

Faculty for Humanities, Social Sciences and Education.

Resistance meets Resistance

Attempts at mobilizing homelessness in Tenderloin, San Francisco—

Tora Smith Aulie

Master thesis in Master of Philosophy in Visual Cultural Studies. May 2015.



Abstract:

This master thesis is based on participant observation conducted with and without a camera in an organization, called Coalition on Homelessness. By following Miguel Carrera's work, who was the leader of Housing Justice' workgroup, and through discussions, interactions and conversations with the homeless and activists in Tenderloin, I have tried to grasp the complexity of the homeless issue in Tenderloin today. I have seen the difficulties the organization has with their relationship to the media, the city hall and the citizens of San Francisco, as well as their struggle they have with mobilizing the homeless themselves. Why is the organization meeting resistance by the homeless themselves? And why does they have difficulties to get pursuant by the local politicians, the media and the public? In this thesis, I will investigate these questions.

Acknowledgements:

I want to thank Coalition on Homelessness, who warmly welcomed me inside their organization. Letting me be a part of them, and including me in all their struggle and work. For Miguel Carrera, who always was positive towards my project. And Melodie, who opened her heart and shared her inner- feelings. You have taught me to never stop hoping for a better world. We always need to believe.

Thank you to all my fellow students at VCS; Aylin, Léa, Alessandro, Sunniva, Mash, Subash, Richard and Marnix for great discussions and support. I have learned so much from you, and you have given me new perspectives in life. I will also thank all the VCS-professors, which followed us through the years. Especially my supervisor Bjørn Arntsen who has been supportive, patient and motivating.

Last but not least, I thank my family for believing in me and supporting me for the choices I make in life. One special thank you to my Mathias, who has been there for me through the most frustrating days. I could not have done it without you, Mathias!

Table of Content

ABSTRACT:.....	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:	5
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION:.....	9
1.1 WHY RESEARCH ON HOMELESSNESS IN SAN FRANCISCO:	11
1.2 HOMELESSNESS IN SAN FRANCISCO SINCE THE 80S:	13
1.3 THE FILM AND THE TEXT:	14
1.4 THE FOCUS OF THE THESIS:	16
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL APPROACH:	17
2.1 HOW TO STUDY HOMELESSNESS:	17
2.2 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:	19
2.2.1 Bourdieu, social inequality and symbolic power:	19
2.2.2 Foucault, power and resistance:	20
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH:.....	21
3.1 REFLEXIVITY:	21
3.2 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION:	23
3.2.1 My role in the organization:	24
3.2.2 Camera's role at the organization:.....	25
3.2.3 Camera's role with Melodie:.....	26
3.3 USING CAMERA, GAINS AND LOSSES:	26
CHAPTER 4: COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS, KNOWING THE ORGANIZATION:.....	27
4.1 COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS:	27
4.2 KNOWING MIGUEL:	28
4.3 KNOWING THEIR WORK:	30
4.4 KNOWING THE VOLUNTEERS:	31
4.5 KNOWING THEIR MEMBERS, ALLIES AND STAFF:.....	32
4.6 MORE THAN A POLITICAL ORGANIZATION?.....	33
CHAPTER 5: MOBILIZING THE HOMELESS:	35
5.1 DEFINING HOMELESSNESS, WHO ARE THEY?	36
5.2 DOING OUTREACH:	38
5.3 HOUSING JUSTICE MEETINGS:	44
5.4 MEETING MELODIE:.....	46
5.5 RESISTANCE AND POWER STRUCTURES, THE HOMELESS PANEL:.....	50
5.6 CHALLENGES THE ORGANIZATION MEETS IN ORDER TO RECRUIT THE HOMELESS:.....	53
CHAPTER 6: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ORGANIZATION AND THE MEDIA, CITY HALL AND THE PUBLIC:	54

6.1: MIGUEL AT CITY HALL:	55
6.2 PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE STEPS OF CITY HALL:	59
6.3 IS IT POSSIBLE FOR THE ORGANIZATION TO INFLUENCE THE POLITICIANS?	62
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY:	65

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION:

Tenderloin April 18th, 2014:

I was walking from the apartment where I was renting a room in SOMA (south of market). I walked through Financial District. Business- women and men were on their way to work, dressed up in suits. Carrying a suitcase in one hand, and a Starbucks cup in the other. I walked through Union Square. Some tourists were up early and were on their way to the big shopping malls located in the middle of the square. Some were about to take the famous cable car. I walked down to Market Street and hit Turk Street. People were laying, sitting and standing on the sidewalks. The smell of urine and garbage hit me. I stopped and picked up my notebook carefully from my backpack. I opened the notebook, *468 Turk Street*. I kept walking. I had reached Tenderloin.

I had arranged a meeting with Miguel at the organization 18th of April, 2014. I had arrived the city some days before, but Miguel was out of the city and could not meet me before Monday. I had the address in my hand, and tried to navigate my way to the organization. Even though, I was familiar with the city, it had been some years since last time, and I was a bit worried that I could get lost. As I got closer to the organization, I realized that I was in the poorest area in San Francisco. The dustbins were full, and the rest of the garbage was lying around on the ground. The smell was different, filled with smoke, marijuana, garbage and dust. People where hanging around on the streets, in groups, either sitting on the street or standing in groups on the sidewalk. The lines of people waiting for a bed in a shelter were long and meandered from one block to the other. The environment change drastically, only some minutes before I was surrounded by businessmen on their way to meetings in Financial District, and tourists shopping at Union Square.

Finally, after a 25 minutes' walk I found the organization. 468 Turk Street, a red narrow door. I rang the doorbell. "Who is this? A person asked, "It is Tora, I have a meeting with Miguel". The door opened, and a steep stair met me. The smell in the hallway at the organization was the same smell on the streets. I walked up the stairs. A guy was sitting at the front desk and greeted me. His name was Michael, a shy and sweet man in his 40s.

He looked like he was homeless. I sat down on one of the chairs he suggested, and waited for Miguel.

Miguel came and looked down on the floor while greeting me, “follow me”, he said. I followed him into the room on the other side of the hallway. We sat down around a big table and he reached me a bunch of papers with information about the organization. “When can you start?” he said. “What do you mean?” I asked. “To work right here”, he answered. I got stressed, “work?” I thought. I had told him that I wanted to participate in the organization’s activities, but work seemed different¹.

I tried as best I could to explain my project, and what I wanted to do. I told him that I was going to film, as well as participating in their campaigns and demonstrations. It seemed that Miguel understood a bit more, but I was not convinced. I said that I wanted to be familiar with the organization, their work and the people connected to it. He wanted me to be there from nine to five every day, and I told him that I could try that, but I needed to schedule my own week. We were interrupted after a 20 minutes talk by Michael that told us there was a Mexican women with her two daughters waiting for Miguel. They got in. Miguel talked with the women in Spanish, and told me to help them out. “Wait, what”, I thought. “Me helping them? What can I help them with?” “What do you mean, Miguel”, I asked. “Help them fill out the forms”, he said. I tried as best as I could to help the woman out. The form they filled out was an application for free school uniforms for her children.

After the first meeting with Miguel, I felt that it could be hard to start my research. If Miguel wanted me to work, how could I manage to film at the same time? How could I be able to do research if my informants did not understand my project?

Regardless of the day before, I determined went back to the organization, hoping for a better understanding. I wanted to give it a chance nevertheless of the day before.

¹ Many emails were sent to Miguel in front of the fieldwork. I had told him about my project, and that I was going to make an ethnographic film as a part of my master project. Nevertheless, when I arrived the field, it did not seem like he had been reading my emails very well; he thought I was going to do an internship.

The description above, of my first meeting with Tenderloin and the organization, is from my field notes. The Tenderloin that met me was a sad sight, and even how much I had prepared myself for the first meeting, it was overwhelming. In retrospect, I see that these descriptions are affected by an outsider's perspective. Following, the homeless on the streets of Tenderloin changed this perspective and people went from occurring as a cultural homogenous group to me, to become a heterogeneous group of individuals. By slowly get to know people, the organization and the neighborhood. I also slowly understood the complexity. Every person I met had their story; they had lived varied lives before becoming poor or homeless. In the next chapters, I will present how I changed my gaze, and present my different experiences and thoughts I was left with after my fieldwork.

1.1 Why research on homelessness in San Francisco:

I moved to San Francisco the fall 2011, to study at the University of California, Berkeley. At that time, I had only studied sociology for one year at the University of Tromsø and was inexperienced with the field. I had heard that they had the biggest sociology faculty in the world, and was very motivated and excited for my exchange year. I arrived Berkeley with an eager to learn. I chose courses regarding inequality and poverty, because of my strong sense of justice, but I had no idea of what the courses would teach me. I really got knocked to ground of what I got to learn about the inequality and poverty in the Unites States. I did not only hear about the poverty at the university. I saw it every day. The many homeless people walking around, sleeping on train stations, in parks, sleeping in stairwells and begging for money. I read about it, wrote about it, and saw films about it.

While I was living there I got a friend that worked as an intern in a non- profit organization called Coalition on Homelessness. Coalition on Homelessness is an organization that consists of homeless and former homeless activists that have two goals: 1) to rebuild housing justice 2) to achieve human rights for the poor and homeless. The stories my friend told from the organization were interesting to me. Even though I saw the poverty every day, I had an academic approach to the issue. I was reading about different theories of explanations of the homelessness and different ways

to intervene the issue, but I had not been talking with the poor and the homeless myself. To hear about a group that was dedicated and believed in a radical change in the society, and that wanted to reduce homelessness and poverty was extremely inspiring to me.

I therefor wanted to go back to San Francisco, this time to meet the homeless and former homeless activists. I wanted to hear their stories and understand their struggle.

The organization consists of homeless and former homeless people standing together as a group trying to influence the decisions at the City Hall. Coalition on Homelessness is placed in the middle of San Francisco's poorest neighborhood, Tenderloin. Tenderloin is the home for thousands of the poorest citizens of San Francisco and is the home of many shelters, soup kitchens and other social services. It is located in the heart of San Francisco, and is surrounded by Financial District, Union Square and City Hall, and the tourists and downtown workers are therefore being forced to recognize the city's inequality between rich and poor (Gowan, 2010:67).

Gowan writes, *"By concentrating many of the city's most disreputable poor, Tenderloin stands as a bulwark against the engine of gentrification north and south"* (Gowan, 2010:65). Robinson argues as well that Tenderloin has resisted the gentrification. He believes Tenderloin has resisted because of the political activism and the political frontier (Robinson, 1995). The gentrification pushes the poor out of the city, but because of what Robinson calls the political frontier, Tenderloin is still a neighborhood for the poor even though it is placed in the middle of the city. Coalition on Homelessness is in large extent a part of this political frontier, and collaborates with other activists that are working against inequality and homelessness. The organization and their allies are working for affordable housing in Tenderloin for the poor, so that the poor still can be a part of the city, and not be forced to move out of the city. Coalition on Homelessness are depending on the "political frontier", and regard the activists of Tenderloin as their allies.

1.2 Homelessness in San Francisco since the 80s:

The way of understanding and treating homelessness has changed over time. I will therefore briefly go through the historical development of homelessness in the US and present how the homelessness issue has been viewed.

David Wagner writes, *“Homelessness started to occur as a social problem in the late 70s and the early 80s, media got the homelessness attention in the early 80s. All of a sudden homelessness was a “new” social phenomenon that suddenly was visible for the public”* (Wagner, 2013:1). The visibility made people react to the problem. As Glasser and Bridgman write in *“Braving the Street”*, before this problem belonged to the skid rows of the large cities (Glasser and Bridgman, 1999:2).

The need of help was huge. Soup kitchens and temporary shelters were established. The public looked upon homelessness as a temporarily problem that would end soon. Immediate and fast help were established. By the mid 80s, advocates, activists and some political leaders started to stress the need for permanent and affordable housing, job programs and other social policy solutions. They believed in a radical change. Grassroots organizations were developed. The organizations collaborated with advocates and worked for change (Wagner, 2010:155). The work made by the advocates and activists, was not recognized by the national and local politicians, as the charitable institutions and the temporary solutions were. Structural changes and permanent solutions threatened status quo. According to Wagner, Americans enjoyed giving aid directly, particularly when they saw result in their own community. In the 80s, fundraisers became a trend, and celebrities and hippies were doing fundraisers for the homeless sake, but as Wagner argues, there was a disconnect between the agenda and the actual need for the homeless. The fundraisers collected a lot of money to short- term shelters and soup kitchens. This trend decreased in the mid-90s, when also the attention among the public and the media started to decrease (Wagner, 2010:90, 93, 94). The homelessness was still an issue in the 90s. The public that thought it was a short- lasting issue lost their patience. They had made soup kitchens, fundraisers and shelters, *“what more could the homeless ask for?”* People started to believe that the poor and homeless needed to change their behavior. When the homeless still was homeless after all the help they got, it needed to be the homeless own fault. Protesters at this time made slogans as

“housing not shelters”, but the attention kept on decreasing (Wagner, 2013:79). Kim Hopper, an anthropologist in the late 80s was concerned about the homeless situation, he wrote; *“The public is being misled into thinking that these folks had their chance”* (Wagner, 2013:135).

