an argument that Foucault meant for heterotopia to be a term used for literary analysis), but perhaps it is because of the concept’s ambiguity (Soja 1996) that it offers a versatile and creative analytic. I address the disparate ways in which the concept has been utilized to premise any deviations I take from the interpretations of others to analyze my research through a heterotopic lens.

Heterotopia’s most common iteration has been the analysis of physical spaces in society, taking Foucault’s definition of “real sites” (1986, 24) literally. Herman Meininger, however, moves away from this interpretation and instead uses the concept to refer to “a dimension of human social reality” in which heterotopia does not refer to spaces with physical borders (Meininger 2013, 31). Instead, Meininger writes that heterotopic space “consists in relations between people who live on the margins and people who live in the centre of civil society” (2013, 31). As I have argued in previous chapters, marginality in the space of the city is not a demarcated experience that is merely other than the dominant; it is in constant relation and contestation with the dominant. It is this relational space that heterotopia illuminates.

Heterotopia as a relational space does not need to sit in opposition to other interpretations of heterotopia as a geographically situated and physical space, however. Instead, heterotopia further clarifies the ways in which the social and physical space are always connected. The concept of heterotopia ties neatly into Lefebvre’s spaces of representation (Cenzatti 2008), that is space as relationally constituted and defined by its use. Both heterotopias and spaces of representation are produced by a relationship between social relations and the space within which they exist, thus the combination of heterotopia and

spaces of representation highlights the temporal and mutually affective relationship between social relations and space in the city. “As soon as the social relation and the appropriation of physical space end, both space of representation and heterotopia disappear” (Cenzatti 2008, 81).

In this chapter, I return to the space of the city not thinking about the margins per se, but marginality with a heterotopic lens to orient my attention to situations and events in which people and the places they inhabit contest and juxtapose the normative relations that exist in the city. Insofar as heterotopias are set apart from dominant time and space, the margins, defined by similar parameters, might be seen to contain a heterotopic capacity. If heterotopias can be characterized as a space that inverts or contrasts the world outside of that space or a set of relations that does the same, then margins, as spaces that are thought to contrast with the centre might be seen as spaces of possibility where what is not possible in the world outside is made possible at the margins. It is this heterotopic capacity, or possibility, of the margins that I explore here through a continued look at Overdose Prevention Ottawa’s (OPO) unsanctioned supervised consumption site. Being at the margins of institutionalized harm reduction allowed OPO’s organizers to offer harm reduction that was rooted in social and political ideals that contested the policies of harm reduction as a health policy. I discuss this, as well as other benefits OPO had by being unsanctioned and operating at the margins of regulated services. The project of destigmatization was at the centre of OPO’s work, and while the physical site of OPO has ceased, the work of destigmatization continues. I explore this through the lives of those living with addiction and a rally in Ottawa for Overdose Prevention Awareness day.

Harm Reduction as a Social and Political Practice

The philosophy of harm reduction began in the 1960s and 1970s through social and political activism that opposed the criminalization of drug use and the stigmatization of drug users (Roe 2005). By

the 1980s, this activism became a movement that was known by the term ‘harm reduction’ which offered an HIV/AIDS risk minimization solution amongst intravenous drug users; but it was only when the threat of infection reached beyond “at risk” populations that HIV/AIDS became a *public* health concern (Roe 2005). With the possibility of HIV/AIDS infecting and affecting the general population, harm reduction principles that had until then remained within a localized population became recognized and adopted as an effective and, importantly, cost-effective, public health strategy. The acceptance of this public health strategy, however, required that harm reduction programs hold politically neutral positions towards drug policy (Keane 2005; Roe 2005), the goals of which are health, rather than political or social change. Even the strongest prohibitionists can identify themselves as harm reductionists when drug use is framed as a health issue, for, from the prohibitionist’s perspective, to prohibit drug use is in the best interests of people, socially and physically, and thereby reduces harm (Brooks & Stringer 2005). This political neutrality of harm reduction has been criticized, consequently, for the way it avoids questions surrounding the legal and social status of drug use (Keane 2003) by “diverting policy and practice away from structural issues” which materially constrain an individual’s agency (Moore & Fraser 2006, 3036). This “new” harm reduction (Roe 2005) as a health policy worked within government institutions to promote health and moved away from its anarchist roots (Smith 2012) that challenged policies and laws that marginalize vulnerable groups of people (Roe 2005, 244).

