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Understanding the Influence of Capitalism on One Group's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness

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UNDERSTANDING THE INFLUENCE OF CAPITALISM ON ONE
GROUP'S TEN-YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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The purpose of this dissertation was to explore and understand how the dominant ideological effect of capitalism has influenced the development of one local ten-year plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. Ten-year plans to end homelessness were instituted through a national initiative launched by the Bush Administration in 2003. The Allegheny County Homeless Alliance Advisory Board (HAAB) was studied because they were the appointed group held responsible for the implementation of the local plan.

The literature review established a context for homelessness and capitalism, exploring how the two concepts are connected. Analysis occurred on multiple levels to reveal power-based constraints in both a local, extralocal, and theoretical context.

The study was conducted utilizing an extended case method approach, exploring sociological aspects of capitalist phenomenon utilizing Marxist tradition. Data was gathered during open ended interviews with HAAB members, participant observation of meetings, field notes, and within document analysis of three years of quarterly meetings.

The study revealed an association between submerged and tightly interwoven internal and external systems of control as exerted by the local governmental body responsible for implementing the group's plan. Secondary outcomes indicated that there were increased levels of awareness and communication among the diverse membership of the HAAB.

Furthermore, the data illustrated that internal networks and relationships had spawned transformative actions outside of the institutionalized governmental structure of the group. The theoretical findings in this dissertation indicate that Marxism can be reconstructed and extended to better explain the dehumanizing effects of capitalism.

The research suggests that praxical transformation of embedded capitalist-driven social relationships can be initiated through a cyclical process of reflection, evaluation, education, and critical discourse. Furthermore, empowering and educating group participants to carry out plan implementation through democratically-informed consensus building processes may be more effective than bureaucratic-led, state-run, government-driven approaches to ending homelessness.

Expanded research focusing on how capitalism influences interpersonal relationships and corresponding institutional structures is needed to better reveal unjust power-based relationships that defeat the purpose of plans to eradicate homelessness and poverty.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my husband Robert “Mac” McMahon whose faith in me, at times, far surpassed my own. Mac would not let me give up however discouraged I became. His enduring determination and support were beyond the call of duty and inspired me to complete a life-long dream and journey.

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To Melanie, I would like to extend my gratitude to her for her willingness to guide my theoretical application from the beginning to the end of the dissertation process.

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In addition, I want to thank all my fellow IUP Cohort Six members who supported me throughout my involvement within the Administration and Leadership program at IUP. I would especially like to extend my thanks to Marion Yoder, Uzi Sasson, and Dirk Matson, whose added support, candor, insight, and compassion bolstered and strengthened me in my darkest hours.

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CHAPTER ONE

AN INTRODUCTION TO HOMELESSNESS AND THE STUDY

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how the systemic effects of capitalism is influencing a local group's effort to end homelessness in Allegheny County. Homelessness in the county, once attributed to loss of industrial jobs in the 80's, has steadily grown in the region despite multiple strategies that the county has adopted to end its occurrence.¹ A new approach to ending homelessness is now underway. The local group charged with implementing this new federally-mandated approach is known as the Homeless Alliance Advisory Board (HAAB). The local HAAB is similar to hundreds of other boards that have sprung up across that nation as a result of a 2003 national strategy advocated by the Bush Administration to end homelessness. This new national strategy is unique because it calls for the formation of local boards, composed of leaders from public and private organizations who are charged with working together to end homelessness in their own communities.

Capitalism in this dissertation is defined in Marxist terms. This means that in addition to the generally accepted belief that capitalism is an economic system in which the means of production are privately owned and operated for profit, critical emphasis is placed on the fact that the wealthy middle and upper classes benefit from this system-wide level of control. The primary goal of this dissertation is to explore the connection that exists between homelessness and capitalism. This is accomplished by exploring how one local group has experienced the national strategy of ending homelessness, through the development of their own local ten-year plan to end homelessness.

¹ This belief is detailed in Allegheny County's 1995 Consolidated Plan describing how loss of steel-mill jobs had led to people having lower incomes with less jobs available, along with lack of affordable housing and rental units. (This information is available at: <http://archives.hud.gov/reports/plan/pa/allegepa.html>.)

This comprehensive strategy was first suggested by the National Alliance to End Homelessness, and then adopted by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). After being endorsed by the Bush administration, the federal department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mandated that local communities receiving federal funds to end homelessness form their own public and private boards to work towards the goal of developing their own ten-year plans to end homelessness in their local communities. It is important to note that these plans were required to be developed before HUD would distribute traditional and on-going sources of homeless assistance funding to them.²

To date, more than 300 cities and communities across America have created ten-year plans to end homelessness at the local level and are at various stages of implementation.³ Remarkably, this strategy was adopted with no new source of funds made available to assist local groups in their efforts. The federal perspective was that by building collaborations between private and public sources, funds would become available from local sources to fund local initiatives.

My dissertation's methodological approach is unique because it utilizes the extended case methodological (ECM) approach. This approach is grounded in a critical sociological Marxist perspective, developed by Dr. Michael Burawoy of the University of Berkeley. ECM is particularly suited to my dissertation because it looks to understand how external systems of

² The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USIC) is a federal program and office created by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1986 (Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act) whose purpose is to coordinate the federal response to homelessness and to create partnerships between the federal agencies addressing homelessness on every level of government on every element of the private sector. (This information is available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/expectmore/detail/10006246.2006.html>.)

³ More information about the ten-year plan and its evolutionary process is on-line at: <http://www.kyhousing.org/KICH/Content.aspx?id=492>.

power influence micro and macro level connections.⁴ As an interpretive method, it takes a “unique case” (i.e., the local Homeless Alliance Advisory Board) approach as a way to extend and reconstruct theory. It is ethnographic and critical in nature, and as such, this approach allowed me to move between micro and macro levels of analysis to better understand how larger systems of power and control had informed the development and implementation of the local group’s ten-year plan to end homelessness. This local group is located in Allegheny County, where the city of Pittsburgh is located. They are known at the Homeless Alliance Advisory Board (HAAB).

In this extended case I began at the micro level of analysis by interviewing 22 of the 27 HAAB members; connecting their perspectives and ideological thinking to the larger systems of control that were consciously and unconsciously informing their work on implementing the local plan to end homelessness. Interviews were especially helpful as they allowed me to explore my original premises that capitalistic ideologies and structures were in some way impacting the interactions of the group as they looked to implement the local plan.

What I discovered through this process of exploration was quite different than what I had originally suspected. I believed that I would find tension between HAAB group representatives based on their own unique capitalist interests. I believed that individual tensions would reveal why the local ten-year plan has been unsuccessful to date, as indicated by increased numbers of people being homeless in Allegheny County five years after the plan was launched.

Yet, instead of finding internal conflict, my research indicated that the HAAB group members were controlled by a few county governmental administrators in the group.

Furthermore, the governmental members composed of 60% of the group. Suggestions from

⁴ This particular approach looks first at local phenomena as an entry point to systems analysis. The system being studied here is the broader capitalistic economic system that exerts power over local plans to end homelessness. Deep familiarity with local events provides the illumination needed to explain powerful local and global impacts.

nongovernmental group members on how to end homelessness received low priority, even with the promise of local private funding offered to support their suggestions. An example is the recommendation by nongovernment members to build a Housing First model program to house chronically homeless individuals (those who spent the most time on the streets).⁵ Even with the promise of local funds from the foundation community, government officials refused to consider this recommended solution of the plan.

In this dissertation, my data and information is gathered from open-ended interviews, participant observations, and document analyses of past meetings and through a final summarizing focus group. My interviews, which provided the bulk of my data, are encapsulated in individual summarized narratives (Creswell, 2007) that adopt a broad contextual understanding of how each individual board member in this unique group perceived the role of the HAAB, external systems of control, and the goal to end homelessness in Allegheny County. This conceptual framework is explained using the sensitizing Marxian concepts of commodification, alienations, false consciousness and class consciousness. Interviews were open-ended, many lasting more than an hour, and driven by the perceptions and thought processes of the board member being interviewed. There was a broad diversity of opinion about how the HAAB was performing. No one person had the same opinion about the success or failure of the group.

The Extended Case Method (ECM) aligned well with my premise that an “incredibly dense thicket of partially independent and partially interacting social processes” (Evens & Handelman, 2006, pg. 6) were occurring within the HAAB and creating deep and profoundly

⁵ Housing First programs look to move homeless individuals immediately from the streets or homeless shelters into their own apartments. Housing First approaches are based on the concept that a homeless individual first and primary need is to obtain stable housing, and that other issues should be addressed once housing is obtained. In contrast, many traditional programs operate from a model of "housing readiness" - that is, that an individual must address other issues first, that may have led to them becoming homeless, prior to entering housing.

complex social interactions that were manipulated by external sources of power and control.⁶

Ultimately, it was these thickets of dense personal perceptions, group interactions, decision-making processes and external systemic pressures and processes that allowed me to explore the internal workings of the group related to their work to end homelessness. In this unique extended case method study, my research indicated that internal constraints and perceptions of homelessness were not as important to the work of the group as external structures of control were. Instead, the process and the plan were externally being shaped by structural constraints that were imposed on government officials by deeper systemic influences.

A parallel goal of this research study was to assist HAAB members with their efforts to end homelessness by exploring how internal and external forces were influencing the plan. With the group members I talked about the progress of the plan to date (the ten-year plan is now at its five year mid-point) with a critical eye to what barriers to success had been. This cathartic, evaluative, and alternative discourse occurred during my interviews with them. Evaluations were not occurring at regularly scheduled board meetings. The interviews allowed for: 1) engagement in a deeper and more critical discourse about reasons for homelessness; 2) creation of a space where emancipatory and alternative strategic thinking could occur; and 3) exploration of why original and alternative solutions suggested in the plan had not been put in place. As a final point, the interviews were important because many of the board members believed that the original plan to end homelessness was not being implemented, and that their work was relatively ineffective.⁷

⁶ Marxism provides a comprehensive worldview to better understand the social world. Often perceived only as a dogma, Marxism also has the potential to reveal our materialistic relationship with each other and the world.

⁷ An article written in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Law, 2007) suggested that the plan to reduce homelessness was behind schedule due to the county following the status quo and not implementing new approaches.

Through a discourse process of feedback and evaluation within interviews, members began to more critically consider how decision-making was occurring, how external powerful influences were manifested within the plan and how the role of advocacy might improve upon what had already occurred. Although advocacy had been recommended as an important strategic step early on, no movement had been made to engage the public, politicians, or the media in the process of ending homelessness in Allegheny County given the plan of action that had been laid out in the plan. Five years into the ten-year planning process, increasing numbers of people are still becoming homeless, many because of the economic downturn which has led to increasing occurrences of mortgage foreclosure, evictions and job losses (Olson, 2007). The process of reflecting on how these external systemic and capitalistic factors influenced homelessness, spurred a praxial discussion and interest in reinstituting an advocacy initiative in the ten-year plan. Examining homelessness from a systemic and historic context began to uncover deeper barriers to ending homelessness as it related to economic and capitalist interests.⁸

Because no evaluation of the plan had occurred prior to my interviews with board members, the process of sharing their opinions and perspectives with me took on a type of cathartic quality. Many voiced that the act of reflection was both revealing and freeing. Although the HAAB members had goals that they were looking to achieve (see appendix E), they were rarely asked for their own personal opinions about how effective this approach had been. HAAB meetings had essentially become a venue for county Department of Human Services administrators to announce to the board what they had chosen to do related to broad goals addressed in the plan. An overall lack of evaluation and introspection had also led to a lack of engagement by board

⁸ Praxial comes from the word praxis. Aristotle used the word in *Poetics* (335, BC) to define action that is embedded in, and responsive to, a specific effort.

members, many who felt their input was virtually going unrecognized by the county representatives that were running the meetings.

In my analysis the dominant class ideology of capitalist interests was manifested in subtle ways within the planning and implementation process. Initially I had believed that HAAB board members had joined the board to pursue their own capitalist interests, i.e. business representatives would become involved with the ten-year plan for prestige reasons and because they were concerned about how the homeless might be driving away business and wanted to enact laws and regulations to keep them away from their storefronts. This was not the case. Instead, I discovered that individual interests of board members were not influencing the decision-making process of the group. What I soon discovered was that decisions related to the plan were made behind closed doors by HAAB government members.

Eventually I discovered that although capitalist intentions were not being individually exerted upon the group by single board members, the systemic impact of capitalist intentions was impacting the work of the group through the powerful influences that were shaping the decision-making processes of the government officials. (This was crucial; it is the essence of the effect.) For this reason, I found that Marxism was especially well suited to my research goals because it illuminated how these larger systemic influences were impacting the actions of the government officials.

Additionally, I found that economic interests were shaping the plan in the sense that no new funds were available from the federal government to implement the group's efforts. With lack of federal funding, the status quo related to how homeless assistance services were being delivered in the county was being maintained. Interestingly, I found that if government officials had chosen to adopt a consensus model within the Homeless Alliance, rather than controlling the

decision making process themselves, they would have had the ability to access new financial resources from members on the board that were representing local foundations.

Unfortunately, government officials were in the position where they felt it was necessary to uphold the status quo, creating a position where foundation member's ideas to ending homelessness were viewed as inconsequential.⁹ In part, the reasons for why the government officials chose not to adopt new approaches to ending homelessness is explained by these powerful systems of control that capitalist interests exerted upon them. This will be discussed in the final chapter of my dissertation. As a result, homelessness continues to increase in Allegheny County as illustrated in the yearly point in time counts with almost 1,000 more people homeless at the time of this research study.

The Homeless Alliance Advisory Board

The Homeless Alliance Advisory Board (HAAB) was first founded in 2005 to create the local ten-year plan to end homelessness. The national initiative to end homelessness predated the HAAB's formation and suggested involvement from diverse public and private interest groups to create the plan. According to rules set by the federal government, representatives working on a plan to end homelessness were to originate from a variety of public and private community groups (i.e., business, nonprofit, government, health, and foundations).

Allegheny County's 15 member-appointed-representatives for HAAB were first invited to join the board by county executive Dan Onorato, based on directions given to him from the government administrators working in the county Department of Human Services (DHS). The local HAAB is one of 300 similar groups that have sprung up in cities and towns across the country as required by the Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD) located within

⁹ A theoretician is a term taken from the native tongue of Marx relating to an individual who observes and writes about the dynamics of society, history, and economics, making use of the main principles of Marxian Socialism in their analysis. (Retrieved May 1, 2010 from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theoretician_\(Marxism\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theoretician_(Marxism)).)

the federal government (see Appendix C). Interestingly, since the founding of the local HAAB, the ten-year plan to end homelessness has been written and revised (See Appendix E) several times. At this current date, a new iteration is in process. In part this reflects frustration at the board level because original recommendations have not been implemented. This will be further explained in my results and in the conclusion of this dissertation.

Since HAAB members represent diverse members from local businesses, foundations, churches, nonprofits, activists and human service providers, it was my intent to more deeply examine how differences and similarities in members' personal ideological thinking about homelessness might be influencing the development and implementation of the ten-year plan. It was my original intent to see if these diverse perceptions were impacting the decision-making process related to implementing the plan. As my research unfolded, I was surprised to discover that, in fact, this was not the case. Still, I found it interesting that group member' personal ideologies and views of homelessness (i.e., values, belief systems, attitudes, and perceptions) were not reflective of class-specific dominant-class capitalist interests and ideologies as I had assumed they would be. Interestingly, what I did discover was that being involved in the HAAB over the past five years had educated members to move beyond traditionally held stereotypes and stigmatizations (i.e., the homeless are lazy and don't work by choice) which many had held prior to their participation in the group.

It was interesting to note that most members were aware of the larger societal forces that were driving increases in homelessness. Information presented at board meetings and education among members had increased their awareness of home foreclosures, and unemployment and poverty statistics. This provided a knowledge that helped them understand how increasing numbers of people were becoming homeless in Allegheny County. The added awareness had

created a space where transformative thinking was occurring, although no one was acting upon this information. For example, foundation members in the group who once believed that homelessness could not be eradicated, were now aware of strategies to end homelessness that were working in other cities because they were interested in the goals of the plan and had traveled to other cities to bring back best practice methods to inform the group process.

However, implementing new approaches suggested by the foundation members, like the *Housing First* strategy, was not being endorsed by government members of the HAAB because they were reticent to take on the public back-lash that they believed would occur if homeless facilities were built with federal funds (Friedman, 2007). In fact, it was probable that such a reaction would occur, as it has happened in Pittsburgh in the past. Taking on an extended legal battle, or inciting ill will among the public, was not a strategy that they were willing to pursue.

Marxism as a Theoretical Lens

Marxists anticipate that a proletarian revolution will replace the current globalized capitalist system of control. This has spurred a growing number of Marxist followers to advocate for broad-based solutions that focus on creating a more sustainable world where working class interests will replace capitalist ideology. According to Marxism, transformative system change is only possible if critical discourse can sway long-standing ideologies controlled by capitalist economic interests. Thus, my comparative challenge in this dissertation was to illustrate, using an extended case method (ECM) approach, the connection between capitalism and homelessness as revealed by the barriers encountered within the local plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County. A secondary goal was to explore alternative perspectives of group members for the purpose of initiating a discourse and plan of action that might lead to system change. The

extended case method allowed me to examine this premise at both the micro and macro levels of analysis, the nexus where capitalist control is institutionalized in the local initiative.

To lay the ground work for this dissertation my literature review included research studies on prevailing perceptions of homelessness, examining how these perceptions impact public policy. I also surveyed current research about the national initiative to end homelessness. In general, these research studies are built on the premise that homelessness is a social problem with structural causes (i.e., the lack of affordable housing) and/or the result of individual deficiencies (i.e., mental illness, unemployment, drug and alcohol issues of homeless individuals).

In this way, this dissertation is designed to move the researcher beyond the two traditional approaches (structural and individual) to consider how deeper systemic cultural influences, may be responsible for increases in homelessness. A broad based inquiry that examines deeper systemic influences is illustrated in my interconnected micro/macro examination of the local ten-year plan to end homelessness. My underlying goal, again, is to examine how unjust capitalist ideologies drive increasing levels of poverty and unfair distribution of resources in a socially oppressive and dehumanizing way.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

My literature review explores how homelessness is perceived, how policies emulate these perceptions, and then considers how the prevailing dominant class ideology of capitalism shapes how homelessness is treated in a capitalist world. Many research studies indicate that poverty is the one common denominator that defines all subgroups of people experiencing homelessness.¹⁰ Interestingly, solutions to end homelessness do not often address the economic disadvantages experienced by larger populations of low income and middle class Americans. My premise is that if homelessness can be associated directly with living in a state of poverty, then broad based economic solutions (like redistributive tax policies) might significantly diminish its occurrence, and improve the social well-being of the majority. Finally, my literature review examines current studies related to ten-year plans to end homelessness and summarizes what these studies conclude.

Perceptions of the Homeless

Earliest recorded perceptions of homelessness have been framed much differently than how we perceive this social phenomenon today. Often associated with religious dogma, those who were homeless were portrayed as self-directed individuals that adopted transient lifestyles in pursuit of spiritual well-being and divine purposes (Roupp, 1997; Levinson, 2004).

...notions of being cast out, wandering, begging, lost in the wilderness, and pilgrimage play prominent roles in world religions including Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam. So, too, does the idea of caring for the poor and homeless and aiding the sick and disabled. (Levinson, 2004, pg. 640)

¹⁰ Placing homelessness in the context of poverty, and economic crises, suggests that homelessness is a deeper manifestation of social and cultural phenomenon, National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. (More information is available at http://www.nlchp.org/about_us.cfm.)

It was not until the dawn of industrialism, when it became common place to drive indigenous populations out of their pristine homelands to urban centers, that the homeless were perceived and defined as all inclusively being undeserving of public support (Weber, 1958; Durkheim, 1952; Hilton, 1985). In industrial centers around the world, perceptions of the homelessness quickly evolved into stigmatized perceptions that concluded that homeless individuals were lazy people who were unemployable because they lacked the motivation to work (Anderson & Rauty, 1998).

This image of indolence was further exacerbated as industrialism led to job instability with economies of efficiency being pursued rather than goals that supported the well-being of the majority of workers. The lack of stable employment opportunities became more prevalent as insecure and unsafe industrialized jobs consumed the strongest, the healthiest, and the most employable men and women with no health or pension protections. In America, unemployed, poverty-stricken workers are often described as lazy, apathetic, and unworthy of the public dole (Skocpol, 1992, 1999). Many scholars connected these stereotypical portrayals of the poor and homeless with the dominant interests of capitalist culture (Bresler, 1993). In reality, America's poverty-stricken unemployed continue to look for work, and forty percent of homeless people today are employed in low paying jobs (Anderson & Rauty, 1999).

As capitalist forces grow in power, anti-sentiment for people who cannot work grows as well. Those who were once traditionally cared for by the state (i.e. in mental institutions, state hospitals, poor houses, etc.) are now considered to be *undeserving* of the public's charitable assistance. This was quite evident in the 1970s when new waves of chronically mentally-ill people were discharged from archaic state-run institutions into the streets and funds for their care slashed from federal and state budgets (Cloke, Johnsen, & May, 2005). The consequent loss of

publically funded services and housing resulted in greater numbers of individuals with severe mental illnesses and development disabilities living on the streets (i.e. schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, and mental retardation).

In the 1980's new subpopulations were added to the swelling ranks of the homeless. An economic recession combined with a substantial decrease in jobs and affordable housing, forced very poor families into the ranks of the growing numbers of the homeless (Skocpol, 1999). Poor families continue to face dual barriers today. The first barrier is the traditional social stigma of being unemployed; the second barrier, which has further complicated the issue, is the dire lack of affordable housing and jobs in America (Dixon, 1998; Ehrenreich, 2001; Shipler, 2004). Increasingly, those who are working at minimum wage jobs are also homeless. Low paying jobs driven by capitalist ideals of market efficiency have antagonized poor working class individuals and families who are caught in a daily struggle for survival; many are doubled up with other families, living in cars, or facing the very imminent prospect of living on the streets (Skocpol, 1999). Despite these facts, rarely do researchers focus on solutions that look to prevent or end poverty, thus homelessness, by focusing on the debilitated economy or systemic influences that contribute to this phenomenon (Berger, 1996).

In addition to the unemployed and mentally challenged; chronically disabled people without health insurance also face homelessness. Families confronted with severe physical health challenges, that can no longer maintain their employment wages, are forced into homelessness when a loved one becomes ill and they are faced with paying the staggering costs of unaffordable health care bills and services.

Additionally, minorities have faced historically barriers to employment and housing. As well, single parents (usually mothers) with children quickly become homeless when losing a low

paying job that cannot sustain their minimum daily basic needs. Finally, many more senior citizens who cannot survive on social security due to the rising cost of housing, utilities, food and transportation are becoming homeless in America today (Odekon, 2006).

Of late, record numbers of families are seeking emergency shelter (Kaufman, 2008). Facing overwhelming odds, due to added economic insecurities resulting from the current recession, many families are without the public resources that might forestall mortgage foreclosures and evictions. In totality, the current economic downswing reflects the debilitating back lash of an unfettered free market capitalist ideology and superstructure that drives a public agenda of *economic development* over *human development*, although only an elite minority profit from this structuration of the world. In the end, strategic goals and the public agenda to end homelessness are defined by a desire for economic development without human supports. As a result, long-term debilitating economic trends have led to a rapidly increasing impoverished middle and lower class (Eade, 1997).