In the 80s, the public blamed the Reagan administration for the homeless issue, but when the democrats came to the power in 1996, it turned out that the Democrats were not allies of the homeless issue either. Instead of helping, the democrats made cuts in public housing, section 8 housing (which is a housing program), food stamps and Medicaid. The grassroots organizations became crucial for the homeless, but grassroots organizations changed as well (Wagner, 2013:10). In the 80s and the beginning of the issue, Wagner writes, *“they worked free, and motivated for structural change and permanent solutions, they are now being institutionalized”* (Wagner, 2013:98). The former activists started to work in social services and shelters. Michael Lipsky describes it as *“street- level bureaucrats”* (Lipsky, Wagner, 2013:156). He argues further that social services become a graveyard for social movement. *“Activists are now managing homelessness, rather than ending it”* (Lipsky, Wagner, 2013:156). The lack of support from the state makes today's activists take care of the social services that before were provided by the state. Wagner writes that the homelessness today is not a popular issue. It is not occupying the public because the number of activists and the public has a difficult cultural bridge. Wagner discuss further that social problems that affect a small number of people are too weak for constructing a movement (Wagner, 2013:79). Are the activists in Tenderloin only street- level bureaucrats? Is the homeless issue too weak for constructing a social movement? I will dig into these questions later on in my analysis.

1.3 The Film and the Text:

“Film brings people and cultures alive on the screen, capturing the sensation of living presence, in a way that neither words nor even still photos can” (Barbash and Taylor, 1997:1).

The film and the text can complement each other, both medium have its constraints and possibilities. As Barbash and Taylor argue for, do film has the possibility to bring the people and the culture alive. In my ethnographic writing, I will try as best I can to make

thick descriptions of events and situations I participated in and make thick descriptions of my informants and the homeless people, activists, social workers and local politicians I observed and interacted with. Nevertheless, no matter how hard I try will my description not make the people and the culture as alive as the ethnographic film. I will in this paragraph, present some of the constraints and possibilities the film and the text have.

The three- dimensional moving images and the sound the film consists of, makes the audience get the possibility to use the same senses more or less, which we use in the real world. The film contributes with qualities, which the text lacks. The audience might never have been in Tenderloin or in the organization, but they get an insight in the field. They get the possibility to see the relations within the organization, and the relations the organization has with other fields in the city. The film can become an arena for the audience to sense and discover meanings. Where the film has its constraints, the text has its possibilities. The text can contribute to understand the complexity of the issue. The text is not locked up in time and space as the film is, and makes it therefor possible to present information that is not limited to time and space.

Both the film and the text are representations of the real world, argues MacDougall. MacDougall writes, *“A significant contrast between the written and the visual in anthropology may lie not in their very great ontological differences, nor even in their different ways of constructing meaning, but in their control of meaning. Translation is always anthropology’s advantage, because it produce condensation of meaning and leave most of the data behind”* (MacDougall, 1998:68).

Both the text and the film is representations of the reality, hence manipulations. While the text in greater extent has the possibility to choose meaningful elements and dismiss other elements that don’t fit to my arguments in my text, the film can occur as a medium that have less control of what kind of interpretation and understandings the audience get. At the same time, film is made up by many choices and interpretations made by me, thus the filmmaker. Nevertheless, will people normally be aware of these modifications done by the filmmaker, and still accept that the film gives a direct access to what being

filmed. The text has still the quality of making analyses that leads to a wider understanding of the field. The analysis enlightens different aspects of the field.

As mentioned above does my film and text complement each other, and shows us different aspects of the field.

1.4 The focus of the thesis:

The sake of my study is not to understand why people are homeless. Why they are on the streets. Why they ended up like this. But to see the complexity of the issue. Understand the dynamics between the homeless, advocates, activists and the politicians at the City Hall.

By doing an ethnographic study of the organization, I have seen the complexity of the issue, the troublesome work, the resistance the organization meet and the difficulties of mobilizing a homeless force. In this thesis will I go in depth of the work of Coalition on Homelessness, and the homeless and low- income people connected to it. Through my many meetings with the people connected to Coalition on Homelessness, participating in their work and filming their demonstrations, I will through a bottom up study try to understand their struggles and difficulties, as well as look upon their strengths.

I will discuss their work for permanent public housing and preventions of the evictions. I will discuss how they approached the politicians at City Hall in order to influencing them to make choices that would benefit the homeless and low- income people.

The organization is depending on the homeless themselves. They want to mobilize the homeless, so that they can appear as a resistant group that together are trying to influence the local politicians at the City Hall to take decisions that benefit the poor and the homeless in San Francisco. Coalition on Homelessness are working by and for the homeless and the campaigns they are making are issues that comes from the homeless. I saw the difficulties that the organization had in order to mobilize that group of homeless. I therefor want to analyze the mobilization of the homeless. Why did some homeless join the organization and the organization's work, and why did the majority of

the homeless refuse? **Is it possible to mobilize the homeless into an activist group that fight for their rights at City Hall?** I want to look upon the resistance done by the organization. What does the resistance show?

My last analysis will be on the relation the organization has with the public, the media and the local politicians. As Wagner argues, the interests and the attention around homelessness decreased in the 90s. Media did not write about it any longer, the public was tired of it. The government and politicians also had a decreased attention. In the last part of my analysis, I want to look upon the relation between local politicians and the grassroots organization. **What are the chances for Coalition on Homelessness to have an impact on the decisions made by the local politicians?** Is it possible to achieve pursuant from the power, thus the local politicians?

I will in the following chapters present my theoretical framework as well as my methodological background of my fieldwork. I will further explain my field, the background of my field of study, and empirical descriptions. In the end, will I go in depth of my research questions and analyze these through some described social situations and my theoretical framework.

Chapter 2: Theoretical approach:

2.1 How to study homelessness:

The courses I had at UC Berkeley regarding poverty were mostly concerned with how to explain the reasons for the high, and still increasing, poverty and inequality. In the sociology on poverty classes, actor oriented explanations to the poverty issue were highly criticized, and structural explanations were embraced.

Theresa Gowan, the author behind “Hobos, hustlers, and backsliders: homeless in San Francisco”, calls this approach “the post- Moynihan Syndrome”. Daniel Patrick Moynihan argued that the reason for the high poverty, unemployment and violence among the African Americans community all over United States was because of dysfunctional values and behaviors at the family level (Gowan, 2010:19). This research had similarities with the anthropologist Oscar Lewis research on slum children in Mexico in the 60s, he argued that a “slum child” was programmed to fail by age 6 or 7, because of

what he called a self-reproducing culture of poverty (Gowan, 2010:20). Gowan argues in her book that the reaction to Moynihan and Lewis provoked scholars within anthropology and sociology. She argues further that the “syndrome” made the researchers overshadowing the study of poverty. She also claims that “The post-Moynihan syndrome” has affected the study using ethnography and qualitative methods, and restrains an up-close cultural description (Gowan, 2010:20). I experienced this “post-Moynihan Syndrome” in my classes, because they were afraid of blaming the victim. If the explanations for why people are homeless lay in the actors, there must be something wrong with the actors. Moreover, if there is something wrong with the actors, there is nothing wrong with the structures.

The thoughts on culture of poverty and Moynihan’s theory, started to reflect the welfare state and the government in the late 80s and early 90s (Wagner, 2010:150). Scholars stopped therefore to do ethnographic research on poverty, and culture became a creepy word. Scholars become afraid that their research could contribute to the idea of a self-reproducing and deserving underclass (Gowan, 2010:22).

When I wrote my articles at my time at Berkeley, with my Norwegian welfare society background, I strongly criticized the structural reasons for poverty. I, as well, “suffered” from what Gowan called “post-Moynihan syndrome”. When I started my fieldwork I had still these approaches in my head, and I was starting the fieldwork with an idea that I could save the homeless and the poor by criticizing the structures and empowering and give a voice to the poor. I wanted to make an ethnographic film for the sake of empowering this group of activists so that their voices could be heard in the public and at the City Hall in San Francisco.

The “post-Moynihan syndrome” was based on fear, fear for producing stereotypes and blame the poor themselves. The scholars became afraid for contributing to that trend. However, by studying from the bottom up, you still will be able to consider structural influences. By studying the actors themselves, while studying the particular, and from a bottom up perspective, you see the structures. You also see every actor as one particular case. No stories are alike. This can also contribute to see the complexity of the homeless issue.

2.2 The Theoretical Framework:

For my analysis in this thesis, I need a theoretical framework, which can give me a certain guideline. In the last paragraph, I explained the dichotomy between structure and actor perspectives used on the study of the homelessness issue. As I said in the introduction, the sake of my study is not to explain why people have ended up living homeless, and my theoretical perspective will neither help me explaining that. The theoretical perspective will help to analyse the organization's work with the homeless, local politicians, social worker and activists from an actor -oriented perspective. By studying the actors, the structures will, to some extent, be revealed. I will therefore use Bourdieu's theory on social inequality and symbolic power, as my frame for my analysis. Where Bourdieu's theory fall short, I will use Foucault's thoughts on resistance.

2.2.1 Bourdieu, social inequality and symbolic power:

I will use Bourdieu's theory in order to analyze the relation between the organization and the homeless, and the relation between the organization and the media, City Hall and the public on the other side. I will therefore use his concepts, habitus, capital and field in order to understand social inequality and social differences. I will also use Bourdieu's thoughts on language, on how language contributes to legitimate power, or as Bourdieu calls symbolic power (Bourdieu and Thompson, 1991).

First, before going into social inequality and symbolic power, I want to present Bourdieu's contributions to the actor/structure debate that was going on in the 70s.

Bourdieu argues that social life, could not be studied nor understood, as simply the overall of individual behavior (Jenkins, 2002). The structures needed to be studied as well. He argued that subjectivism and objectivism is both inadequate theoretical positions, where subjectivism ignores the importance of the objective structures in the society, the objectivity ignores the active actor (Aakvaag, 2008:163). The actor, said Bourdieu, is in high degree affected by the structures in the society. The actor, on the other side, influences and affect the structures. The structures only survive, exist and are being reproduced because of the actors (Aakvaag, 2008:163).

Bourdieu argued therefor to make an interconnection between the structures and the agency. To study the individuals both as structured but also as structuring individuals (Jenkins, 2002). In order to make this bridge between the agency and the structure, he developed the concept habitus. The way Bourdieu interlink structures and agency, is by explaining that individuals internalize and embody the structures throughout life and as a result produce social structures (Aakvaag, 2008: 152). Thus, habitus shapes our social world, and the external social structures shapes our habits. Thus, Bourdieu manage to interlink the agency and the structures, but how did he explain power and social inequality?

Bourdieu argues that our habitus is shared by those of the similar class, and also it correlates often with our field. Social inequality is according to Bourdieu, made both by structural impacts and the actors. The people in power, argues Bourdieu, are the ones that have most of the economic and cultural capital, and are the people that also are dominant within one field. For Bourdieu, capital ultimately means power. Capital could be within social, economic, cultural and symbolic capital, all of these capitals interact with each other (Grenfell, 2004:113). Cultural capital was for Bourdieu the root that caused social reproduction (Grenfell, 2004:113).

2.2.2 Foucault, power and resistance:

Bourdieu is concerned by social reproduction, and how the over class reproduces itself (Aakvaag, 2008:167), but lack thoughts about resistance. Because of habitus and cultural capital, it makes it difficult for the dominated group of people to act or threaten the established structures (Aakvaag, 2008:167). That is why I want to bring in Foucault's thoughts about resistance as a complement to Bourdieu's theory. To study the resistance made by the organization, it might reveal some structural patterns, and might contribute in giving some interesting information. Foucault is known for his pessimistic view on the modern society, instead of thinking freedom, enlightenment, sense and civilization. He argued that the individual was governed by comprehensive forms institutional discipline. "Less freedom and more power", wrote Foucault, in opposition to the modern sociologists (Aakvaag, 2008:303). Foucault argued that the power was fluid, and that discourses are in our head and our body. Foucault has changed over time, and is regarded by other scholars to be a bit blurred in his way of thinking. His theory is

complicated and comprehensive, and it changed and developed during his authorship (Aakvaag, 2008:326). Even though Foucault has a pessimistic view on the modern world, and claims that the individuals are less free, he has also studied resistance and opportunities connected to resistance. I will also mention Abu-Lughod thoughts about resistance as well in my analysis. She develops Foucault thoughts of resistance in her analysis about how the Bedouins women's resistance reveals new power structures, which the women become a part of (Abu-Lughod, 1990).