While the intentions and health outcomes of institutionalized harm reduction are good and effective, harm reduction as a health policy has also been criticized for causing new and unintended harms. Scholars have commented on the ways its discourses, policies and practices inscribe a neoliberal subject – that is “autonomous, rational, independent, calculating—and fail[s] to acknowledge adequately material constraints on individual human agency. (Moore & Fraser 2006). For example, the embedded, moralized expectation is that “bad” drug users can become “good” citizens by choosing to use the services of

supervised consumption sites, or by ascribing to the best practices of harm reduction, that is, by taking care of themselves. It is, viewed biopolitically, a process of normalization, confirming ‘abnormal’ or ‘deviant’ drug users as ‘good’ citizens through their self-care. In contrast, in OPO’s distinction of being ‘other’ and apart from institutional and legal, spheres of harm reduction, it contested the norms and processes of normalization that existed in broader society (Foucault 1986). In the face of the current opioid crisis, harm reduction services such as supervised consumption sites fulfill their goal in saving lives, but this, according to those who view harm reduction as a political movement, does not alleviate the social and political harms of drug use. Consequently, there is a “historic tension” between the people who see harm reduction as merely medical intervention to promote health and mitigate harm and those who see it as a means to greater social change” (Roe 2005, 244).

Regulated harm reduction services are tasked with being welcoming enough that drug users will access them but not nice enough to be viewed as encouraging drug use. When Insite first opened, North America’s first supervised injection facility in Vancouver, health officials asked the organizers to remove the coffee maker in the chill out room (where people wait after administering their drugs to ensure there is no risk of overdose), citing that the it made the space ‘too welcoming’ (Lupick 2017). OPO’s goal, in contrast, was to be entirely and overtly welcoming to drug users. Like other supervised consumption services, OPO offered a space for drug users to remove themselves from the constant threat of criminalization and harm that characterizes street drug use, but OPO’s motivation exceeded that of public health. Their work was firmly rooted in the belief that the harms of drug use are caused and perpetuated by social and political structures. Statements on OPO’s website such as “The drug supply is tainted as a result of prohibition...” (from a post on August 31, 2018) and that there is a “need to end prohibition in order to address the overdose emergency” (from May 25, 2018) reflect their opinion of where the harms of drug use originate – not in the drug use itself, but in structures that make drug use criminal and thus

dangerous. OPO was a space that drug users could be themselves, where they had inherent dignity. Accessing harm reduction services were not what made them good; at OPO they already were. It was a space where drug users were cared for, but also where they could care for others. It offered a space where people who are normally excluded from society are included; a site where groups of people who are assumed incompatible share space and form relationships. Considering all the possibilities opened by OPO's site it is not surprising that the importance of this small patch of grass came to be known affectionately as "the patch of power."

The Benefits of Being Unsanctioned

All of the founding members of OPO had a connection to the drug using community in some way; most worked in harm reduction as service providers at community health centres around Ottawa. The illegal status of OPO allowed them to operate outside of the policies that guided the regulated services in which they worked, which they criticized for not putting the needs of drug users first. Marianne, a founding member of OPO explained this to me. She said, "Myself as a worker I have a lot of ethical and spiritual pain because of the priorities of social services being on liability always and rarely, extremely rarely, about the actual guest or the actual client. So shifting that focus was to repair that pain." At OPO, liability and regulation came second to their guests needs, or not at all. While institutional SISs often use to term *client* to refer to the people who access their services, OPO chose the term *guest* in an effort to invoke an environment of hospitality. Drawing on the business dictate of *the customer is always right*, OPO's dictate was "The guest is always right."