One way to explore how economic policies might impact the poor is to examine how recent waves of homelessness are associated with Reagan-era budget cuts which significantly lowered the stock of affordable housing in the 1980's. Combined with an overhaul of tax codes which reduced incentives for private real estate developers to create low-income housing, America's affordable housing supply took a hit from which it has yet to recover (Fagan, 2004). Reaganomic theory framed the dominant-class capitalist ideology that looked to reduce public benefits for the working class. One way that the Reagan administration was able to accomplish this was by speaking to reduction of taxes rather than to the resulting reduction in housing and services for the majority of all people (this is also referred to as "trickle-down economics").

Unfortunately, this profound policy change resulted in a significant amount of power being shifted to upper-class capitalist elites (Crimson, 2000).

In a Marxist theoretical framework, structuring economic policies to appear as if they are beneficial for the working class creates a type of false reality (or false consciousness) that exemplifies how oppressive and unrestricted superstructures have far-reaching control over expanding sectors of the population. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness (Marx, 1859). In other words, existence within a capitalist economic system which provides wages and social position begins to shape how we interact with the world. For example, participating in a social event might be driven by the desire to gain access to individuals that will increase perceived social status. Inversely, an individual that has no job, no home, and no property, is seen as being less than deserving of our attention and support.

As the culture of capitalism solidifies within our consciousness and the way we relate to each other, false consciousness and ideological frame-setting endorses dehumanizing policies and processes. Disinterest in helping those who are faced with homelessness reinforces the desires of capitalist elites. In this way, capitalism drives increases in homelessness locally and nationally.¹¹ Marx predicts that a future crisis will be created by these internal capitalist contradictions. Some Marxist advocates suggest that these contradictions are evident today in the economic crises that America now faces. The three economic crises that Marx predicts will manifest in a capitalist culture include: 1) under-consumption that is spurred on by increased production, which also pushes down wages; 2) a fall in the rate of profit leading to a slow-down

¹¹ The US Mayors Task Force of Homelessness reports a steady increase in homelessness for the past 25 years. Retrieved on-line at: http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/us_mayor_newspaper/documents/01_13_03/hunger.asp.

in capitalism; and, 3) a full-employment squeeze which impacts the rate of profit and brings on a recession (Marx, 1867).

My literature review reveals that in each of these three crisis scenarios workers are negatively impacted by either a loss or a reduction in the amount of wages received. A resulting fall in profit leads to additional lay-offs and a recession. This places the majority of all workers in the possible position of living in extreme poverty, where they can no longer afford to pay for housing, food, or the other items they will need to stave off homelessness (Yaffe, 1976). Marx's predictions (1867) suggest that workers will eventually be dramatically impacted by these internal structural weaknesses, leading to growing incidents of transitional and permanent states of extreme poverty and homelessness. In part, Marx's predictions have come to fruition. The world is now experiencing economic crises at levels that have never been felt before in almost every country where capitalist economic conditions prevail.¹² The crisis of capitalism also creates a possible redistribution of wealth for the elite where some may loose and others may gain. If serious enough, these crises may lead to the end of capitalism. However, capitalist institutions always profit over individuals (i.e. wealth is redistributed to banks while families' homes are foreclosed on). Moreover, wealth that is given to the state (i.e., working class taxes) benefits only the elite (i.e. health insurance companies) while Medicare, social security, and other public benefits disappear. Thus, this form of false consciousness, furthered by capitalist framed ideology, leads to growing numbers of the population becoming destitute and homeless.

Marx's predictions of economic crisis are exemplified in more depth within my extended case method (ECM) research study where I explore how the HAAB members work to end

¹² In a February 12, 2009 article "*World economic crisis is top security threat*" published by Reuters it mentions that the global economic crisis has become the largest U.S. security concern, sowing instability in one fourth of the world's countries and threatening destructive trade wars and that the financial crisis and global recession are likely to produce a wave of economic crises in emerging market nations over the next year.

homelessness is obstructed by the systemic and institutionalized effects of capitalism. My intent in this dissertation was to explore how this dominant ideology and powerful force, impacts the local efforts to end homelessness. Given the powerful capitalist forces that drive a culture of poverty, it is easier to understand why local efforts are undermined and the numbers of homeless continue to grow in Allegheny County.

This approach aligns well with the works of Pablo Freire (1970) who believed that critical reflection and discussion increases levels of awareness and ultimately informs action so that social transformation can be made possible in oppressive systems of control. My belief was that by stimulating a critical discussion HAAB members would better understand and address how systemic influences create social injustices. By doing this, HAAB members have the opportunity to reflect on the larger economic and social systems which are shaping their strategies, interactions and decision-making processes as they look to end homelessness. By better understanding this challenge, more productive solutions can be designed to end homelessness locally.

Researchers may find it difficult to reveal how the powerful effects of capitalism obstruct social interactions. In part, this is because capitalist-constructed misinformation and false consciousness are powerfully present, yet subtly submerged in deeply embedded ideological thinking. In the case of the local HAAB, members would like to enact strategies to end homelessness (i.e. build housing for the homeless) yet their efforts are blocked by county officials who control the flow of funds from the federal government. In part, this is because county officials are constrained by political and public sentiment that does not support helping the homeless. In this way, questioning the structure of capitalism is often perceived negatively. Similarly, Marxism is often viewed as a failed dogma. Yet, as a theory it has the profound ability

to reveal subtle inconsistencies in the prevailing superstructure that negatively impact the working class and the reality of life circumstances in America.

It is this ability to reveal inequities that have assisted me in addressing the broad systemic inequalities that growing numbers of poor and homeless people face in Allegheny County. Nevertheless, many Americans still adamantly believe that the majority of all people are living in a state of equality because of capitalism, and that freedom and opportunity allows any hard working individual to achieve long-lasting materialistic well-being (Rossi, 1989). However, growing sub-populations of Americans (senior citizens, disabled individuals, single-parent families, the working poor, and minorities) face poverty and social sanctions due to capitalist informed ideology and socialized sanctions.

The Deserving and the Undeserving

In my dissertation, which unfolds using an extended case method research study, I examine the polarized references of deservingness and undeservingness which relates to Marxist sensitizing concepts of class rights and privileges. This subtle dichotomy helps to reveal the web-like structuration of dominant capitalist ideology in references to homelessness. Framing the homeless as deserving or undeserving also defines institutionalized federal policy approaches, which ultimately determines how welfare funds will be allocated to the homeless (Sommerville, 2005; Wynne-Edwards, 2003; Rossi, 1989). A perceived state of "deservingness" promotes the belief that some homeless people are more qualified than others to receive public funds (Skocpol, 1992, 1999). Value-based frames of reference portray the "other" (in this case the homeless) as non-deserving of the public's trust (Rossi, 1989, 1994). In this way, non-deserving individuals are represented as lacking intelligence (Murray & Hernstein, 1994), values (Lewis, 1996), and motivation to work (Mead, 1986), as well as lacking the formal education needed to make

credible decisions (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1981). In this way, we further the process of capitalist dehumanization and neglect, emphasizing materialist aims over human ones.

Thus, it is these polarized definitions of homelessness that define a growing tendency to stigmatize, abuse, and criminalize large segments of an already impoverished population (Barak, 1991). Consequently, conservative and liberal opinions alike, only further complicate an already contentious group decision-making process at the federal level, which determines how funds will be allocated to the poor. Polarized debates in congress and the senate lead to more cuts in public funding, and a dwindling amount of welfare dollars spent in support of the poor. It is in this same ideological framework, that the growing federal deficit is attributed to funding spent on human services and education, rather than the billions of dollars that are spent on fueling the military industry and corporate priorities.

In my research study I explored this phenomenon by focusing on the decision-making process of the group.¹³ My intent was to understand if polarized decision-making processes might be indicative of a powerful and controlling dominant-class ideological capitalist struggle for power. If this schism was apparent, then it might be because only the interests of an elite few in the group were being realized. If only the dominant class interest of a small group of powerful individuals were being realized, it might explain how capitalist ideology creates an embedded culture of homelessness. In this way I hoped to explain the barriers to implementation that the group was facing which had resulted in an increasing number of homeless people in Allegheny County. If capitalist ideology, was propelling only the interest of a powerful few, it might

¹³ In the dominant capitalist ideology the deserving poor are those that work and the undeserving poor are thought to be shiftless and lazy because they do not work. Such a rationale extends the dominant ideology that individuals control their own chances of success by how hard they work. In reality a large majority of the homeless have jobs. This interpretation hides complex barriers related to job security including, race, gender, class, physical, emotional, economic, social, educational, health and gentrification barriers to entry into a minority of elite capitalists.

explain how shifts in policy focus were furthering the goals of capital accumulation rather than poverty reduction (Tyson, 1999; Ralston, 1996).

In the end, power-based, polarized arguments, effectively reduce, retrench and withdraw public assistance from the poor (Mishel & Bernstein, 1993). Reductions are further perpetuated by prohibitive government spending policies, despite compelling evidence that the working poor are increasingly subject to homelessness (Passell, 1998). At the same time, the public resolve to provide homeless assistance programs has been replaced with a dehumanizing tendency to stigmatize and criminalize the homeless because they cannot obtain a job (Mishra, 1997). This comes at a time when the gap between the wealthy and the poor has dramatically widened, an issue worthy of research in and of itself (Strope, 2004). Their share of wage and salary income has increased sharply from the 1920s to the present, and especially since the 1970s. Emmanuel Saez (2009) of the University of Berkeley projects that a significant fraction of the surge in top incomes since 1970 is due to an explosion of top wages and salaries. Saez reports that estimates based purely on U.S. wages and salaries show that the share of total earnings of the top 1 percent has jumped from 5.1 percent in 1970 to 12.4 percent in 2007.¹⁴

Table 1

Average Income per Family in U.S. in 2008

Top .01%	\$27,342,212
Top .01% to .1%	\$3,238,386
Top 1%	\$1,137,684
Top 1% to 10%	\$164,647
Bottom 90%	\$31,244

Note: 2008 data - includes capital gains

Source: Emmanuel Saez: University of Berkeley

The polarizing effects of portraying homelessness as being the result of personal failings (i.e. saying that someone cannot keep a job so they do not deserve to receive public assistance)

¹⁴ The dramatic increase in top wage incomes has not been mitigated by an increase in mobility at the top of the wage distribution. As Wojciech Kopczuk, Emmanuel Saez, and Jae Song (2007) have illustrated, the probability of staying in the top 1 percent wage income group from one year to the next has remained stable since the 1970s.

typifies the dominant class message of capitalism. This approach promotes weakly-veiled, value-based, power-driven arguments that further illustrate a lack of awareness and understanding of overall economic indicators (Foucault, 1979; Weedon, 1987; & Giddens, 1979).¹⁵ Thus, creating a strategy to end homelessness needs to take counteract the capitalist value system that shapes policy decisions, which do not align with the weakening economic climate and growing numbers of people living in poverty.

In my extended case method research study, I consider this dynamic by looking to see if the local HAAB members are framing the homeless as being “deserving” or “undeserving” of social supports. Cryptically, I did find some indications that some group members believed that homelessness was the result of micro level challenges (personal failings) and macro level barriers (the failing of the housing market). This led me to explore the possibility that public funds for the homeless were diminishing due to the impact of polarizing arguments driven by following a consensus model. I also considered that because there was diverse group membership, individuals might have different viewpoints, resulting in the difficult process of attempting to arrive at group consensus (Neale, 1997).

In the end, I found that a polarizing form of consensus was present but in a more subtle way than I had anticipated. Disagreement among HAAB members was not occurring. This was because group decision-making was being controlled by county officials. The HAAB had been structurally set up so that 60% of group membership was to be composed of governmental members, who in this case were county officials. This gave the governmental members overall control over the plan. Interestingly, larger societal forces drove their decision-making processes. County officials were not in a position where they could enact decisions that did not support the

¹⁵ The Marxian concept of false consciousness helps explain many of the questions put forth in this dissertation. False consciousness, simply defined, is promulgated by the dominant class interest in furthering the goals of an elite few, and flows from the idea that people experience relationships as a materialistic value between things.

political or public will of the superstructure. For example, they could not pursue advocacy goals, because it would have required involvement in the political process. Neither could they lead the effort to build housing for the homeless, as it may have resulted in legal ramifications similar to Not In My Back Yard reactions (NIMBY) which are occurring locally and nationally, because the prevailing public opinion is that the homeless are to be feared and not trusted.

In the end, I discovered that the opinions of each member of the Homeless Alliance Advisory Board did vary, but it was only the opinions of the Department of Human Services administrators that drove the decision-making process. It was these administrators who controlled how the plan to end homelessness would be implemented. Decisions and recommendations of non-governmental group members were kept to a minimum. I will speak more to this occurrence in my research findings and conclusion.

Structural Perceptions of Homelessness

The lack of affordable housing for low income families and individuals is a common structural perception of why homelessness exists today. The lack of affordable housing is often addressed in the research community (Hombs, 1999). Many researchers have also recognized that in specific cases institutionalized structures of racism and sexism perpetuate the debilitating effects of poverty and homelessness. Homeless blacks, for example, have unparalleled high rates of unemployment, with the added barrier of an inability to access fair housing (Koegel, Burnam & Baumohl, 1996; Bratt, Stone & Hartman, 2006). Again, an attribute that minority homeless individuals have in common with all homeless individuals is poverty. Still, their level of vulnerability to homelessness is deepened with the added stigma of lower class status.

This is not to say that every dimension of racial, sexual or national oppression can be reduced to a function of class exploitation. Still, the well-recognized and proven racist

exploitation of the poor has yet to drive the collective desire to end poverty or homelessness. Instead, it is evident that the prevalent dominant capitalist ideology divides loyalties among groups by driving the shallower discussion of how to fragment diminishing funding and available public resources to those that are the most deserving of our support (Sprinker, 1999).

Critical Theory and Homelessness

Marxian conflict theory plays an important role in my extended case method research approach. In particular, it illuminates how that sensitizing concepts of commodification, alienation, class privilege, and false consciousness, characterizes our capitalist culture.¹⁶ These concepts define my research study and allow me to explore how the dominant-class ideology of capitalism exerts influence over HAAB members and the group decision making process, as it relates to their goals to end homelessness through the ten-year planning process.

Marx closely examined class conflict between what he called the proletariat (including all workers, low income people, and the poor) and the bourgeoisie (the elite, a limited but powerful group of capitalists who control most of the world resources) as a way of understanding and defining the evolution of capitalism over time (Ollman, 1976). Capitalism's inherent drive for scales of efficiency and cheap labor begins to explain why we treat people, and ourselves, as tradable commodities (Marx & Engels, 1848). Weber, Durkheim (other classical critical theorists) and Marx all align in this conviction, arguing that alienation, which creates human commodification, is a form of social control (Scott & Scott, 1971). Marx (1848) extended that theorem to include that "society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: bourgeoisie and proletariat" (pg. 473).

¹⁶ Marxist conflict theory emphasizes a materialist interpretation of history, a dialectical method of analysis, a critical stance toward existing social arrangements, and a paradigm that considers alternative approaches to promote reform in historical and materialistic phenomenon. Marx states "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (Marx, 1859).

However, as it relates to homelessness, alienation drives increases in the population by creating a steady supply of under-paid and temporary laborers, all who lack job security and the education needed to move beyond unskilled labor positions (Wilder, 2001).

Thus, the homeless, a historically alienated group in the industrial age, are frequently classified as undeserving of public support in general public debates (Skocpol, 1992, 1999). In this social classification process, whole segments of the population lose value (Vergne, 1992). The reality is that there are no social benefits in maintaining an unskilled labor job; these are the jobs which are most transitional, unfulfilling, and dehumanizing in nature. They do not provide for a person's health benefits nor do they provide for their job security. Furthermore, unskilled laborers usually face extended periods of unemployment throughout their life time and they are also at the highest risk of becoming homeless (Hopper & Hamberg, 1984).

In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels (1848) deeply examine the root causes of unjust social and economic conditions. In their critical world view, a society with a powerful dominant class will not advocate for the common good over the economic interests of the capitalist ruling class. In a capitalist controlled culture, because the class relationship of domination and exploitation appear(s) as fair and just, fundamental inequalities are framed in ideological concepts that are believed to be reasonable to the majority of all people. As Marx (1847) summarizes it, "in the same relations in which wealth is produced, poverty is produced" (pg. 134). Poverty is a by-product of the capitalist drive for efficiency. Its impact is most visible in the cycle of urban growth and decay in America. Humanist aims (i.e., aiding the poor and the homeless) are counter-productive to furthering the economic goals of capitalism. Marx and Engels have referred to the "public" or working class acceptance of this subtle and concealed form of inequality as false consciousness (Pines, 1993).

Interestingly, capitalism as a dogma is fundamentally perceived as individualistic; shaping our worldly desire to become wealthy at the expense of the common good. Perpetuating this way of interacting with the world requires continual economic focus and growth, thus, nullifying human rights, religion, ethics, morals, and environmental concerns and any action that prioritizes an improved quality of life for all people (Hooker, 1996). A capitalist system becomes concretized by the greed-based desires of only a few wealthy individuals and groups who maintain an uneven and grotesquely perverse hold on the distribution of scarce and dwindling resources (i.e. oil, gas and electricity). In the long-term, this strong and submerged, ideologically entrenched trend perpetuates a spiraling growth of poverty, homelessness, and world-wide degradation (Chossudovsky, 1998).

Other critical theorists like Dahrendorf (1959) view social conflict as resulting from opposed interests and power disparities between groups. Society, in Dahrendorf's view, consists of dialectically conflicting groups; those with power and those without. Thus, conflict emerges when individuals deprived of power and resources become aware that the prevailing structure of social relations is not in their best interest. Dahrendorf argues that it is only when the disenfranchised commit themselves to contesting power disparity that inequality will be overcome (Turner, 1975). Dahrendorf's view of the world falls short of creating the long lasting change that is needed to end oppression and homelessness because it fails to consider how ideology is systemically institutionalized in broad based economic systems of control.

Critical theorists influenced by Marx, like Foucault (1980), argue that cultural power disparities are also inherent in hermeneutic practices, language formulation, and the structures of knowledge as "present in a socio-historical tradition" (Derrida & Ewald, 1995). For Foucault there is no escape from the damaging effects of power, even in situations of revolution and social

conflict. In his theoretical approach, power and greed operates covertly in all social relationships (Foucault, 1977). Marx, in comparison, advocated that real change comes about if fundamental transformation in economic relations occurs. Greed, to Marx, is a by-product of commodification, which sets the stage so that market value replaces the significance of social value, thus defining how humans relate to each other and the world around them.

Furthermore, Marx believed that capitalism would inevitably collapse upon itself based on its own flawed evolution.¹⁷ Given current downward economic trends and the powerful effects of the current recession, exacerbated by rapidly increasing world population, endemic poverty, and homelessness, alternative strategies to end homelessness will only be achieved if driven by a radical discourse that looks to ensure the very survival of the world (Taylor & Taylor, 2007).

Research Studies of Ten-year Plans to End Homelessness

In 2000, a new approach to ending homelessness was proposed by the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH). NAEH leadership suggested that the public welfare system encouraged homelessness by providing incentives to people to become homeless.¹⁸ This theoretical framing of why homelessness was increasing was adopted by the Bush Administration and led to the government requiring that communities that received homeless funds create ten-year plans to end homelessness at the local level if they were to continue to receive federal funding for homeless programs in their communities. Since then, efforts to end

¹⁷ Most simply stated capitalism is unsustainable development, moving back and forth between boom and recession with a tendency for the rate of profit to fall and uneven concentration of capital with a continual growth of the poor working masses. Given the inevitable falling rate of profit historic crises can be viewed as under consumption as well as the long-term impact of the drive for efficiency. This process is gradually destroying human relationships leading to the normalization of dehumanization. Lenin added that war and revolution would lead to a catastrophic collapse as a result of this evolution. (Retrieved from the Encyclopedia of Marxism on November 18, 2008 at <http://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/c/r.htm#crisis-of-capitalism>.)

¹⁸ Taken from NAEH's executive summary statement explaining why ten-year plans to end homelessness were proposed. This information can be found at: <http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/tools/tenyearplan/execsum>.

homelessness with ten-year plans have been researched and reported on by Cunningham, Lear, Schmitt, & Henry (2006) and the Interagency Council on Homelessness (2006). The word “end” in these local plans indicates that communities hope to reduce or even eliminate the number of people who experience homelessness in their locale.

Likewise, during the past nine years the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) McKinney-Vento program (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006; HUD, 2002) has favored more funds for permanent housing and less funds for emergency shelter and service-related programs.¹⁹ Interestingly, the current rationale for ending homelessness is that emergency shelters have led to increases in homelessness (Culhane, et. al, 2002).²⁰ Both of these ideological frames of reference suggest that the homelessness is being perceived in economic terms. The first suggesting that the homeless choose to become homeless to receive government economic incentives, the second suggesting that having emergency shelters available lead to more people choosing to become homeless in the first place. This framing of homelessness as something that is “chosen” perpetuates popular negative perceptions and veils the larger societal phenomena of increasing rates of unemployment, the rising cost of living, and a significant lack of affordable housing leading to broad increases in poverty and homelessness.

Although an increasing body of research is focusing on identifying who the homeless are in terms of economic class (Skocpol 1992, 1999) and documenting the national lack of affordable housing (Burt, et. al, 2001; Holmes, 1999), very few studies explore the systemic ties of this trend to the failing economic and dominant ideologies of the ruling class. Ultimately,

¹⁹ 1. The McKinney Vento Act authorizes federal spending on homeless programs. Since 2000, Congress has required that HUD set aside 30% of its funding allocation for permanent housing programs. HUD in turn has required local communities to create ten-year plans to end homelessness that focus on providing additional housing for the homeless.

²⁰ This ideological framing of why homelessness is increasing can be found on-line at the National Alliance to End Homelessness web-site: www.endhomelessness.org/section/tools/tenyearplan/execsum.

narrower strategies to end homelessness will fail if they do not consider these profound systemic influences. The steady increases in homelessness locally are quite apparent in Allegheny County despite the plan that has been put into place by the HAAB members. In the last ten-years alone, homelessness has doubled. These statistics are well documented in the county's point in time survey of homeless people living on the street, in shelters, and in existing housing programs that serve the homeless in Allegheny County (see Appendix G).

More recently, a different approach to examining the issue of homelessness has begun to emerge related to negative stereo-typing. Research indicates that damaging perceptions are often associated with organized community resistance and anger evolving around the establishment of homeless shelters, housing, treatment centers, and government services in residential neighborhoods or close to schools. Known as the NIMBY, or the Not-In-My-Back-Yard syndrome (Takahashi, 1997; Wynne-Edwards, 2003), this gentrification phenomenon is well-documented and resistance by neighborhood groups are often legally savvy, well-funded, and politically influential. Many are supported by neighborhood residents that are working stridently to oust services for the homeless and low-income so that poor families will not live in close proximity to the upper class families (Sommer, 2001). These campaigns are often driven by a fear of the homeless and monetary concerns about impacts on property values.