Chapter 3: Methodological approach:

In this chapter, I will discuss the methods I used during my fieldwork. I will explain how I got access to the field, and how I approached the field. Which role did I have?

It is important to present and discuss my role in order to identify how I got my findings. My findings are affected by the role I had, and my connection to the field and my informants.

The camera is also affecting the outcome of my findings, and is therefore crucial to discuss as well. The camera's role might have improved my research, but at the very same time, it might also have restricted the research as well. I will discuss how this related to experiences within my research.

Doing an ethnographic research is very much a social process, and the separation between me as a researcher, and my research "objects", is blurred. To some extent, are all researchers connected to their field, because we are social individuals interacting and participating in social activities (Davies, 2008:3). The researchers is therefore in need of turning back on oneself in order to try to place us, thus the researchers, in the field of study. I will discuss reflexivity as a method in order to understand me as a researcher and the outcome of my research.

3.1 Reflexivity:

Anthropological research is a social process. Conveying knowledge through interpretations of social interactions, observations and participations. The focus on the individual researcher is therefore important. Reflexivity has thus been developed as a

crucial part of the ethnographic film and writing. Reflexivity, defined by Davies, means turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference (Davies, 2008:7). How I interpret and understand the data I have been collected in the field is affected by my background, culture and views (Davies, 2008).

Pillow is presenting different ways of looking upon reflexivity and different ways of being reflexive in her article on reflexivity in qualitative research. I will use some of her examples to highlight some of my thoughts on my own reflexivity (Pillow, 2003).

One example of reflexivity is a focus on developing reciprocity with the informants. Before I went on my fieldwork, and very much while I was on my fieldwork, I wished to develop a certain form of reciprocity with my informants. I had a wish to do research *with*, and not *on* my informants. I was eager to empower my informants, because I knew that they were not highly recognized in the city. I was emotionally engaged in the issue. I thought the only way to do the research correctly was to have reciprocity with the subjects. I wanted my informants to decide what they wanted to speak about in front of the camera, and what they wanted me to film. I wanted my informants to be determine and that I should follow what they wanted, not the other way around. After a while in the field, I found it difficult as well. Because the longer I stayed in the field, the more I became curious about, and the more I figured out and understood myself. I saw situations and interactions in my field that become crucial for my thesis in order to convey the knowledge I was about to develop. I could no longer only following Miguel's ideas; I needed to follow my own ideas as well. I still wanted to empower my informants or develop reciprocity, but I needed to decide which direction my research was going.

During fieldwork I was participating in their work, I walked wit in their demonstrations; I sat together with them in the meetings at the City Hall. I was with them. When I came back to Tromsø and the university, I went through my field notes and my film material. I got a distance from the field. I needed that distance to reveal my own inner- feelings and reflections, but at the same time was it something I consistently felt bad about, I felt I was giving my informants my back. Even though I have felt bad about it, I also feel that I still manage to empower. My goal for my thesis is that it will be a contribution to their work, and not become a criticism.

It is harder for an anthropologist that use film to convey knowledge to be reflexive in an explicit way as you do when you are writing an ethnographic text. MacDougall writes that ethnographic films no longer require the ritualized reminders that the films are constructed, but that the filmmakers rather trust the audience's recognition of this fact (Macdougall, 1998:88). MacDougall argues further that the filmmakers' presence may be shown through small details and in very implicit ways. How I ask questions, or what kind of questions I ask, might reflect me as a researcher. Reflexivity occurs more implicit compared to how I write my ethnographic text. He also argues that times have changed, and the audience of the film is much likely the subjects of the film. This makes the filmmaker's role different. MacDougall writes, *"If I am self- reflexive, that self-reflexivity must be about the relationship between us, not a way of speaking behind my hand to some foreign audience. But if I have done my job well, that need may be irrelevant. Those things will already be in the film"* (MacDougall, 1998:88). In my case, my informants will see my film, and are very much looking forward to see it. During the editing, and also while filming, I had that very much in mind. My presentations of the subjects, and how I constructed the film, was in constantly negotiations between me and how I think the subjects will respond. The result in the end is my point of view, but the way I selected the scenes and present the subjects, is with the motive that the subjects will hopefully understand and respect my view, as well as I have hopefully respected them, and their views (ibid).

3.2 Participant observation:

As I have described in my introduction, I was participating in the organization. In Miguel's eyes, I was working in the organization. In the beginning, I was worried if I was able to film and observe, as well as participating in their work. How do I manage to participate and observe at the same time? I figured out that the observation part came automatically. By being a stranger in a new situation, our senses work fulltime. I observed the relations within the organization, how they spoke, how they interacted. It was necessary to observe these things in order to participate (Spradley, 1980). I was also worried that the participation will take away the ability to film, but I rather experienced the opposite. My work at the organization made it easy for me to film.

People trusted me, and by feeling at home at the organization, I had plenty of time to film what I observed as well. To film what I observed, is called *Observational Cinema* and has often been regarded as a synonym of ethnographic filming (Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2009:1).

3.2.1 My role in the organization:

It was difficult for me to find my role. More difficult than expected. Since Miguel had been informing everyone at the organization that a new intern was coming (me), it was difficult for the people at the organization to change that image of me. Since I also was working so close to Miguel, and Miguel never stopped calling me an assistant, people also regarded me as Miguel's assistant. So, who was I? An intern, assistant, anthropologist or a filmmaker?

Even though I knew my role, I found it difficult to being part of the organization, working so close to them, and at the same knowing, that they did not grasp my role. I was in a constantly dilemma with myself. Was it ok that people did not grasp my role, or was I in fact lying for them, pretending to be someone I was not, thus Miguel's assistant. My last day at the organization Miguel even made a diploma; "thank you for your internship, we would never had made it without you!" I thought it was funny and sweet. At that point it didn't mattered to me anymore how he interpreted me, because I knew that I had been trying to explain him my role, over and over, and in the end it didn't seemed that he cared about who I was. If I was an intern, assistant or an anthropologist. I interpreted the diploma as a way of thanking me for my stay and my work. The diploma made me feel appreciated.

By being at the organization every day, and being pushed by Miguel to join him early in the morning for work, or late in the night for meetings. I experienced things I would never have experienced if it had not been for Miguel's wish. By doing ethnographic research, and being exposed to my informants ideas, the research become very much different from how it would have become if I only followed my own plan. I guess that is the beauty of ethnographic research. The experience of being exposed to their ideas, become an important learning for me. I realized that doing participant observation in an organization is possible.

3.2.2 Camera's role at the organization:

The first week at the organization I did not film. I wanted to get to know the people at the organization and their routines first. After a week, I started to feel that it was time to film. At the same time I had not become hundred percent comfortable at the organization. There were still people I had not met, and routines I did not know, and overall I felt I needed to be comfortable to start filming. However, one day, Miguel asked, "hey, Tora, when are you starting to film? Tomorrow?" I interpreted this to be my start signal and started to film the following day.

I had an ambivalent feeling bringing the camera with me. I knew I would get a lot of attention and questions. I also knew that there were so many different people stopping by the organization every day that it was going to be hard to explain everyone what I was doing. In the beginning, I filmed only Miguel. I knew Miguel was ok with it, and very happy with it. I asked Miguel every time before I turned the camera on, if I could film. After some days Miguel said, "Don't ask anymore, just film. It is ok!"

I was comfortable with filming Miguel and his work. However, I wanted to film everyone else as well. Moreover, after a while I started to film the situations I participated in as well, like meetings, interactions with homeless people and situations with the staff. I started to film one of the volunteers one day. After a while one by one of the volunteers asked to be filmed. Miguel even encouraged the volunteers to be filmed. After that day, I felt more comfortable with my filming, and I started to film the organization in its whole. I become the "intern" with the camera, and it was ok. It seemed that the people at the Coalition on Homelessness got used to me filming.

It seemed like Miguel liked the camera. He also asked me to film times I was not planning on filming. For Miguel, the camera became a place where he could have a voice. Where I could give him a voice. It became a place for him to formulate his thoughts and beliefs. Sometimes the camera became a practice place. Before we were going to the City Hall to have press conferences or public hearings, he practiced in front of the camera. The practice part was not conscious from Miguel nor my side. It just turned out that way, because I always interviewed him before such events. However, in the editing process I

have explored that these interviews we had before his speeches at the City Hall, become a practice to formulate his words into meaningful sentences.

Since Miguel was my main informant at the organization and the leader of the work group, I was asking him in front of events if I was allowed to film or not. Since Miguel was positive to the camera, he always said yes. Since he knew me, and knew that my film was going to benefit them in a way, he thought it would be nice to film every situation we had with the homeless. However, some uncomfortable situations occurred, in situations where the camera become banned or not appreciated, one of those situations, will I mention later on in the analysis. I liked that Miguel was easy going with the camera, it made me more comfortable and gave me access to situations I would never have gotten access to if it wasn't for him. The reason for this was that I was modest in situation I was not comfortable in, or situations I was not sure it was ok to film. Miguel, on the other hand, was not modest. Miguel was also positive to me filming, because he really wanted the film to show the homeless situation, and it was therefore important to show every side of it. While I was in the field, I thought it was better to narrow the story and hence, film less, but Miguel made me film situations, which ultimately become crucial for me in the edit process and for my analysis.

3.2.3 Camera's role with Melodie:

With Melodie it was different. When I filmed Melodie it was most of the time only the two of us. When I was with Melodie I was filming almost all the time. She had a lot to say, and was eager to tell me her story. Melodie was many times directing me. "You need to film from this side" or "today, I want you to film my camper". I was participating in her life, but all of the time through a lens. Our social interaction was through the camera. For her, as well, the film became a place for her reflections and thoughts. When I filmed, Melodie got a place where she could formulate her thoughts and reflections out loud.

3.3 Using camera, gains and losses:

As described above, the camera had positive and negative sides in my fieldwork. It was not before the last month I started to get used to the camera, and get used to the camera as being a part of me. The camera made me enter situations I would not have

experienced without the camera. In many situations, people approached me. Not the other way around. The camera was visible and people wanted to be a part of it. Sometimes the camera had its constraints. It had its constraints when there was people that was negative towards the camera, and wanted me to turn it off. Sometimes it even made me excluded from situations happening, because I had brought the camera. The camera made people I did not know, loose trust in me. In those situations, I really felt the camera was an obstacle.

CHAPTER 4: Coalition on Homelessness, knowing the organization:

In this chapter, I want to present the field of study, in order to get to know the concepts and understand how they work. By presenting the field, it makes it easier to understand the analysis I have done in chapter five and six.

4.1 Coalition on Homelessness:

Coalition on Homelessness is a homeless advocacy and social justice organization that focuses on long- term solutions to homelessness, poverty, gentrification and housing issues in San Francisco. The organization was founded in 1987 by a collaboration of San Francisco service providers, homeless people and activists (<http://www.cohsf.org/>). As Coalition on Homelessness say on their webpage,

“A ragtag group of community activist and homeless folks, fed up with the lack of a response to homelessness that addressed the root causes, formed the Coalition on Homelessness in 1987” (http://www.cohsf.org/?page_id=35). Coalition on Homelessness is a result of the lack of attention homelessness as an issue got during the late 80s.

Murphy writes that after almost 30 years of Federal retraction from anti- poverty initiatives, many American cities experience intensified poverty and fewer resources to fight the problem (Murphy, 2009:305).

On Coalition on Homelessness' webpage it stands, "*28 years of resistance, resilience and re- building*" (http://www.cohsf.org/?page_id=35). The many years of work for justice for the homeless and poor have been a struggle and they have met a lot of resistance.

Faced with one of the highest per- capita rates of homelessness in the US, San Francisco has struggled to address its homeless problem for more than 20 years writes Stacey Murphy. Stacey Murphy claims that the city of San Francisco is of "Top 20 meanest cities", ranked by National Coalition on Homelessness, towards the poor and homeless population, while making laws abandoning people from camping and sleeping in the public (Murphy, 2009).

