matter. My ethnographic method, which gives us access to the social worlds of individuals in small groups at one point in their lives, is hardly adequate for precisely calculating the political and social forces that operate to make these streets the way they are. Nor is it adequate for fully comprehending other forces which shape these blocks: the segregation, concentrated poverty, flawed or inequitable drug policies, and the failure of the state to help the newly deinstitutionalized (including ex-convicts and the mentally ill) make smooth transitions to jobs and homes. No concise look at the circumstances of these men's lives can explain how they came to live this way. In the case of the written-matter vendors, the political actions of Councilman Edward Wallace on behalf of a lone poet, and the legal interests of circulation managers of major newspapers, worked directly in an unplanned way to bring this particular habitat into being.

These forces would have been nothing, of course, without the activities of many other people working together in an indirect, unplanned way: police officers offhandedly teaching people working the streets as much of the law as they needed to know; new scavengers imitating the behavior of more experienced ones as a means of self-preservation, and developing differing amounts of specialized knowledge about subjects ranging from the law to the print industry; ecological movements that led to local residents bundling their magazines for recycling; great numbers of persons making an intensive use of local space and providing a market for used written matter.

A habitat came into being where these complementary sustaining elements were brought together in a working system. Mudrick, Ron, Marvin, Grady, and Ishmael could have a legal right to sell, but it would have meant nothing without a source of merchandise in local trash cans, a way to get food, and sleep. By virtue of its contextual connections, Local Law 33 became a resource—and a valuable one.

# PART THREE

# THE LIMITS OF INFORMAL SOCIAL CONTROL

M. Duneier, *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1999, Part III: The Limits of Informal Social Control (Sidewalk Sleeping): pp. 157-172.

# Sidewalk Sleeping

In the early 1980s, residents of many American cities came to see their sidewalk life as a new kind of struggle. They perceived that conventional standards did not apply on streets like Sixth Avenue. Politicians responded by advancing programs for restoring order and reducing crime that seemed to be the exact opposite of Jacobs's "eyes upon the street." Jacobs wrote: "The first thing to understand is that the public peace—the sidewalk and street peace—of cities is not kept primarily by the police, necessary as police are. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary control and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by the people themselves."[1] For many city dwellers, informal social control was no longer enough, because the eyes upon the street were no longer conventional. The police were essential to the maintenance of order and could no longer be the "or else" of social control.

The most prominent argument for using formal methods of social control was advanced by the social scientists James Q. Wilson and George Kelling in an article entitled "Broken Windows," which appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* in March 1982. They grounded their argument in the 1969 report by social psychologist Philip Zimbardo, who had arranged to have automobiles without license plates parked with their hoods up in the Bronx and Palo Alto, California. In both places, according to Wilson and Kelling's summary of Zimbardo's study, vandalism occurred once passersby sensed that the cars were abandoned and "no one cared." In Palo Alto, it was middle-class white passersby who did the damage; in the South Bronx, it was poor minority ones. Using Zimbardo's experiment as an analogy, Wilson and Kelling went

on to argue that the appearance of a single broken window in a neighborhood (not merely in an abandoned car) gives a sense that "no one cares." Once the "no one cares" threshold is met, they claimed, "serious crime will flourish." And even before crime increases, citizens will begin to feel the anxiety that comes from "a sense that the street is disorderly, a source of distasteful, worrisome encounters. . . . One unrepaired broken window is a signal that no one cares, . . . so breaking more windows costs nothing."[2]

Although for Jacobs disorder serves many positive functions and for Wilson and Kelling it does not, their approaches are only superficially different in other ways. Both ask what sorts of unintended consequences flow from particular sorts of publicly visible practices. Jacobs's argument, in part, is that public characters (who in her analysis are respectable figures) generate a sense of predictability by acting as eyes, and this generates social order, by creating a set of cultural meanings and expectations that "someone cares." Wilson and Kelling and those who advocate stronger police control believe that visible forms of disorder and disrepute have the unintended consequence of producing crime, by creating a set of cultural meanings or expectations that "no one cares."