Antagonistic research studies related to strategies that look to end homelessness is further substantiated by Gallup-poll findings that link public perceptions of homelessness with alcoholism and drug addiction, or other vaguely defined human deficits. These perceptions are rarely associated with an understanding that there is a lack of affordable housing and a diminishing source of living-wage jobs (Link, Phelan, Steuve, Moore, Bresnehan, & Streuning, 1995).

My approach to understanding how the ten-year plan to end homelessness is impacted by dominant capitalist ideology is unique in the sense that it explores the issue on a relational level, linking relationships to the systemic influences impacting the local group's experiences as they look to end homelessness. My intended purpose is to reveal that economic and social power structures shape this particular group's plan both internally and externally. My exploration begins at the base, where local perceptions of homelessness are experienced and understood by group members, both individually and as revealed in the group decision-making process. From there, I explore the possibility that a capitalistic superstructure influences the group's plan. In this way I was able to reveal how ideology is driven by economic systems of control, shaping the internal and external decision-making processes of the HAAB.

Revealing power structures in a critical manner allowed members to form alternative views and strategies on how to implement the local plan. Through a process of evaluation and feedback, group members formed alternative perspectives and began to think about their work to diminish homelessness locally. By creating a space where hermeneutic discussion could occur, group members had the opportunity to challenge the traditional, theoretical, political and social barriers that were impacting the plan to end homelessness. The results and conclusions drawn from this study illustrate that group members did have the opportunity to challenge that status quo influences of capitalist structures upheld by government structures of control. The extended case method approach reveals how this occurred in detail in the research findings and conclusion section of this dissertation.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it." Karl Marx, 1845.

My theoretical approach involves not just an analytical examination of the issue; it also involves a process of reflection and the creation of a prescription for action. Again, my ultimate theoretical ambition was to examine how "external forces" were shaping "local processes" and to stimulate critical discourse that would create long-lasting "social change" (Burawoy, 2000). In the end, I will clarify how this critical engagement strategy created a community of resistance (hooks, 1992).

To accomplish my goal, I chose to examine the culture of capitalism being exerted upon the HAAB group, utilizing a Marxian framework. My Marxian analysis was best accomplished using my chosen extended case method approach. This approach allowed me to explore the impact of capitalist ideology on local group members in a historical, materialistic, and theoretical framework as it related to capitalism (Brenner, 1977).

Extended case management (ECM) is bounded within critical theory. ECM combines both theory and method in its approach. It is reflexive, interpretive, and analytical in nature. I chose an ECM approach because it allowed me to explore how the systemic effects of capitalism were impacting the group's efforts to end homelessness in Allegheny County. ECM is also a "performance of critical theory," a process of both evaluation and discovery. ECM empowered me to focus on the larger goal of revealing how systemic power structures dominate personal relationships, processes, and world views in relation to HAAB's work on the ten-year plan to end homelessness (Madison, 2005, pg. 13).

Theory surfaced as I searched for evidence that capitalism had impacted the group

members in some tell-tale way or manner. My exploration began with open ended interviews and was followed by participant observation of meeting interactions. ECM provided an ideal lens for me to conduct this micro/macro analysis because it was transformative, theoretical and interpretive in nature (Simon & Dippo, 1986). A base level understanding of personal levels of engagement was developed by questioning how each member experienced and perceived homelessness within a one-on-one open interview process. What I discovered in the process was that individual group member perceptions of homelessness had changed over time because of an educative process that had occurred within the HAAB.²¹

ECM is also ethnographic in nature; it is both critical and theoretical because it evaluates “the conditions of oppressive and inequitable moral and social structures” as it relates to “historical relations of power and materialistic conditions” (Simon & Dippo, 1986, pg. 197). As a method, its purpose is to emancipate members from dominant class ideologies that control and oppress them. ECM is premised upon the assumption that systems and institutions advance a false consciousness through power and oppressive institutionalized forces. These assumptions become taken-for-granted false ‘realities’ (Thomas, 2003) of the oppressed. It was this innate framework of domination that I wished to investigate in my research study employing an innovative extended case study method.

Because I am personally involved in advocating for the homeless at the local level in support of the ten-year plan to end homelessness, this study was also reflexive and introspective in nature. The dissertation process actually allowed me to reflect upon what was shaping my own theoretical consciousness of homelessness (Patton, 2002). As a personally involved homeless advocate, I recognized that my commitment to “social justice becomes an ethical duty of the first

²¹ The dominant class ideology shapes our perceptions of ourselves and others beginning in childhood. With increased technology transfers through media outlets, our generation in particular, has experienced massive influxes of images and photographs since early childhood which has shaped our consumer-oriented perception of reality.

priority, based on social change and the well-being of others” (Madison, 2005, pg. 84). My vision of a fair and just world, and my continued dedication to ameliorating the long-term effects of homelessness in Allegheny County (and around the world), was in fact what drove my commitment to exploring this topic in this context and with this group of people.

Because my study tested the underlying assumptions of the superstructure of capitalism in a localized context, I began by exploring how group member’s thoughts, beliefs and perceptions of homelessness were impacting their own commitment to ending homelessness in relation to capitalist forms of domination. In the process of uncovering personal meaning, I found the tell-tale indications that a dominant capitalistic ideology was shaping their internal belief systems, which were informed by institutionalized structures of control. The theoretical purpose of this type of approach was to reflect upon how the "power effects" of capitalism dominates, silences, objectifies, and normalizes the efforts of the group in unspoken ways (Burawoy, 1998).

After exploring the local group member’s perceptions of homelessness, I connected the information that had been generated from the interviews, to a broader theoretical discourse that considered how systemic forms of power shapes the way humans relate to each other and how they perceive and value human existence. In the end, this exploration was framed by my sensitizing concepts, which is outlined in this dissertation. It is important to note that my approach is quite different from traditional case studies which instead focus on a bounded community at the local level only (Agar, 1996).

The Application of Marxism

Karl Marx, and his colleague Frederick Engels, were one of the first theorists’ to critically recognize that “the *devaluation* of the human’s world grows in direct proportion to the

increase in value of the world of things” (Fromm, 1991). This is the ethos of capitalism that drives the loss of morals, ethics and compassion in a capitalist society.²² Together Marx and Engels demonstrate how capitalism is well ensconced in social, economic, materialistic and historical human frameworks. They accomplish this by examining how the dominant class ideology of capitalism influences multiple layers of society at the personal, community and social level; promoting the interests of wealthy elites in a way, which for the most part, is invisible to the majority of human beings, yet impacts the world at a deep and subliminal level of awareness (Tyson, 1999).

Consequently, when applied correctly, Marxism has the capacity to unveil the powerful effects of capitalism on the common good, a long established process that is personified through economic and political domination over most, if not all, of the public sector (Susser, 1996). This phenomenon has never been more apparent than in the way American society views and chooses to deal with homelessness, a concrete example that illustrates how the *value of things* has taken precedence over the *value of human beings*.

Using ECM, I was able to closely examine the perceptions of local HAAB members who were working to end homelessness. Because group members represented diverse stakeholders in the community (i.e., businesses, foundations, nonprofits, churches and government entities), it was important for me to examine how their affiliations with these institutional structures impacted or shaped their own personal understandings of homelessness as it related to their reasons for participating in this Homeless Alliance Advisory Board.²³

²² Marxism itself draws upon German idealism (in particular the works of Hegel and Feuerbach), French politics (in particular socialism), English economic theory (Adam Smith and David Ricardo) for the purpose of analyzing the effects of capitalism on human and social life (Belasco, Folsom & Price, 2007, pg. 43).

²³ Appendix A provides a full overview of the board structure. As regulated by the federal government, the board must have representatives from a variety of constituent groups. In the last year, the Board was restructured to be

Theory reconstruction, an important component of ECM, proceeds from the bottom up. This process was used to search for evidence that the influence of capitalism might be embedded in how the homeless were perceived at personal levels of interpretations and interaction. Using this Marxist lens, it is easier to understand how dominant class ideologies are reflected in everyday life. Unbeknownst to most, our interactions with the world and decision-making processes support the interests of the dominant class as is evidenced in our sentiments, modes of thought, materialistic needs, and our individually framed view of reality. A capitalist frame of reference results from the commodified way in which we interact with the world around us.

In *Capital*, Marx puts forward:

...the mode of production of material life dominates the development of social, political and intellectual life generally...is very true of our own times, in which material interests preponderate. (pg. 85-86)

On the surface this may be a difficult concept to grasp, modes of production controlling lives. Yet, capitalism embedded in economic interests creates a deeply pervasive force that shapes our identities, recurring traditions, values and experiential learning.²⁴ The classical version of Marx's concepts originates in *The German Ideology* where he asserts that "the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society" (pg. 64). In other words, our complex relationship with our worldly modes of production exerts itself over how we live, how we work, the products that we produce, the commodities that we purchase, and the ways that we view them and ourselves; ultimately placing power in the hands of an elite few in a capitalist state that controls the flow of resources in a way

more representative of a wider group of stakeholders, as the original group was thought to be more representative of homeless providers rather than representative of the wider community.

²⁴ Marx's mode of production is a complex concept that refers to human labor and the equipment and resources that result in the forces of production. It also includes relations that are needed to produce, i.e. the social and technical relationships that surround owning property and controlling society's productive assets. These relationships are codified in law, work relations and in forms of association. They are also evident in relationships between people, social classes and objects of work.

that appears to be legitimate in the eyes of the majority of working class people who are much worse off as a result of this phenomenon. This embedded form of coercion is further reinforced by the fact that in times of economic crisis, we no longer rely on the land or a union to safeguard our families. Today, without these protections, it becomes that much easier to become homeless and victimized by the dominating ideology that we use to define our relationship with the world (Abercrombie & Turner, 1978).

As previously stated, the local Homeless Alliance Advisory Board, and hundreds of like organizations in cities across America are striving to implement their own plan to end homelessness in their own communities.²⁵ Examining how deeply held dominant class ideologies inform and shape their planning and decision-making processes may prove fundamentally useful for groups who are intent on pursuing alternative strategies that addresses underlying power structures that impact the evolutions of homelessness in their communities.

Marxism suggests that reflective processes, like the one that is being undertaken in this dissertation, are needed to stimulate a deeper critical discourse to reveal false consciousness. Reflection creates the space needed to uncover submerged dominating capitalist ideologies that permeate national and local consensus-driven collaborations looking to prevent homelessness with ten-year plans to end homelessness. Stimulating critical dialogues, at both the historical and systemic level of awareness, draws into question the most basic beliefs that HAAB members hold about homelessness. By revealing the existence of false consciousness in this way, this

²⁵ Currently 200 cities are working on 10 year plans to end homelessness in their own communities. The development of these plans is inextricably linked to receiving federal funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Appendix B shows a complete listing of cities that are working on similar plans.

study provides one alternative way to more closely examine how oppressive tendencies of capitalist ideology are deeply ingrained in local and national systems of control.²⁶

Most importantly, it is by building upon this Marxist theoretical application, that I looked to engender a deeper reflective process that questions how group members experience the world and how they exist within it so they can then create alternative dialogues and solutions.²⁷

The next section of this dissertation will highlight the sensitizing Marxian concepts that I have utilized within my extended case method and theoretical approach. These sensitizing concepts allowed me to more closely examine the underlying dominant class ideological perceptions experienced by the local HAAB group members; it also empowered me to better understand how these perceptions and structurations have impacted the ten-year plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County.

Commodification

Members of the HAAB were chosen to participate on the board by our local county executive, Dan Onorato. Onorato is advised by Allegheny County's Department of Human Services officials' on whom he should select to join the group. Each board member represents a different stakeholder group (i.e. business, foundation, health-care, law force, etc.); the inclusion of diverse group representatives was required by the federal government, which dispenses traditional funds for homeless assistance programs to the local county.²⁸ Stakeholder groups often have their own agenda. For example, business members may participate within a group

²⁶ Engels (1893) explains false consciousness as a set of false beliefs spurred on by economic decisions that are contrary to society's interests.

²⁷ Habermas suggested that wide-spread public participation should be encouraged when working on group projects. This approach encourages reasoned argument, consensus building, and cooperation rather than focusing on strategic action (Bolton, 2005). I am suggesting that this communicative approach lacks an in depth reflexivity and understanding of the wide-spread systemic conditions that are endemic in capitalism and promote an in-bred culture of homelessness.

²⁸ Please note, no new funds were allocated by the federal government for this initiative. Traditional funding sources are being given out to cover a wide range of services.

process because they would like to decrease the number of homeless from city streets feeling that homeless people are frightening their customers away. Participation in the group in this way is clearly driven by an economic desire which supports the tenets of capitalism. Likewise, when public welfare goals are driven by similar economic aims they tend to become oppressive in nature and objectify and commodify human beings rather than address inequitable economic conditions that may have led to individuals becoming homeless in the first place.

This objectification or reification of human beings, or the process of demoting people to the level of things that are to be feared, reflects upon the Marxian concept of *commodification*. In a capitalist world, this process of commodification transforms human relationships for the purpose of obtaining materialistic things, placing value on the production of goods and undermining the value of human rights and concern for those who might be homeless or destitute (Horton, 1964). In the process of interviewing HAAB members I looked for evidence that commodification was occurring by exploring member's internal beliefs about the homeless, as well as by examining the group's moral discourse processes (i.e., reflected in values of alienation, fear and/or distrust of the homeless) as it related to goals to end homelessness.

In capitalist cultures, human suffering is not valued. Thus, human isolation and alienation is perpetuated by dominant class ideologies that instead focus on promoting the importance of product commodity value rather than human feelings and relationships. To Marx, commodification explains how value is determined by products of labor (Allan, 1998). The need for materialistic products and the status which they convey and place on human beings shapes how quality of life is perceived by others. Labor power becomes the only "source of value in a capitalist mode of production" and results in the exploitation of the common laborer (Stehr, Henning, Weiler, 2006). The homeless clearly lack this type of power. Commodification, in this

way leads to a loss of moral authority, so much so that human values are rarely focused on when quality of life issues are discussed. Instead, the economic well-being of a community is deemed important in planning processes. An example of this is the way community development corporations (CDC) are seen as the premier strategic community planning organizations in cities and local communities. CDC's primarily focus on economic development and human development and social services are rarely considered when they develop community plans.

Furthermore, human interactions are framed by economic aspirations and exchange value; relationships between people ultimately become the relationship between things (Mulcahy & Wheeler, 2005). The innate purpose of relating to others is driven by an internal desire to accumulate more things. Focus is on networking to achieve business goals or to further career plans. Supporting others who are less well off in the community does nothing to move one upward on a career ladder towards materialistic well-being.

Marxism suggests that people value commodities in a way that "fetishizes" their experience of them. In a class-based dichotomy, inanimate things are given value over human beings or relationships. If you are without goods or property, or in the case of the homeless, without homes and the ability to purchase or produce commodities, your value as a human being is virtually nonexistent. Those without homes are perceived as being less important or less deserving of our attention, in part, because they are unwilling to pursue the larger shared goal of accumulating capital and fetishizing things. Thus, a homeless person's social value is greatly reduced and the moral and ethical awareness of assisting people who have no homes or resources is quickly forgotten. Americans living in a capitalist world are driven by an unending desire to accumulate things so they can be socially valued by themselves and others. This drive for more things (Money+Commodity+More Money) begins to explain the continuous transformation of

the conditions of capitalist expansion which advances economic commodification (Taussig, 1977) even within plans to end homelessness.

Commodification, as a concept, lays the ground-work for understanding how humans are no more important than things, and less important than human relations as defined by classes who strive to accumulate things. Working is one way that the poor and lower class are told that they can improve their status. Those who do not work are considered to be deviant or in some way less deserving. Additionally, there are negative consequences for those who do not work, including: social isolation, stigmatization, alienation and even criminalization (Takahashi, 1998). Class judgment of worthiness in a commodified capitalist culture is often based on one's employment status and shapes the public welfare debate. Too often those with jobs are often the first to condemn those without jobs, implying that those who are not working are in some way lazy or unwilling to provide for their own well-being. Evidence of this commodification process was apparent within internal and external decision-making processes exhibited by the local HAAB group and will be explained in my findings and conclusion.

Alienation

Alienation is a key concept within this dissertation and provides important insight into understanding how homelessness is perceived by HAAB members and external policy decision-makers.²⁹ Alienation, according to Marx, describes a state of being in the world that generates a sense of isolation and disconnects us from our emotional, physical and spiritual well-being, and a desire for friendship and caring communities (1867). Marx refers to the process of relating to commodities and property as if they have meaning or value, as the way in which we further an

²⁹ Please refer to Allegheny County homeless point in time results, which can be found on-line at: http://www.alleghenycounty.us/uploadedFiles/DHS/Basic_Needs/Housing_and_Homelessness/HomelessPointinTime.pdf

ongoing state of societal alienation.³⁰ Phrased another way, alienation is the direct result of the subordination of a worker to a place where they have become the reified product of their own labor (Heilbronner, 1985).³¹

Alienation is a condition of capitalist society. Alienation is also realized within dominant class ideology, conversations, and social interactions that connect people to things for the purpose of building capital and/or exchanging value (i.e., networking to further ones career rather than to enjoy friendships). It is alienation that perpetuates the belief that every personal interaction will further ones materialistic and class position in the world. As commodification distills human relations to a subjective relation between things, alienation increases, and the ability to act humanely diminishes. Alienation is especially experienced by people who are believed to carry no exchange value whatsoever, like the poor and the homeless.

A culture of capitalism alienates us from ourselves as well. As Churchich (1990) explains it, “human individuals living under the alienating conditions of bourgeois society cease to be the slaves of man and become the slaves of dead objects (pg. 64).” Realizing this, Marxism denounces all systems of private property and labor confirming that these are nothing more than capitalist institutions, a place where exploitation and dehumanization is perpetuated (Churchich, 1990, pg. 278).

As capitalism and alienation has spread through America, so has the mass acceptance of increasing numbers of people living homeless within a materially rich, yet humanely impoverished, world. On the surface, it would be simple to associate a capitalistic sense of greed and desire for power as the cause for this spread of greed, rather than the consequence of

³⁰ Another concept that defines this phenomenon is progressive commodification. An extreme case of Commodification is slavery, where human beings themselves become a commodity to be sold and bought.

³¹ Reification, defined in German as *Verdinglichung*, literally meaning "thingification." It is the consideration of an abstract thing, like a car, as if it has human qualities and abilities; it also implies the *thingification* of social relations.

alienation, but it is not that simple. In *Grundrisse* (1939) Marx reflects on the debilitating effects of commodification and alienation when he suggests “greed itself is the product of a definite social development, not natural as opposed to historical” (pg. 217).

Our morally impoverished world is more so the result of a capitalist historical, materialistic and ideological transformation, reflecting the growth of virulent socio-economic structures that promote a subtle greed-based desire for more things.³² In other words, it is not that we are greedy, as much as we know of no other way to relate to each other than through things and the structures that support the exchange of these things. Thus, in a capitalist world order we do not choose to be greedy. Instead, we have become lost within relationships that search for meaning through the objects that we produce or purchase rather than for the value of human gratification and belongingness.

Advanced to the institutional level, capitalism continues to “objectify” relationships between organizations and political parties, furthering a process of dehumanization and an ultimate “loss of reality” (Marx & Engels, 1844). In a global sense, the value of material things has continued to increase while the value of human beings and life has rapidly decreased. As we lose ourselves within our relationship with objects, we lose our ability to care for ourselves and others likewise. Especially lost are those who do not fit into a capitalist framework, like the homeless, who have no property to negotiate with or value for materialistic or status-related relationship-building goals.

Furthermore, as we disconnect from our human selves, homelessness and a concern for eradicating its presence is forgotten as economic goals replace a false societal sense of well-

³² Marx’s original explanation of self-alienation has psychological elements. His later works suggest that alienation evolves from socio-economic relationships rather than from a self guided evolution (Churchich, 1990). This duality of approach, the role of the self vs. the role of the system has been a contentious element in Marxist writings.

being.³³ A community is viewed to be healthy if it is economically robust, rather than robust with social services to support those who are in crises. This supports the fact that people on the street literally *cannot see* homeless individuals because they do not fit into our relationship of working for things. Homeless individuals also have no value for those in power because they cannot produce goods, and neither can they consume them. For the political elite, they are viewed as the non-participatory voting bloc. Thus, addressing the needs of the homeless becomes inconsequential when powerful groups that control political elections also control the policy agenda of the nation.

In the end homeless individuals are the outliers in an economic matrix that does not measure the needs of those who do not interact with the production of goods or the accumulation of more wealth. In social conflict theory, those that do not fit into the current powerful paradigm of capitalism are more often than not framed in a negative or stigmatized manner. Thus, the cycle of alienation is complete; lacking a job or income; property or a house; a homeless person becomes less deserving of our sympathies and funds for the public welfare.³⁴

Marx asserts that if alienation is to be overcome, the working class must reclaim genuine human relationships and satisfy the social needs that are common to all individuals. Then, and only then, can we hope to stop the ongoing cycle of capitalist commodification and reification. In fact, Churchich (1990) claims that all forms of alienation can be diminished of significance, power, and dehumanizing effects when people work together toward a common goal. Marx

³³ Interestingly, Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) show conclusively that the wellbeing of whole societies is correlated not with average income but rather with the size of the disparity of income between the top 20% and the bottom 20%. As capitalistic tenets overtake political agenda's societal wellbeing deteriorates and concern for human beings carries little weight in the web of relationships between people and organizations.

³⁴ According to Marx, in stratified societies, there are two groups: 1) the ruling class and 2) the subject class. The ruling class receives power from its ownership and control of the forces of production. The ruling class also exploits and oppresses the subject class. As a result, there is a basic conflict of interest between the two classes.

advocated that this enlightened way of relating to the world would occur in a communist society where human functions were not alienated from human needs.

False Consciousness

False consciousness, or the concept of the “false ideal,” originates in Marxist theory as it relates to the idea that a false reality is being advanced by an elite capitalist class through capitalist social relations and prevailing dominant class ideology, rituals, culture and consciousness (Tyson, 1999). It is said that Marx himself did not use the phrase “false consciousness,” instead the term was penned by Engels (1932) who was addressing how workers continually suffer from a state of submerged subordination, exploitation and domination (Eagleton, 1991, pg. 89). False consciousness, perhaps one the more difficult Marxian concepts to understand, is best explained after exploring and understanding the concepts of alienation, dominant ideology, and commodity fetishism.

In my extended case method, I look for evidence of false consciousness, as evidenced by the prevalence of dominant class ideology exerting influence over member’s perceptions and actions in relation to the ten-year plan to end homelessness process. This included exploring values, judgments and decision-making processes that members had developed as the result of living within a materialistic and economically-based society. I also explored how economic interests may have influenced social and moral perspectives in an effort to reveal deep rooted evidence of false consciousness.³⁵ My definitive goal was to reveal how “oppressive power arrangements of the world” bolster ruling class values and interests to the detriment of the working class, the poor, and the homeless (Madison, 2005, pg. 53).

³⁵ False consciousness arises from dominant class ideological control in which the masses are unaware of the power that capitalists have over them, and because they disregard their control over them because they themselves are pursuing upward mobility. This concept flows from commodity fetishism, where people value social relationships for the material goals that it can produce for them. Competition is antithetical to the very concept of society.