In 1989, Coalition on Homelessness founded the newspaper street sheet. Which is today, the oldest continuously published street newspaper in North America.

The SF gate newspaper writes, "*Today, more than 200 homeless folks hawk 32,000 copies a month, still for \$1 a copy – and they get to keep the money they make, which can come to \$30 a day*" (<http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Coalition-on-Homelessness-beyond-protest-4120451.php>). Every morning between 9 and 12, homeless people were picking up their amount of paper and went out to sell them.

The organization operates these days on \$280,000 a year in private donations. The staff, which consists of five, are paid ca \$22,000 a year, the rest of the budget goes toward rent, insurance and printing the Street Sheet

(<http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Coalition-on-Homelessness-beyond-protest-4120451.php>).

4.2 Knowing Miguel:

Miguel said to me in an interview," *It is something you have in your soul and your heart, like you really want to be here. And when you are being right here the first impression is, what the hell? This office. Scratch and in pieces. The space is not the important thing. The important thing is what you have in your heart*".

For me, Miguel occurred as a hardworking man that did not take no for an answer and knew that he needed to push, in order to get pursuant by the Federals and get homeless

to join their work. Miguel grew up in a poor family in Mexico. As a half indigenous, he was called a bastard and got beaten up and treated badly by his family on the father side of the family. His mother was indigenous, and Miguel, his mother and his siblings were living in a little house on their grandfather's property. When he was young, they were working for their grandparents that did not look at them as true grandchildren because of their mother's indigenous background. When he was in his mid twenties, he immigrated to The US. In San Francisco he was homeless for the first years. He got in touch with Coalition on Homelessness late in the 80s and become a volunteer. Working day time at the Coalition, at a restaurant at Fisherman's Warf at night. He participated in the activist work, by engaging in meetings and demonstrations. Miguel had been participating in activist work before while he lived in Mexico. After some years he become the leader of the work group and has been working there since. Now he has a home and a family, but still working to end homelessness, something he believe is possible.

"Forget about the space. When I was organizing in Mexico. We didn't have an office. We didn't have a roof. We were doing it open. On the ground. In the shadows of the trees. We were organizing the people around there".

I often got amazed by Miguel's will and determination. He believes in a structural change. Miguel is inspired by the revolutionist, Che Guevara, and wears a t-shirt with Che Guevara's face on almost every time the organization has a demonstration. First time I met Miguel he asked me to join his revolution. I laughed and said yes, but even though Miguel has an ironic undertone, I feel that down below he hopes for a dramatic change.

Miguel does not trust the politicians at the City Hall. He has never felt listened to, and has no faith in them. However, he does not give up. He has been working with this the last 25 years, and is not going to stop now. Miguel is an extremely positive and social person, which is easy to like. Every day we went to a Mexican taqueria down the street from the office, and there were not a day without people yelling from every corner "Miguel, what's up?" Miguel took his time to stop and talk with everyone.

"I have a responsibility to supervising the work you do. But not to be dictator. To dictate others to anybody. One of the things I don't like it to is to dictator. I am equal".

Miguel is the supervisor of the volunteers, he is the one that recruit the volunteers, and follow their work. But as Miguel says himself, he wants the will to work and the engagement to come from the volunteers themselves, and not to enforce the work on them.

4.3 Knowing their work:

The organization's activist work is divided in two workgroups, housing justice and human rights. My main focus was on the housing justice work group since Miguel was my informant and also the leader of the workgroup. I also attended some of the human rights meetings and demonstrations as well, to understand the whole work of the organization. Housing Justice' vision is, *"to have a San Francisco where every man, woman and child can have and maintain decent, habitable, safe and secure housing"*.

Every Tuesday at 12 a clock, was Miguel holding a Housing Justice meeting. In these meetings, the homeless people where encouraged to join. This was a meeting for all the members and volunteers, but they were mostly women and especially mothers that came to these meetings. As I said, Miguel had close relations to all the Mexican families, and most of the families consisted of single mothers. Many of the Mexican mothers that were members of the Coalition on Homelessness were victims of domestic violence. The meeting consisted therefore mainly of single- mothers that wanted to be engaged in the campaigns, and were hoping for a better living situation.

The organization is depending on their members, allies and donators to join their meetings, actions and events, and especially on the low- income, poor and homeless' voice and contribution to the meetings and the actions. The organization wants that the problems and the issues the poor population suffer from in San Francisco, comes from the poor themselves. The working groups is therefor having meetings once a week, to discuss the week's past events, and discuss and decide further steps. Miguel always ended the meetings by wondering where the next steps should go. For me, the next step

had a symbolic meaning. It was a symbol of them never giving up. I felt it was an endless fight that never finished, so the next steps were always in need to be discussed.

4.4 Knowing the Volunteers:

The organization is divided in two. On one side, the meeting room was located. Miguel and his coworkers' office was also located on this side. The people that worked for Miguel was taking care of the low- income and homeless families. On the other side of the hall, the volunteers worked. They were giving out Streetsheets and ²homeless verification. The volunteers were also responsible for the front desk and answering phone calls.

Malcolm got my attention already the first day. He came into the organization carrying plastic bags over his shoulders, followed by a little white and brown dog. Malcolm was dressed up in orange working pants (the kind of pants you use when you are a road worker), and a bubble jacket with the hoodie on his head. The dog was dressed up in the same orange color, in an orange vest. The dog was named Miho and was the type of dog that is often recognized as a feminine accessory. It looked like a relationship build on trust, because Miho was never more than a meter away from Malcolm.

Malcolm came almost every day to the organization. Bringing his plastic bags and Miho. Malcolm had been in contact with the organization on and off for seven years. He was often sitting around the meeting table, and organizing his belongings or papers. He lived in a shelter, and was therefore bringing his belongings everyday and having his important papers at the organization. It was difficult for me to grasp his position at the organization. He and the staff defined him as a volunteer. The first days, or even the first weeks I believed that the volunteers were the ones that participated in the actions, and were in the lead of the actions. The volunteers were often living on the streets or in shelters, and I thought they were the ones wanting to fight for the homeless rights. However, after joining the actions, I never saw the volunteers. Some of the volunteers were joining but not all. Malcolm never joined any actions or rallies when I was there. When I asked him why he was volunteering he said: *"I mean it is a good place to come to.*

² Homeless verification was a form the volunteers at the Coalition on Homelessness was filling out for homeless people, in order to verifying that one was homeless. You needed a homeless verification in order to apply for public housing or long- term shelters.

And it helps me stay out of trouble. I mean I got to meet a lot of nice people here. And you know, I learn a lot, about political activism, and dealing with the government. And you know, how to fight for your rights and things at that nature”.

For me it seemed like Coalition on Homelessness SF was more than a political activist movement.

The volunteers were at the office from early in the morning to closing time at afternoon, thus from eight in the morning to five o’ clock pm. They were always there to greet me in the early morning, take a morning coffee with them, or a talk in the afternoon. We would often walk home together, if we were walking in the same direction. They were always genuinely interested in how I was doing, and always askin how I was doing. I was happy they were there. They made me feel welcome. Since the stab always were busy and had a lot to do on their agenda, the volunteers were having the time to meet the people that were stopping by the office. In some way I felt the volunteers were the organization’s face.

4.5 Knowing their Members, Allies and Staff:

The staff consists of nine, which are the only ones that get paid. Most of them are former homeless, and has been in contact with the organization before they got hired as staff. It is only Jennifer Friedenbach, the director of the whole organization, and Miguel that are having a full time position. The others are working two days a week.

” You know, the other part to why I love to working with the members, because is the only way we can changing the system, the people who suffer, the people who is living in this oppressive system. Is the people who need to be involving”.

“I would love to bring the homeless with me, to tell the politicians what they need to change and what they need to do. It’s the only way we can do something for the people”.

The organization is depending on their members. The member of the organization is often joining the demonstrations, campaigns, press conferences and other events

relating to their work. The more the merrier. The members of the organization is everyone that want to join “activist work”. It might be social providers, an advocate, a shelter employee or a homeless. Miguel wish for the latter. He believes that the voices should come directly from the homeless themselves, and those are ones that need to participate in the demonstrations, actions and rallies, and interact and become visible for the politicians.

“I don’t want to talk with any of the politicians, without the persons or the human beings who is providing this information”.

The difference between volunteer members and the regular volunteers, the members is only participating when there is an event going on. Either it is a demonstration, a meeting or a public hearing.

The organization is also depending on their allies. Their allies are also always inviting to their campaigns and meetings. The allies are part of what Tony Robinson calls the political frontier in Tenderloin. They are often other advocates, social workers or activist that are working for the same goal as Coalition on Homelessness, and want to find a long time solution to the homeless issue and to the resistance of the ongoing gentrification.

4.6 More than a political organization?

“Once the meal is over, the spell is over” (Glasser. 2010:10).

This paragraph is inspired by Irene Glasser’s book, “More than Bread: Ethnography of a Soup Kitchen”. Glasser did an ethnographic study on a soup kitchen in Middle City, New England. The soup kitchen is one of many thousands other soup kitchen, and as all the other soup kitchens it serves one hot meal six days per week a year. Not only are they serving meals, but doughnuts and coffee as well, and has become a public meeting place where the homeless can come together and talk. Glasser argues that there is a special culture at the soup kitchen, which become one of the many cultures of an individual’s repertoire (Glasser, 2010:10). It is the soup kitchen as a meeting place and a culture I found interesting, and that I want to discuss further.

There were always people at Coalition on Homelessness. Some days when I arrived there early in the morning, I needed to be careful to not step on a guy's head who was taking up the stairway, sleeping. He looked tired, exhausted and looked like he had been having some rough nights lately. People let him sleep, and I did as well. People respected the man's need for rest, and kept their voices down while passing him.

Every day the homeless could pick up the Streetsheet papers, from 9 to 12. At the office, where people picked up their papers, there were armchairs. One day, a guy fell asleep on that chair. Again, everyone respected this man's need for sleep. After a four-hour sleep he woke up, a bit more refreshed than some hours before. I asked confirmatory, "tired today?" The man told me in a very friendly way, that he did not get any beds at the shelters lately so he needed to sleep at the ³BART station, but because of laws refusing any human being to either sit or lie in public spaces of San Francisco, the BART police came and chased him away.

I believe that the organization has some of the same characteristics as Irene Glasser's soup kitchen. The homeless volunteers have a place to go to, they find meaning in their everyday life, people are respecting them and having expectations to their work. They get food there and have their likeminded friends there. As Murphy argues, the city of San Francisco makes laws that abandoned the homeless to sleep or sit in public places, which means they are restless wandering around. By having a place to come to, it might reduce mistreatment and stigma for the homeless participating in the organization.

Also, by working at the organization you feel like you are contributing to the society. It might lead to a better self-esteem. If you are not having a job, you might feel like you are not having meaning in life, or feeling that you don't contribute to the society. People around might as well be prejudiced, might think you deserve that life or think you are lazy. The volunteers at the organization are contributing and helping out, and this might as well make them feel better about themselves. The volunteers I talked to told me that the reason they continued to work there was because they felt their job was meaningful.

³ BART is the train in the Bay Area. It connects San Francisco, which is a peninsula, to the mainland.

I also experienced the organization as a meeting place. Where everyone was welcome. They were discussing their struggle, and sharing experiences.

CHAPTER 5: Mobilizing the homeless:

In this chapter, I will look upon the relationship between Miguel and the organization and the homeless. As I have mentioned, the organization want the homeless themselves to participate in the activist work. The voice should come directly from the homeless.

Former homeless people drive the organization; they have been on the streets themselves. If Miguel as a former homeless believes it is the only way to eradicate homelessness by mobilizing the homeless to become activists, why does the organization meet so much resistance from the persons they are trying to help?

The analysis in this chapter takes point in three situations. Every situation takes point in the relation between Miguel, respectively the organization, and the homeless. I will also use Melodie's relationship with the organization to present a perspective from a homeless person. The last paragraphs in this chapter I will discuss resistance and power, inspired by Abu-Lughod and Foucault, by describing an event the organization was arranging at a soup kitchen in Tenderloin.

As I have presented in the theoretical chapter, is my theoretical framework Bourdieu's theory on social inequality and symbolic power. In this chapter, I will use Bourdieu's concept, cultural capital, in order to provide insights and try to grasp why a huge amount of the homeless do not want to participate in the organization's actions.

I will also mention Oscar Lewis, which is a known and discussed scholar on poverty. He has also been taking part in the actor/ structure debate, and I will look upon his concept, culture of poverty.