Through what came to be called the "broken windows" theory, Wilson and Kelling laid the scholarly groundwork for a political combat plan that responded to the concerns of vast numbers of city dwellers who wanted to feel safer on their streets. In the 1980s and 1990s, these issues became the substance of two successive New York City mayoral elections. In 1989, Democratic Mayor David Dinkins initially tried to show tolerance for sidewalk vendors, scavengers, and panhandlers even as he hired William Bratton, a transit-police chief who vigorously applied Wilson and Kelling's ideas. In 1993, Dinkins went down to defeat to the Republican Rudolph Giuliani, who intensified the same policies (as he would later promote Bratton to the post of Police Commissioner) as he ran an unrelenting campaign against the forces that were said to be diminishing the "quality of life" for conventional members of the electorate. Since 1993, crime rates have dropped dramatically in New York City. Because crime rates have also dropped in cities where the "broken windows" theory has not been applied, the extent to which the dramatic drop in New York can be attributed to "broken windows"–style social control is a matter of fierce debate.

Having examined the way that the informal ties of the sidewalk help



men as they struggle to live in accordance with standards of moral worth, I want to look now at the very acts that lead policymakers to classify these same persons as "broken windows." These are acts which seem not to be regulated by informal social controls among the vendors themselves, and which have made sidewalk life seem like a new kind of battleground for many conventional citizens. In what follows, I will focus on four apparently indecent behaviors: when some men working the sidewalks urinate in public, detain local residents in conversation, sell stolen goods, and sleep on the sidewalk. (I might have focused, say, on the sale of marijuana or crack, but during the time of my fieldwork such petty dealing was uncommon—only once did I see a man working with the vendors sell marijuana to a passerby—and also has been addressed in detail by other scholars.)[3]

Thus far, I have tried to show that what makes sidewalk life viable is an informal system of social control, maintained in part by people like Hakim, Marvin, and Jamaane. The question is this: If the informal system is so powerful, how and why do some men persist in these acts? And aren't the people who do these things the very people I claim are trying not to give up on basic standards? How is it that the same person who makes a conscious decision to "respect" society by scavenging trash or panhandling (instead of breaking into parked cars or selling drugs) turns around and urinates against the side of a building? How much respect does he really have for society if he engages in such behavior? In examining some of the hardest cases and the most contradictory evidence, I hope to address the limitations of informal modes of social control.

## *A Puzzle*

On a late night in August, Ron came up to me and asked if I would hold sixty of the ninety dollars he had earned that day. Even if he asked for it later on that night, he told me, I shouldn't give it to him.

Marvin, Hakim, Jamaane, and Alice were also often asked to hold other people's money (mainly because they did not use drugs). By the end of my first summer working full-time on the block, I sometimes found myself holding someone's money as well.

What is the significance of a person's giving me fifty or sixty dollars to hold and insisting that I not give it back to him later on that night, even if he

asks? It means he is about to buy some five- or ten-dollar vials of crack cocaine ("nickel" or "dime" vials) and does not want to spend all of his money on drugs. A nickel in a crack stem is often referred to as a "good hit," a dime as two "good hits." The high from a nickel lasts for about five minutes, but can be made to last as long as fifteen minutes if the person has no more of the drug. Then a depression tends to set in, leading him to smoke more. A person with a hundred dollars can do a nickel every two or three minutes, going through a pocketful of money in less than an hour. Some smoke up to a hundred dollars in a night, usually extending their supply over a few hours. It is no wonder that a man might give someone else money to hold so as to have enough left over the next day to buy food, purchase merchandise to sell, or settle debts.

Sometimes when Ron asked me to hold his money, he returned at one or two in the morning and insisted on getting it back. Once, when I refused and reminded Ron what he had told me earlier, he said, My money is my money! Give it to me!

Okay, Ron, I'll give you twenty dollars, I responded, and did so.

An hour later, Ron laid his body down and went to sleep.

When I arrived on the block the next day, I noticed Ron sitting on a milk crate, evidently drunk. Rather than give him the rest of his money, I walked away before he saw me. A few days later, now sober, he expressed appreciation that I hadn't returned the money to him earlier. He then used it to buy some extra books from Joe Garbage, who had struck gold on a hunt. He also bought some food, and paid back a debt of ten dollars to Marvin.

Instead of having me hold his money, he might have used it to stay at the White House Hotel on the Bowery, which now charges ten dollars for a cubicle room, or at one of a number of other hotels. He could have gone and checked into the hotel *before* he smoked, a common practice of men who know they don't want to sleep outside after they get high. Or, like Conrad, another vendor of scavenged magazines on the block that night, who was (at that time) addicted to crack, he could have reserved three nights at the White House with a lump-sum payment.

When I told Hakim that I found this behavior puzzling, he said he could offer no explanation to help me out. But he offered to take the tape recorder and do an interview with Ron.