OPO abolished ineffective or harmful protocols that limit the ways people can use their drugs in institutionalized settings. The first limitation is that inhalation, which was the highest attended service at OPO, has historically not been permitted under Health Canada's federal exemptions for harm reduction

services. But at OPO, the inhalation tent, called Tokyo, where people could consume their drugs by smoking them, was the busiest spot on the OPO site, seeing on average twice as many visits per night than the injection tent. At any given time, there was a crowd of people sitting around a table playing cards, listening to music, and having a good time together. The general rowdiness of the group in the tent seemed to have the potential to get out of control, but organizers told me that during the months they operated they only had to break up two fights. Generally, the guests regulated themselves, fully aware of the fragile position of the site: if the police ever had to intervene, the City would certainly follow through with their threats to shut OPO down. My position at Tokyo one night was to greet people as they arrived, mark the number of guests entering the tent and their perceived gender. Having these numbers allowed OPO to prove the need for inhalation services, as at the time government exemptions only allowed for injection services. Keeping minimal statistics was also in case of future funding applications, but other than keeping track of visits to the tents, OPO purposefully did not keep any other paperwork on its guests, sensitive to the many other ways they were normally surveilled.

Additionally, at sanctioned sites, people generally are not allowed to assist each other with their injections. At OPO this was permitted and routinely done by guests. “People assist each other all the time,” Marianne said, “We have folks that have arthritis; we have folks that have missing limbs, all sorts of things. They have muscle weakness and their friends assist them for their injections and that’s possible at OPO.” The practice of allowing assisted injection helps the most vulnerable of drug users, as those who need assistance are at an increased risk of harm already and barring them from supervised services further forces them to use in unsafe environments (Gagnon 2017). The work of OPO and other activist groups like them have aided in changing the regulated system to further meet the needs of people who use drugs. Since 2017, a handful of sites have been granted approval for inhalation services (Government of Canada

3). Additionally, the Canadian government approved a pilot project that gave six supervised injection sites (SIS) permission to allow peer assisted injection (Glauser 2018).

Marianne also pointed to Health Canada's restriction of one injection per visit which did not make sense in preventing overdoses. "One of the many strategies to prevent an overdose", Marianne pointed out, "is for folks to pace their use...If that makes sense to them, we're really pro that." If people needed to inject two or three times and stretch out the doses, they could with supervision at OPO. In other words, if it "made sense" within the careful practices of the people who they were serving, then OPO trusted that knowledge of what works. The restriction to one injection per visit (which is additionally restricted to no more than 20 minutes) is feared to force drug users to take care of one need in place of another. For example, a drug user may choose to use a sanctioned SIS as a precaution in case of an overdose, yet because of the one injection per visit rule they may then choose to inject a larger dose during their visit, since pacing is not allowed, and since leaving and re-entering the site is not desirable or practical.

The consequence of offering a service that was guided by the needs and knowledge of its guests created a space that drug users wanted to be, beyond the need for safer drug use, and for which they felt ownership. On most of the evenings I volunteered at OPO, Daniel, a guest of the site, helped monitor the Greeter Tent in between his visits to the Gallery, the injection tent. His main object of concern was that the lids of the plastic bins which held the drug using equipment such as filters, alcohol wipes, and syringes, remained securely fastened. Common sense isn't so common anymore, he told me one night as he straightened the bins, pushing the corners of the lids on each one. He said he'd been thinking about it, and it seems to him that God stopped handing out common sense in the eighties. Whether Daniel is right about that or not, OPO supported the common sense of its guests. It made sense to Daniel to monitor the Greeter Tent all night, to him that was important, and within OPO what mattered to him and made sense to him, and others like him, was encouraged and championed. OPO was a space in which drug users and their

opinions were valued; it was also a space in which they could care, not only for themselves, but for the work of OPO and each other.

Caring for One Another

It was a normal night at OPO. Guests, many of whom are regulars, arrived to use and socialize, and the movement in and out of the tents, particularly Tokyo, was constant. Yet this night there was an overdose. A crowd of people came loudly out of the tents; the group was holding up and surrounding a woman, Tina, her body stiff, her head thrown back like she was frozen in a convulsion. Her overdose symptoms were atypical of a normal heroin overdose, in which a person normally collapses. This was different, and carfentanil was suspected to be the cause. Perhaps at this point, Tina's friends did not know she was experiencing an overdose, because they were trying to leave with her. But then, as they reached the edge of the park and congregated in a bus shelter, one of them began yelling for somebody to call 911. Within seconds, a volunteer from Gallery was running out with a naloxone kit, which she administered while other guests and volunteers held down Tina's convulsing body. It didn't take long for the drug to take effect, and then Tina was mad, as people often are after naloxone is administered. It blocks the nerve receptors that the drug is attached to, essentially plunging the person experiencing the overdose into an immediate and violent withdrawal, in other words, it is sudden "dope sickness." She stumbled about the park, angry, yelling, visibly in discomfort and pain, until the adrenaline ran out and she came to rest on the ground in the parking lot nearby. Volunteers were there when she did, with some blankets, and they monitored her while she rested.