5.1 Defining homelessness, who are they?

Before I go deeper into my analysis, will I present a definition of homelessness.

Peter Rossi distinguishes between the literally homeless and the marginally housed. The literally homeless is defined as persons who obviously have no access to a conceivable housing and who would be considered homeless by any conceivable definition of the term (Glasser & Bridgman, 1999:2). The marginally housed are the ones who typically live doubled up. Double up means living in temporarily situations with other, usually poor families (Glasser & Bridgman, 1999:2).

Another way of defining homelessness scholars on poverty has used is the self-appellation of the group under study (Glasser & Bridgman, 1999:3). Glasser and Bridgman argue that this becomes difficult; because it might happen that, the people that actually are in the category of homelessness do not consider themselves homeless. Therefore, in my analysis, I am using Coalition on Homelessness' definition on homelessness. They are embracing both the literal homeless and the marginally housed. Miguel was concerned about all the families that lived double- up. Most of the families living double- up were single motherhoods. For Miguel these people were homeless and he found it important to regard these people as part of the homeless population.

When I arrived Coalition on Homelessness, I was expecting to meet visible poor. People you see are homeless. Living on the streets, shelters, in train stations and so on. I experienced the opposite. Many of the people did not look like they were homeless. They were nicely dressed, had clean clothing and were well groomed. Especially, I found this to be current for the Mexican women. As I have already mentioned, Miguel knew many homeless Mexicans, especially women, and were trying to help them out in different ways. They were often stopping by to get help, especially with English forms and applications since most of them did not speak English. Miguel asked me several times to help them out with applications to public housing.

Many American families were also in that category of being marginally housed. They were also well groomed, but in another way than the Mexican mothers were. Somehow, their clothes and their way of speaking witnessed their poor background.

The last group of the homeless I met connected to the organization were the literal homeless. The literally homeless were often volunteers or selling the Streetsheet papers. Daniel was a visible homeless and working as a volunteer at the organization. I got to know Daniel quite well. He only had one set of clothes. He told me that he only got to take a shower if he got room in a short termed shelter for a night, or if his only friend with housing let him borrow the shower. He slept on the streets most of the time, and many mornings at the organization, he told me that he got no sleep; often because of loud noises or that, the police were moving him from the streets. Even though Daniel and I became friends, he asked me for money every day. None of the other homeless would have asked about that. They explicitly told me that they did not like that Daniel asked me of that, nor that I gave him money. He probably also continued to ask me for money, because I always gave him money. I felt uncomfortable with the situation, because of course was I in a better situation than him, but at the same time, we were “colleagues” at the organization, and it felt weird that he begged money from me at work.

The latter, is an example of how the self- appellation of the groups could differ. They all were homeless, but they had extremely different way of being homeless. Even though the people at the organization were all homeless and poor, many of them would never have asked me for money. They wanted to present themselves as regular citizens, not looking as a stereotyped homeless.

Most of them had always been poor. The way down from being poor to homeless, is short and fast. Even though most of them came from a poor background, their stories differed. They were not at all a homogenous group. Some suffered from abuses, either alcohol or drugs. Some of the Mexican women for instance were victims of domestic violence back in Mexico and moved to the US in hope of a better living. One of the volunteers were homosexual. He was from a small town, and needed to move from his hometown, because of his sexual orientation. He moved to San Francisco as a teenager in hope of being accepted.

To sum it up, there are different ways of being homeless. Different ways of ending up like a homeless. Different ways of living like a homeless. Different ways of acting like a

homeless. I figured this is important to have in mind when I later on is going to analyse why it is hard to recruit the homeless. It shows how complex the issue is, and that it is important to look for different perspectives of why they struggle to get recruitment.

5.2 Doing outreach:

Miguel thoughts about outreach:

"We cannot reach all the homeless, or bringing all the homeless to the organization. You can do a thousands outreaches in one year, and if you get one or two members to the Coalition, it is great" (Miguel, Coalition on Homelessness, May 2014).

Miguel and the staff were doing outreaches every week at the shelters in town. As Irene Glasser explains, there is a great variability among the shelters(Glasser and Bridgman, 1999). I got to experience that.

The short termed shelters were often driven by volunteers. These places are more like a refuge, a place to get shelter for the night. People living in these conditions often has a life which is associated with immediate, daily, weekly and monthly cycles of time. For example are there certain rules that are governing their time. They need to leave during the day, to be in by the afternoon. To stand in line is a huge part of being homeless on the streets. Lines for shower, lines for seeing the caseworker and lines for the downtown soup kitchens (Glasser & Bridgman, 1998). The people living short termed shelters, often never get out of their homeless situation, but rather live from day to day, in search for a bed. Another type of shelter is the long term. I visited a shelter like that once, it was a total different experience than from the short- terms shelters I had been visiting. These shelters look more like a home. As Glasser describes, *"a therapeutic house, providing shelters for mostly families, but with the understanding that the families would actively be working on a case plan to return to permanent housing"*. Here the staff are educated and often well – paid (Glasser and Bridgman, 1999). These homeless families at the long- term shelters were convinced that they would get their own home one day. Their homeless situation was only temporarily.

A visit in a short termed shelter:

I came late to the organization that day. I felt a bit sick, and had told Miguel that I was not sure if I was coming. After some hours in bed, I decided to go anyway. I met Miguel with one homeless mother and her child in the stairs of the organization. I had met the mother before, both at a demonstration and in some of the housing justice meetings. Miguel greeted me, "Ah, you made it. I am glad you are joining". My immediate response was a polite yes, while I was at the same time thinking for myself, what am I joining? I turned halfway in the stairs and joined them out on the streets.

Back on the streets Miguel, the mother and her child waited for me with flyers in their hands. "Where are we going, Miguel?" I asked shortly, but tried to seem polite and interested. "We're going to Oshon, a women emergency shelter and do an outreach". I had heard the word outreach a lot of time in the organization already, but I did not understand what kind of outreach they were doing. I followed Miguel and the mother. They were walking some steps in front while they were talking Spanish. We went into a bus, and then out of the bus, and than into another bus. All this happened while I was silently following Miguel's footsteps. After some minutes on the last bus, I got a nick from Miguel that it was time to go off the bus. Miguel, the mother and I carried the wagon with her child out and started to walk. Only some minutes after the bus stop and after crossing a huge road with several lanes we got to the shelter.

The shelter was inside a red and impersonal brick building. We got inside two industrial glass doors, those types of doors where you can look out, but not look in. There were two women that sat in the front desk. Miguel asked if they could gather the mothers at the shelter so that he could have outreach. The women with their children were sitting on chairs in a room made of brick. There were no windows, no pictures on the wall; no toys for the kids not even a couch. This was a shelter in the true sense. Some of the women were brushing their children's hair or trying to make their children quiet. Some were just sitting still in a chair half a sleep. Miguel started to talk. He talked about Coalition on Homelessness, about their work and their campaigns. Miguel talked fast, loud and determined. He seemed to know exactly what he wanted to say. He told about his background, that he had been homeless himself, but thanks to Coalition he has made his way out of poverty. He went on, and said that it is important that the voices from the ones that suffer from poverty speak up. The women were not paying attention, some

were talking with their children, other were sitting laidback in the chair and some were half a sleep. But it didn't stop Miguel from talking, he continued with the same loud and clear voice, and with the same rhythm he always had when he was talking in front of gatherings. "Now, Tora from Norway, is going to give out some flyers for you". I revived, and did what Miguel told me to, while my stomach was filled with despair and sadness.

I joined Miguel several times for outreaches. The next outreach, I brought my camera. I asked Miguel if he thought it was ok to bring it there, Miguel was positive to bring the camera (he was always positive towards the camera). We went to the same shelter, but this time we visited the single- women. Around 30 women were sitting on three rows, ten on each row, on plastic chairs. Some were sleeping and some were sitting and looking at us with an empty gaze. I asked them if I could film while Miguel was talking. Nobody answered. I took it as a yes. I took up the camera and started to record. Miguel started his speech. All of a sudden, one woman in the back, on the other side of the room yelled at me. "What the hell are you think you are doing? Turn that off right away, or I will call the police". I stopped recording at once. Miguel started to talk again, as nothing had happened. Miguel told them that they should join the actions and the public hearings to tell their stories to the politicians. One, old woman raised her hand, "we never see anything changing, why should we use our time on this?" Miguel again, acted calmly and explained that they had won some battles, and without fighting, there will be no change. Half of the women were a sleep.

Miguel and his colleagues visit at least one shelter every week to do outreach. After a while, I was starting to do outreach myself. Miguel pushed me into it. I felt uncomfortable with it, especially after seeing their distrust and anger towards Miguel. The filming incident did not make me more comfortable. I was ashamed for what I had done. For filming women in their most vulnerable way. This would probably not have been any problem if I were *with* them. If they were my informants. However, since I was *with* Miguel and not them, they lost trust in me.

I thought Miguel's will to recruit the homeless is admirable, because he meets a lot of resistance, anger and disinterest in his campaigns, even though he is fighting for the

homeless and low- income. I understand also the homeless people lack of will. Many feel betrayed by the society, and have stopped believing in change.

As Bourdieu would have said it, these persons are dominated by the upper class, which has the highest symbolic capital. Thus cultural and social capital. In Bourdieu's theory on capital, both social and cultural capital, are reduced to economic capital (Grenfell, 2004:113). If you are having cultural and social capital, you also most likely have economic wealth. Bourdieu was concerned about education as a means to high cultural capital and again high economic wealth, which leads to the reproduction of social inequality (David, 2012:732). Even though different social groups have different cultural capital, cultural capital makes social inequality because there are some cultural marks that are highly valued in the society (David, 2012:372). Bourdieu was mostly concerned about how the cultural elite, made the social inequality reproduce. However, some researchers find it also important to highlight the cultural capital within a dominated group (David, 2012:369)As David argues in his journal about homeless youth, there is a cultural capital within the homeless marginalized group, which is valued within that group, but stigmatized by the broader society. Some researchers, calls it therefore a negative cultural capital, as the cultural capital within marginalized groups (David, 2012:369). Miguel wants the homeless people in the city of San Francisco to react to the dominant system, but the politicians in the City Hall will not appreciate the negative cultural capital the homeless could have. I will therefore not discuss negative cultural capital.

Miguel concentrates on the small steps. As he said, they are happy to get two members a year. He also concentrates on the campaigns they win. When they are arranging campaigns, they know that most of the campaigns they will never win, but they remember the once they won very well. And they live on that. For this, they believe that the Coalition on Homelessness is something very special, unique, and important for the homeless. In the spring of 2014 while I was doing my fieldwork, they were demanding 13.8 million dollars for eviction prevention and more public housing from the city budget. They got 6.6 millions. The number they demanded from the city budget, was not a random number. It was a number they had calculated. Even though they got half of the money they needed, they did not count it as a loss. I guess, without the Coalition's work

they would not get nearly that much money for public housing and eviction prevention. Nevertheless, how does that help a homeless women living in and out of shelters for many years. Their struggles are here and now. Even if they get 6.6 million for housing and eviction prevention, it does not help the homeless directly. The women I met in the shelter will probably still be waiting for ⁴public housing. When I left fieldwork, the waiting list for public housing was even closed because of too much demand.

If you do not directly see the money you are demonstrating for, why should you then use time on activism? Well, here is why I want to bring up Bourdieu's concept, cultural capital again. As I have written, Bourdieu was concerned about the cultural capital and how the capital helped the people get into education, and how having a high capital made it easier to handle the education well. According to Roy Nash' article on education and cultural reproductions, he is agreeing with Bourdieu and claims that the school in modern societies is the most important agency for the reproduction of almost all social classes (Nash, 1990). Bourdieu believes the reproduction of power, rests on the relation between the domestic sphere and the school system (Nash, 1990:434).

The reason why children with high cultural capital both got into education and handled the education well was according to Bourdieu that the socially and culturally dominant classes controlled the school system. Bourdieu argued further that the school system will generally ignore the habitus of children of non- dominant classes, and will again lead to low attainments of the students of the underclass (Nash, 1990:433).