Churchich (1994) also suggests that false consciousness is “inverted thinking about material reality, reflected in mental production” (pg. 53). False reality, as such, is essentially based on illusions, distortions and fabricated ideals that support the materialistic goals of those in power. In our capitalist world order, false consciousness is essentially focused on furthering the means of production for those elite few who are in power. Those who fall outside of the dominant class structure, like the homeless, are simply stigmatized in a way that disempowers them (Cox, 1998). The process of stigmatization leads to an increasingly negative class status. This is most evident in the evolutionary portrayal of homeless people as criminals, bums, mentally ill, drug addicted and in some way deficient (Corr, 1999).

Revealing false consciousness provides a point of entry into building alternative dialogues about how we relate to the homeless and how they can be empowered and assisted. Breaking out of traditional and institutionalized sense-making processes surrounding dominant class perceptions of homelessness can be difficult to do. In my extended case method approach, I work to achieve this deeper reflexive discourse by revealing the latent capitalist power structures that frame the HAAB member’s work on developing and implementing the ten-year plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County. Mid-way into the implementation of the local plan, the numbers of homeless people in Allegheny County continues to increase despite the limited number of steps that have been taken to reduce or end homelessness through implementation of the existing plan. In 2005, when the plan was first introduced, a homeless point in time count indicated that 1,947 people were homeless. In 2010, that number had increased to 2,486 (Appendix F).

Class Rights and Privileges

One of the most powerful and dynamic explanations of why and how homelessness manifests itself through ideology can be found in Marx and Engels' analysis of class conflict as it relates to the historical and material developments of capitalism (Rummell, 1997). Class, in their understanding, is most easily defined by the ownership of property. Those who have property are more likely to be wealthy, and likewise, they also wield more power and influence over others. Those with no property, like the homeless, who own no homes and possess no property, hold the lowest possible status in a capitalist society. Thus, they have least access to rights and privileges.

Marx delineates three societal classes in his analysis; 1) the bourgeoisie (or capitalists) who own the means of production that result in wealth accumulation; 2) landowners; and finally 3) the masses of humanity who own their labor and sell it for a wage (many for a substandard wage because the capitalists control the prevailing wage standards). In Marxism, this last group, the majority of all people, is known as the proletariat or the working class. Workers are the class that is controlled by the dominant class ideology and power structurations of capitalism for the benefit of a minority of elite capitalists. Even Marx, had no classification for the homeless, or those without wealth and property rights. In an economically defined system of control those with no job, no property, and no wealth are virtually powerless.

Likewise, dominant capitalistic values control the media, political institutions, and rituals which occur in everyday human relationships and cultural processes (Musolf, 2003). One example of domination is that economies of scale that drive down prices so that the majority of people can afford to buy products. This conceals the exploitation of wage workers, most who are paid the lowest price possible to keep prices down (i.e., consider Wal-Mart as an example) to ensure the highest return for a small number of elite capitalist stockholders (Ehrenreich, 2001).

Yet, it is widely known that low-paying minimum-wage jobs do not provide an adequate amount of funds needed to sustain the basic needs of the majority of all individuals and families (the working class) even in the most substandard fashion (Champlin & Knoedler, 2004). Still these jobs are accepted and perceived as acceptable and desirable in a capitalist culture. This poverty of acceptance supports the economic interests of an elite capitalist minority and goes unchecked by the masses that are placated by the media and political regimes that support capitalist interests. This cycle fuels an ever growing number of underpaid laborers who cannot afford to sustain themselves, who are effortlessly laid-off, and who quickly become destitute and homeless with no public supports available to them due to capitalist disinterest in their health and welfare (Jencks, 1994; Katz, 1989).

As long as capitalism is maintained as the rightful and only possible economical and social way to exist, and its accompanying ideology is upheld, these unjust efficiencies of scale will continue to rule the superstructures which drive dramatic increases in homelessness while perpetuating sub-standard wage-paying jobs (Robbins, 2005). If ever a redistribution of the wealth would occur it must refocus the public consciousness on humanitarian and environmental goals if there is hope to reverse this historically unjust trend. Unfortunately focusing on goals of emancipation, human rights, and increased quality of life for the majority of all people has yet to come to the surface, although it is a Marxist concept that drives the core philosophy of this theory (Marx & Engels, 1845). Capitalist ideology today upholds the dogma that having a home is a privilege and not a right. This ideological base moves beyond the rights which people held in the age of feudalism. Then workers had customary rights to land (to a home). In a relatively short time frame, comparatively speaking when considered historically, capitalist ideology now

dominates how people relate to themselves, each other, the land, and the homes that which they occupy (Cox, 1998).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FIVE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My research questions utilize a Marxist extended case method perspective to critically explore HAAB member's perceptions, values and dominant ideologies about homelessness as it related to their work to implement a plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County. In the process, I looked to discover if the plan was in some way being impacted by the subtle and dominating effects of capitalism.

Marx argued that the systemic effects of capitalism unconsciously shape the way that we interact with the world. If this is the case, then HAAB members perspectives may differ depending on the class interest of the group they represent (i.e. government, business, foundation, academic, public safety, and civic groups). In this way members may be supporting goals to end homelessness, but only if it advances the desires of their own group needs. In the end, I found that I was wrong in this base assumption. This was because I found that the HAAB did not operate following a consensus building process. It was not individual members, nor the groups that they represented, that influenced how the ten-year plan was unfolding. Instead, I discovered, it was the government officials that drove the decision-making and agenda setting process.

I discovered this by analyzing interviews and observations of personal, group, and external activities that were exerted upon the group. In the process I was looking to explain why the plan has been largely unsuccessful to date. For this reason, many of my questions were designed to examine the personal ideologies, perceptions, interactions, and decision-making processes of the local HAAB members. These questions allowed me to explore the possibility that capitalist power systems and associated ingrained structures were impacting the work of the

group (Thomas, 1987). I expected to find that capitalism would be dramatically shaping social, political and economic institutions that influenced the plan.

Marxism was well suited for this extended case method approach, because it suggests that capitalistic tenets influence traditions, embedded routines, and every day-lived experiences; this would become evident when I interviewed the board members (Gille & Riain, 2002). My research questions drew upon Marxist theory through sensitizing concepts that explored if dominant capitalist ideology was affecting the members of the group.

After the interviews concluded, I relayed my summarized findings to participating group members in a focus group format. I believed that a deeper understanding of capitalist barriers would stimulate an alternative discourse about external power structures. This indeed occurred, and is discussed in my findings section. By adopting this methodological approach, I was able to stimulate emancipatory thinking within board member perspectives so that alternative solutions to ending homelessness could be discussed and considered in the planning process.

With this in mind, my research questions are detailed below:

1. How do HAAB members perceive, experience, and act upon their understanding of homelessness within the ten-year group planning process to end homelessness locally?

The purpose of this question was to uncover the existing values, belief systems, judgments and perceptions that group members had as it relates to homelessness in Allegheny County. My goal was to look for evidence that the dominant-class ideology of capitalism was in some way influencing members thought and decision-making processes related to the development of the ten-year plan to end homelessness. This was based on the original assumption that each group member's perceptions grew from their own personal experiences and the influence of class (i.e., business, health care, foundations, religious, public safety and nonprofit institutions, etc.). My

expectation for this question was that I would encounter diverse perspectives and understandings of homelessness that influenced the overall process of ending homelessness.

2. How are HAAB members understanding of homelessness impacted by the dominant class ideology of capitalism?

My hypothesis was that if the members were influenced by dominant-class ideology and systemic influences of capitalism, I would find evidence of this within the open-ended interview process. I believed that this would also hold true in board meetings where I would observe powerful and dominating effects of individual member's beliefs or become aware of outside influences shaping the planning process or influencing how members interacted within the group and within the group decision-making processes. It would seem to follow that if individual members have strong values, beliefs, and perceptions that they would in some way impact group actions and policy making as well. I did find that dominating stereotypes and capitalist based influences had shaped group members perceptions prior to their interactions on the board. Interestingly, an educative process had occurred for many board members, who learned that homelessness was not the same as it was being portrayed in the media. Many of the board members understood that larger economic forces were at play, and that homeless individuals were impacted by the failing national economic climate.

3. How are HAAB member's views of homelessness affecting group decision-making processes and the ten-year plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County?

Because there was a diversity of perceptions of homelessness among group members, I believed that I would find dualistic and polarized viewpoints on how to implement the ten-year plan to end homelessness. I also believed that these contrasting viewpoints would be shaping the

communicative processes (see appendix A) occurring within the group.³⁶ I expected that if issue polarization was occurring, it would have an impact on the overall effectiveness of the group's ability to end homelessness in the short and/or long term. Interestingly, as I observed and spoke with group members, I did document diverse opinions, thought processes, and beliefs about why homelessness exists. As well, I did find the presence of power-based relationships affecting group member decision-making processes, namely the dominating relationship of county board members over individual board members. This included, government officials influencing how internal decisions were being made and why they were being made. The officials in turn were being influenced by larger systemic influences that prohibited their abilities to act against external political influences.

4. How and why are outside or external capitalist ideologies and power-structures influencing or impacting HAAB's ten-year plan to end homelessness?

In this research question, I was looking to understand how group processes were being impacted by external and systemic capitalist power structures and policies. Outside influences exerted on the group was explored through interviews and observations of group meetings. This required exploring external pressures and forces that were driving the formal and informal group decision making processes. My open ended exploration required outward-oriented questions that examined forces (economic, political, legal and social) impacting group dynamics and processes.³⁷ Some of the outside actors in this extended case included government funders, politicians that advocated for and drove the funding process, legal jurisdictions that shaped laws

³⁶ According to Jürgen Habermas (a German philosopher best known for his work on the Public Sphere) Democratic public life thrives when citizens are empowered to debate matters of public importance. He describes a public discourse where actors are equally endowed to voice their own opinions and recognize each other's basic social equality, leading to speech that is not distorted by ideology or false consciousness.

³⁷ For Marx, the superstructure is the ideologies that dominate a particular age, including all which men say, imagine, and conceive, is reflected in politics, laws, morality, religion, etc. (Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology*).

that mandated where and how the homeless occupy public spaces, local and federal oversight and controls, and corporate economic forces that were implicitly and subtly driving the dominant paradigm of being economically focused, that responded to political pressures and sensibilities.

5. How will an added awareness of the powerful effects of capitalism, and its prevailing dominant class ideology, transform group members thinking in a way that impacts actions or strategies taken to advance the ten-year plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County?

Ultimately, the goal of this dissertation was to inspire total praxis (Lefebvre, 1972) so that the plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County would be effective in its goal to diminish, end, or prevent homelessness locally.³⁸ In this type of a Marxian extended case method research approach, positive social change is made possible when a deeper awareness of the capitalist forces, controls, and ideology, which impacts group member's perceptions become more readily apparent. By looking to reveal this embedded false consciousness, my dissertation looked to create an alternative discourse among group members so they might better comprehend, react, and respond. to the powerful systemic market-driven forces that way driving the development of the ten-year plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County since its inception in 2005. It was my belief that if these powerful effects were brought to the surface, alternative and successful solutions to ending homelessness (either through the ten-year plan or through another strategic approach) might become possible for those working on the plan locally, or for others working on the same goal in other cities. And indeed, this was the case. When members had the opportunity to reflect on the success of the plan to date, many realized that need for a more progressive stance that would incorporate a dialogue that included consideration of larger systemic influences that impacted the progress of the group. A hermeneutic process of examination

³⁸ Praxis was advanced by Karl Korsch and George Luckacs in the 1920s and 30s with the belief that materialism and Idealism, interpretations of the world, would be undermined in the face of revolutionary praxis (Prasad, 1983) revealing the character of the dominant ideology for what it is, a way to exert power over the masses.

spurred the desire to move toward advocacy actions that would include government actors, who would better understand the thrust of the economic climate on the growing numbers of people becoming homeless in Allegheny County.

Consequently, my extended case method approach, informed by these guiding research questions, spoke to the deeper dominant class ideological and systemic barriers that Homeless Alliance Advisory Board (see appendix B) members experienced as they looked to end homelessness in Allegheny County through the ten-year planning process. I believe that this information may be useful for other cities, where groups are working on similar plans to end homelessness, and that they will benefit from the analysis, discourse and results generated by this dissertation.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH METHODS

This section provides a discussion of the Marxian-based extended case methodology (ECM) employed in my dissertation. By methods, I am referring to the techniques that are adopted for data gathering, and the broad-based methodological framework that has been designed to unite my research with theory and with the epistemological purpose of generating knowledge and understanding through theory reconstruction.

Research Design

The extended case method approach is a research design that is flexible and ethnographic in nature. It does not begin with a hypothesis to test; rather it remains open and fluid in a qualitative manner. If visualized, this type of research design looks somewhat like a spiral or a helix where data collection, analysis, and summarization, leads back to more data collection and more summarization, so that the research design and information is continually emerging from the data (O'Reilly, 2002). This is because the ultimate goal is to be open to the occurrence and meaning of significant events and dominant ideologies that guide key informants. Additionally, this type of research design reflexively operates throughout every stage of the project with the research questions and theory being reconsidered and reformulated as the data is collected and processed (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Consequently, although I began my research design with the assumption that the dominant class ideology of capitalism might be in some way influencing the Homeless Alliance Advisory Board member's perceptions and actions as they work on the ten-year plan to end homelessness, I remained open, fluid, and flexible to the idea that this might not be the case and that my research design, questions and assumptions might need to be reformulated. In this way,

if my assumptions proved to be wrong, I will move back and forth between an iterative and inductive framework to refocus my assumptions as well as my research questions and design on the data I had collected. For this reason, I was particularly interested in discovering anomalies to move me through the iterative process of theory reconstruction. Utilizing this approach, upon finding that capitalism as an external force did impact the ten-year plan to end homelessness, my secondary aim became to encourage a critical and hermeneutic dialogue to create alternative strategies and to build a deeper awareness to counteract this occurrence. This is indeed what occurred in the research process and the results are detailed in my findings.

The Extended Case Method

The extended case method was an especially well suited methodology for my dissertation because it investigated social structures across multiple levels of analyses (Burawoy et al. 2000). Burawoy (1998) has defined the extended case method as “dwelling in theory.” Dwelling in theory occurs when the researcher employs a critical theoretical and ethnographic lens (in this case Marxism) as a cognitive mapping tool to situate the research study within it. By adopting an extended case method, I had the added opportunity to present my own personal values, premises and biases into this research study, exposing my own reflexive views so that the reader might better understand how my theoretical premises originated.

As Burawoy defines it:

Premised on our own participation in the world we study, reflexive science deploys multiple dialogues to reach explanations of empirical phenomena. Reflexive science starts out from dialogue, virtual or real, between observer and participants, embeds such dialogue between local processes and extralocal forces that in turn can only be comprehended through a third, expanding dialogue of theory with itself. (Burawoy, 1998, pg. 5)

Thus, using an extended case method approach, I began my research with an open ended interview process that stimulated a dialogue with participants that questioned normalized and

accepted perspectives and interactions between the HAAB members. I also explored my own biases as I interviewed and discussed the phenomena of homelessness with the HAAB group members. My perspective was indeed transformed based on my own findings and interactions.³⁹

Burawoy states:

...dialogue between the participant and observer provides an ever-changing sieve for collecting data. This is not to deny that we come to the field with presuppositions, questions and frameworks but that they are more like prisms than templates and they are emergent rather than fixed. (Burawoy, 1998, pg. 11)

Adopting the ECM approach to my research study also created a scenario in which my findings could emerge from my own theoretical assumptions. It also created a place where alternative dialogues, outside of the norm, could be brought to light. Launching this critical dialogue, considering alternative view points and questioning power relationships were all ways that I chose to stimulate a transformative social change process that made praxial action possible.

In the end, I believe that the critical discourse that evolved from this collective analysis revealed that systemic and powerful forces were shaping the local ten-year plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County. The discourse generated by the HAAB members also challenged many of my own assumptions, some of which were incorrect, allowing me to contribute to the theory reconstruction process. Indeed, using an extended case method approach provided insight into divergences between my own assumptions and the assumptions of HAAB members.

Burawoy (1998) frames it:

The extended case method applies reflexive science... in order to extract the general from the unique, to move from the “micro to the macro,” and to connect

³⁹ My premise at the beginning of the research process is that capitalism is driving the growth of homelessness, in essence, creating a culture of homelessness. I believe that many do not see capitalism as the agent that propels the growth and isolation of entire sub-groupings of homeless individuals, including: families, foster children, the disabled, seniors, those with HIV/AIDS, war-veterans, and other disenfranchised groups of individuals.

the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on pre-existing theory. (pg. 5)

Two tensions surfaced from adopting this method. The first tension was found when I explored the rigidity between my own perspectives and the perspectives of the board members who had a different understanding from my own. The second tension occurred when I sought explanations to my own research questions, rather than look for emerging alternative theories, or anomalies, to my own suppositions.

It was in the space between these two tensions that theory and lived experiences intersected, giving me an opportunity to inform and reconstruct theory. Anomalies drove this iterative process and guided me to a better understanding of the actual internal and external dynamics that were being played out by the group in their efforts to create a plan to end homelessness. The desired end result, to demonstrate how an awareness of internal ideologies were being shaped by capitalistic power structures, was not as easy to arrive at as I assumed it would be. Instead, what I discovered was that a powerful set of external constraints were influencing the actions of the group, which were being controlled by the government members of the group.

These government members were in turn being controlled by external actors and institutionalized systems that required their compliance for the flow of homeless assistance funds to continue to be received by the county. Nonprofit board members who realized the dichotomy those government members faced, had a strong influence on whether their agency would receive funding for their homeless assistance programs were in turn compliant with the decision-making process of the government members. In this way a cyclical and controlled systemic influence controlled the environment of the HAAB and a consensus building decision making process was never made possible. My original premise, which focused on the belief that a polarization of

diverse opinions was impeding the process of ending homelessness, was incorrect. The barriers were not arising from internal conflict, they were occurring because an external power dynamic, the flow of federal funds, was impeding the process to end homelessness. And although the desire to end homelessness existed, the formal board structure that could have made this goal possible was nonexistent. Instead, I found that the oversight function of members from Allegheny County's Department of Human Services deadened the ability of board members to participate effectively in an educative and democratically driven consensus process to end homelessness. Better understanding this external power dynamic may potentially better inform similar group collectives who are working on the complex goal of ending homelessness.⁴⁰

ECM (which is both theoretical and methodological) requires participatory discourse, an analysis of structurations, and a guiding theory, to link the micro to macro perspectives of the group.⁴¹ Marxist theory is thus tested and extended by examining how sensitizing concepts illuminate the internal and external formulation of the ten-year plan to end homelessness.⁴² Anomalies and challenges presented in the process gave me the opportunity to rework my research questions and assumptions to reveal where I might have the opportunity to extend Marxist theory.

Because HAAB members have dissimilar backgrounds, I had originally expected that diverse class backgrounds and up-bringsings would be manifested differently by the 22 of the 27 group members that I interviewed. Indeed, I encountered contrasting purposes, beliefs and

⁴⁰ Emancipation is a term that is used to describe efforts to obtain equality or rights, often for a specifically vulnerable and disenfranchised group, like the homeless. Marx (1845) has defined emancipation to be the equal status of individual citizens in relation to the state, equality before the law, regardless of religion, property, or other private characteristics of individual persons.

⁴¹ The *Theory of Structuration* was first proposed by Anthony Giddens (1984) in *The Constitution of Society* as an attempt to reconcile theoretical dichotomies of social systems such as micro and macro perspectives. The approach does not focus on individual, societal or national totality but social practices ordered across space and time.

⁴² My point is to study how underlying social structures are created by the capitalist driven focus on production.

perceptions among the HAAB group members that were reflected in conflicting beliefs and value judgments related to how the ten-year plan to end homelessness should be implemented.

Additionally, those that had once held misperceptions about homelessness had reformulated their opinions based on the educative process that had occurred within the HAAB board meetings.

Still, informed economic perceptions of homelessness were irrelevant, because HAAB members were not contributing to the decision-making process. My research findings revealed that HAAB members were virtually nonparticipating members in the ten-year planning process; many members were no longer attending meetings. This was because the county members of the group were dictating how the plan to end homelessness should be implemented based on their own constraints and expertise.

Utilizing an extended case method approach was helpful in discovering this anomaly to my original assumptions of why the group had failed to decrease homelessness in Allegheny County. If I had not had the opportunity to talk with group members one-on-one I would not have discovered how ineffective the group consensus process had become. In fact, the HAAB is nothing more than a puppet board that meets to appease the wishes of federal officials who require that a public and private board exist if the Department of Human Services is to receive funds for their ongoing homeless assistance programs. The extended case method approach allowed me to examine how the board was truly interacting and how decisions were being made. It also allowed me to examine where anomalies existed in my original premises.

The Role of Praxis

The final goal of this dissertation was to promote praxis, a change-oriented, transformative form of engagement among Homeless Alliance Advisory Board members. By stimulating critical discourse and reflection among board members related to the effectiveness of

the ten-year plan to end homelessness, an opportunity was created to consider and speak to and about the systemic forces that were impacting their work to end. My praxial intent was to create transformative and more effective action at the local level through a deepened awareness of exploring dominating capitalist frameworks as it related to informing actions and interactions among board members (Bransford, 2006). I accomplished this by creating a place where a "reflective style of thinking about the relationship between knowledge, society, and freedom from unnecessary social domination" could occur within the interview process (Clair, 2003, pg. 45).

Praxis is related to three core components of my study, epistemological and ontological reflexivity, empirical inquiry, and transformative action.⁴³ Together these three components guided my inquiry process, helping me to uncover the "systemic conditions that produce false consciousness" (Thomas, 1993, pg. 46). It was by looking to reveal false consciousness that I had the opportunity to "unmask hegemony and address oppressive forces" (Crotty, 1998, p. 12). The vision inherent in this research study was thus to create human-focused, rights-driven, dialogue among the HAAB group members. In this way the local had the ability to transform the global. In the end, praxis was achieved because a critical dialogue began to put a face to multiple layers of power structures that were impacting the group's implementation of the ten-year plan to end homelessness. Uncovering these multiple layers revealed how social, political, legal and economic conditions create the oppressive conditions and societal forces that drives the existence and continuance of homelessness in America.⁴⁴

⁴³ This will require a theoretical grounding of my analysis of Homeless Alliance Advisory Board member's ideologies so as to overcome my own biases and interpretations. In this research study, that theoretical grounding is Marxism.

⁴⁴ Freire (1970) explains that conscientization is a type of learning that focuses on perceiving and exposing social and political contradictions. Conscientization includes taking action against oppressive elements as part of the learning process.

Researcher Location

The extended case method approach also allowed me to employ my own knowledge, observations, and experiences in the dissertation process. In the past, I have interacted with HAAB members as a participant and as a homeless advocate advancing the goals to end homelessness locally. Briefly stated, the Homeless Alliance Advisory Board (HAAB) is a public/private partnership formed to assist Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh, the City of McKeesport and the Municipality of Penn Hills in reviewing the ten-year plan to end homelessness which informs and funds public policy, homeless programs, activities, data and other efforts that are intended to eliminate homelessness and improve the well-being of homeless persons locally.⁴⁵ I have been involved with this local group in a tertiary way since its commencement, assisting as a volunteer with specific goals and processes to design local strategies to end or homelessness (See Appendix A).