"Do the other guys that [are] out here know about the White House?"



"Yeah! But they [don't] want to spend that money. Ain't nobody gonna save up no eight dollars!"

"But, Ron!" exclaimed Hakim. "Eight dollars! Save up? You can make eight dollars out here in five minutes!"

"In one sale!" Ron laughed.

"You just made a sale for . . ."

"Fifteen dollars!" said Ron.

"That's two nights right there!" said Hakim.

"Yeah, that's two nights."

"It's warm?" asked Hakim. "It's clean?"

"Yeah, it's clean."

"It beats sleeping out here on the sidewalk?"

"Yeah, definitely."

"But you are saying these guys don't want to spend eight dollars a day, which out here is peanuts, to stay somewhere rather than the sidewalk?"

"Yeah. And you get a bed, towels for a shower, and soap. They have a big shower down in the basement."

## *The Logic of the Habitat*

Approximately a third of the men working on Sixth Avenue sleep on these sidewalks, in the subway, or on nearby blocks. In his influential 1994 book, *The Homeless*, sociologist Christopher Jencks argues: "A bed in a New York or Chicago cubicle hotel currently costs about $8 a night. Most people who have enough money to buy substantial amounts of crack could therefore afford to rent a cubicle instead. A large fraction of the single adults in New York shelters who test positive for cocaine presumably think that a crack high, however brief, is worth more than a scuzzy cubicle." He goes on: "We badly need more reliable information on where the homeless get their money and how they spend it. But the only way to collect better information is to spend endless hours with the homeless, observing what they do instead of just asking them about such matters on surveys."[4]

In responding to Jencks's plea for more and better evidence, I did *not* find that these men spend every bit of additional money they have on drugs. Why, then, do they continue to sleep on the street?

As we have seen, the blocks are a place in which various survival ele-

ments can be networked together, making it a particularly good subsistence habitat for the street entrepreneur. A defining feature of unhoused persons on Sixth Avenue is that a complex social organization has arisen from the work they do to sustain themselves.[5] There are two basic reasons, rather than a lack of available housing or a lack of money, why embeddedness in a habitat leads a person to remain on the street. First, a man will sleep on the blocks as a function of the complementarity of the various habitat elements (such as food, basic shelter, and an opportunity to make a little money) coming together in one place. Second, he may sleep there because his friends are out there watching tables, which makes the habitat a place where he feels safe and even comfortable. He is there for the same reason that Jane Jacobs says a busy sidewalk life makes pedestrians feel safe: because those who are out know that eyes are upon the street.