As Oscar Lewis argues, there is a culture of poverty. The people living in it, will never get out, because of the culture internalized and socialized (Lewis, 1959). Lewis and Bourdieu share some of the same thoughts about how culture (or for Bourdieu, habitus) makes restraints for the people socialized in it. According to Lewis, the women living at

⁴ When I left fieldwork, the waiting list for public housing was closed because of too much demand. Coalition on Homelessness was working for the list to open. They had meetings with the Housing Authority, which is coordinating the public housing in the city, in order to push them to open up the waiting list. Housing Authority had no chance to open the waiting list before they got more money for public housing. Miguel told me some months after my fieldwork, that they finally had got support from the city budget to build new public housing.

the shelters will therefore never be able to approach the politicians at the City Hall, because they do not have the culture it takes to do so. Not only because the way they behave and act is not recognized at the city hall, but also because they do not have the skills to act in the first place. They will never act, because they have not learned how to defend themselves. As described above, Bourdieu argues that this can be shown in the education systems and that it differs already at school between the ones that are children of ones with high cultural capital from the ones with low cultural capital (Nash, 1990). The ones with high cultural capital, knows how to behave in order to achieve their goals. They learn how to act in order to get what they want, and learn how to speak in order to get what they want. To use Bourdieu's example on habitus and cultural capital, the women at the shelters do not resist because they haven't learn how to defend themselves, and are not capable of doing so either because it is not part of their habitus. The difference between Oscar Lewis and Bourdieu is that Bourdieu argues that their habitus reveals the power structures in the society and the social inequality, which makes it impossible for the poor to act differently. Oscar Lewis is not concerned about the power structures.

" By the time slum children are age six or seven, they have usually absorbed the basic values and attitudes of their subculture and are not psychologically geared to take full advantage of changing conditions or increased opportunities which may occur in their lifetime" (Lewis, 1959).

Scholars have criticized Lewis, by claiming that there are surveys being done that shows that the lower- class behavior shares values with the dominant society as well. In surveys shows that the homeless people have said that they value education and want to go to college (Swidler, 1986:272). Ann Swidler writes, *"even though classes have similarities, they could remain profoundly different in the way their culture organizes their overall pattern of behavior"*. Culture, according to Swidler, is more like a style or a set of skills and habits than a set of attitudes, preferences and wants (Swidler, 1986:272).

Swidler argues that if you ask a slum youth why he did not choose the same education path as a middle- class student, the answer will not be " I don't want that life," but instead, "Who, me?" Why Swidler is trying to say is that it is hard to reach success in a

world where the accepted skills, style, and informal know-how are unfamiliar (Ibid). Swidler says, *“One does better to look for a line of action for which one already has the cultural equipment. To adopt a line of conduct, one needs an image of the kind of world in which one is trying to act, a sense that one can read reasonably accurately how one is doing, and a capacity to choose among alternative lines of action”* (Ibid). Swidler argues that we experience a “culture shock” when we move from one cultural community to another. Oscar Lewis explanation of culture of poverty is focusing on the values and attitudes, the poor people absorb and that these values and attitudes makes the poor reproduce poverty. By looking upon Bourdieu’s concepts, habitus and cultural capital, it is not the values and attitudes per se that makes the poverty reproduce itself, but the skills, habits and styles. The homeless women living in the shelters do not have values and attitudes that make them resist when Miguel is asking them to join the actions at the City Hall. Maybe they are having more a “Who, me?” approach to the issue. As Swidler would have suggested, they do not think of them having the habits and skills to approach the City Hall and the politicians in order to demand a social change. I will therefore argue that to study the homeless resistant towards Miguel and the organization, it might be necessary to look upon habitus as a possible causal explanation.

5.3 Housing Justice Meetings:

I want to describe the housing meetings, in order to understand Coalition on Homelessness as a part of a homeless activists’ field. Inspired by Bourdieu, I find it important to look upon Coalition on Homelessness as its own field. As Grønhaug argues, there are several hierarchies in different scales. To look upon Coalition on Homelessness as a field you need to see it as an own hierarchy.

I experienced an own habitus and hierarchy within the organization. They are having same opinions on the society. The same opinions on what they think is the right way of acting, when it comes to the activist work. They have the same opinion on how to approach the struggle. The same opinions on how they shall work in order to get what they want. No one ever criticized the way they were solving their problem or how they worked. No one ever told them to think differently in their way of approaching the homeless, the politicians or the media.

I had some knowledge about the homeless situation when I arrived. However, I knew little about their concepts, their actions, their way of working and in general, how they were organizing their work. Since I was new, I neither knew how the meetings were structured, and what was normal or abnormal ways of behavior within the context of the organization.

I want to start with a housing justice meeting as an example to show the habitus within Coalition on Homelessness, and as a part of a bigger field. Crossley argues that the habitus of the homeless activists are shared with every homeless activist across the country. Thus, Coalition on Homelessness is part of a bigger social movement that share the same habitus (Crossley, 2003:50). He argues that the activist movements need to be seen as an own field, with their own habitus and value system (Crossley, 2003: 50).

The housing justice meetings were meetings for everyone that wanted to be part of the organization's work. In the meetings, they had their routines. Miguel had prepared an agenda that everyone got. They went through the agenda systematically. For me as a newcomer, I felt the meetings had the same problems, the same solutions to the problem and the same suggestions for further work. Miguel asked me explicit several times about advices, but I was rather quiet. I was convinced that they knew more than I did, and that my suggestions would not fit in their way of working, so I rather kept my mouth shut. I listened and observed instead. One day, a new person joined the meeting. Kevin was a homeless guy living in a shelter. He wanted to become a volunteer. He told me that he needed some meaning in his life. He needed to get to work in a certain time a day, in order to feel useful and get up of bed in the mornings. He therefor was eager to work as a volunteer in order to feel useful again in his life. Miguel invited him to join the meeting. He joined the meeting with an eager to participate. He was listening, but opposite to me, he participated as well. He suggested things. He asked about things. Talked about problems he as a homeless encountered in his everyday life. They dismissed every single suggestion or sharing he had. They were not interested. Furthermore, it did not fit to their agenda. It did not fit to their schedule. He was bringing up issues that were not in their priority. For me it seemed like they had issues that were more important on their agenda that they needed to go through. The staff that had been working their for years,

knew exactly how they were suppose to behave, what kind of issues that was important and so on. They knew which problems that were prioritized and the ones they needed to work with. There was no room for anything else.

I did found Kevin's issues important, but there was no room for his issues in their schedule. They followed their fixed patterns. While I was there, they were working to get money from the city budget. That was something they did every year. They knew the process. They also had a demonstration related to the Mothers Day while I was there, that action was also happening every year. They organized the action in the same way that they always did, every year. Their actions were very much limited to the yearly happenings, and restricted the room for new thinking. It restricted the room for new thinking because their schedule was already full. I believe that the homeless who attends these meetings with a wish to influence, will get disappointed, because there are no time for new thinking. Their social movement habitus, as well makes it difficult for the homeless to act. The homeless that wants to be a part of the organization needs to learn the habitus, in order to fit inside the organization's work. The homeless could feel that they lack the knowhow, and again loose the eagerness to participate.

Miguel and his colleagues gain from being part of a larger social movement field, because they know how to approach and get help from other homeless activists. To have regular events that structures the year, makes it also easier to organize the actions, and makes it easier to manage the actions as well. The actions become a regularity and they will therefore be able to have more actions, because it takes less time to organize.

Nevertheless, the organization's habitus and regularity could make it hard for a newcomer to adapt. It might also make it harder for Miguel and his colleagues to recruit members, because the homeless might feel powerless in their meetings with the organization.

5.4 Meeting Melodie:

In the last paragraphs, I have tried to get closer to understand why Miguel meets resistant by the homeless living at the shelters. As both Bourdieu and Swidler would

have argued, they lack the set of skills which makes it hard to stand up for their rights in the City Hall. How can you stand up for your rights in the City Hall, if the field you are trying to influence, has skills, style and informal know-how that are unfamiliar? How can you be a part of an organization that has skills and habits that are unfamiliar?

In this paragraph, I want to present Melodie. Melodie was my informant, and an activist member of the Coalition on Homelessness. She actually attended her last demonstration while I was in the field. She did not want to continue anymore. I tried to grasp why, and through explicit conversations about the theme, we discussed why. I will present this in order to try to grasp again why Miguel and the organization are having a hard time recruiting members and volunteers to the organization.

I met Melodie at a demonstration held by Coalition on Homelessness. The work group, Human Rights, was having a demonstration outside City Hall because of new laws saying it is not allowed to park oversized vehicles in the city. Every oversized vehicle gets a 48 hours notice to remove the vehicle. The Human Rights workgroup were reacting strongly upon this law, because this law is one of many laws that are hostile towards homeless and poor people. The laws make it difficult for the people living in oversized vehicles, because they are constantly being hunted around the city by the police.

Melodie lives in a van. She became homeless ten years ago, after being evicted from the apartment she was renting. She ended up on the street. After some years, she met Frosty. He let Melodie stay in his camper. Eventually he bought her a camper. Frosty died a year ago, and now she was stuck with three campers, and constantly afraid of getting tickets for the parking. Her endless escape from the parking attendants makes her life a struggle.

Coalition on Homelessness calls this criminalization of the poor. What they mean by this is that the city is targeting the homeless peoples' way of living. They are not having the economy to live like the society wants them to, and when they are trying to cope with their homeless situation they are being criminalized by the society. By getting tickets for sleeping either on the streets, in the parks or in their oversized vehicles. Melodie told me once that she feels they want to exterminate her. She doesn't have a job, has no money

and has therefore not a home. She is trying to survive by living in her van, but the way she lives is not appreciated by the society.

After meeting her at the demonstration, I wanted to visit her where she lived with her vans. She occurred as a political engaged woman. She was engaged in the homeless rights, and she was in despair over the whole situation. I was impressed by her will and her rhetoric way of speaking, and wanted to meet her in order to understand her relation to Coalition on Homelessness. For me, it seemed like she was exactly a homeless activist the organization was eager to recruit.

I visited her many times at her camper. Her camper was old and broken, and it was almost impossible to get it started. After our first meeting, she told me that she had quit as a member of the organization.

“You know its like you show up you got your hopes you’re invested in. And then nothing happens, and then nothing happens, and then nothing happens. It’s like people can only take that for so long, before it breaks down. And you’re like, wait a minute. Why should I show up for this meeting when I already know nothing is going to happen? Like I know the police are going to come tonight or tomorrow” (Melodie in her camper, June 2014).

Melodie does not have the time to join the meetings, her constantly fear of getting tickets from the police makes it impossible to focus on activism. She also argue that she has been invested in time, and hoping that her time and effort will make a chance, but as she explains nothing happens. Her hopes are being crushed.

She is being forced out of the city because of the laws against oversized vehicles. She is also being forced to move every 48 hours with her vehicles. As Melodie said, *“people are saying, why can’t you just jump in the car and move it. The vehicle is not in shape that it is supposed to be in order to jump in and just move it”*. So, between every 48 hours she has to fix her vehicles in order to move it in order to not get a ticket she can’t pay, in order to not end up in jail. That is her struggle in life. In addition to this, she has been trying to contribute in the demonstrations and meetings. It takes one hour to get to the

organization from where she is parked. When you in addition do not feel like anything is happening it seems hopeless to participate in the organization's work.

So, what I'm trying to enlighten with this is that there are societal reasons for why she can't join the organization. It is actually the city of San Francisco that makes it a struggle for her to join. She wants to speak up, she wants to be heard, and she is even good at it. But because the way she is living is not valued by the dominant society, she cannot take part in the organization's work.

"It's kind of weird for me. I was raised middle class. Living in this way is not even in my value system. I guess what I mean by that is I'm used to thinking in terms of taking responsibility for myself. And I'm in a situation where I can't".

This citation, as well as the previous, is from the film. Melodie, Adam, a friend of Melodie who also lives in a van, and I are talking about how it is to be homeless, and how it is to be in a situation where you are not being heard. As Melodie explains, she is from the middle- class and has been homeless for ten years. She is not part of any culture of poverty; she neither compare herself with the underclass. She is from the middle class, and she is used to take care of herself, but her life situation does not let her. As she says, living like this is not even in her value system. To use the "Bourdieuian" way of thinking, the way she is living is not a part of her habitus. This means that even though she has the skills and habits to act like a "non- homeless" person, she is still living as a homeless, and the way she is living is restricting her to take responsibility for herself. It means that according to Melodie, it is the society that makes her stay in this situation. If it was up to her, she would have acted differently, but she cant. Since she is already being homeless, she needs to act like a homeless. There is not a chance for her to get a job, when she has to take care of the vehicle, and keep moving the vehicles in order to stay out of trouble with the police.

To understand Melodie's struggle, and her lack of hope that the society is going to change, it is understandable why she does not want to take part in the organization anymore. She also has a lack of trust in the organization, because of all the meetings and demonstrations she has attended, but she sees no changes after all. Melodie's story

might also go for the homeless women at the shelter. Instead of moving a camper, they need to move from shelter to shelter. Every day is struggle. They need to cover their basic needs, and does therefor not have the time to participate.