Keeping this in mind, it is important to remember that this study is interpretive and reflexive in nature and informed by my own background, identity and perceptive lens (Morse, 1993). As the researcher, I was the one who was native to the community that I studied. For this reason my dissertation is not replicable (Smith, 2008) but reflective to the unique characteristics of the group. What will be informative for others working on similar plans to end homelessness is the role that external systemic capitalist forces play in shaping their efforts. They may benefit from a critical discourse that considers how these forces shape the planning process.

Data Collection Methods

Data was collected in multiple ways, including within field notes, participant observation of meetings, open-ended interviews and discussions, discourse analysis, document analysis of

⁴⁵ This sentence encapsulates the mission of Allegheny County's Homeless Alliance Advisory Board.

meetings and within a final focus group where the results from my research study were presented to HAAB members. Each approach presented an opportunity to “extend out” from the local to consider how systemic and structural forces exert power over the group.⁴⁶ Field notes were both inward and outward focused. Notes were taken after I left meetings, as well, so that I could document my own deeper thoughts about the interactions that had occurred.⁴⁷

Open-ended interviews occurred with 22 of the 27 HAAB members that were available to speak to me. Of this number, 4 members were no longer interacting with the board. The one remaining member, was traveling abroad for extended periods of time, and was unable to meet me at a time when we were both available. The interviews provided the core data for this dissertation. Before I began to interview the members, I met with the county representative responsible for calling group meetings, and asked him to email a letter out to all board members explaining the objectives of the study. I then followed up this email with a personalized email or phone call, inviting each member to meet privately and participate in an in-depth and open-ended interview that discussed and explored their understanding of homelessness, the ten-year plan to end homelessness, and their perceptions of how the group had evolved and made decisions over time. I also focused on how their perceptions had framed how they acted within the group, and how outside economic and capitalist influences may have shaped their efforts.

My list of open-ended interview questions is detailed in Appendix D. These questions provided a guide, which was at times used, and at other times not, depending on the interviewer/interviewees thought processes, flow of the conversation, belief systems and willingness to reflect about their work to end homelessness at a deeper level. Each member came

⁴⁶ “Extending out” is a term that Michael Burawoy (1991) coined in *Ethnography Unbound*, to describe how the external world shapes the local, for example how labor markets shape work organizations, how welfare agency’s limit the effectiveness of reform, etc.

⁴⁷ Emerson (1995) defines fieldnotes as accounts describing experiences and observations the researcher has made while participating in an intense and involved manner.

to participate in the HAAB from their own frame of reference; many innately differing from other's perspectives at a core level of understanding, purpose and belief structure.

All discussions were taped and transcribed as individual narratives for further analysis. Additionally, field notes were written while observing a HAAB meeting in action. I also reviewed the minutes of past board meetings, and media articles that were generated related to the group's 10-year-plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County. Once all data was gathered and analyzed, it was presented back to a small group of active participants, in a focus group format, to gather final feedback and to inform board members of my research findings.

A chronological listing of events, observations, meetings, and public relation documents were tracked, ordered, and reviewed during my analysis. I reviewed this data for emergent themes and anomalies. Because group member's interviews provided a key source of information, I chose to prepare a final summarizing narrative after each individual interview, written in a third-person manner (i.e., he/she said) for members to review if they choose to do so. All identifying information about the individual was left out to ensure confidentiality of the respondent. Additionally, when interviews occurred, HAAB members were asked if the interviews could be examined as it related to a power-based context (Bransford, 2006).

Interviews took three varying forms dependent on board member interest and comfort level. This included one of the following approaches: oral histories, personal narratives, and/or topical interviews (Madison, 2006).⁴⁸ After building a personal rapport with each HAAB member that originated from the level of interviewee-interviewer comfort level and trust, open-ended questions were posed that were responsive to the individuality and interests of each the member. As O'Reilly (2005) advocates, a researcher should be open to impromptu research

⁴⁸ This will be determined by the interviewee if they approach the questions from a historical reflection on their past experiences, or interactions with relatives, I will not interrupt their presentation process. If the conversation moves away from the research questions, I may redirect them back to the conversation with a guiding question.

encounters in a reflexive interview process, adopting this approach, I was able to do this.

Because I adopted an extended case method (ECM) approach, the interview process was dynamic in the sense that it connected the local experience of group members to the systemic and often broader structural context that informed their actions and experiences. This created an open-ended interview that was "part technique, part ethics, part theory, part method, part intuition, part collaboration, and part openness to deep vulnerability" (Madison, 2006, pg. 35). This meant that although I brought a list of questions with me to use as a guide, the questions did not necessarily drive the interviews. Instead, my goal was to uncover the deeper thoughts, meanings, intuitions, values and judgments that members held related to ideologies that might be shaping the ten-year plan to end homelessness. In this way, I was better able to define how dominant class capitalist ideology and power structures influence thought, action and decision-making processes.⁴⁹

Once world views and perceptions were better understood as it related to the tenets of capitalism and the sensitizing concepts, I looked for common and uncommon characteristics and emergent themes among each of the group member's interviews. My guided questions had provided contextual data (i.e., group-related, organizational, structural and personal data) that allowed me to better understand and define individual perceptions related to how the plan was proceeding. I also focused on asking questions that revealed authorization and power relationships in the group, in an effort to understand how internal and external forces were informing the implementation process of the plan to end homelessness.

Prior to meeting individually with the members, I reviewed organizational documents defining the group's work. This included reviewing the board description, past meeting minutes,

⁴⁹ Again the dominant ideology in Marxist theory is the set of common values and beliefs shared by most people in a given society. These common values frame how the majority think about a range of topics. The dominant ideology reflects and serves the interests of the dominant class.

news articles, press releases, the plan and changes that had been made to it in the past five year, along with reported progress and the county's point in time statistics measuring the numbers of people that are homeless in Allegheny County over the past five years of the plan's progress.

Observational data of participant interest, reactions, and other anecdotal information was written down immediately after the interviews occurred and then documented to give deeper context to my analysis (Patton, 2002). Although a lengthy process, a set-time was established after each interaction to document my notes and thoughts about how the interview had evolved as recommended by Hall (2006). Field notes differed substantially from interviews, in that some were jottings with brief words and phrases, while others were more personally descriptive in nature. These field notes provided rich and contextual detail that disclosed my analysis in a deeper and more thoughtful manner. Most importantly, field notes allowed me to relate back to my guiding research questions. The final analysis of my field notes linked my findings from the interviews to capitalist power structures and ideologies in a way that more deeply informed member perceptions, beliefs, values and interactions within the group. This reflective process united my data with the larger Marxist theoretical context of the study.

In conclusion, all of the collected interviews, narratives, field notes, and observational data was analyzed in terms of my sensitizing concepts, grouped in emergent themes and anomalies and presented back to members within a final focus group session. During the focus group, I acted as the facilitator in the discussion process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The focus group was interactive with the goal of stimulating participation, reflective thought, guided discussion, and to probe for deeper answers to my research questions. The information generated from this focus group informed my final results, as well as future emancipatory actions that may be taken by the group. In this way the summary of my results were triangulated.

Because the HAAB members are socially positioned in the community, some summary statements made in public were most likely “in part based on their positions or perspectives within the social network” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, pg. 160). In consideration of this, I provided a mechanism for confidential feedback after the focus group, suggesting that members email me to give me their personal perspectives. Some took advantage of the offer. This was another tool employed for validation purposes.

It is important to remember that my goal in implementing the focus group was not to generate agreement from the members, or to determine if my findings were right. Neither was it my purpose to look for disagreement, indicating that my conclusions were wrong (Lenclud, 1996). Instead, the goal of respondent validation was to again answer the research questions which were designed to explore the impact of the systemic and power based effects of capitalism on the group’s plan to end homelessness and to triangulate the data so as to ensure that my results were contextually rich, robust, comprehensive, and well-developed (Patton, 2002).

The final intention was to provide reflexive information for the purpose of creating social action “in order to transform” the group’s embedded thinking and action processes and to provide alternative solutions for ending homelessness locally by creating a space where an alternate discourse could occur (Freire, 1996, p. 36).

Data Analysis

Again, data analysis in an extended case method approach is ethnographic in nature; therefore, the analysis takes place throughout the life of the project (Hall, 2008). As data is gathered, it helps to determine how future observations and interviews may unfold. While there is no one prescribed way to approach the data, there are several paths that were considered as the information was analyzed. This includes reading through all the collected data, summarizing

it, organizing the information based on sensitizing concepts, evolving the data into sub-groupings and emergent themes, noticing and recording observable patterns, connections, similarities and contrasting the information that was generated through the process of exploration.

Initially, my data was classified through a manual coding process grouped by sensitizing concepts. Coding of the data helped me to determine local categories of meaning, remembering that my research study was axial (or learned by doing) in nature. Another level of analysis focused on the “local” to reveal the “systemic” context of embedded capitalist power structures related to the board members implementation of the ten-year plan to end homelessness. After looking to reveal the underlying influences of capitalism and the prevailing dominant class ideologies impacting the plan, the concluding vision of this dissertation was to create social transformation through initiating a new consciousness and discourse examined the possibility of creating alternative strategies to end homelessness.

Another way the data was analyzed was through testing the categories, themes, and explanations against interview narratives and field notes; looking for alternative explanations, anomalies and perspectives to my questions. This was a way in which I could triangulate the data for the purpose of looking for patterns of convergence that corroborated an overall interpretation of the study (Patton, 2002). When a common finding or explanation held across several data sources, I looked to better understand this concept within my collected information and observations. Finally, the information that was generated from my data analysis was authenticated within the final focus group (Flick, 1992).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Respondent validation occurs when the researcher’s account is compared to the participants to establish a level of correspondence in the data. Participants’ reactions to the analyses are then incorporated into the findings. Some view this as the strong check on the credibility of a research project. Respondent validation is part of the process of error reduction which generates more original data.

In the end stages of the data analysis, I focused on my research questions to consider if they could be answered from what was learned. Remembering this, I worked back and forth between my conclusions and questions to produce a cohesive summary (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). My findings allowed me to connect the ten-year plan to end homelessness strategy to a theoretically Marxist-related understanding of how larger power-based, capitalist influences shaped its genesis. It is at this mid-level point of analysis point that I began to find evidence of systemic forms of capitalist domination.

Relying on theoretical discoveries that utilize micro and macro extensions, I was able to reconstruct Marxist theory as it related to the ten-year plan to end homelessness to better understand more complex levels of power and. In this way, my data analysis moved from description to interpretation to theoretical explanation. Luminous moments occurred when sensitizing Marxist concepts connected the current strategy to end homelessness to the larger capitalist forces that defined and challenged its goal and purpose (Katz, 2002).).

Goals of the Research Study

The primary goal of this dissertation was to explore the possibility that the local ten-year plan to end homelessness is being influenced by the hidden yet powerful dynamics endemic in a capitalist system. Understanding the impact that capitalism and dominant class ideologies have on the development and implementation of this ten-year plan may broaden the perspective of the local group and help them devise a more effective local strategy to end homelessness. Now at the mid-year point in the ten-year plan, homelessness in Allegheny County has grown, not diminished. Pursuing a path that explores more systemic reasons for these increases may provide deeper knowledge, as well as assist the hundreds of other groups working to end homelessness through a ten-year planning process.

Fundamentally, social structures are dynamic and relational in nature, and can be reconfigured to shape positive outcomes once false consciousness is revealed and dominating ideological thinking shifts. In this particular case, after discussing the impact of capitalist power based constraints, the local Allegheny County HAAB group chose to enact transformational social change strategies by challenging the local power structures that shape the ten-year plan. Specifically, they chose to enact an advocacy approach to accomplish specific goals that were not being met inside the group structure.

Assuring Data Quality

The data that I have collected is qualitative in nature and it is controlled through triangulation as previously discussed (Patton, 2002). To ensure data accuracy and to avoid domestication, interviews and observational notes were closely examined and checked with group members to determine if my own values, judgments, and ideological frames of reference were in any way influencing the analysis (Madison, 2006, pg. 5).⁵¹ This included confirming that leading questions and prompting or interjecting questions or remarks were not posed during the interview process. In this way, I established that I was not influencing member responses based on my own frame of reference or expectations or by controlling prevailing organizational structures and attitudes.

I also looked for data anomalies and contradictory answers in my collected data; in particular, those that defied observed reality, and/or concealed gaps in information (Bransford, 2006). By looking for anomalies I was able to move well beyond conventional research questions about homelessness to reveal the deeper and more reflexive levels of meaning controlled by the powerful effects of a dominant-class ideology of capitalism. As Thomas (1993)

⁵¹ Domestication occurs when there is a lapse in critical thinking. Domestication furthers the existence of false consciousness because it underscores the belief that there is only one truth, and one source of knowledge which furthers the dominant ideology of those who are control wealth and resources.

suggested, this approach required me to be flexible and ready to ad-lib or reframe a question to uncover deeper meanings. Thomas (1993) also recommended using a process of defamiliarization, by looking “for non-literal meanings,” within the information being collected (p. 43), which I did. Defamiliarization provided an added assurance by distancing me from the taken-for-granted aspect of what is seen or what is expected. Such an approach lent itself to the deeper context of critical thinking built on observations, anecdotes, perceptions, documents, and other symbolic representations building an opportunity to discover new concepts and new ways of thinking (Bransford, 2006).

Finally, Thomas (1993) suggested that research with a critical focus should examine underlying values and judgments that affect “data gathering, analysis, and subsequent display of data to an audience.” By utilizing this focus my deeper examination promoted a more profound “reflection, an act of repeated thinking about our project, where we become self-aware of the process and consequences of knowledge production.” This is yet another way that I assured the data was “thickened” (Thomas, 1993, p. 46) and strengthened when coupled with field notes and organizational documents. Another purpose was to combine the joint processes of observation and participation to uncover the “hallmarks of praxis--critical reflection and purposeful action” (Bransford, 2006). Finally, the data was strengthened because I critically analyzed the relationship of my role as researcher within the research setting.

CHAPTER SIX

HOMELESSNESS IN IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

As Burawoy and Wright (2004) explain, denouncing capitalism is “a bit like criticizing the weather.” However, as capitalist ideology begins to extend itself into social institutions and relationships, we begin to understand why political representatives fail to respond to the human concerns of all people. In the process a deeper awareness of systemic structural barriers is revealed and we begin to understand how the language and spirit of capitalism shapes how we relate to each other and how we relate to the world we live in.

My dissertation focuses on this deeper level of analysis. In particular, it focuses on how capitalism influences homelessness, and the ways that capitalist ideology defines the way that we address the phenomenon of homelessness. To accomplish this I utilize an extended case method (ECM) approach, a process that specifically explores how the influences of capitalism “extend out” from relationships and institutional structures (i.e., the work of the local HAAB to end homelessness in Allegheny County). This critical approach originates within the Manchester School of social anthropology, which first coined the phrase “the extended case method” (Burawoy, 2009, pg. 22). The method originates in the belief that it is through extension from the local that we can begin to see how interwoven patterns of external controls and institutions impact micro/macro relationships.

My dissertation incorporated the extended case method approach by first focusing on how the micro-world perceptions of the local Homeless Alliance Advisory Board members were shaped by experiences and power based relationships at the individual and group level. It then considered the role that state-run institutions played in the implementation of the plan. Through this form of parallel analysis (internal vs. external) it became much more apparent why solutions

to end homelessness locally have not been successful to date and why the numbers of homeless were increasing rather than decreasing in Allegheny County. In this way my dissertation provided a clear and specific opportunity to reconstruct and reconfigure local narratives of the HAAB members into a class analysis of capitalism, revealing how following the status quo has lead to further entrenchment of government policies which reinforce the deservingness of homeless populations.

ECM has often been explained as “dwelling in theory” because multiple levels of understanding identify extended explanations of why an empirical phenomenon occurs (Burawoy, 2009, pg. 20). Consequently, my extended case method helped connect the work of the local group (micro) to larger systems of control (macro) clarifying how state-run power structures are controlled by powerful social, political and economic structures. Revealing this phenomenon required deconstructing interviews and data collected from members.

In my dissertation, I adopt this reflexive ECM approach, first, by utilizing an open-ended interview process, and secondly, by exploring the dialogue that was occurring between the members of the HAAB and myself. Information collected in the preliminary interview process *is* embedded within a second level of analysis defined by Marxian concepts which consider how local perceptions and processes are being informed by extralocal forces. This second level of analysis led me to a much larger and expanded study where I had the opportunity to explore anomalies for the purpose of reconstructing and extending Marxian theory itself.

As Burawoy (2009) explains:

“Objectivity is not measured by procedures that assure an accurate mapping of the world but by the growth of knowledge, that is, the imaginative and parsimonious reconstruction of theory to accommodate anomalies (see Kuhn 1962; Popper 1963; and Lakatos 1978).”

I chose the ECM approach precisely for this reason. It was my intent from the beginning

to determine if the federal goal to end homelessness, as outlined in the federal mandate for cities to create ten-year plans, was somehow being internally contradicted by deeper and more powerful forces of capitalism. If this was the case, I reasoned that an examination of the culturally imposed ideological perceptions of homelessness would reveal how the ebb and flow of local and federal funding are constrained by capitalism. In the end, I discovered that group members had no real participation in, or control of, the current plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County. Instead, I found that the decision-making process on how the plan was to be implemented was being controlled by external governmental forces reflected in the actions taken by the county decision-makers.

In this way, my analysis moved from the general to the unique and from the micro to the macro, while building on preexisting Marxist theory. More specifically, sociological Marxist theory revealed how group members were alienated from human needs of the homeless because they viewed their relationships to each other in terms of exchange value and desired access to funding resources and privileged networks of information. Abilities and needs of the homeless were quickly converted into a drive to produce outcomes and meeting results for the political and governmental actors that controlled public funds. In the process, other the homeless were framed as competitors controlling public funds, or as inferior in an unfolding process of control.⁵²

To refute the status quo, group members, needed to consider how powerful structural influences were impacting their plans and efforts to end homelessness. To initiate this process I asked group members to reflect on the barriers that were inhibiting the adoption of the plan. For example, by discussing why homelessness was increasing, I was able to open up the larger dialogue of how we frame our understanding of homelessness related to deservingness and

⁵² There is a more detailed description of this experience in *The Concept of Freedom* (Lawrence and Wishart, 1977).

undeservingness, and how this process informs public distribution of resources.

As the extended case method approach suggests, I did not seek out confirmation with group members that capitalism was influencing their work to end homelessness, rather I focused on evidence of sensitizing Marxian concepts which provided theoretical proof that this was the case. As Burawoy (2009) explains, adopting an extended case method approach calls for the courage to explore preconceived convictions and submerged ideologies, then the courage to challenge them, and finally the imagination to sustain this courage within a process of theoretical reconstruction (pg. 53).

Marxist theory explains how a process of dehumanization occurs on a daily basis. Considering how larger structural processes drive this phenomenon is a way to reveal how powerful influences impact our everyday perceptions and decision-making processes. Using this approach, I had the opportunity to reflexively interpret the micro processes occurring within the HAAB. Through evaluation and critical discourse, group members destabilized the deeply embedded power structures that were controlling decision-making processes. In the end, real efforts to end homelessness were attempted outside the formal structure of the HAAB.

Informal networks of HAAB members were able to launch some of the recommendations of the plan that government members of the group were too anxious to attempt. Because the HAAB was controlled by government members (60% of the group was governmental members) the recommendations that challenged stereotypical media, political and public perceptions of the homeless were never instituted (i.e. building housing first homes for the homeless, creating an engagement center, and launching advocacy campaigns). Data revealed that because the HAAB was for all intents and purposes a state-run institutionalized structure, governed by governmental members, launching the plan and its eight recommendations to end homelessness was almost

impossible to do.

When I interviewed the nongovernmental group members at the mid-point of the ten-year plan, many were already questioning how upward trends in poverty, like job loss, home foreclosures, and a rise in eviction rates, were already challenging the goal to end homelessness. Some realized that lower income classes were destabilized by national economic forces. These members realized that nothing that the HAAB members could plan or implement would counteract the larger macro-forces of the economy which was moving more and more economically fragile individuals and families into homeless situations in Allegheny County. Although the original ten-year plan, created by a larger public/private partnership of about 100 community advocates, focused on creating housing first model units and resources for the homeless, the status quo homeless service delivery system continued, in large part this was because governmental members (60% of the group) were unable to adopt the more activist recommendations of the original group.⁵³

Below, my research questions are restated followed by quotes from board member's spoken during interviews, participant observations and document analysis of meetings. This data is blended utilizing my sensitizing concepts. Anomalies are particularly important in my results section because they provide the information needed to reconstruct Marxist theory, the end goal of this extended case method approach.

1. How do HAAB members perceive, experience, and act upon their understanding of homelessness within the ten-year group planning process to end homelessness locally?

⁵³ One sub-recommendation that challenged the traditional way of providing services including creating a 24/7 engagement center that would have been open and available to homeless individuals at one site on an as needed basis. The engagement center was reformulated by government members to be an "engagement network" following the traditional approach of providing services at different locations, with nonprofits providing specialty services instead of holistic ones at one location. The one location approach would be easier to locate and more beneficial for the homeless. Governmental officials were concerned about incurring NIMBY responses from the public if such a facility were to be built and would not have had the legal and political resources needed to combat its occurrence.

It was interesting to discover that my original assumption, which was grounded in the belief that board member perceptions were shaped by stigmatized public images of homelessness, was for the most part unfounded. In all interviews board members displayed a more complex understanding of why people become homeless based upon capitalist-based economic challenges. Not one member displayed a stereotypical or negative preconception of what they believed a homeless person to be (i.e. a bum, lazy person, drug addict, welfare mom, etc.) and for the most part, each realized that there were multiple sub-groupings of homeless people in Allegheny County, who are working on ten-year plans to end homelessness in their own communities.

Another goal of this dissertation was to empower HAAB members through a process of participatory emancipation by better understanding how institutionalized structurations promote Marxian false consciousness in a capitalist world.⁵⁴ By examining the dominant class ideology of capitalism, particularly in the way that it impacts social relationships, institutional structures, and decision-making processes, my long-term goal was to "raise havoc with settled ways of thinking and conceptualization" (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, pg. 138).

The ensuing critical discourse that arose from this reflexive exercise helped to uncover alternative approaches to ending homelessness for the local HAAB members and informed a deeper discussion by others engaged in this issue at the national level. Just as important, an introspective study and process lead to in depth consideration of how power positions and relationships are embedded in the current national strategy to end homelessness, making it difficult to institute local plans that ignore larger dominating influences.

⁵⁴ Class domination and exploitation contribute to oppression in the form of institutionalized structures of repression. Marx speaks to how oppression is furthered through dominant class ideology, a particular focus of this dissertation.

This lack of stigmatizing perceptions was in part related to the increased awareness that members had experienced as a result of their association and participation within the HAAB. Many of the members were without previous knowledge of homelessness prior to joining the board. Additionally, most (70%) of the HAAB members had remained on the board since they were first invited to join in 2005. During this time an educational process engaged board members within a more complex understanding of what causes homelessness. This was evident within the open-ended interview process. Thus, I found out that stigmatized perceptions of homelessness were not influencing the implementation of the local ten-year plan.