This evening, because three Gallery trained volunteers were with Tina, extra volunteers were needed in the Gallery tent. I was recruited to take what is called the "911" position, where the sole responsibility is to call 911 in the case that it is needed. At this time, there were two guests in the tent

using. Despite the commotion that had happened just moments before, the atmosphere was calm once again. Then, one of the site leads, Julie, came into the tent and asked one of the guests where Tina's rig was. Josh answered, and said that he threw it out, continuing to prepare his own hit but motioning to the sharps/biohazard container. "It was the purple stuff," he said. The purple stuff had been the cause of five people "dropping" (when someone becomes unconscious, often the first sign of an overdose) near Clarence Street earlier that day. "She's asking for it," Julie said. She asked Josh what sharps container he threw it in, and he motioned to one at the other side of the Gallery. Another volunteer in the Gallery, Meghan, went over and picked up the box, looking into it as if eyeing through a telescope. For the next few minutes they discussed what to do. "She's gonna come looking for it," Julie said. When Josh was done with his dose, he left the Gallery to talk to Tina. He came back to prepare another rig and didn't say anything, but Tina didn't come in looking for her rig either. He must have helped convince her not to.

Later that evening, I was back at the Greeter Tent when Tina, supported by her boyfriend, came by to get some snacks on their way out. They stocked up on sweets (there was a lot of Halloween candy still), popcorn and juice boxes. Tina asked for an extra bag of popcorn. She said she loved popcorn, but other than that she did not say anything. She was clearly exhausted. When they were finished gathering what they needed, her boyfriend propped his arm around her, put his other hand to his heart and said, "Thank you." Then they left. Tina was only wearing a hoodie with basketball shorts, socks and sandals. It was 7°C.

It was cold and raining when 9:00PM came around. There were still people in Gallery, but volunteers started packing up everything else. Josh was there to help until the end, when anyone who was still around held hands in the closing circle to wrap up another night.

Children in the Space of OPO

In the previous chapter, I discussed the opposition and contention that surrounded OPO's site. Many of the arguments against the site stated the presence of children as a reason the site should cease to operate. To reiterate, Jim Watson, for example, expressed his disapproval of the "inappropriate location" of the site, stating that it was "time for that volunteer group to go and work with public health and give the park back to the children and families in the Lowertown neighbourhood" (Chianello 2017). Similarly, a woman quoted on CBC radio said the site should not be in a park "where children could be exposed to it" (CBC Ottawa Morning).

Laying claim to the space for children meant, despite disclaimers, the exclusion of people who use drugs. Children, it is often assumed, are in danger *in the vicinity* of people who use drugs, and this is an argument that is not unique to Ottawa and OPO. Around the same time, in the fall of 2017, an elementary school in Montreal was taking legal action to stop a supervised injection site from opening 200 metres from the school. The school's lawyer said, "When there's an issue of children, when there's an issue of safety, it's something that immediately strikes one as a legitimate and serious concern" (Levesque 2017).

In OPO's case, the fear of children and drug users sharing space was not just activated in debate around OPO but was also a concern of police who routinely monitored the site. One night, the police told OPO organizers that if there were any children ever present it would be an issue for the Children's Aid Society (CAS). OPO called CAS to check the legitimacy of this threat in order to avoid any legal implications for anyone. CAS told them that it wasn't an issue for them if children were in the space, but only that it would be a problem if the children were under the care of the people accessing services at the site.