5.5 Resistance and power structures, the homeless panel:

According to Foucault, there is no class that uses their ideology to dominate the rest of the society. Foucault argues that there are no single oppressive force that wield power. He argues that power is diffuse and occurs on every level of the society. Foucault believes the power occurs at micro- level and he calls this micro- powers. He believes that power is existing at micro level, because the once in power is sustaining their own regimes of truth (Neale, 2007:52).

Neale writes in her article about homelessness and theory, *“Foucault doesn’t believe in one radical change, or that the dominant class is the reason behind the homelessness, he believes that small changes at the micro level needs to be done. Those who work with homeless people are, of course, not always and necessarily resistant to strategies which endeavor to empower homeless people. Nevertheless, homelessness remains the seemingly intractable problem it was a century ago. Moreover, because micro- powers seek to maintain the status quo, a likely objective of any policy provision will be to normalize homeless people”* (Neale, 2007:53). I want to use this part of Foucault’s thoughts, to look upon how their work might make the homelessness become an everlasting issue instead of ending it. Through a Foucaultian approach, I will discuss how Coalition on Homelessness might contribute to normalize homelessness and keep the status quo.

Abu- Lughod argues that through resistance we can grasp more clearly the traditional structures of power. Foucault argues that we cannot see resistance as a reactive force somehow independent of or outside of the system of power. Resistance is a part of the power system (Abu-Lughod, 1990:41).

“As the veils they wear get sheerer and these young women come more involved in the kind of sexualized femininity associated with the world of consumerism- even if it is only the comparatively small- time world of five- dollar nightgowns and 15 –cent nail polish- they are becoming increasingly enmeshed in new sets of power relations which they are scarcely

aware" (Abu-Lughod, 1990:50). Abu- Lughod argues that resistance reveals new power structures. Without the people that resists being aware of the power structures they become a part of. The resistance is therefor like Foucault argues, neither outside nor independent from the system of power (Abu-Lughod, 1990:41). Abu- Lughod writes that the Bedouin women that embrace the Egyptian ways of living for a modern woman, actually binds the women to the Egyptian economy. Abu-Lughos writes, *"We respect everyday resistance not just by arguing for the dignity or heroism of the resisters, but by letting their practices teach us about the complex interworkings of historically changing structures of power"* (Abu-Lughod, 1990:53). By studying resistance, you will see the power structure. The organization wants a structural change, they want to help and empower the homeless, by demonstrating against certain laws, and demonstrating for public housing. By looking at their resistance, do the structures of power become visual?

As I have mentioned many times before, the way the organization resist to the structural power is to engage the homeless people to become activists, so that the whole community can stand together and demand housing, and demand human rights for the poor and the homeless. They want the homeless to learn how to speak in order to be heard. A Friday afternoon, the organization had arranged a panel discussion at a soup kitchen in Tenderloin, called St Anthony's. They were gathering all their members of the homeless activist community, and invited all the homeless in the shelters and on the street in Tenderloin to join the homeless panel discussion. The soup kitchen was changed into a panel discussion. Jennifer Friedenbach, the director of Coalition on Homelessness and three other people from other social services, were discussing issues concerning poverty and homelessness in San Francisco that they believed needed to be discussed. There was no media; there were no politicians and no public, except from the community itself and some homeless people. Everyone was happy with the panel discussion; people from the community were clapping their hands and yelling, all agreeing with what being said.

I want to look closer to the resistance the Coalition on Homelessness veil. The resistance the homeless activist community is having towards the structural power system in the US is discussed, but it might also contribute to keep the status qou. The activists are showing the homeless how to speak up, explaining what kind of struggle they are

meeting, why they are struggling, why there is difficult to get housing, and what they need to do to change this. However, at the same time they are taking away a soup kitchen from the homeless, from the most vulnerable people in the society. A place where people are safe, get food and are meeting friends in the same situation. By having these panel discussion they are taking away a social room for the homeless.

They are also keeping the homeless dependent. The homeless become dependent on them. Which means they maintain a hierarchy, it maintains a dependent relationship. Foucault would have argued that the Coalition on Homelessness keeps the status quo. Even though Foucault seems pessimistic to the modern society, and that society produce docile bodies, he is quite optimistic towards resistance on a micro level (Neale, 2007:53). Which means that the homeless can resist local exercises of power. Foucault is all about power hierarchies in different layers of the society, which means he believes that Coalition on Homelessness can exercise power, in a way that they maintain and normalize homelessness. Foucault argues that homeless people need to resist this power, and achieve respect and more efficient services (Neale, 2007:53).

Coalition on Homelessness' resistance to the City Hall, and their demonstrations for more money to public housing makes them a part of the larger power structures. They become a part of the larger structures, and maintains the power structure. According to Grønhaug, Coalition on Homelessness becomes a part of an everlasting ritual. Their relationship back and forth with the politicians at the City Hall, makes them a part of the structures (Grønhaug, 1978).

Coalition on Homelessness resistance to the power is on one side, revealing power structures. By demonstrating at the City Hall they are, as Abu- Lughod would have argued, being part of the bigger power structures. The ritual they are being part of, reveals the power structure. Because the back and forth relationship the organization has with the local politicians, only maintain the status quo. Foucault would have argued, by having panel discussions at the soup kitchens, they are making the homeless dependent and again normalizing homelessness and maintaining status quo and the legitimate power.

The reason why I want to analyze the resistance the organization veils with a Foucauldian perspective, is not to criticize the organization, but to look upon different reasons for why the organization struggles to mobilize the homeless, and to find reasons for why they are struggling to get the people out of poverty.

Melodie told me about the *homeless industry*. The homeless industry is the people that live off the homeless people, she said. Thus, social services, people that work in shelters or advocates. Gowan also uses the concept in her book about homelessness in San Francisco, and writes that the homeless industry has grown into an archipelago of institutions. She writes that many have raised critical questions towards the homeless industry, and ask if they are the ones behind the reproduction of the homeless (Gowan, 2010:6).

Coalition on Homelessness, could be seen as a ritualized theatre where the homeless are the commodity in focus. Even though nothing happens with the society, the show has to go on, with the same rituals and the same agendas. The homeless are still homeless.

5.6 Challenges the Organization meets in order to recruit the homeless:

"You know they are asking me, when are we getting housing? I say to them, the only way you can get housing is to participate and involve in the campaigns"(Miguel, Coalition on Homelessness, April 2014).

Why does Miguel and the organization meet resistance and why is it so difficult to mobilize a homeless activist? What makes it so hard? Does the way the organization is organizing their work make themselves actually more dependent of the power structures, and the homeless dependent on the organization?

I have in this chapter presented different social situations and used different theories to discuss the problems or difficulties the organization is meeting.

The lack of cultural capital the homeless have might never make them ready to interact with the politicians at the City Hall. The habitus the organization has is shared with the homeless activists in Tenderloin, and probably homeless activists in the whole state.

This habitus makes it difficult to join the organization if you are not a part of that specific habitus. However, it makes it easier for the organization to actually conduct their demonstrations and campaigns. The way the organization is working might also keep the status quo, by being part of the power structures. By having a back and forth relationship with the City Hall, and being trapped in a ritual, might make the homeless issues everlasting. By studying their resistance, it reveals the relation the organization has with the power structures. Finally, by using Foucault's thoughts on micro- power, the organization might also wield power over the homeless. They contribute to a dependent relationship between the homeless and the organization that makes the problem continues. As Foucault would have suggested, the homeless should therefore resist the organization, and demand more respect and autonomy.

I cannot emphasize enough, that this is not a critique towards the organization, nor does I claim that the organization is the reason behind the homeless issue. However, by studying resistance, I might reveal information that is important to understand in order to improve their work, understand the complexity and grasp why the homeless choose to resist the organization's resistance.

CHAPTER 6: The Relationship between the Organization and the Media, City Hall and the Public:

In this chapter, I want to analyse the relationship the organization has with the media, the politicians at the City Hall and the public, thus the citizens of San Francisco. I want to enlighten the relationship between Miguel and the politicians by describing situations from the City Hall, where Miguel was interacting with the politicians. The last part of this analysis I will present a press conference the organization was having at the stairs of the City Hall. I will analyse this situation to look upon the relationship the organization has with the media, and the public.

I want to use Bourdieu's theory on language to enlighten the difficult communication between Miguel and the politicians. I will also use Bourdieu and his thoughts about the media as being controlling, as well as controlled. I will use Bourdieu's theory on doxa

that makes it difficult for Miguel and the organization to reach engagement from the media and the public.

6.1: Miguel at City Hall:

Miguel wanted me to join him to the City Hall one of my first days. He did not say much more than that. I had almost just arrived at the organization and was about to set up my camera. He asked me to pack the camera down and lock it into his locker, so no one could steal it. I asked why we were going to the City Hall, he said that there is so much going on lately and he needed to ask the supervisors about different things. He said he wanted me to join him, because it was important for me as a part of the organization to meet the supervisors and have a relation to them. I had never been to the City Hall before, and was excited and nervous to meet the supervisors.

I therefor got a bit stressed when Miguel made me hurry up and join him for this. After a 10 minute walk from the organization, we arrived at the entrance of the City Hall. The City Hall is a huge and old building made of marble with four big doors made of tree in the front. Miguel walked straight in the middle door. To get inside the city hall we needed to walk through a security check. Miguel took of his jacket and sent it through the security. It went through. He took his jacket on in a hurry, walked fast up the big stairs, walking past a wedding and determined went to the left in the hallway on second floor. I jogged after, trying to keep up Miguel's determined speed.

We reached the first door in the hallway. Miguel stopped and knocked on. He just knocked on the door once, and opened the door. We were met by two interns sitting on each computer looking busy and serious. "We are here to talk with supervisor Jane Kim", says Miguel. One of the interns, the one that was supervisor Jane Kim's assistant answered, "Do you have an appointment?" "No, but I really need to talk to her. It is about Mothers Day Action, and it is urgent!", "I am sorry, but you need an appointment. She is busy these days, and she is in a meeting right now. Is there anything I can do for you, or shall I leave a message from you?" she asked polite but also quite uninterested. "Tell her, Miguel Carrera asked for her, and that we need her to help us at the 6th of May. She knows what it is about. We need microphones, and to reserve the stairs in front for us".

“This is Tora btw, my new assistant” (a feeling of discomfort slightly went through my body while he mentioned my name, but I put myself together and polite reached my hand to the two young interns about my age).

While walking out of the office, he shook his head, “these supervisors, they never have time for us. Promising a lot of stuff all the time, but never do anything. They don’t care”. However, it did not seem that these words stopped him. He continued walking determined. The hall was long with many doors. Miguel went to almost all of them. He told me that he had to go through every office that he thought he would get help with the action they were going to have 6th of May. It was obvious that he knew his way inside the City Hall. He knew where all of the different supervisors’ office where. Since I only had been at the organization some days, I didn’t realised that Miguel’s visits at the City Hall, and his relation to the City Hall was a big part of his everyday life and his work for the organization. After some “hit and miss”, we eventually managed to meet one supervisor. He talked Spanish and met us with a friendly smile. Miguel and the supervisor had a friendly tone, and laughed and joked. He told us that he would try to help us out if he got time. While walking out of the City Hall heading back to the organization, Miguel told me that we, him and I, together needed to keep on calling and mailing the supervisors about 6th of May, so they would not forget about us and that we could get the help we needed.

After and during this situatio, I had a strong feeling that his behaviour was not appreciated by the people at the City Hall. I felt unease with the situation and felt strongly that the treatment he got was short and indifferent. Miguel did not listen; he did not want to listen, because he did not trust the people at the City Hall. He did not believe what they told him. They could not help him out they said, but Miguel believed they could. He could not understand that even if they knew about the increasing poverty, they still did not help him out.

It was not only this time I felt Miguel’s appearance unwelcome at the City Hall. I want to describe another situation at the City Hall as well:

The supervisors had arranged a homeless public hearing at the City Hall a Wednesday afternoon. Miguel was of course there and had prepared a speech for the supervisors, so

that the mayor's supervisors could understand the need for public housing, and use more of the city budget on public housing and eviction prevention. Miguel spoke fast and determined as he always did. He knew exactly what he wanted to tell. He did not stop before he was finished, even though the supervisors were trying to tell him that he had used his time. The supervisors did not pay him much attention. Two of the supervisors were talking to each other. One was eating lunch and another drinking coffee. He was speaking to supervisors that did not listen. However, Miguel did not stop, he continued. He had to tell them everything he knew about homelessness, whether they listened or not. Again, I got the feeling that they did not care to listen to him. I got a feeling that they did not take him seriously.