In fact, I found that some members were more focused on particular sub-sets of homeless individuals based on their own backgrounds or job affiliation. I noted that board members with specific expertise - i.e. homelessness and mental health experiences or education, would take the time to raise awareness with other members of the group about the specific challenges that disenfranchised sub-groups of homeless people were facing. As a result, I found that overall the board members were more informed about the reasons for homelessness than the general public.

In the process of understanding why homelessness existed, all board members agreed that there was a lack of affordable housing available. From information distributed to the group by the county, they also recognized that a growing number of homeless individuals represented working families that could not survive on minimum wage jobs. Yet, only a few members looked beyond traditional explanations (i.e., homelessness is caused by drugs and alcohol or lack of affordable hours) to consider how larger systems of control, like a failing capitalist-based economy and increasing number of people living in poverty, was impacting the growing numbers of homeless individuals. Most board (80%) members still believed that, given the right resources,

homelessness would decrease over time if an array of services and housing opportunities were made available to them.

Interestingly, those few members who did consider the influences of external forces tied to capitalism, such as snowballing unemployment, and rapidly increasing cost of living, did not relate their understanding to these larger systemic and structural occurrences. Instead their perceptions, experiences, and understanding of homelessness, focused on day-to-day realities rather than structural imperfections. Even the formerly homeless individuals, believed that individuals facing homelessness had the ability to pick up their boot straps and improve their life situations despite the increasing barriers that homeless people with little to no resources had to overcome. Capital operated to make invisible its own impact on homelessness and replace it with an ideology that does not permit the interconnections between capitalism and the perception of individual rather than structural impacts on failure and success.

In my interview with the HAAB government official, he framed it this way “It is impossible to live on a minimum wage job. Electric, gas, clothing and all costs continue to rise.” Further he reflected on the decisions that a person in poverty faces. He noted that technology expenses had increased and believed that low income people believed that they needed the best cell and internet services to stay competitive although they could not afford it. The county decision-maker was subtly aware of the fact that commodification, alienation and external economic forces were profoundly impacting people living on very low incomes. He reflected during the interview process, “The desire for more things, can at times outweigh, the desire for basic necessities.” Still, he did not raise the analysis to an awareness of how lack of basic rights and unequal distribution of income impacted the common good.

Not surprisingly, analysis from The Keystone Research Center paints a disturbing picture with median family income down by nearly 1.5 percent between 2007 and 2009 and consumer prices increasing in Allegheny County over the eight years of the study.

Table 2
Consumer Price Index for Urban Consumers in Pittsburgh

Year	Retail Prices	Gasoline	Housing Shelter	Housing Fuels/Utilities	Food at Home	Medical Care
1999-2000	3.4%	38.6%	1.3%	13.7%	1.7%	1.7%
2000-2001	2.1%	-16.3%	2.4%	8.1%	5.0%	3.0%
2001-2002	0.3%	-16.2%	4.3%	-13.4%	3.4%	4.1%
2002-2003	1.4%	7.7%	3.7%	-5.1%	0.2%	4.5%
2004-2005	3.5%	17.1%	3.9%	11% (gas) 4.4% (electric)	3.5%	4.7%
2005-2006	3.7%	27.9%	4.1%	24.7% (gas) -.3 (electric)	1.4%	5.8%
2006-2007	2.5%	5.0%	3.5%	14.5% (gas) -13.9 (electric)	5.1%	3.2%
2007-2008	4.9%	30.7%	1.0%	13.8% (gas) 9.5% (electric)	5.5%	7.0%
2000-2008	24.3%	143.0%	24.0%	69.0%	32.5%	44.5%

Note: From the Bureau of Labor Statistics; Pittsburgh Consumer Price Index; August 14, 2008

One member of the HAAB, another county (government) official who was one of the lead decision-makers of the group, appeared to have the broadest understanding of how external economic forces, illuminated by the chart above, played into increased incidences of homelessness in the county. This completely confounded my original assumption that government officials were looking to protect their own self-interests and employment status, either unwilling or afraid of reprisal to address how larger forces perpetuated local incidences of homelessness. Indeed I discovered that government officials had a good grasp of how external forces shaped increases in homelessness. Yet, they did not reflect on this systemic awareness in public formats, nor did they connect this knowledge to their implementation of the plan to end homelessness.

Remarkably, although government members of the HAAB (roughly 60% of the HAAB board structure is composed of government employees) had a greater understanding of systemic barriers, they did not promote pursuing policy advocacy, public education or legislative actions to raise awareness of how economic trends were impacting local residents who were at the greatest risk of homelessness. It was even more interesting to consider this with the knowledge that the original ten-year plan recommended this course of action.

As one non-governmental framed it, “I do not expect that the county will take action on the advocacy recommendations of the plan as the plight of homelessness is not a topic that politicians will touch, nor an issue that the public or media will support.” This insight begins to address the deeper challenges that government decision-makers are faced with related to exposing the more profound and systemic reasons for homelessness. To reveal these inequities, government HAAB members might risk personal retribution for adopting an unpopular and unfunded strategy to end homelessness. Maintaining the status quo approach, which was to engage nonprofit homeless providers on how to allocate controversial services and scarce funds, was a much easier course of action for them to take. In the process of this analysis, it became more and more evident to me that the government official’s actions were being shaped by larger forces beyond their own control.

Nonprofit providers on the board also acknowledged the fact that external forces were impacting their work to end homelessness. They knew that of the increasing numbers of homeless individuals that they were serving, many actually had jobs, but were still faced with homelessness and housing crisis due to the rising cost of living in Allegheny County. One woman on the HAAB spoke of the powerlessness and frustration she faced as a homeless

provider that was forced into “sending vulnerable and defenseless people back onto the cold streets” after leaving the cold weather shelter during the frigid winter days of January.

Other HAAB members spoke to the fact that they believed the county was leading the planning and the decision-making processes of the group and that their “input was meaningless”. Many saw their role on the board as to merely advise and/or listen to the county members, who decided how to disperse traditional HUD funds to existing programs. She was also offended by the fact that county members were asking her how they should cut existing programs given the dwindling federal funds needed to maintain them.

Another HAAB member expressed horror at having to choose between which program to keep and which to cut. He was further shocked that the county had proposed such a question in the first place. The board member remarked that “energy should be focused on building collaborations and cutting waste, rather than choosing which nonprofit would go unfunded in the year ahead because they were unable to exhibit this behavior.”

Those members that represented nonprofit homeless providers realized that they were dependent on the county for HUD funds and very few would question the authority or prowess of the government officials to determine how the plan to end homelessness should be implemented. As one nonprofit board member reflected in the interview, “I am hoping to get funded for an important housing program from the county next year, it would not be wise for me to disagree with their decision making process at this time.” Only the foundation members, who were not beholden to the county officials due to powerful funding relationships, expressed open frustration with the way that the ten-year plan was being implemented. As one foundation program officer said in open frustration during the interview, “The next time I see the lead

county administrator, I am going to ask him, how many more people have to die on the streets before you take action?"

Two of the people on the board that I spoke with were formerly homeless individuals. Each addressed their life time experiences as a homeless person in the interview process. In both cases, becoming homeless was an unexpected occurrence. Each had never known homeless people before, and one viewed their role on the board negatively for having the experience. "I know why the county chose me to be a board member, it's because I was homeless and I fill the need for having a consumer in the group. I don't like to bring the story up about my homeless experience, because when I do, people treat me differently."

There were many other complicating factors for both of these board members, but poverty played a key unifying role for each. One suggested that "building trust" with people in crisis was perhaps the most important component of successfully helping people but a concept that was rarely addressed. One felt that the current homeless assistance system was only effective when caring administrators and staff were in charge.

"Most homeless provider staff that I have worked with is more interested in collecting a pay check then helping homeless people in crisis. There are very few case managers that are willing to take the extra time that is needed to listen to your complicated life problems. There is no easy solution to getting out of homelessness. It's all about taking baby steps towards your goal. Most staff doesn't have the time or the interest to listen to you and go the distance."

A sense of alienation existed in this paradigm. If there were no interest in helping the individual beyond the delineated outcomes detailed by governmental funders, then the individual experiencing homelessness had to "jump through the hoops" established by the nonprofit entity that was assisting them. If the nonprofit was a behavioral health service provider, than the

individual had to first establish that they had a mental health condition, and prove that they were homeless, before they qualified for assistance. Likewise commodification was reflected in a narrow approach to helping the homeless. If the nonprofit provider would only be reimbursed for helping someone that fit into their specific criteria, than assisting someone that did not fit into the “box” that had been created by the funding source did not “pay off” for the service provider.

In conclusion, the first research question, which examined how HAAB members perceive, experience and act upon their understanding of homelessness within the ten-year group planning process, was answered in diverse and introspective ways. Perceptions of homelessness and actions within the group were rebuilt after belonging to the group over an extended period of time. Power relationships that were being exerted upon nongovernmental members by governmental HAAB members were shaping the implementation of the plan. Likewise, governmental officials were being controlled by larger system actors, including the federal government, political will, and the media. Relationships between nonprofit providers and county officials were complex. Very few members would disagree with the governmental decision-makers controlling the group process, because it would have threatened their ability to receive funds from them, because they channeled the governmental funds that flowed into the county.

For this reason, actions dictated by the ten-year plan were for the most part determined by county officials (who represented 60% or the majority of the board). The few members that were not nonprofit providers or county officials expressed that they had learned many things about homelessness while being on the board, dispelling past stereotypes that they held. The foundation members, who were not indebted to the county officials in any way, and free to express divergent views, were generally unhappy because their recommendations were not being listened to and they perceived that the county was relatively impotent. To conclude, despite the

educative processes that had transformed group member perceptions, informed action to end homelessness through the ten-year plan was not occurring because of institutionalized and structurally profound challenges.

2. How is Homeless Alliance Advisory Board members understanding of homelessness impacted by the dominant class ideology of capitalism?

Because this question was central to my proposal, I spent a considerable amount of time analyzing how board member perceptions might be influenced by dominant capitalist ideological thinking. Board members generally were quite aware that homelessness, as a phenomenon, is negatively portrayed in the media, by politicians and by the general public, which counteracted my original belief that they themselves held some of the same stigmatized views of homelessness. Interestingly though, what board members did *not* generally do was connect homelessness to broader overarching economic problems related to capitalism.

A few of the board members, in particular those who were not government officials or homeless providers, looked to structural solutions to ending homelessness like providing more jobs or increasing the amount of affordable housing, as a way to decrease the numbers of people who were living on the streets. As one board member expressed it, “I do believe that homelessness will diminish in Allegheny County when we bring needed resources and housing to the homeless.” Most though, believed that the economic challenges connected to homelessness were quite complex and that easy answers would not put an end to the phenomenon.

“Minimum wage jobs don’t stop homelessness...it only advances the problem,” said one long-time member and homeless service provider. Another private housing member of the board stated, “As long as government officials avoid addressing the politically hot issue of the lack of low income housing in the county, nothing is going to happen. We have recreation centers and

schools standing abandoned that could house all our homeless, but city leaders are never going to take this approach because it is too politically hot to do so.” Each veteran response seemed to reflect a deeper understanding of the complexity of the problem. Economic and structural reasons for homelessness were being suggested in subtle ways but not in the way that would connect it openly to broad systemic problems created by capitalism. Indeed, such a connection is rarely made by researchers in the field of homelessness; only a very few academics perceive how the capitalist mode of production creates a massive reserve of unemployed and disenfranchised paupers as reflected by Marx (1863) in his theory of surplus value (p. 478).

One homeless provider *did* connect capitalist phenomenon to the larger structures that were driving homelessness. He was a board member who was an African American male in his 50’s. He reflected, “People are much more alienated from each other today than they were in the 70’s ...homelessness has become much more complex because it is fueled by racism and classism. It is much more difficult to be homeless today because people do not trust one another. If you are African American, let alone homeless, you are to be feared and alienated.”

Although not as heartfelt, a mistrust of the homeless was apparent in many other interviews with board members. As one member stated, “We have many more restrictions in place today that looks to criminalize the act of homelessness.” This individual had been working with the homeless for more than thirty years. “The homeless can be arrested for sleeping in public, urinating on the street, or for asking for money; these new restrictions are fairly recent and reflect a larger trend of alienation and fear of people who are homeless, even though they might be homeless only because they lost their job or are unable to pay their rent or utilities....something like this could happen to any one of us.” Alienation in this way was a driving theme in my study.

Of the twenty two board members that I interviewed, eight were homeless service providers. These individuals focused on the existing safety net of supports that wrap resources around homeless individuals and families while helping them work toward self-sufficiency. Many were focused on providing resources at the local level. Not looking at the endemic or system-wide problems fueling homelessness, these providers were burnt out and frazzled by the influx of poverty-stricken families. Still, they continued to focus on day to day operations and status quo services rather than seeking out system wide solutions to a swelling tide of poverty. Primarily occupied with receiving and disbursing small allocation of funds, these board members were focused on their annual allocation of funds from the federal government, disheartened by the continuing reductions of funds that were available to serve an increasing number of people in need. Many believed the current strategy of ending homelessness was a thing of the past. “We have a new administration now; they have already shifted their focus away from the street homeless to helping homeless families.” Shifts in plans, subpopulations served, and decreased funds only drove the local homeless continuum into further chaos, with nonprofit providers fighting for scarce funds instead of focusing on the needs of people living in chaos and crises.

There was some consensus that helping the homeless on an individualized level, focusing on building trusting relationships, was of the greatest benefit to the homeless. As one person who had been homeless framed it, “I moved in and out of homelessness myself, I had never had a stable life as a child, and when encountering problems as an adult, I would move from place to place, crisis to crisis. Stability had more to do with me finding my own emotional well-being but very few service providers were interested in my own interests. They were focused on the service that their individual nonprofit provided. Mental health staff focused on medicines, diagnosis and counseling. Food pantries focused on providing food. Drug and alcohol providers

focused on counseling or detox. Again, the people that helped me the most were the ones that would take enough time to sit down and talk to me about how I was feeling, not just one day, but over a period of months. When I trusted this individual enough, I was able to hear what he was saying much better. But it really wasn't about what they thought I needed, it was more about what I knew I needed to get out of my homeless situation.”

Trust in this sense, contradicts the prevailing societal alienation that is maintained when nonprofit organizations follow strict rules and regulations that are required by governmental funders, health insurance companies, and administrators. As one board member reflected, “Providing services based on what category a person fits into is quite dehumanizing and alienating. These are cultural responses that tie how we perceive each other to financial restrictions which prevent us from spending time with people on a caring or personal basis. For example, government funding allocations for case worker positions rarely take into account social or recreational interaction encounters,” which help “build trusting relationships among staff and homeless people.”

Formerly homeless members of the board further reflected on how support groups had helped them overcome the challenges they were facing over time. One gentleman related that the need for “finding a trusting community” was one of the most difficult barriers that he faced when living on the streets. He framed it this way, “A world that focuses on economic achievement rather than human interaction and fulfillment” doesn't care much about people. Other board members reflected that alienation in today's society had increased. Yet, the fact that this was occurring because of capitalist-informed power structures was not something that board members took time to consider or talk about in the interview process. As one nonprofit board

member so aptly put it, “we are not solitary individuals that exist independently from each other, we require communities of care and support. This is something that is lacking in today’s world.”

Interestingly, creating communities of caring supporters that help those facing the crisis of homelessness received little focus by HAAB members in the context of the ten-year plan, remembering that real community is antithetical to capitalism (social relations of profit). A dialectical approach that reveals the push and pull between economic interest and human interest exposes underlying power structures and creates an opportunity to consider alternative approaches to ending or helping the homeless. In this context it would require recognition that staff time should include casual interactions driven by participant needs, not funding outcomes.

One board member reflected, “My homeless assistant staff focuses on securing tangible concrete resources like housing and rental assistance. Creating community connections and human relationships has much merit but it’s not something that I can ask the staff to pursue given the funding restrictions that our agency faces.” Furthermore, building trust at an interpersonal level is especially difficult as mistrust is grounded within clinical staff-client critical-frameworks in social work theory that reinforces keeping a professional and established distance from the people that we serve (Wells and Zebrack, 2008). “You help people between 9 am and 5 pm, not afterhours, or in the middle of a cold dark night. This is what you are taught in your academic studies...” said one homeless provider. Even the academic institutions support the superstructure with this type of capitalist ideological thinking.

The recognition of what is needed, paralleled against the disconnect of not providing for these deeply human needs, suggests that deep philosophical and psychological barriers related to alienation and commodification run deep in American capitalist culture. In today’s society, measurable outcomes determine funding formulas at both the governmental and foundation level.

If a nonprofit is unable to measure its success, given the funds it has received, it will no longer be funded. Building trusting relationships for the benefit of the client is not relevant and therefore not valued by the primary institutions that fund us. How can we expect homelessness to end when human need is barely recognized as important? Relating to people in crises as if they were a number or a “point of contact” just reinforces the sense of non-deservingness the superstructure of capitalism supports to protest the needs of an elite few.

Still each HAAB member expressed interest in diminishing the number of homeless people living in Allegheny County, despite the fact that their current approach was not successful in making this goal a reality. Only one government member of the board said she believed the group would actually end homelessness with the ten-year plan. She was a member that had little experience interacting with homeless people or homeless assistance services. The majority of the board members were quite aware that since the local plan was first instituted, the number of homeless people in Allegheny County had steadily grown and these members expressed disillusionment at being able to accomplish the goal of ending or diminishing homelessness.

Table 3

Point in Time Surveys December 2000 to January 2010 - Allegheny County

Actual # of persons served in programs ranging from Street Outreach to Permanent Housing*											
# Persons	Dec 2000	Oct 2001	Dec 2002	June 2003	June 2004	Jan 2005	Jan 2006	Jan 2007	Jan 2008	Jan 2009	Jan 2010
Total	1919	1903	2094	2258	2187	1947	2009	2105	2130	2242	2486

* These numbers include only those who received homeless services at the time of the count.

These increases, coupled with my data, suggest that larger influences are at play. The Allegheny County plan to end homelessness is now at its mid-point, and no real reduction in the numbers of homeless people has occurred to date. Most board members commented during the interview process that they believed that the ten-year plan to end homelessness was

unachievable; or as one member reported, “another lofty yet failed attempt put into place by a new administration that will cycle out of power in eight years or less.”

Yet, the HAAB continues to meet quarterly with a sustained focus on the goal to end homelessness with the plan that they developed in 2005. As one government official reflected, “the meetings in and of themselves are required if we want to continue to receive traditional Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds for existing homeless assistance programs and services.” In essence, the quarterly meetings ensure that the prevailing federal regulations are being met. In this way the status quo is maintained, reinforcing the upward trend in numbers of people becoming homeless.

Interestingly, there has been a positive side effect within the ten-year planning process. As one city administrator recounted, “Before the HAAB, we had very little communication between diverse public and private stakeholder groups related to homelessness.” She went on to say, “recently, when new funds from the Obama administration came down from the federal government (stimulus funds), the formal and informal networks that the HAAB had created led to increased trust and cooperation among providers and foundations, so that the funds were more effectively dispersed.” These new funds targeted low income families who were homeless due to the economic downturn. They were accompanied by many rules and regulations related to how and who could receive the funds. Unfortunately, the new funds cannot be channeled into facilitating the existing 10 year plan and its recommendations, which were created by the prior presidential administration. Not surprisingly, the new stimulus funds are supporting a specific

and growing “deserving” subpopulation of the homeless; working families. Indeed, even this allocation of new stimulus funds has come under grave criticism by the far right.⁵⁵

Increased levels of communication among members reflected an unexpected anomaly in my findings as well. Despite underlying capitalist influences that were controlling the decision-making and allocation processes of the board, the members increased knowledge were helping them to implement needed changes by working outside of the formal structure put in place to support the ten-year plan. For example, as of this writing, the foundation community is working with a local nonprofit, outside of the HAAB structure, to institute a housing facility for chronically homeless adults. This would not have been possible if informal relationships and education had not occurred within the HAAB meetings. As the foundation member related it, “the county is not interested in creating housing units for the chronically homeless, even though the original ten-year plan recommended this strategy.” Creating new housing for the chronically homeless would have been risky to do for the county officials but not for the foundation members. A dialectical and relationship building process had empowered some members to overcome the barriers that they were encountering at the local level.

As a rule, the eight recommendations that had been originally suggested by the large private and public stakeholder group that wrote the 2005 plan to end homelessness, has not been implemented by the board. Most of these original goals have been dropped or transformed into less risky objectives. For example, one board member commented, “We had recommended to the county to create a 24 hour, 7 day a week, engagement center, where people who were homeless could come to find resources, or be housed temporarily.” This goal was restructured by the county officials. Having the plan transformed outside of the group process created a sense of

⁵⁵ Casey Mulligan (March 2, 2011) of the New York Times writes that the data and economic reasoning suggest that the effect of government spending on G.D.P. was minimal at best. Retrieved on-line on March 3, 2011 at <http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/03/02/the-minimal-impact-of-the-stimulus/>

disillusionment and frustration among some HAAB members, leading to a disinvestment and lack of attendance at the board meetings. Gradually, many became disinterested, and the vitality that fueled the beginning steps of creating the plan dissolved and many advocates who once heralded the plan as a step in the right direction are disillusioned with the county, the process, and the government that launched the initiative in 2003.

As one board member said “I rarely attend, I have no impact in what is happening on the HAAB. Why should I attend? I can always read about the meeting in the notes that they send out afterwards. I believe many of the board members don’t attend the meetings for just this reason.” He continued by saying, “This, along with the shifting of priorities of who to serve, from one federal administration to the next, has lessened the potential that the current plan, or any future plan, will ever be put in place and acted upon successfully in Allegheny County.”

The idea of Marxian commodification (i.e. market value replacing human value) was present in four board members statements that reflected on an increased focus on the importance of accumulating “stuff” in today’s world. Stuff referred to material items such as computers, cell phones, expensive clothing, new cars, Nike tennis shoes, and other high-end items that were beyond the means of a very low income homeless person. Even the homeless, stated one board member who worked with homeless youth, “are very much focused on collecting expensive things rather than purchasing basic and needed commodities like food for themselves or their family members.” This board member suggested that, as a whole, “human value is of little concern” and the “collection of things” has taken a hold of our deepest desires and needs in American culture.

Likewise, over concern by county officials for inciting NIMBY reactions among elite neighborhood groups spoke to the level of power that gentrified neighborhoods are exerting over

city and county officials. The increasing desire for property value over human need not only underscored commodified interests, but it also spoke to the widening gap between the rich and the poor, and the dehumanizing power that upper class individuals have over the lower classes that live in their neighborhoods.

Another board member intimated an underlying capitalist influence when he stated that “living on a minimum wage job was becoming increasingly more difficult to do,” as the cost of living in Allegheny County, and around the country, continues to rise. Unemployment is profitable within a capitalist system because it lowers wages. Yet, it does not benefit the homeless who cannot find a job. Capitalism unfairly manipulates the market by perpetuating unemployment which lowers demands for fair wages. Workers are pitted against one another at the service of increasing profits for owners.

