



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Research Highlight No. 11
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PANHANDLING IN WINNIPEG PROJECT: MAPPING METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The general methodology of the study *Panhandling In Winnipeg: Legislation vs. Support Services* in many respects is breaking new ground using a combination of several quantitative and qualitative approaches. This Research Highlight focuses on the methodology used in the creation of a panhandling typology (various panhandling techniques) that was used to gather data in field observations, then mapped within a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) framework. This data was used to supplement the other two major components of the research study: interviews with panhandlers and a literature review. The methodology for mapping panhandling events includes: typology development, data gathering, and data processing:

1. **Creation of a panhandling typology:** The development of a typology of panhandling methods was a qualitative undertaking. It is an area of research on panhandling that has previously been given little attention. The developed typology was used to create a Field Observation Matrix (Table 1).
2. **Definition of Study Area and Creation of Base Map:** Specific areas of Winnipeg's inner city were chosen for field observations. Base maps of the areas were then prepared for plotting locations of panhandling activity.
3. **Field observations:** The geographic location of observed panhandling events were recorded, as well as the researchers' observations of the various techniques of panhandling.

4. Mapping field observations with GIS:

The mapping of locations of panhandling events provided quantitative material on the location and nature of the activity. Using GIS technology to map field observations provided opportunity for detailed analysis (to be discussed in subsequent Research Highlights).

Typology of Panhandling Methods

To collect and analyze data in the observation component of this research study, a typology of panhandling methods was developed based on the categories of panhandling offences identified in Winnipeg By-Law 7700/2000 and the 2005 amendment to this By-Law. The typology also incorporates other categories in order to collect the information necessary to develop a broader understanding of panhandling. This includes factors such as technique used (e.g. sign, cap in hand), how the request is indicated (e.g. verbal, gesture), and nature of activity (sitting, standing, walking). Also recorded was whether or not upon refusal any further communication occurred, and if so, whether it was polite ("thank you", "have a nice day") or impolite (nasty reply, perhaps including obscenities, gesturing or raised voice). The intention was to develop a more comprehensive range of panhandling methods than is identified by the By-Law and to better reflect the truly broad spectrum of panhandling methods that exist. Community agency partners, a review of the literature and legislation in other cities, and panhandlers themselves provided insights into the development of the typology.

Based on all the information an Observation Matrix was developed to record the panhandling methods observed during sweeps of the survey area (Table 1).

Key panhandling methods were distinguished for the purpose of mapping and to allow for more accurate analysis:

- **OTM** (On-The-Move) refers to a panhandler who, for the most part, is walking and panhandling people along the way. Other than short stops made to rest or to gather money, movement is constant.
- **Stationary** is when the panhandler is either seated or standing in one place.
- **Approach** is when the panhandler is standing and moves towards a passerby when making a request. The solicitation space is very small; only a couple of steps are taken.
- **OCT** – refers to **ob**struct, **con**tinue and **thre**aten as descriptors of the following specific parts of the amended By-Law 7700/2000 (2005):

- a) In the course of solicitation, to **obstruct** or impede the convenient passage of any pedestrian or vehicular traffic in a street;
- b) To **continue** to solicit from or follow a pedestrian after that person has made a negative response to solicitation; or
- c) To verbally **threaten** or insult a pedestrian in the course of, or following a solicitation.

For a panhandling event to be considered OCT, it must be recorded on the observation matrix as at least one of the following categories: Obstructive Approach, OTM Obstructive, Verbal Repeat, Verbal Loud/Threatening, Follows, Gestures, Touches, or Nasty Reply. Passive methods of panhandling involve no violation of the above three rules (they could be considered non-OCT).

The Observation Matrix also indicates if the panhandler was male or female, alone, with a pet, or with others, and if with others, the number of people together. The panhandling location, address and description, the date and time of the panhandling event, and weather conditions were recorded at the top of the Matrix for referencing.

Study Area and Base Maps

The Study Area was restricted to certain parts of Winnipeg's greater downtown and Osborne Village (Map1). For the purposes of this research, the downtown study area extends as far west as Arlington and north to include Ellice and Sargent Streets, as panhandling has been observed in these areas. Downtown also includes Main Street north to Higgins and south to include Broadway. The commercial portion of Osborne Village to Wardlaw Avenue was also included in the study area. It was limited to Osborne Street itself and the adjoining Safeway Shopping Complex, as this is where most panhandling activity in Osborne Village was observed occurring.