Miguel told me this in an interview:

"Many times I feel and I believe some politicians at the City Hall don't like me because I'm bringing people and putting the situation uncomfortable. This is because they need to change their behaviour. And because they need to come to the river and drink water. Why we have to go and telling these guys to change the system, or to do something for the people? They know already we're having so many homeless people. They know already that we need money".

Let us say, Miguel is correct. They know about the homeless issue, they know that there is need for public housing. Why don't they listen to Miguel? Miguel understand that he makes the situation uncomfortable. Probably it is quite uncomfortable to listen to Miguel's speech, when they know that it is hard to follow up his suggestions. I want to dig into why this situation becomes uncomfortable (Miguel's words), and why it seems like they do not listen to Miguel.

Bourdieu was concerned about capitalism and the neo- liberal state (Grenfell, 2004). I therefore think it is important to look upon Bourdieu's thoughts about how the structural forces can explain the power, and explain why Miguel might never affect or influence the politicians.

Bourdieu was concerned about the structural forces and the reproduction of the power. Bourdieu criticized the neo- liberal society, and he argued that neo- liberalism was an

expression of the social conditions in the USA (Grenfell, 2004:117). Social conditions such as, the weakness of the state and the greater freedom given to individuals as other modern sociologists argued as well (Grenfell, 2004:118). According to Bourdieu the neo- liberal system made the State's withdraw from public services and converting public goods (health, housing, education and culture) into private goods (Grenfell, 2004:117). This is very much the case today as well, and is probably one of the reasons for why Miguel is having a hard time getting pursuant from the politicians at the City Hall. I want to look further into how the language, according to Bourdieu, is been affected by capitalism and the neo- liberal state.

Grenfell writes, *"Bourdieu argued that neo- liberal economies were presented in the language of mathematics to give them the sense of natural laws that the economic policies decided upon conform to a natural law"* (Grenfell, 2004:129). Thus, the reason for why the neo- liberal state is still existing and got pursuant, is that it got its grip in the language in the field of mathematic, and it therefor become normalized. Therefore, the neo- liberal state is normalised in the language. The once that are having high capital in the field of mathematics, is also most likely to have capital in other fields, and is therefore having the symbolic power. The once in power is thus normalizing capitalism. The key concept for Bourdieu was in fact the naturalisation of the social inequality (Aakvaag, 2008).

"The power of agents and mechanisms which today dominate the social and economic world, rests on an extraordinary concentration of all forms of capital, economic, political, military, cultural, scientific, technological foundation of a symbolic domination without precedent" (Bourdieu, Grenfell, 2004:160).

The politicians Miguel is trying to influence have according to Bourdieu, most likely high capital of all capital forms there are. The agents that dominate the society will reproduce their power and their children will again be the ones with power. Even though the politicians understand Miguel's wish for more public housing, and they see the homeless issue, they will maybe never solve the issue by giving money for public housing. Because of their habitus, and high capital in the field, they are convinced that the characteristics of the neo- liberal state is the only correct way of governing a state, and that the neo-

liberal state is having positive sides as well. How can they not think that the neo-liberal state is having positive sides? They have made it! They have managed to become politicians. They are not poor, or homeless. They do not see that their own habitus and high capital within the field are being a reproduction. They do not see that their habitus is making them behave, talk and interact in a way that is appreciated at the City Hall and by other agents of dominate society. They probably believe that everyone have the same chance to succeed if they just work hard enough.

I am aware that I have put this very simply; it is to show how the habitus of the people in power may work. To moderate this a little: they have probably also worked hard for their position, and the worsening economic development affect them as well. They are managing a constantly decreasing budget, and it is hard for them to meet all of Miguel and the organization's demands.

Bourdieu argues that the power lays in the language and in the words. The ones that dominate the society, speak the language and have the rhetoric skills that makes them maintain the power. In this way, he has similarities with Foucault that believes the power lays in the discourses. However, Bourdieu was also concerned about symbolic power and linguistic habitus. The language and the way we speak, as already mentioned, are a part of our habitus. Bourdieu argues that there is an official language, which is mandatory on official occasions and in official places (schools, public administrations, political institutions and so on). This official language becomes the norm according to Bourdieu. All people's way of speaking is therefore measured by the official state language, and judge whether it match or not. (Bourdieu and Thompson, 1991, Grenfell, 2004). Bourdieu argues that the language therefore needs to be understood in context with the relations of symbolic power (Myles, 2010:14). Since Miguel and the homeless he is bringing to the City Hall, is not speaking the official language, may they not be respected. Unconsciously, may the politicians not listen; because of the way, they speak.

6.2 Press Conference on the steps of City Hall:

Miguel and I met each other at seven o'clock in the morning at the office in Turk Street. Miguel gave me five pages with phone numbers on. All of the numbers were belonging to

different media agencies. Miguel took his pages and we sat us down on each telephone and started calling the press. I got a bit nervous, since I had not called the media before. I was unsure of what to say in order to persuade the journalists. I sat down for some minutes and observed Miguel. It was obvious by looking at Miguel that this was something he had done several times before. He started from the number on the top, and dealt with each phone number on the list. It was about 50 phone numbers.

“Hi, this is Miguel from Coalition on Homelessness. We are going to hold a press conference at nine o’clock at the stairs of the city hall. You should be there. We need money for public housing and eviction prevention”. His characteristic accent is determined and targeted, he know what he needs to do. I picked up the phone myself, and started to talk with a slighter less determined voice. Most of the phones went right do the newsroom and they told me that they were going to inform the journalists about it at the morning meeting. Somehow, I got a feeling that even though they told me so; it was not going to happen.

Miguel, Daniel (one of the volunteers), Tina (a former homeless woman a member of the coalition), and I took the banner and went down to the City Hall. Miguel and I, as I described in the first paragraph of this chapter, had stopped by at the City Hall the week before and asked to have the stairs and borrowing their microphone and rostrum. We got it. Everything was set. The members were already there, around 30 people, all members. Miguel directed two of the members to hold the banner, *“What if your mother was homeless, beautify the lives of our mothers with the gift of a home”*, the banner said.

All the members were standing on the side of the stairs, the speakers in the middle. The time got close to nine, and no one were in the front watching. None. No media, no people and no politicians. After some minutes, they decided to not wait anymore. They started. The director of Coalition on Homelessness, Jennifer Friedenbach started the press conference and said, *“Welcome everybody, there is not a lot of media around, so I will have to point this out to the sky”*. She looked up to the sky and kept on speaking. The members cheered and applauded, they were yelling slogans:

“Mayor Lee, give us a meeting!

Mayor Lee, give us a meeting!”

“What do we want? Housing!

When do we want it? Now!”

Some tourists were stopping by, curious to see what was going on, but most of the people just hasted away. Even though Miguel and I had called 50 different media companies, no one showed up.

I will use Bourdieu’s view on the media’s role to look upon why the press and the public is not showing up and paying attention to the homeless issue. As Wagner argues, the media does not pay attention to the homeless issue anymore, nor does the public. Wagner argues that the public believe that the homeless have had their chance, and the reason for why they are homeless is more or less their own fault (Wagner, 2013:17). Bourdieu has thoughts about how the media is working, and I will present this in my analysis on why the media and the public is not paying attention to the homeless in San Francisco.

Bourdieu had a quite pessimistic and sceptical view on the media. He argued that the media shaped the public opinion for political ends. He went so far to actually suggest that the media produced a public view, which was a collective misrepresentations of misrepresentations (Grenfell, 2004). The politicians, Bourdieu said, was influencing the mass media. Since the mass media was influenced by the once in power, the public opinion, according to Bourdieu, was a misrepresentation and a construction and become a legitimacy for the policy- makers and politicians. The public is therefore legitimizing the power, because they are being affected by the media. The once in power are claiming that they are acting in the name of the people, but actually, they are just keeping status quo. They manage to keep the status quo, because they have the public with them. This is what, according to Bourdieu, creates symbolic violence (Grenfell, 2004:137).

According to Bourdieu, there is an interdependent relationship between the politicians and the media. The politicians are almost never acting outside the mass media or against them. The political parties also train their politicians to act properly in media, so that

they are making sure they are controlling the reality. The media on the other hand is depending on the economic wealth. Bourdieu calls this the paradox of journalism, because the journalists are both fragile and powerful. The media has the power because they are the one who is writing and presenting the “reality”. At the same time, they need money and is therefore controlled as well, by companies with good economy (Grenfell, 2004:94).

Even though Bourdieu wrote about the media in 1990s, I think his thoughts still are usable. I think it is hard for Coalition on Homelessness to get hold on the media, because the homeless issue is not popular anymore. The homeless issue does not sell. Therefore newspapers will prioritize other cases that will lead to more readers. But it is the media in the first place that has made the public decrease their interest in homelessness. And the media has been affected by the politicians in power. It is a circle of power, and Coalition on Homelessness is weak in this circle. They do sometimes manage to get hold on some very local newspapers, but the local newspapers are too small, and do not get very much attention from most of the public. It is a viscous circle, where the three fields of power are depending on each other in order to keep status quo: the media, the political field and the economic field.

6.3 Is it possible for the organization to influence the politicians?

On one side, the politicians are managing a consistently decreasing budget, and it is hard to meet Miguel’s demands. Miguel will probably never feel listened to at the City Hall. It might be because the politicians cannot help him, and is therefore not paying him much attention because of the demands that he brings are not possible to meet. On the other side, it might also be because Miguel and the homeless he brings do not speak the official language and is not appreciated by the politicians at the City Hall.

To understand the politicians’ rejections, we might also look upon the power structures they are a part of. The media and the public is neither giving Miguel nor his activists any pursuant, the media and the public is also being affected by the power structures. The viscous circle shows the dependency between the media, politicians and the economical

field, thus the power. The circle makes it therefore almost impossible for the organization to get pursuant from the media, the public nor the politicians.

CHAPTER 7: Conclusion

I went to the field with a wish to empower my informants. By doing an ethnographic methodological approach over time, and participated in and observed, I have tried to grasp the homeless situation in Tenderloin, San Francisco. By participating in demonstrations, campaigns and meetings, interacting and having discussions with the homeless and the people working at the organization, I have learned a lot.

I have learned that the people who are homeless, all have different stories, all different reasons and all different ways of managing their situation. They have all lived various lives before they got homeless and the homeless I met and talked with, were by no means cultural homogenous.

I learned that there is not only the visible poor that suffer from homelessness. I met people that were moving from one friend to another, always nervous not to find a place for the night. I met people living in long time shelters, but were frustrated about their situation because in six months their family would be kicked out of the shelters, and would then have no place to go. Coalition on Homelessness is embracing every person who is homeless; either you are living on the streets or at a friend's house. The stress and the struggle relating to not have a house is the same, according to Coalition on Homelessness.

After a while in the field, I started to understand that the organization is struggling to mobilize the homeless. They are meeting resistance by the homeless, even though they are working for the homeless. Through observations, participations and interactions I have been trying to grasp why this is happening. The homeless are having a daily routine that is not manageable with working as an activist. They simply do not have time. Another aspect of why they are meeting resistance is that they lack the habitus in order to act at the City Hall. Their approach to Miguel is "who, me?" The third and final aspect is that they do not believe in change. They have gotten promises and have been

hoping for a better future, but they have never seen anything good coming their way, so why should they continue to hope.

The organization has a goal to end homelessness, by mobilizing the homeless themselves. By using Abu- Lughod and Foucault's reflections on resistance, it might show that the organization might reproduce homelessness by creating a dependent relationship with the homeless. Melodie and Gowan argues that there is a homeless industry, which might reproduce homelessness. Coalition on Homelessness can be looked upon as a part of that industry.

Even though the organization meets a lot of resistance by the homeless themselves, there are homeless that appreciate the organization. For the homeless volunteers the organization was more than an activist organization. It was a place to meet likeminded and find meaning in their everyday life. It was a place to feel needed.

The homeless issue, is not a popular issue. The organization struggles to get pursued from the City Hall, the media and the public. To understand why they are not getting pursued, I studied the office, as a small-scale organization at street level, with its specific culture, ways of talking and acting. Through studying the organization at street level, I managed to some extent to study the social fields of the large scale as well. It makes one understand how political and economic changes in the overall US give an important framing to what goes on at the local level. My experiences from the organization and the organization's work on a micro- level will therefore also say something about the changes that happens in the American society that has large consequences for the citizens of San Francisco and in the US in general.

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