This was an important distinction because children were routinely at OPO. It wasn't uncommon for volunteers to visit OPO with their children, using it as an opportunity for a "teaching moment." It also

allowed them to show their children where they had been the many evenings they hadn't been at home. One night that I was volunteering, a mother and her 11-year-old son brought homemade cookies and helped set up the tents. They stayed to participate with other guests and volunteers in the opening circle at 6PM. I brought my daughter, Rose, with me one night to drop off some donations of warm socks and personal hygiene products for the guests. There were a few children from the neighbourhood who routinely stopped by for granola bars and cookies from the Greeter Tent. OPO organizers had conversations with the children's mother to make sure she understood what happens at the site, and she asked, "Are they bothering you?" They never did. In my interview with Marianne, she expressed her happiness that OPO was a space that made inaccurate the view that drug users are "inherently dangerous and contagious and violent...so mere exposure could endanger the innocence of children."

This is not to say that the presence of children in the neighbourhood was not considered by OPO. When OPO decided to operate at Raphael Brunet Park, they were sensitive to the fact that adjacent was a City of Ottawa recreation centre. The organizers of OPO did take this into consideration when deciding where to locate their pop-up services, but Marianne said that at the time the recreation centre was closed for renovations, so the issue of children's programming being right next to their operation wasn't an issue, at least not in the immediate present; and they had no idea how long they would be allowed or need to operate in the park. For most of September, a large City of Ottawa billboard advertising children's summer camps stood at the corner of the park facing the road. On the billboard, the happy face of a child in a swimming pool served as a reminder of the juxtaposition and set of relations that was inverted within the space of OPO. For some, the billboard might have symbolized the claim that children should have the space with the exclusion of drug users, but for others it symbolized a shared, inclusive space that the heterotopia of OPO made possible.



A photo posted on OPO's website celebrating 20 days of operation. People with lived experience and without lived experience, adults, children, neighbours and friends together on the patch of power.

Due to its illegal status, OPO was able to operate outside of national policies and regulations, offering the guests and their service providers greater freedoms to care for each other and themselves. Despite the freedoms they had at the margins, OPO put pressure on the city to open sanctioned services. Finally, on November 7, 2017, Ottawa Inner City Health opened a sanctioned SIS in a trailer at the Shepherds of Good Hope shelter a block away from OPO's site. On November 9, OPO set up its tents for the last time. In 77 days of operation³ OPO saw 3,676 visits to their consumption tents. Five overdoses were reversed with naloxone, but OPO stresses that the number of overdoses *prevented* is "hundreds more", achieved through "various interventions" such as allowing guests to take their time and pace their use, and by offering a place guests could "experience connection and belonging within the community" (OPO Summary Report). On that last night, guests and volunteers were invited to write messages about what OPO had meant to them.

"Put up a tent somewhere and we will go...I'm not picky, I just want somewhere that is safe. I loved that OPO provided a smoking area. It was fun and comfortable. Now, we don't have a space to go."

"I don't understand why are you [sic] doing this for us, I thought no one cared about us."

³ OPO was forced to close on three occasions due to extreme weather that would have made offering their services in tents unsafe.

Resistance at the Margins

The experience of marginality has created in some what bell hooks (1984) calls an oppositional world view. This is a perspective of the world held by those at the margins that is unknown to those at the centre, which has “strengthened [their] sense of self and [their] solidarity” (hooks 1984, preface). OPO offered a physical site for this resistance, opening the avenue of communication between the centre and the margins, questioning forms of dominance and shaking up the status quo (hooks 1984, 159-160). The work of OPO began with a rebellion from the margins, manifested in the physical and illegal space of the consumption site, but its work has continued and contributes to the greater project of destigmatization and decriminalization of drugs. OPO was committed to normalize drug use, working against the view of drug use as pathological and deviant, which thus makes the user pathological and deviant. The project of destigmatization, which is a fundamental part of harm reduction as a social and political movement, aims to reinstate the humanity of those who use drugs. In contrast to the institutionalized form of harm reduction, OPO did not aim to change or shape the drug user, rather OPO’s goal was to change society. The work of OPO was therefore not fulfilled when Ottawa opened its first sanctioned SIS in November 2017. The work of OPO, to destigmatize the drug user, part of the larger social project of harm reduction is far from over.