One board member related to me that “40% of the homeless nationally actually have jobs.” A broad based understanding of the existence of economic injustice in the form of the rising cost of living was most evidenced by nonprofit providers and government members of the group, which represented at least 75% of the total membership. The remaining 25% who were less educated about homelessness and worked in the business and foundation community believed that homeless individuals had more control over their life situations and could “lift themselves up” out of poverty if they connected to the right resources and chose to make “a better life for themselves.”

Two board members believed that a minimum wage job could sustain a homeless individual if they “worked hard and tried to achieve the American Dream.” One of these members stated that public tax funds are “not targeted for the common good but instead are focused on maintaining a sense of corporate well-being.” Many voiced the belief that taxes

would not be raised in the near or far future to support social services and housing programs for the homeless because it was “not what the public wanted” rather than considering how the public was controlled by the capitalist-elite perspective.

One board member who had experienced homelessness in the past believed that the “world as it exists today is akin to slavery. People are working two jobs and still they don’t make enough to survive on.” Almost all members who were interviewed saw homelessness as a low priority that would not receive increased public attention or federal funding because the issue was not understood or supported enough by the public, media, or by politicians who were instead much more interested in cutting taxes and funding economic development for businesses and corporations. If anything, HAAB members believed that the focus on subpopulations of homeless individuals would continue to shift from chronic homelessness to family homelessness due to yet another swing in public sentiment of who was deserving of public support by the current administration. The ever changing opinion of who was most deserving of public funds also distracts attention from the larger picture which reveals that a growing number of low income people who are facing homelessness are impacted by a growing class divide.

In the end, global and systemic phenomenon relating to capitalist power structures begins to explain and reveal the reasons for growing incidences of homelessness. Yet, HAAB members do not visualize or connect this phenomenon to their own work to end homelessness. Board members, both governmental and nongovernmental, do believe that social inequities are manifested locally; they understand marginalization, alienation, commodification and false consciousness in ways that are not identified by Marxist context. It is when the local is considered in its global context that capitalist power-based-effects are experienced.

The usefulness of Marxism lies in its ability to reveal and interconnect broad structural and systemic dysfunction to local relationships that are controlled by state run institutions. Focusing on the whole, rather than the parts, should drive plans to end homelessness. Helping the HAAB, to see that they are only propping up the status quo, helps initiate a more profound discourse that looks to open minds, build informal networks, and launch creative solutions to ending homelessness; solutions that build on human relationships and communities of care.

In its first years of operation, the HAAB had one subcommittee working on education and public awareness to bring a heightened understanding about the global nature of homelessness to the general public, but this subcommittee is no longer functioning. Individual board members who once led this group, explained that “we were too busy working on an increasing number of tasks related to operating homeless assistance programs with less funding.” They did not have the time needed to work on increasing awareness efforts about the challenges that the homeless face. One member was thinking of starting the education committee up again because she realized how important education and awareness activities are if long-term change is to occur.

Still, everyone agreed that the energy and participation of board members that once existed in the beginning phases of the ten-year plan was no longer present. At the most recent quarterly meeting of the HAAB, there was agreement that the group should revisit the purpose of why the board existed in the first place. This would be the third time in five years that this questioning process has been instituted internally by board members. Revisiting the purpose of the board is in part generated from the belief that nothing has been substantively achieved.

At the HAAB meeting that I observed, one board member questioned openly in the meeting, “Has anything been achieved?” An Allegheny County representative immediately stood

up in the meeting and began listing programs that had been funded and housing opportunities that had become available since the plan was instituted. Still, few of these accomplishments were associated with the recommendations of the original ten-year plan that had been created five years ago through a public and private community planning process. These funds were part of traditional funding streams that functioned outside of the ten-year planning process.

To conclude, HAAB members understanding of homelessness continues to be impacted by the dominant class ideology of capitalism as it relates to the Marxian concepts of commodification, alienation, false consciousness and class rights and privileges. Capitalism drives the institutionalized constraints that the county officials face, who in turn control the plan to end homelessness by directing the decision-making process of the Homeless Alliance Advisory Board.

Non-governmental group members do not challenge the power of the county officials because they are reliant on them for funds. Challenging the decision making process would place them at risk of losing the funds. Over the years HAAB subcommittees, which were focused on particular goals of the plan, have ceased to meet. Participation in quarterly board meetings has dwindled, and members are no longer engaged in the process of ending homelessness.

In the end, it is the county officials that are controlled by larger capitalist processes, which furthers false consciousness, by supporting an unfunded plan that cannot be implemented due to a lack of political and public support. In this case, the Bush administration created a strategy that appeared to be beneficial for all homeless individuals in the nation. Yet, because the strategy lacked government backing and support, the county workers faced capitalist constraints which restrained them from implementing the recommendations of the ten-year plan. In the end,

homelessness continues to rise in Allegheny County, and the local HAAB group formed to end this occurrence, is largely ineffective in their efforts to end homelessness.

Many board members are aware that the plan is impacted locally by social inequalities and economic injustices, but they don't understand this in a theoretical context or in a systemic way that connects the power imbalances to the dehumanizing influences of capitalism. Few members link their local awareness of homelessness back to an understanding that explores how global economic impacts influence the local experience of homelessness. Instead, HAAB members are more focused on singular components of capitalism like class and race biases, government power relationships, and income disparity between the rich and the poor.

Still, as a rule, HAAB board members do not challenge those in charge of the plan. In fact, there is a silent acceptance of how the status quo is being supported, along with an understanding by some, that county official's hands are tied. Challenging power inequalities that are deeply submerged in globalized structures propped up by legalistic and political restrictions can be very difficult to change. Yet, I would argue that without this larger systemic understanding and re-activism against capitalism, alternative strategies will not be designed to counteract this dehumanizing supremacy, and no substantive change will occur in the short and long term; and most certainly homelessness will increase.

3. How are HAAB member views of homelessness affecting group decision-making processes related to the ten-year plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County?

Ironically, when I framed this research question, I believed that HAAB members were influenced by stereotypical thinking of homelessness and that this influence was impacting the group decision-making process and shaping the implementation of the ten-year plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County. My research has led me to understand this question in a

different light because member's views of homelessness were not stereotypical. In fact I found that it was irrelevant what their views were in the first place since the plan was being controlled by the county administrators of the group. Prior to my research I had believed that the HAAB was working from a consensus building model, as had been suggested within the original format launched in 2005. But instead I found that the group was being controlled by county administrators who made up 60% of the group membership. This fact was proven when a county administrator gave me a list of all the members. His list was subdivided by two columns – one was for government members, and the other was for nongovernment members. A percentage was calculated at the bottom of the column showing that 60% of the members were indeed county administrators. This was surprising to find out as the HAAB description (Appendix A) specifically stated that “sixty-five percent of the Advisory Board of the Homeless Alliance will be from non-governmental bodies.”

In any event, there was such a level of dissatisfaction among board members that the HAAB was no longer effective. This was demonstrated by: 1) lack of attendance at the meetings (on average 50% of the board members attended the quarterly meetings); 2) the fact that board members rarely spoke at the meetings; 3) the nonfunctioning status of the subcommittees; and finally by 4) the knowledge that board members did not set the quarterly agendas. In principle, the board was a non-working and non-functioning group that continued to meet only to satisfy the restrictions imposed by federal regulators who controlled the flow of funds to the county.

Furthermore, I found that county administrators (again 60% of the entire HAAB group) were constrained by the general public and political perceptions of homelessness. Their decision making processes and actions were driven by the desires of external elite power holders. The administrators were in a position where they could not act against public sentiment. As one non-

governmental member of the group explained, “the county is not in a position where they can legally advocate for, or fight for the homeless. This is because the political and public will does not approve spending funds on such a battle.” In this atmosphere of external constraints, nontraditional and alternative solutions to ending homelessness are not likely to occur.

Furthermore, nongovernmental HAAB member’s recommendations for ending homelessness are not asked for nor listened to in meetings. As several of the HAAB members informed me, they believed that their role on the board was “to support the county as they made decisions on how to fund homeless programs.” Another member suggested “the agendas and minutes are presented at the meetings to the board members and not mailed out prior to the meeting for group members to read.” He expressed his frustration by saying: “this isn’t enough time to digest what is to be presented at the meeting so I can speak to important issues when I’m there.” He went on to say, “I find that I cannot simply react to what is presented at the board meeting, because I really don’t have a grasp of the ideas that are being presented until I have time to think about all the dimensions of what the county members are presenting to us. I think about what I should have said afterwards when I realize the impact of the actions that they are taking are on the homeless.”

This data indicated to me that non-governmental board members had very little decision-making power or influence in the quarterly HAAB meetings. The decision-makers, I was repeatedly told by the nongovernmental board members, “were the Allegheny County Department of Human Services county administrators.” As one nonprofit board member summarized it, “we are nothing more than a figure head group, required to attend meetings which are mandated by the federal government. We go to the meetings ourselves because we are reliant on these federal funds to maintain our homeless assistance programs and the relationship

we have with the county must be maintained if we hope to receive these funds for our homeless assistance programs.”

This seems to counter the original purpose of the HAAB as explained here: The Homeless Alliance Advisory Board will, at a minimum, perform the following: review, advocate for, and promote positive changes in public policy on homelessness. Other tasks include identifying gaps and prioritizing housing and assisting in the implementation of recommendations laid out in the 10-year plan to end homelessness. The original eight recommendations laid out in Allegheny County’s ten-year plan to end homelessness are summarized as:

Table 4

Original Recommendations of the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness

Recommendation 1	To reduce the number of homeless.
Recommendation 2	To increase the affordable housing supply.
Recommendation 3	To develop, implement and maintain a comprehensive approach.
Recommendation 4	To improve how homeless consumers access supports.
Recommendation 5	To co-locate homeless services within regional centers.
Recommendation 6	To develop short-term and long-term public awareness programs.
Recommendation 7	To establish a central repository for financial contributions.
Recommendation 8	To advocate for accessible comprehensive health services.

Note: Taken from original ten-year plan posted on Allegheny County web-site

Generally speaking over the past five years since the plan was launched, only a few of these recommendations have been addressed by HAAB. As previously stated, the first recommendation and express purpose of the ten-year plan has not been achieved, because homelessness has increased in Allegheny County. The second recommendation has been addressed minimally with funds that were already being received through the county that were traditionally allocated to homeless service providers for existing Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD) programs; these funds would have still been available if the plan had not been instituted.

The third and fourth recommendations are ongoing goals that are already being addressed by a collaborative of homeless nonprofit providers through a homeless service provider entity in the county known as the Allegheny County Continuum of Care. The fifth, sixth and eighth recommendations have not been achieved, though initially, when the plan was adopted subcommittees were formed to focus on each of these specific recommendations but are now disbanded. The seventh recommendation was in part achieved, with donations received from the local foundation community, but these funds were dedicated to providing support for existing HUD funded permanent housing programs for the homeless not new ones made possible by the plan. Prior to the existence of this matching fund pool from the foundation community homeless providers had to seek financial support from the community at large, which proved to be difficult to do because the foundation community did not believe the programs were sustainable and deserving of their support.

Yet, it is important to note that one foundation member of the HAAB expressed general dissatisfaction during the interview process about a general lack of movement by the county to create new affordable housing as outlined in recommendation number two. Although a collaboration of local foundations had offered funds to the county administrators to accomplish this goal, the county refused to take them. This particular foundation member suggested that the lack of movement by Allegheny County government officials might be attributed to a fear of NIMBY (Not in My Back Yard) reactions, which often occurs in Pittsburgh when new housing programs are established for the homeless in the city. Another disengaged board member described two recent local encounters with NIMBY responses in relation to new housing that he was building in residential communities that had required years of federal court law suits to overcome. He stated that he believed that the county was not willing, nor financially able, to

become involved in such a protracted, negative, or legally prolonged community encounter for the purpose of building housing for the homeless.

In general, advocacy efforts that should have been occurring as indicated in recommendation #8 (“to advocate for accessible comprehensive health services”) were not occurring within the structure of the HAAB. One board member expressed an interest in motivating the board to take on this role within the board meetings. Likewise, in the follow-up focus group that was conducted, one particular non-governmental board member discussed his perception of advocacy efforts and the possibility of taking on this role with a few select nonprofit members who were committed to making a change. Although the topic of advocacy has often been referred to by HAAB members in the past, working to create an advocacy plan, strategy or subcommittee has yet to be achieved.

In general, a lack of board participation in the internal decision-making processes of the HAAB speaks to a lack of strategic planning, member feedback, outcome charting, reporting, and evaluation. As one HAAB member stated, “If the committee structure that was originally instituted to support the recommendations of the ten-year plan were still functioning, these specific recommendations would have been vetted, discussed, and strategically implemented.” Instead the subcommittees that met at the beginning of the planning process, gradually faded off, and at some point, “they were no longer brought up again at the HAAB meetings.”

Table 5

Original Subcommittee Structure of the Homeless Alliance Advisory Board

Original HAAB Sub-Committee	Meeting Location	Focus/Goals
Advocacy	905 Watson Street, Downtown Pittsburgh	Review current legislation and advocate for system change.
Health Resources and Services Delivery	7227 Tioga Street, Homewood	Advocate for comprehensive health care services
Homeless Outreach Coordinating Committee	374 Lawn Street, Oakland	Serve the hard to reach chronic street homeless
Housing Development	Various locations	To create new units of affordable housing
Housing	One Smithfield Street, Pittsburgh	Address housing barriers and improve quality of care
Supportive Services	One Smithfield Street, Pittsburgh	Build collaborations between homeless and non-homeless providers
Public Awareness & Education	Butler and 37th Streets, Lawrenceville	Create public awareness around homelessness and present opportunities for public to engage in solutions to end homelessness

Note: This document was part of the original Allegheny County ten-year plan to end homelessness

Of the eight originally formed subcommittees seen above, only three committees are still meeting: the Homeless Outreach Coordinating Committee, the Health Resources and Service Delivery Committee, and the Housing Committee. Although these committees still meet on a monthly basis, none of the committees are working on the recommendations established in the ten-year plan, and as a whole they are no longer reporting back to the HAAB. Additionally, the subcommittees no longer have representative members on the HAAB, except for the housing group, which includes a county staff person who facilitates the board meetings and attends the housing committee meeting on a regular basis.

Once again, it is important to point out that the primary subcommittee structure of the HAAB is no longer in place, that the board meetings are poorly attended, and that the group has never acted in an advocacy or policy driven capacity as it was originally intended to do. Most importantly, when observing the HAAB quarterly meetings, it was clear that information and decisions being presented were generated by the county staff and being reported out to the

nongovernmental board members who simply sat and listened to their report. Board members would also report in their interviews that meeting times for the HAAB would change unpredictably and sporadically, or they were cancelled without timely notice, making it even less likely that board members would have the ability to attend the meeting or even have the interest in doing so. Considering that the HAAB is an unfunded federal initiative that the county is required to maintain, it may seem understandable why more effort is not put into engaging the board. It can also be countered, that by placing all decision-making responsibility in the hands of the county staff members, nongovernmental board members have become less engaged and interested in participating in the HAAB. Lack of participation in part explains lack of accountability to the homeless that were to benefit from their efforts.

There is also another element that should be addressed here; conflict of interest. Many of the nonprofit board members are in competition for homeless assistance funds that the county distributes to them. Homeless providers who serve on the board have a definite conflict of interest, and are placed in a position where they have more access to information and funding that other nonprofits are not able to receive because they have not been invited to the table. It would behoove these board members to *not disagree* with the county decision-makers if they wish to continue to receive homeless assistance funding. Unfortunately, this also creates an unequal power relationship between board members and county administrators, as well as external homeless providers who are not invited to sit at the table. One cannot help but wonder if this fragmented and deeply submerged power structure detracts from the original purpose of the plan to end homelessness in ten-years, adversely affecting the possibility of having any of the HAAB recommendations fulfilled at all.

For the purpose of this dissertation, I have listed the original subcommittee structure of the HAAB, the locations where they were scheduled to meet, and the subcommittee's purposes above. Unfortunately, this original subcommittee structure is no longer operative and the intended goals are not being accomplished as the original plan had intended them to be through this preconceived structure. When the subcommittees stopped meeting, the goals of the plan slowly eroded and the original plan to end homelessness ended with them.

To summarize, the HAAB member views of homelessness are not affecting group decision-making processes because the group is no longer functioning as it was originally intended. As a nonfunctioning failed entity, the group continues to operate under the direction of county Department of Human Service officials, who are charged with sustaining the group to meet funding requirements set by the federal government. The original recommendations are not being implemented by the county, either because of lack of funds, or because implementing them would place the county in a position where they could be confronting NIMBYism (not in my back yard zoning and legal prohibitions) to site new facilities for the homeless.

4. How are outside or external capitalist ideologies and power-structures influencing or impacting HAAB's ten-year plan to end homelessness?

The external influences of capitalism over the plan to end homelessness were apparent yet deeply submerged within the design and nonfunctioning state of the HAAB in several ways. Most pronounced was the group's inability to decrease or diminish homelessness in Allegheny County. Since the plan was launched in 2005, powerful political and public influences have inhibited the county from allowing the HAAB to function within its originally constructed consensus driven design. The original design called for a board that was composed of diverse public and private stakeholders that could support the objective to end homelessness.

Another capitalist-driven-ideological impact was the creation of an unfunded plan that allocated no new sources of support to drive the recommendations of the plan. This put forth the false reality that leading federal officials were interested in ending homelessness, but subtler influences did not uphold the message. In reality, the majority of Americans face the prospect of homelessness because there is no job security, income equality, or guaranteed health care. These factors and more place us all in the position of being just one paycheck away from homelessness. Still, the majority of Americans live within this false consciousness, lacking the rights and privileges of the wealthy. Fragmented attention on the issue of inequality fractures a united struggle against an unjust and inequitable system of control. Sub-groups demand gender equality, race equality, and income equality, but little attention is given to the system that drives the phenomena. Fragmented attention further polarizes belief systems, much to the benefit of the elite class that furthers the goals of inequitable economic outcomes.

Current homeless assistance funding from the Obama administration, has been designated for families with a source of income or job. This reflects the traditional “deserving” of funds, homeless status, that Skocpol (1992, 1999) describes which aligns well with Marxist implications of class rights and privileges distinctions. An embedded political regime of state power extends the capitalist ideology in a way that dehumanizes human need and social relationships. With the most current economically driven capitalist crisis, HAAB members are very much aware that there are more homeless families in search of stable housing and support. Yet, the original objective of the ten-year plan to end homelessness in 2005, was to shelter the most vulnerable of all homeless populations, the chronically homeless, many who have long-term mental health and substance abuse issues. The shifting focus on different homeless

populations lessens the ability of the HAAB, and future groups, to create long-term plans to end homelessness for any group of homeless populations.

Locally, as well as nationally, there is a lack of shelters to house homeless families. Nationally, the increase in family homelessness is being tied to job losses and home foreclosures. Taken together these two trends speak to a broader and overarching failed economic system. Capitalism, as such, fuels outlandish credit crises which mirror overwhelming mortgage defaults, eviction rates, and the collapse of the epic housing bubble. This is the direct result of a failed capitalist-framed free market structure and philosophy. As poverty rates continue to increase in America, more profound exploration of capitalist tendencies will be required to overcome destructive and unsustainable patterns of state control. Clear messaging about the phenomena and alternative discourses can help redirect critical thinking to solution-focused strategies.

On the surface, HAAB members spoke to this phenomenon. Most specifically, the housing advocates recognized the trend by stating, “We need accountability. Money needs to be evenly distributed.” One board member went on to elaborate how funds that were federally marked for affordable housing were not being spent in this manner. One way to counteract this phenomenon is to pursue policy driven advocacy efforts, as recommended in the plan, and hold the government accountable to increasing the affordable housing stock. Yet, the political framework that dictates how government decisions are being made for the benefit of the capitalist-elite does not allow for revealing this type of false consciousness.

A less defined indicator of the influence of capitalism is the breakdown of the internal structure of the HAAB, which is reflected in the lack of attendance at meetings and the dissolution of the subcommittee structure that designed to implement the recommendations of the plan. The board, once very active, with functioning subcommittees and goal-driven agendas,

are disenfranchised by county official's control of the quarterly meetings. Board members explain it as such, "the county officials cannot adopt the recommendations of the plan, because the prescribed actions are in direct opposition to the political and public will. With 60% of the board composed of government officials, no advocacy or policy reform will occur, because these representatives are not permitted to participate in such dialogues." Likewise, building housing for the homeless will place them in a "legally precarious" position. NIMBY reactions are quite common in Pittsburgh, and the county does not have the funds nor the legal supports needed to take on such a battle. In this way, the county officials are controlled by the state administrative machine.

As previously described, the original recommendations of the plan are no longer being tracked or evaluated. The reasons for this are embedded, and subtly interwoven, in powerful relationships established between capitalist elites, government officials, county bureaucrats and the inner workings of the local HAAB. This debate, framed at the macro level in capitalist-ideological references of work and commodification of how funds are spent of those who cannot live independently are used to define the debate of who is deserving or undeserving of homeless assistance funds. Government officials crafting national plans to end homelessness must accommodate this capitalist agenda. Although homelessness is antithetical to capitalist attentions of work and products of labor, the fact that people who are homeless do not support their agenda, creates an antagonism where capitalist ideology reflects negative stereotypes of those who are without class rights and privileges awarded through employment and land ownership. In essence there are no human rights in a society where capitalism controls the state system of control. Dialogue that promotes human rights is often challenged by individual-centric philosophy fueled by concepts of commodification, i.e. the right to own things and advance materialistic interests

over humanistic goals. In this way we promote the dehumanizing aims of capitalism over our own human needs for compassionate relationships. Capitalists do not have a plan to accomplish this, as much as they have an ideological agenda that promotes their economic ends.

Although well intentioned, a national design to end homelessness implemented at the local level without funding is nothing more than a plan. Hoping that local entities will fund these plans by creating private/public structures like the HAAB; yet controlling the design of the plan and the allocation of the new funds by weighting the group with 60% county/government, creates a failed design because removes group investment and incentive that the goals of the plan will be implemented. County officials function under controls implemented by government officials who are subjected to publicly and politically unpopular goals which are driven by a capitalist ideologically based agenda which focuses on the goals of powerful elites who propel relationships with materialistically defined values that are based on economically based (not humanistic) principles of well-being. In a capital-centric economy, most forms of production involve the deployment of a great deal of capital, most often the use of machinery or other manufactured goods. Ownership and control of the means of production, is framed by institutionalized systems of control. Political, legal, religious and media superstructures maintain the power exerted on the public by capital that humans are reliant on for their very livelihood. In this way, "the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer," through a fundamental economic reality that places us in a position of reliance and indebtedness to the capitalist.

Such a state-driven regime of ownership and control creates injustice-premised capitalism, which disenfranchises large portions of the population that are reliant on capital. Inversely, the capitalist is not reliant on individual wage earners, because they have a vast supply of workers to choose from, and settle on those that are willing to do the most for the least amount

of money. In these unjust conditions, homelessness and poverty are bred. County officials are just as reliant on the state machine as minimum wage workers are. Their jobs are dispensable and they can be easily replaced by another lower wage worker. This drives the cautionary tendencies of the county officials who are reluctant to take on the state in the fight to gain human rights and housing for the most disenfranchised populations living in Allegheny County. Likewise, nonprofit workers face the same capitalist-driven dilemma, at risk of losing their homeless assistance program funds and their jobs for opposing an ingrained system of control and subservience. In this way, commodification, alienations, false consciousness, and class rights and privileges drive the analogy of injustice and indebtedness.