Base maps of various scales and geographic regions were made for field observations. The maps contained basic urban features: labeled streets and building footprints. They also contained the plotted locations of sensitive services as well as the walkway system. *Sensitive Services* is a term used commonly in panhandling literature to define locations where panhandling solicitations are not supposed to occur. For the purposes of this study, generally a sensitive service is a location where a "captive audience" can be found as outlined by the 2005 By-law Amendment. For instance, if people are panhandled while trying to withdraw money from an ATM, or catch a bus, they are "captive" for a period of time in that location.

Field Observations

Fieldwork was required to document the nature of panhandling methods through simple "observation." The researcher observed from a discreet distance and recorded how panhandlers indicated their need to people. The Panhandling Observation Matrix was used to gather all data on panhandling event observations. The location of each event was then recorded on the paper base maps and labeled for later correlation to the typology data found in the Observation Matrix. These panhandler locations were "eyeballed" by the observer from the discreet distance instead of using a GPS unit, as the purpose of the observation was to gain an unobtrusive look at panhandling.

The researcher walked through the study area in an “observational sweep” and recorded details of each panhandling event observed. A total of 27 observational sweeps were conducted during the course of this research. Two sweeps were done during the winter (Jan, Feb) followed by 25 sweeps between April 5th and June 10th, 2006.

Initial sweeps identified the sub-areas of concentrated panhandling activity to be Central East and Central West along Portage Avenue, North Main/Exchange, and Osborne Village. The remaining observation sweeps were then focused on these higher activity areas in order to record a higher number of panhandling events within a shorter period of time, and make more efficient use of limited research resources. Other areas were then only periodically sampled, during higher activity times of day and days of week.

Mapping Field Observations with GIS

The purpose of the mapping portion of the project was to identify where people panhandle in the city, whether they panhandle in close proximity to “sensitive services”, and correlating this spatial data to the panhandling techniques observed. ArcGIS version 9.1 software by ESRI was used for these purposes.

Field observations plotted on the base maps were digitized as point data into the GIS. As these points were entered, all relevant data from the Field Observation Matrix was entered as attribute data for each point, which represented each panhandling event. Sensitive service point data was previously entered into the GIS in the same way. A 10-metre distance restriction “buffer” was then created around all sensitive services. Several maps were produced indicating the distribution of panhandling events observed throughout the study area, priority or high traffic locations for panhandling, and proximity to sensitive services. These maps illustrate the distribution and frequency of occurrence for various panhandling methods.

Due to the large size of the entire Study Area, 8 sub-areas were chosen to represent smaller geographic portions of the study area (Map 2). This served two purposes. First, it allowed for larger scale maps that could reveal better detail than the map scale necessary to show the whole study area. Secondly, the sub-areas permitted some quantitative comparisons of differences in panhandling methods throughout various parts of the Study Area.

Methodological Limitations

Some sensitive services specified in the By-Law could not be included in the observation and mapping component of this research. Public transit vehicles were not mappable because transit vehicles are not stationary. Elevators, parking spots and parking lots were not included because they are far too numerous in the study area to effectively map. Any attempt to plot every one of them on a map in the study area would have resulted in a map that looked like one solid sensitive service. Such an image, however, would have served to illustrate that there are few, if any, places in the study area in which panhandling would not violate a sensitive service, particularly when considering a 10-metre distance restriction.

This study’s methodology required that the geographic range of the research be narrowed. The study area chosen within Winnipeg was the downtown area where the majority of panhandling activity occurs. This is also the part of the city where the greatest proportion of panhandling violations occur. It must be kept in mind that as panhandling occurs in other parts of the city, the study area does not represent the level of panhandling activity nor the proportion of violations for the entire city of Winnipeg. The limitations of resources and time also meant that a limited number of observational sweeps were possible, and the research had to shift its focus to the sub-areas with the highest frequency of panhandling activity.

Conclusion

The methodological innovations described in this Research Highlight illustrate the detailed nature of this research study into panhandling methods. The steps taken to move from data gathering tool creation, to field observations, to data processing within the GIS framework permitted in-depth analysis of some of the activities of Winnipeg's most marginalized citizens. Although the typology of panhandling methods created for this study could be refined, it served to capture a broader range of methods than represented in the By-Law.