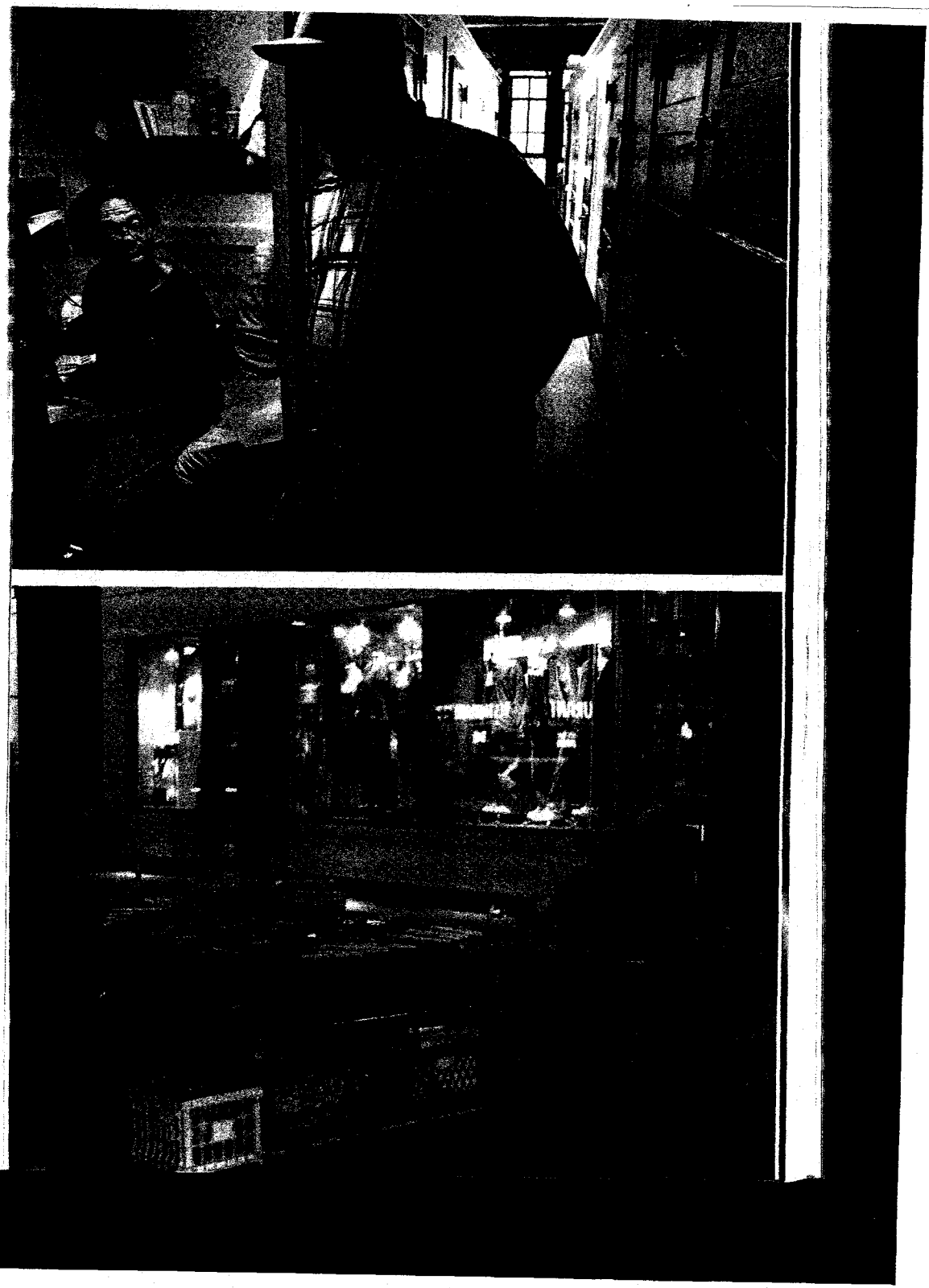
Because resources are valuable in the setting by virtue of their contextual connections, people working the street use the sidewalks in accordance with a logic that derives from the complementarity of different elements. To understand the act of sleeping on the sidewalks, rather than assuming a person is making a trade-off between drugs and a room, it is always useful to consider a person's overall logic and how it is encouraged or structured by the existence of the habitat.

Why might a man choose to sleep on the sidewalk? Some common answers:

*To save a vending space.* "If you see the spot that Ishmael got, he want to be there all the time, twenty-four hours," Ron told me. "He don't want to leave the spot and have it be taken by somebody else when they get here in the morning. So he figure he just stay there."

Ishmael confirmed that he stays there because doing so maintains another resource, a space on the sidewalk from which to sell his magazines. We have, of course, already seen a variation on this theme: a person who earns his money as a table watcher may stay on the block all night to earn his pay.

*To save money.* Grady, a longtime drug user, now clean, who recently discovered that he is HIV-positive, sleeps on the sidewalk or in the dungeon of the subway because of the complex of other activities that exist within the



habitat. He told me that someone is always getting on or off the train in the middle of the night, so that he usually feels safe and comfortable on the sidewalk or in the dungeon. His plan is to to sleep on the streets in the summer and fall, so that he can have enough money saved up for the winter, when it gets cold. Such a plan would not be possible unless the habitat provided a space for sleeping that Grady considered a safe and comfortable alternative to a hotel.

For a time, he went to a hotel on days that he spent with his girlfriend, Phyllis. But when she was locked up in the Riker's Island prison, a hotel hardly seemed worth it to him anymore. In one month he saved a thousand dollars for the winter and for a trip to see his mother in Florida. (I counted the money.)

Hakim interviewed Grady about his finances and sleeping. Grady explained that he was saving his money for the winter. He knows that, like other men, he could earn enough money in the winter to afford housing then, but this would force him to be working outside during the coldest months of the year as he tries to combat HIV. His choice is not between drugs and an apartment, but between an apartment in the warm weather and an apartment



in the cold, or between an apartment when his girlfriend is with him and one when she is not.