On August 31, International Overdose Awareness Day, I arrived at the Human Rights monument along Elgin Street for Ottawa’s 2018 events. On the platform of the monument were dozens of pairs of shoes, each with a sign beside it, announcing the decade of age within which each person died of an overdose, and who they were to someone else. “Twenties BEST FRIEND,” “Sixties MOM,” “...GRANDMA,” “...POPPA,” “...NEIGHBOUR.” The laying out of shoes to signify a life lost to overdose is a tradition in harm reduction activism that began in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (Lupick 2017).

I arrived ten minutes before the event was to start, and a couple dozen people milled about. It was obvious that most people knew many of the other people gathered, as there were many warm greetings and hugs exchanged. A group of people stood together wearing matching t-shirts that read “Nice People Take Drugs.” When the event started, one by one, speakers took to the stage: harm reduction workers, a police officer, people with lived experience. While the main message of the demonstration was the need for more services in the face of the opioid crisis, the overarching message was that people who use drugs are worthy of this care.



Behind the pairs of shoes representing the people in Ottawa who have died by overdose, signs with messages “Opiate Contrasts are Killing Us!” and “Fent Kills. So Does Stigma!”

In all my conversations with people living with addiction, their motivations for speaking with me about their experiences were similar. Their hope, they told me, was that by sharing their story, it might help others experiencing something similar, or it might help change societal opinions of people living with addiction. Matt said he was tired of people looking at addicts as disgusting and sick people. “They’re just people that need some help,” he said. “That’s where the problems are coming from. There’s something

happening that's causing them to want or feel they need that sort of escape." And it's because of the people who care, he said, those who "push their voice over all the chaos" that help things change. This was the motivation for one of the speakers at the Overdose Awareness Day event too. She stood before everyone, supported by a friend who held up the microphone, the pages of her hand-written speech shaking. To be part of this project, to speak to the centre from the margins, is not an easy thing to do. In fact, to be part of the project on destigmatization requires those who are stigmatized at the margins to make themselves visible and heard so that they can, borrowing Matt's words, push their voices to the centre. Her voice cracked as she spoke about her addiction, and the overdose that nearly killed her, in front of nearly a hundred people that day. She spoke on behalf of other addicts, drawing them out of the margins and claiming their place in the centre as her voice rose "over all the chaos" and the familiar and routine noises of Elgin Street.

Conclusion: Heterotopic Moments and Care in the City

A heterotopia is a place that is other. It allows one to see old issues with new eyes; and to listen with strange ears to what seemed to speak for itself.

-Annemarie Mol

In the previous pages, I have outlined the aspects of what constitutes the marginal public's relationship to the city – marginality and living in public. I pointed to the margins as a place of possibility, where marginality is contested in significant and organized ways in response and opposition to the dominant. While I have, hopefully clearly, explained the term 'marginal public' in a way that the concept may be applied to other cities and contexts, I want to return to the moments of interaction between my daughters and the marginal public that started me on this exploration in the first place. These moments of publicness, in which a connection was made between strangers, I conceive as heterotopic in nature. The presence of children opens the possibility of these moments, for the ways they move about the city that contrasts with the dominant rhythms of urgency and privateness that most adults have been taught to. Children approach the city with wonder and possibility. A bike rack, for example, can become monkey bars; a concrete barrier a balancing bar. The interactions I had between the marginal public and my children are influenced by their particular ways of being in the city; both are set apart from the dominant, though in very different ways. These moments of publicness they shared contested the boundaries that are thought to exist between them. They were also moments that showed care and attention to the presence of another. I want to end with more images, that might make you, the reader, wonder at the city, to leave open the ways the city is "a space of encounter and surprises, of openings to difference" (Harvey 2004, 12).

Many of the moments of publicness that my daughters and I have had with the marginal public have involved some form of care. I have wondered why this population, more than any other group of

people, paid the most attention to the presence of my girls. This attention was shown through compliments, “Look at those beautiful dresses!” or comments to me like, “You take care of those beautiful girls.” Once, a man, sitting on a milk crate near a convenience store on Elgin told me that he has grandchildren. “They’re lovable,” he added, referring to children in general, the presence of mine obviously giving him joy. The attention my daughters received from the marginal public was offered in the form of gifts, such as when Nancy gave Rose the Winnie-the-Pooh pacifier, or the panhandler who gave Hazel a bottle of bubbles. These were caring gestures, from a population who are stigmatized, in part, for their inability to care for themselves, or because they solicit for the generosity of others. Children it seemed, offered a way for them to reciprocate, or at least participate in caring for others, in small ways that were within their limited means.