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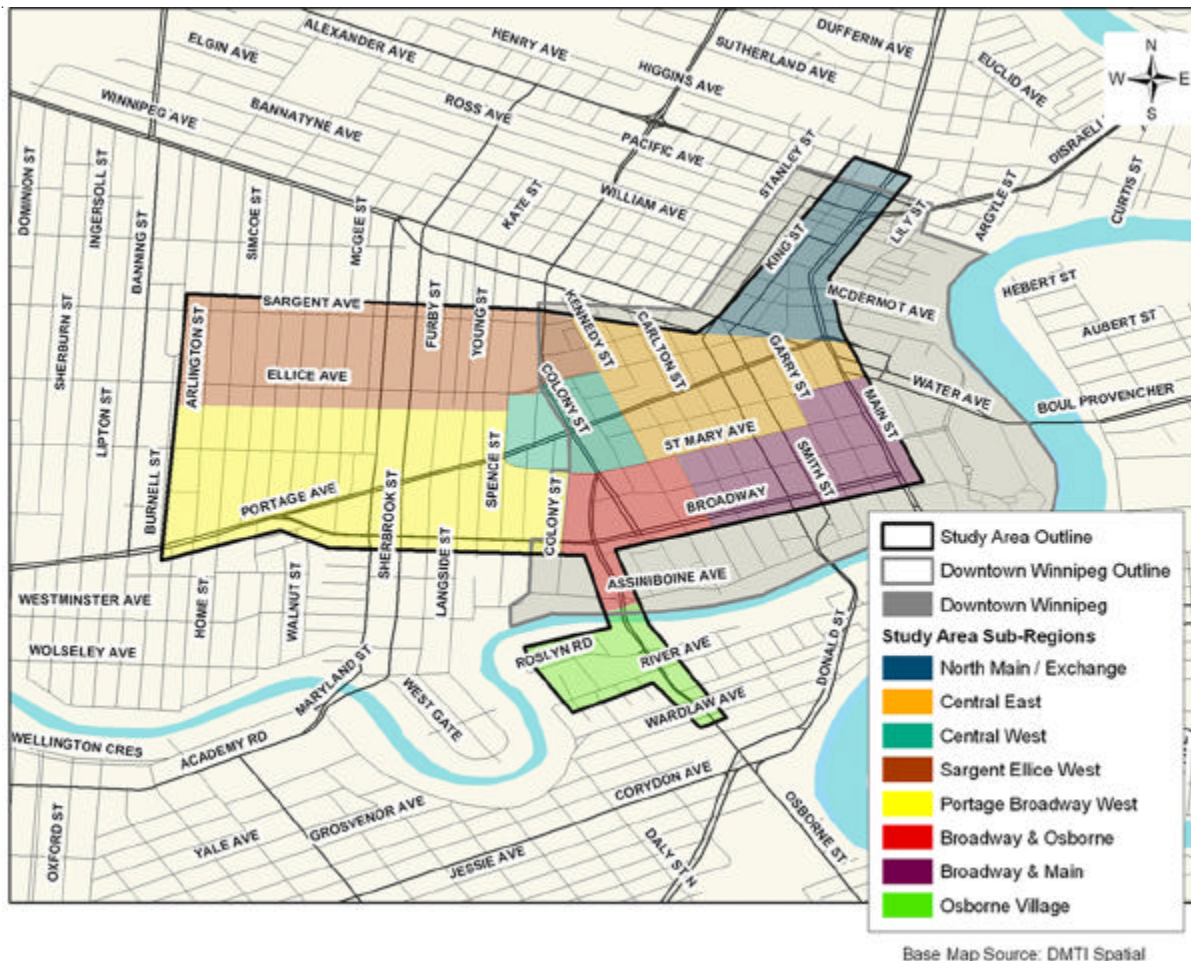
Table 1. Panhandling Observation Matrix By Panhandling Typologies

Date:																		
Time:																		
Weather conditions:																		
General location:																		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Specifics: location																		
Stationary																		
Non-obstructive Approach																		
Obstructive Approach*																		
OTM, Obstructive*																		
OTM, Non-obstructive																		
Captive Audience*																		
Non-verbal Passive																		
Verbal Polite Passive																		
Verbal, Repeat*																		
Verbal, Loud/ Threatening*																		
Follows*																		
Gestures*																		
Touches*																		
Alone																		
Alone with Pet																		
With Others, # **																		
With Others and pet(s) ***																		
Polite reply																		
Nasty reply*																		

* Denotes By-Law Violation

** Violation if Group of 3 or more

Map 1. Study Area Map



Map 2. Central West Sub-Area