*To use crack.* Even though there are many police officers around Sixth Avenue, a person who is using crack often prefers to be on the sidewalk, near those police, rather than in a hotel (presumably away from the police). Why? Because he knows that in a hotel the manager can call the precinct and say that something suspicious is going on in a particular room. "The police can get a key from the front desk and walk right on in," Ron told me. "You might be engaged in some kind of activity and you are busted. That's one of the reasons they say hotels is not safe."

Also, Ron, like other crack users, is paranoid about being in small, enclosed spaces when he is high. This might also help explain how crack use became associated with the rise in the number of unhoused persons. And, of course, the continuous stream of money that comes from the entrepreneurial activity of the sidewalk makes it possible for Ron to keep bingeing all night long—smoking or drinking until he passes out, or sitting in his chair at the table until he falls asleep.[6]

## *"Once You're Homeless, You're Always Homeless"*

The person who sleeps on the blocks to save a space, to save money, or to use drugs is making use of the complementarity of the various subsistence elements available in one place.

In each case, the person who regularly makes the decision to remain on the sidewalk overnight has a vocabulary for expressing its acceptability to him. Hakim used my tape recorder to conduct an interview in which Mudrick made a number of statements that illustrate this point. Mudrick often sleeps on the steps of the church, on subway trains, or on the floor of a storage room in the building where he makes extra money taking out the trash. Here he keeps his clothes neatly folded.

"Once any man is homeless, he's always homeless," Mudrick told Hakim.

"In what respect?" asked Hakim.

"You got a bed, Hakim? You sleep in your bed, right?"

"I prefer to sleep in my bed," responded Hakim.

"I sleep on the floor," Mudrick continued. "Ask my daughter where I sleep when I go see Dyneisha. Me and my granddaughter go get a blanket and sleep on the floor. My daughter asked me why I can't sleep in the bed. I said, 'Listen. It's a long story. One day you might hear it . . .' She don't know what streets I live on. You see, I sleep on the sidewalk."

"Would you spend ten dollars a night to stay in the White House Hotel?"

"I can't afford it!"

"But, Mudrick, you making money!"

"What I'm gonna stay in the hotel for when the same thing as the hotel is sleeping in the street? What's the difference?"

"So, if tomorrow you won the lottery or you inherited an apartment on Tenth Street with a bed and furniture and everything, you gonna sleep on the floor?"

"That's right! I choose to be homeless."

"You choose to be homeless?"

"I choose to be! Where else I had to go when I come here? I didn't have no money. I came here to find a job and work. But that didn't work and my money ran out."

"If a man who sells magazines or books makes fifty to sixty dollars a day, what would stop him from taking ten dollars and going to the White House?"

"People who sleep in the street that make that kind of money want to do this."

"So you saying it's not a question of money?"

"Listen, a bed is made to sleep in. I don't sleep in it. I'm not used to it. I don't want to get used to it. I got a choice. I gonna stay in the street. I ain't going to go nowhere."

"No matter how much money you make?"

"No matter how much. Once you're homeless, you're always homeless."

•

In speaking of their own deep acceptance of their condition, men sometimes refer to their initial unhoused condition as a choice, sometimes blatantly contradicting biographical facts from the same interview or an earlier conversation. (In this case, Mudrick claims to be "homeless" by choice in the same sentence in which he recalls his inability to find a job that would put a roof over his head.) Once again we are reminded that interviewing does not

necessarily produce a clear understanding of the men's personal choices, even if we do get to hear the vocabulary through which they explain their condition.

Two of the most common explanations for remaining on the street are "I can't afford a room" and "The hotel is not safe." Yet, when challenged on these claims, many men will state that sleeping in certain hotels (like the White House) *is* as safe as sleeping on the sidewalk, and few men will stick to their claim that they really can't find in their earnings the money for a hotel. "Safety" sometimes seems to refer to being free from police searches.

Mudrick's "Once you're homeless, you're always homeless," seems to be linked to his body's response to the social and physical experience of sleeping on a hard surface. His body seems to have grown to prefer a particular physical experience, which makes the social experience of homelessness acceptable in ways it would not be for the average person. For some of these men, sleeping in a bed no longer feels natural. Although most Americans take sleeping in a bed as basic to decency, the conventional bed is not a physical necessity but a cultural artifact; many people of the world regard a bed as less healthy for sleeping than a hard surface.[7]

Ishmael hardly ever leaves the corner of Sixth Avenue and Eighth Street. Yet, when Hakim asked him if he considers himself homeless, he said, "No! I don't consider myself homeless. No. See, I don't sleep on the street. I don't lay out on the street. I don't act like I can't work."