Theories of care offer a helpful way to think about the way strangers share the city as a public. David Conradson (2003), for example, explores how subjectivity and care are shaped in the socio-spatial environment of a community centre, where ‘space’ is employed not to merely describe the physical space of the centre, but “a socio-spatial field disclosed through the practices of care that takes place *between* individuals” (Conradson 2003, 508, emphasis mine). For Conradson, this conception of care extends beyond tangible forms of care, such as providing food or helping in sickness, and instead marks “everyday encounters between individuals who are attentive to each other’s situation” (2003, 508). This is more than mere publicness. Care that emerges in ‘everyday encounters’ between individuals requires that the connection between us through publicness is recognized and acted upon. This care emerges when we understand the commensurability that emerges by being in urban space together.

From what I have observed of my daughters, they seem to understand this, at least in the sense that they act upon the connection that comes with publicness. One day, as we made our way through downtown Toronto, we saw a woman struggling a long with an old suitcase. We passed her. Half an hour later, we

saw her again. She was waiting on the steps of a community centre. Rose yelled, “Mom! We know her!” I too, recognized the woman, yet I did not equate having seen her with knowing her. When May said, “They see me” perhaps her smile was merely because children make clear, through their stares, they know she exists. This is more than most adults offer each other in the city. While I remembered seeing that woman with the suitcase, I was accustomed to pretending that I didn’t know she existed when I saw her again. Rose, on the other hand, was clearly thrilled about the connection she had just made, through publicness, with a stranger. Cities will be stronger if we pay attention to presences. Maybe we can learn something from Rose’s fast connection with strangers in the city by being attuned to the commensurability that comes from sharing space, the connections we form by being in the presence of another. The potentials that might come from this may be significant. As Catherine Fennell has wondered, “A meeting of bodies and senses might make for a meeting of the minds” (2015, 27).

The day that we met Elaine on Rideau Street was hot. When she had finished talking about how she tells children to do what she says, not as she does, I smiled and told her not to worry about her cigarette. Then I told the girls that they could go and sit in the shade of a tree nearby, and I would call them when the bus came. They would have to be ready and come quickly so we didn’t miss it, I reminded them. Elaine lamented how so often bus drivers don’t wait for mothers and children, or older people. She asked what bus we were waiting for, and I told her the number 14. She offered to wait at the bus stop for us and tell the driver we were coming. I accepted her offer and thanked her. She walked over to the bus stop, pulling her small suitcase behind her. When the 14 arrived, she leaned in and said something to the driver, then turned waved us over. Then she walked on the bus. The girls and I followed and got on, thanking her again as we found a place to sit down. Weeks later, we were in that same spot along Rideau, and I saw Elaine across the street. She looked tired and walked with a noticeable limp. She was having no luck as she asked people waiting for the lights at the intersection for change. Then she crossed to the south side of Rideau

and sat on a bench near a bus stop. It was time for us to go, and we crossed the street as well. Then Rose noticed her and said excitedly, “Mom! It’s her!” We stopped to say hello, and Elaine seemed pleased to see us again too. I asked how she was, and she said she had broken her toe. She learned her lesson, she said, to not run without shoes on. At least now she had a nice new pair of runners from the Salvation Army, but her foot was really hurting. She was so hungry too, she added, and only had 30 cents on her. She hoped the bus driver would let her on so she could get to the Salvation Army for a meal. Then she seemed to catch herself in mid sentence, leaned down to the face the girls and said, “But how are the children?!” She said this with a tone that communicated ‘enough about me’ and motioned with her hands as if to brush away her problems and focus on the kids. Rose revealed with a proud grin that she had lost her first tooth. After chatting for a few minutes, Elaine couldn’t ignore her reality anymore, and she grabbed her foot and rubbed it. She was in a lot of pain and discomfort, I could tell, yet she tried, even if briefly, to attend to the children.

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