"You say you don't sleep on the street. But I've seen you for quite some time in a chair on the sidewalk, asleep."

"On the sidewalk, sitting down, asleep. Okay? At a job, asleep. Okay? I'm at my job, asleep. It's not like I'm not at a job! I'm not stretched out on the ground."

So some men deny being homeless even as they demonstrate an acceptance of that condition in other terms. The "homeless" condition itself does not constitute the basic role through which these men define themselves. *The entrepreneurial activity*—more than the person's unhoused state—is central to personal identity. If you ask a person to tell you about himself, he'll likely say, "I'm a vendor," not, "I'm homeless." (Here recall Ron and Marvin's bargaining techniques, the way they sell their wares and "get over," producing self-respect and a sense that they are independent businessmen.)

Although passersby regard him as a "homeless" man, Ishmael's answers



suggest that he sees his work as basic to who he is. Indeed, most aspects of Ishmael's day on Sixth Avenue are tightly scheduled in accordance with the demands of work and the principle of complementarity within a habitat. He knows that the police will walk the beat at certain times, and he *must* be present at his table during those periods if his belongings are not to be taken. He knows that trash is put out at certain times, so that he must be out "hunting" then. He knows that customers will purchase the most magazines at certain other times, so he must be present on the block then. He knows it is good to be present on the block if he is to be there when a random person appears with a donation of magazines.

He may tell a researcher that he would choose to have a place to live, but not if that means he must give up the things that otherwise sustain him: yes, a place to sleep; but also free or cheap food, social networks, abundant trash, and, most important, a place to earn a living by selling what he takes from the trash. Into his presence on these blocks must be read more than the existence of "homelessness." We must see in the uses to which he puts the sidewalk an embeddedness in habitat, a series of complementary elements tied together in an encompassing manner that ultimately sustains. In networking together complementary sustaining elements, Ishmael chooses to sleep on the block—not because this is the best sleeping alternative he has, and not because he has spent all of his money on drugs, but because he is on the block first and foremost to work and, through that work, to live his life.

•

To speak about the little choices people make on a day-to-day basis is not to comprehend the circumstances that led them to the street. Nor does a close look at this population solve the problem of understanding other types of unhoused people whose sustenance activities have not led to complex forms of social organization.[8] We must not begin with the assumption that the unhoused on Sixth Avenue are the same as single mothers with their children walking the streets, unhoused families living in cars, individuals sleeping by themselves underneath bridges, or persons who cannot find a place to stay.[9] Research suggests, for example, that the destruction of New York City's Single Residence Occupancy (S.R.O.) housing stock was a primary contributing factor to the rise in visible big-city homelessness in the 1980s.[10]

Nevertheless, when people sleeping *on these blocks* decide to stay there, it becomes questionable to many passersby whether they are really struggling to live "decent" lives. The answer, I think, is that such acts pose no challenge to what we saw in the first three chapters of this book: each of these men is engaged in such a struggle. This is most evident in the way they choose to support themselves: through honest entrepreneurial activity. If they were using drugs, could not work for other people in a tolerable manner, had no marketable skills, and then robbed to support their habit, we might reasonably conclude that they had given up on the struggle to live in accordance with society's standards. In this case, the men have made clever use of a local ordinance to appropriate public space and avoid engaging in criminal activity that hurts others. As Ishmael sees his life, others can do the same thing with the space that he did, appropriating it from him. So he has to protect it by staying there, or at least he thinks he must.

Some argue that no matter how "degraded" or "victimized" a man is, he must be held up to the same standards as everyone else. Actually, a sociological analysis gains power when it takes up such a challenge, comparing the acts these men engage in with those of other members of society who are not viewed as "victims." Ishmael brings to mind people whom society considers respectable who, like him, choose to sleep where their jobs are. Owners of small retail businesses may have spent the first ten years of ownership sleeping in the attic. They are afraid that, if they are not present, things may get fouled up. Even once their store runs like clockwork, they seem to believe they mustn't be away from it.

It is tempting to believe that the difference between Ishmael and "decent" people is that the latter have solved problems of where to sleep in ways that fit in better with standard ways of doing things. To some extent, this is true. But when "decent" people have not done so, few people accuse them of being indecent. This is because they don't fit the delinquent stereotype and aren't as public in their behavior. Few people actually see what they do.

There are, of course, many people in America and throughout the world who appropriate public space and sleep outside. In Santa Barbara, California, some people sleep in beat-up Volkswagen buses by the Amtrak station, sometimes for months at a time. There are many other people who appropriate the public lands with sleeping bags and camp out as they make their way up and down the coast. These people are white, and often



come from middle-class families. That they use drugs while they do their camping seems of little concern to anyone. Fewer people question their decency.

If Ron is too paranoid to rent a room when he is high on crack, and if Grady is afraid of being outside in cold weather and wants to save his money, it is hard to argue in consequence that they have given up on the struggle to live a "decent" life.

It is important to note that of the sixteen men who have at one time regularly slept on these blocks, only five currently spend their nights out there. Like Ron, of the eleven men who left the blocks for a housed existence, *all* still work out on these or other sidewalks as vendors. At any given time on the blocks, someone is looking to take the money he has saved and get himself a place to live. As I write this, Grady has now secured an apartment and his partner Keith White has saved $1,000 to be able to afford a security deposit for an apartment in Brooklyn. The opportunities to vend ultimately do help many men to stabilize their lives.

But there are always some people who take sleeping on the blocks to an extreme. When I asked Hakim to account for the failure of people like himself, Marvin, and Jaamane to stop sidewalk sleeping altogether (in cases where it does not seem necessary), he said: "It's not as if, in the case of Ishmael, that we have not tried to talk to him and say, 'This is what we would like for you to do to move your life beyond sleeping on the sidewalk.' In the early days I was optimistic about it, but I came to the conclusion that he was not interested in creating a balance in his life beyond work, work, work. Once a guy gets used to living a certain way, it takes a long time to adjust to doing anything better."

The practical test of whether the informal controls have been a failure is whether a system of control brought in from the outside could do better. If the kind of mentoring depicted in the first part of the book does not discourage sidewalk sleeping on its own, could the government implement formal regulations that would work? For example, if the city were to assign spaces to vendors, it would be unnecessary for men to sleep on the sidewalk to maintain their rights. In theory, this would encourage some people who are living on the streets to go elsewhere at night. If a person had a property right to a particular sidewalk space, he or she would not feel a need to sleep there to maintain it.

Such a regulation might well lead to greater order on our sidewalks and among the people dwelling on them. But the evidence suggests that many of these particular unhoused people would not go to hotels anyway. Even if the right to vend at night were taken away, men who are out on the sidewalk because they are accustomed to hard surfaces would likely remain outside. And those who are there to make money for drug bingeing would also likely remain outside, panhandling or stealing the money, instead of vending. From what we know about these men and their lives, it is fair to speculate that the effort to reduce disorder through more formal regulation might even result in greater disorder; that eliminating vending and scavenging might result in more theft.

Informal mentoring and controls simply cannot contain all acts that go against common notions of decency, nor could we expect government to establish a policy that would do any better. The best alternative, of course, would be better drug treatment and men who are willing to avail themselves of it. But even with the best programs in place, some people will choose to binge. Some of those will choose to earn their money honestly. And some of those will sleep on the sidewalk. The contribution of the informal system of social control inherent in sidewalk life is to encourage men to live "better" lives within the framework of their own and society's weaknesses.

# When You Gotta Go

If you walk down Sixth Avenue between Waverly Place and Washington Place, you will sometimes see men urinating against the side of the Washington Court Condominum. Although Sixth Avenue is a habitat that can sustain a fairly well-rounded life, it lacks one of the best amenities of Pennsylvania Station: bathrooms open to the public. So men must find their own places to urinate and defecate.

When I asked Phillis Gross, a resident of the condominium, how people in Washington Court felt about this, she replied: "Clearly, one of the design flaws the architect of this condominium made was placing indentations in the side of the building, which makes it very convenient for people to use it as a bathroom. The fact that a *human* would have to use the street [is disturbing to me] . . . but they really don't [have to], because there is a bathroom in Washington Square Park [a few blocks away]."

## *Mudrick: "This Is My Bathroom"*

"I gotta get me a paper cup and I'm gonna be all right," Mudrick tells me as we walk down Sixth Avenue at 10:00 p.m. After he finds one in a trash can, he pauses, unzips his pants, and begins urinating into it. I ask him why.

"This is for the street, Mitch. This is for Guiliano," he laughs, referring to the mayor, who is more commonly known as Rudolph Giuliani. "Guiliano say you can't go to the bathroom. I invented this thing. Now everybody out here gets a cup. You can't go to the bathroom in the stores and restaurants,