Furthermore, public and private stakeholders who have been appointed to accomplish the recommendations of the plan to end homelessness are unable to do so, because they have no decision-making power available to them to influence the adoption of the recommendations of the plan. Instead the board meets quarterly (the 50% that attend) and receives information given to them by the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, and at times makes comments about the topics. Their recommendations and suggestions, although listened to in the context of the meeting, may not be followed or instituted. Those who originally met in subcommittees to further the recommendations of the plan, became frustrated at the lack of action taken by the county officials, and divested themselves from working on the plan. Still, nonprofit members attend the meetings to gain inside information about how funds will be directed so they are in a better position for obtaining an increasingly smaller pot of funds in the future.

At a 2010 quarterly meeting of the HAAB, it was reported by the county that a local shelter and low income housing unit was about to close down due to financial difficulties that the nonprofit organization that operated the facility was facing due to rising utility payments and

staff health care costs directly related to deteriorating economic conditions in the country. When hearing of this dilemma, the nongovernmental board leader reacted by asking county government board members what they were doing to avert the loss of the shelter and established single occupancy rooms for very low income and homeless individuals. The county responded that they were doing work behind the scenes, but the work that they were doing could not be reported to the board due to the sensitive issues surrounding what nonprofits that the county was choosing to work with, their interest or lack of interest in supporting the project, and the funding arrangements associated with adopting the project.

All these issues were confidential and sensitive, and could not be publically discussed. Yet, this “behind the scenes work” was happening without the support of the other board members given the decision-making recommendations, funds, or advice that they may have been able to offer, some who were members of foundations that might have access to potential funding sources. This example portrays how the HAAB is not being used effectively used to support potential crisis situations, which would lead to increased numbers of homeless individuals in the county, a direct conflict to recommendations of the ten-year plan to end homelessness.

External capitalist forces driving the crisis cannot be overcome by the county-controlled HAAB. If the group was functioning as the public/private entity that it was designed to be, advocacy and public policy actions could be taken to bring to light the more profound issues surrounding the inability of homeless assistance organizations to sustain operations given the escalating costs of meeting the needs of homeless individuals. Instead, the external conditions of capitalism are institutionalized in state and county-run administrative and political

superstructures which slowly erode humanistic goals. In its place, capitalistic-ideological agendas focus on economic well-being over human well-being.

Given this information it can be summarized that external powers have diminished the goals and implementation of the plan to end homelessness. The HAAB board, as a whole, lacks any substantive control of the plan, including the required funds needed to implement the goals. They also lack the decision-making powers to facilitate the recommendations and the process. Finally, they lack a board member feed-back loop or evaluation process, therefore, they are unable to track outcomes detailing progress on the original recommendations of the plan.

County-led decision making processes are informed by larger public and political frameworks that adhere to materialistically controlled capitalist-based constraints. County officials are unable to build new housing, create 24 hour support centers, advocate public-policy changes, nor campaign in the media for reversed attitudes and perceptions as the original plan mandated because of the institutionalized constraints that inform their day to day actions. As one member reflected, “The public and politicians are calling for diminished taxes to pay for human services, affordable housing, and shelter, with an increased focus on economic development over human development. A general lack of public supports for helping the homeless indicates a break down in our national system of care for those in need.”

Not only do politicians emphasize materialistic goals over humanistic ones; the homeless do as well. As several board members noted, the homeless want “stuff” like “expensive cell phones, rather than to pay for their own food and shelter, which would help keep them off the streets.” As one homeless provider board member said, “I have young kids who are coming out of the foster system, and becoming homeless, simply because they want to buy something they can’t afford like expensive shoes, and then they end up on the street homeless.” Because

commodification is so deeply internalized on a personal, institutional, and ideological level, economic interests easily prevail over humanistic ones, which would be more focused on decreasing homelessness through affordable housing, decreased utility costs, providing shelter and ensuring access to other public supports like health care for all.

Veblen's (1899) theory of "conspicuous consumption" suggests that poorer groups of people want to give the impression that they are a member of an elite group, by publically displaying that accumulation of things, but the behavior of the homeless youth goes beyond this because they are buying costly material things because they believe that they can achieve happiness through the accumulation of these things. As the member recounted, "It's what they see on television, on the internet. They develop a hunger for these things. When foster kids who have aged out of the system finally do have a few bucks to spend, they spend it on shoes or clothes, instead of paying the rent. Then they end up homeless."

Interestingly the original intent, purpose, and focus of the ten-year plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County were created with humanistic interests in mind. Initially, the planning process brought together a larger group of diverse and interested stakeholders composed of business, education, foundation, health, nonprofit, and governmental representatives (almost 100 people in all) who recommended policy changes, advocacy, education, and other systemic methods to end homelessness locally. These more systemic recommendations were never acted upon once the plan was created and under the auspices of the county-led HAAB. It can be argued that because the plan was placed in the hands of these county officials (60% of the group) that the systemic recommendations were stymied because of external federal regulatory bodies that controlled their actions.

Ultimately, external capitalist ideologues and unjust power-structures have influenced the HAAB's ability to implement the recommendations of the ten-year plan to end homelessness by exerting political and governmental systemic controls over the county decision makers. Unable to initiate actions that are counter mainstream political positions, the recommendations of the plan have not been adopted. As one administration framed it, "we are faced with yet another governmental plan that is nothing more than that. It is just a plan." Still, grass roots efforts to organize diverse stakeholders in the process did drive an educative process. But after the education occurred, there was no opportunity to engage in action and solutions. This alienated the nongovernmental members of the HAAB and the plan lost a level of local membership support that it will not win back in the near future. In this way, grass root efforts to end homelessness were stifled by a top-down capitalist superstructure.

This was evident because county officials were constrained by ideologies that politically restricted their capacities to implement group recommendations. As a result, the recommendations of the original ten-year plan were lost in the process, including the suggestions to build housing for the homeless, advocate for policy changes, create public education and awareness campaigns, promote comprehensive health care coverage, and to facilitate the co-location of homeless services within regional centers (see Appendix F). Because these recommendations were contradictory to capitalist ideologies, which the county officials upheld, they were judged to be non-deserving of the public supports outlined in the original ten-year plan.

In this way capitalist ideologies prevent the formation of class consciousness ignoring the existence of economic hardships for the majority of all Americans. This is evident in the lack of media attention focused on the homeless, a reason for the original recommendation to educate

the public through media campaigns. In Marxism, the superstructure of society, or the ideological institutions that arise from its economic base (i.e., law, culture, politics and the media) reflect and endorse the economic systems that reproduce these institutions and form the base of society. County officials, the decision-makers with the majority of votes on the HAAB, are public officials that are controlled by these institutions. Implementing the recommendations of the ten-year plan would have placed them at risk of legal, political, and public disapproval.

5. How will an added awareness of the powerful effects of capitalism and its prevailing dominant class ideology transform group members thinking in a way that impacts actions or strategies taken to advance the ten-year plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County?

My data revealed that there is increased awareness about the complex issues that drive increases in homelessness among HAAB members, especially for those who were not previously involved with the issue. During the interviews, these members spoke to their own original biases and considered how their own stereotypical representations of homeless individuals had diminished as the result of their involvement on the board. One member said, “I didn’t realize how many families were homeless prior to my participation within HAAB. Homeless people are not just bums like the media portrays them to be. Many have lost their jobs and don’t have a family to depend on.” This particular individual related a story of how she had rallied her office staff around helping a homeless teenager that had come to them for help. She said she may not have acted this way had she not been “educated during the HAAB meetings.” She concluded that homeless people were “not to be feared.”

Other nonprofit board members, many who are immersed in day to day work experiences with the homeless, exhibited a broader understanding of how the county supports the homeless with a set of diverse homeless assistance programs in Allegheny County. Nonprofit leaders

recognized that they had increased access to available government and foundation funding through the informal relationships created by their participation on the board. Some had been able to apply for additional funds due to these relationships and the knowledge of how the county planned to disburse existing funds.

As one person communicated during the interview process, holding a position of privilege by sitting on the board had a “double-edged effect.” To not agree with the county on how funds should be allocated “puts me in jeopardy for losing future funding. It also places me in a position where I cannot provide critical feedback and suggestions which might improve upon the plan.” In the end, this structural tension protected the position of power that county staff exerted over other members. Placing the lead county decision makers in the position of “quarterback” allowed him to call all the plays and determine the strategy for how future funds would be spent. This included avoiding implementation of recommendations that he deemed to be against public opinion. In this controlled environment, those who are most supportive of county actions and decisions were more likely to receive favored status and future funding.

The county officials were strategically constrained by powerful outside influences. As one non-county member framed it, “At the beginning of the planning process, we all agreed that more affordable housing needed to be put in place for the street homeless. The county though, is not in a position where they can take on a protracted legal battle, which might ensue, if they were to build housing facilities for them. This has often occurred in Allegheny County, and I have only seen some nonprofits overcome the political, legal and public dissent against building new facilities for the homeless.”

Remarkably, how homelessness is being addressed by the county does not sit well with the foundation community members of the HAAB. Foundation members had been called to be a

part of the board originally because it was believed that they would bring added resources to some of the unfunded federal recommendations that had been proposed in the original plan to end homelessness. Yet, this is not what happened over the course of time. Instead, foundation members who had the desire to implement the recommendations of the plan were met with resistance. As one foundation member reflected, “We recommended best practice solutions and even visited cities where other communities had been successful in decreasing homelessness. We took a lead role by inviting and paying for, other board members to accompany us in the process.” With the HAAB members that accompanied them, they chose a best-practice research-driven strategy that had effectively ended homelessness in another city. The group then proposed a solution that supported the original recommendation of the plan to build more housing for the homeless. The model that they chose was the “Housing First Model” which endorses placing homeless individuals directly into housing without strict requirements for clean time or an agreement to enter into mental health treatment.

Unfortunately, the suggestions of the foundation community, and consequently other members of the board, were not supported by county officials. Even with the added offer of providing funding for the purpose of launching this best practice, Housing First model, the county officials would not pursue it. Many believed this was in part due to an unwillingness of the county officials to build affordable housing developments that they believed would bring on NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) responses from the broader community, media and political leaders. One member suggested that a “lead Department of Human Services decision-maker did not want to threaten his public image with the anticipated negative public reaction,” and would never endorse such an effort. Whatever the reason, the county’s unwillingness to work cooperatively with the rest of the board, despite the research done by the foundation community,

antagonized at least two board members and even more foundation leaders in the wider community. At least three board members reported this same concern, triangulating the existence of this particular capitalist-based power dilemma.

On a more positive note, the HAAB structure had created increased communication, education and awareness among board members that did not have previous relationships with the county and homeless assistance providers in the past. This increased level of awareness had helped decrease the “silo effect” of local federal funds, which as one member stated it, “often leads to gaps in service and fragmented resources for the homeless.” As a result of increased levels of awareness, available funds are now being leveraged across silos to address the more broad-based concerns of the homeless. As a county administrator noted, “increased communication as the result of the ten-year planning process has allowed us to work more proactively together to share information and access new funding sources.”

Still, the county approaches the challenges of homelessness with a “consumer” frame of reference. By relating to the homeless participants as consumers, they emphasize capitalist ends over human ones. As one board member talked about this dichotomy she said, “The plan tends to emphasize the belief that homeless individuals work independently of their own desires, hierarchy of needs, and communities of friends and supports. When faced with a housing crisis, the homeless need many different level supports, not one at a time. The way the plan is set up now, homeless individuals must travel all over town to access one service at a time, when they have no funds and no transportation to do so.” Furthermore, without asking for feedback from homeless individuals, it is likely that the solutions will be fragmented and county-led services may be impossible for people struggling with poverty to access.

However, with increased communication among board members and service providers, there has been added attention paid to understanding individualized needs of the homeless, as well as streamlining and combining existing services so that homeless individuals can access support in a more efficient and less regulated ways. An example is the increased communication occurring between city and county housing authority officials, which has created an opportunity for nonprofit and county members to informally discuss how to navigate tightly restricted housing rules and regulations, allowing for easier access to vacant subsidized housing units.

Consequently, there is not enough affordable housing available to meet the needs of people facing housing crises and poverty in Allegheny County. According to one HAAB member, “county affordable housing units are at or above 95% capacity, and waiting lists indicate that there is not enough low income housing units available to house low-income individuals in the community.” Unfortunately, the information being generated by the group is not reaching the media, politicians or the public (most probably for the same reasons that county officials are not sharing information with these same entities), nor is the increased need being documented for the purpose of approaching new funding sources. Quite a few HAAB members addressed this by pointing out to me in their interviews that the “data that is being collected is not adequately being used to promote an increased awareness in the wider community.”

As one foundation board member stated, if we would make the case for the “Million-Dollar Murray,” which refers to tracking one homeless person through all the systems of service that they are being supported by (i.e., hospitals, jails, psychiatric services, and shelters), and show how cost-inefficient this is when compared to what it would cost if we placed him in housing, then we would gain credibility for promoting the plan. His belief was that this cost efficient approach to ending homelessness might be more palatable for community members that

are driven by economic values. Unfortunately, the data about homelessness that is currently being generated by the county is not being used to inform the strategic planning process at the board or community level, or to drive the board's education and advocacy efforts with the public.

Finally, I must make mention to the transformative effect that occurred during the interview and focus group process as a result of this research study. Most of the HAAB (50%) members had been serving on the board for more than two years. All of the members were very much interested in achieving the goal to end homelessness in Allegheny County. Many had never before been asked for their opinions and evaluation of the board's progress and they were interested in sharing their perspectives with me. Often the recommendation for advocacy came up within interviews and conversations. The final focus group, which occurred after a HAAB quarterly meeting, was attended by almost half of the board members who had attended the meeting (only 11 members were present during that meeting). At this time the topic of advocacy was brought up by the board members, and an underlying interest was expressed to increase advocacy efforts of the group. Having an opportunity to talk about a desire to do something together outside of the county-led HAAB meeting offered a time and place for the issue to be better considered and discussed without county official intervention. As one member stated, "the county will not take on the role of advocacy, if we are to act on something together we may need to do this outside the HAAB structure." Since that time, a group of nonprofit organizations are working on building such an effort. Discussing the role of advocacy with board members may have aided in the process of starting such an effort locally.

Likewise, since I have interviewed the foundation members about their desire to fund a housing initiative for chronically homeless individuals, these members have chosen to fund a Housing First facility with the support of a local nonprofit without HAAB endorsement or

participation. This praxial transformation has occurred through informal networking among members, education and discussion. My data indicates that some members have found alternative ways to implement the recommendations of the ten-year plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County.

To conclude, an added awareness of challenges and barriers created by external barriers attributed to the capitalist superstructure has transformed some HAAB members thinking. Stigmatized perceptions that were once held by some members have been overcome. Likewise, members who were frustrated by barriers to plan implementation have found alternative ways to facilitate the goals of the plan outside of the formal structure of the group. A process of reflection and critical discourse has inspired praxical thinking, similar to what Brazilian educator Pablo Freire (1996, 1970) conceptualized, leading to transformative actions being adopted by nongovernmental board members who are committed to ending homelessness in Allegheny County.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Traditional research studies looking to end homelessness tend to focus on coupling housing and individual support, rather than reallocating scarce resources to community programs (Culhane & Metraux, 2008). Many of these studies analyze the cost effectiveness of existing programs and suggest that placing the homeless in permanent housing rather than shelter is a more cost efficient use of funds (Lewin Group, 2004; Culhane, Metraux & Hadley, 2002). Other studies focus on racism or classism as a prevailing determinant that must be addressed to end homelessness (Galster, 2002). Underlying rationales for these research studies often focus on ways to determine the alleged deserving and undeservingness of homeless subgroups to justify distribution of dwindling public resources (Skocpol, 1992, 1999). Very few research studies consider and explore ways to end homelessness by focusing on methods that can diminish the growing incidences of poverty globally, which I argue, drives the growing numbers of homeless people in our society (Darby, 1996).

This dissertation is unique in that it suggests that alternative approaches exist for poverty reduction strategies. My research approaches this broader view of the world by exploring how capitalism is influencing a local group's effort to end homelessness. My premise being that within the globalized system of capitalism, economic goals are shaped for the benefit of an elite few, rather than for the benefit of the masses, of which a growing number are becoming homeless (Shipler, 2004). The theoretical assumptions of Marxism provide the critical tools needed to explore and reveal the origins of homelessness as impacted by powerful and socially complex capitalist ideologies and deep systemic influences (Musolf, 2003). This assertion prompts the necessity to use Marxian concepts to answer my five research questions.

Interestingly, Marxist theory is often portrayed as a dogmatically failed world view; yet, its influence continues to gather strength as global economic and environmental systems fail around us. Each failure deepens the crisis and impacts us on a much deeper human level (Wesson, 1976; Churchich, 1990). Marxism shifts our focus to historical and materialistic perspectives that intuitively explain how homelessness has evolved over time, specifically as it relates to; 1) human relationships and suffering, 2) the way we choose to relate to each other, 3) and the way we perceive ourselves in a commodified world (Ollman, 1976; Rossi, 1989).

In this dissertation, Marxist theory creates the opportunity to reach both inwardly and outwardly for a deeper understanding of why poverty and homelessness exists in the first place. Alienation, false consciousness, commodification, and class relations are the Marxian sensitizing concepts that help me to reveal deep and powerful systemic problems that are driven by the culture of capitalism. Adopting such a lens, allows for deeper introspection related to processes and policies that drive strategies and plans developed by the federal government. In the case of the plan to end homelessness, the process began with an imperative obligation to involve the public in the development and writing of the plan.

In Allegheny County, engagement of a much larger group of advocates launched the process to end homelessness locally in the spring of 2005. A plan was created, and the HAAB was appointed by County Executive Dan Onorato, based on the recommendations of the local county officials. When community leaders were put in place on the HAAB, the group faced an obstruction of which they have never been able to overcome. This was the impetus of the county officials to set governmental group membership at 60%. Since that time, the subcommittees, who had taken on specific tasks, have dissolved and the plan has run-aground, with little effort being placed on meeting the vision of the plan, which was to end homelessness. In the end, non-

governmental group members are alienated, the process has been commodified and attendance is failing, with an average of 50% of the membership not attending each quarterly meeting. A false consciousness has arisen that follows the members as they continue to meet despite the fact that the group is no longer working to achieve the recommendations goals. In this way, homelessness continues to grow in the county, and no unified approach has been adopted to inhibit the process.

In the end, the subtle and hidden influences of capitalism are exerted on the efforts of the group, and the plan to end homelessness (Rossi, 1989). In this process I have discovered how human identity and group relationships are formed and bounded in the political, public and private realm and how they are constantly being reshaped to fulfill capitalist ends (Giddings, 2010). The Homeless Alliance Advisory Board (HAAB), the local group working to end homelessness, provides an excellent micro and macro view of the deeply embedded, cultural influences that drive homelessness. The culture of capitalism defines the lifestyles of people who are residing within a capitalist society. In our world, national capitalist ideology and economic constraints define the way individuals relate to each other, with government actors acting as regulators for capitalist elites. Central to this mind set is business interests, consumerism and economic individualism (Robbins, 2005). These influences feed increases in poverty and homelessness (Churchich, 1990; Freire, 1970).

More specifically, my exploration of the HAAB's work focused on the role that dominant class ideology plays in state run systems of capitalist control where government officials act as regulators for the capitalist elite. Activists that wish to enact humanistic alternative strategies to end homelessness are best served to act outside of the governmental systems that control their actions and recommendations. Ending homelessness will require a broader mindset that resists the economic interests of capitalist elites. As in the case of the HAAB, resistance can be

promulgated through building trusting relationships, creating a space for cathartic public discourse, inspiring knowledge formation, and by experiencing group identity outside of governmental structures (Fromm, 1991; Gramsci, 1971). Digging into these dense thickets of understanding and inter-connections required a unique methodological approach. Following Burawoy's lead (2000), the extended case method (ECM) approach, provided a deeply reflexive and ethnographic path and methodology which allowed for further investigating of anomalies to extend and reconstruct Marxist theory (Burawoy, 2009).

My first anomaly indicated that through education, discourse, and interactions with group members who had worked with the homeless, many of the business, foundation, and community leaders had transformed their dominant ideologically informed perceptions of homelessness. Prior to interaction with the HAAB, many of these members had held stigmatized perceptions of homelessness, i.e. the homeless are bums, lazy, living off the public dole, etc. (Murray & Hernstein, 1994; Lewis, 1996; Mead, 1986; Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1981). Over the course of several years of being involved with the board, praxis had occurred and many understood that deeper economic-driven reasons for homelessness existed (Korsch, 1974).

Another anomaly that I discovered within the research process was the failed group consensus-building structure of the HAAB. My original assumptions about the group as an outsider, was that polarized viewpoints between diverse stakeholders groups were influencing the group-decision making process (Skocpol, 1992; Sommerville, 2005; Wynne-Edwards, 2003; Rossi, 1989). I had believed that I would experience power-based polarized arguments play out in HAAB meetings, effectively reducing and retrenching support for the poor (Mishel & Bernstein, 1993). Indeed, this was not the case for the local HAAB.

Instead, I discovered that there was no disagreement among members because decision-making was not occurring within the group in the first place. I was quite surprised to discover that, for the most part, HAAB board members were passive observers in the ten-year planning process. Their role as board members, as described in appendix A, was nonexistent. Instead, they were essentially passive observers in a process that was being shaped and determined by the county officials who were HAAB members, who comprised 60% of the group membership. Decisions took place in county offices outside of the group meetings. As Gramsci (1972) might explain it, the county officials had managed to win “active consent over those whom it rules” (pg. 244). The remaining members were simply observers of the process.

Despite the fact that all board members were not active in overseeing the ten-year plan to end homelessness, the HAAB continued to meet on a quarterly basis as dictated by the national Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Department.⁵⁶ One of the reasons the quarterly meetings continued was because HUD required the county to hold them. Failure to conduct these meeting would lead to the loss of funding received from them, of which Allegheny County receives over 13 million dollars a year. Remarkably, although the HAAB meetings are occurring to end homelessness in Allegheny County, the incidences of homelessness is increasing and all board members are unable to reverse the trend as they have no power to do so in the process.

Finally, it is important to mention that original recommendations that had been written into the plan by a larger public collective of involved and interested community members are not being implemented by the county officials as they are believed to be politically risky. An example is the original recommendation to build housing units for the chronically homeless (see appendix E). If the county officials had pursued this recommendation, they may have been

⁵⁶ This is detailed in the Continuum of Care application found on HUD’s website at <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=CoC2010NOFA.pdf>.

caught within a legally and politically precarious NIMBY (Not in My Back Yard) situation where the public could sue them for building undesirable housing in their neighborhoods (Takahashi, 1997; Wynne-Edwards, 2003). It is these negative and stigmatized perceptions of the homeless that often drive NIMBY responses (Sommer, 2001).

At the same time external political influences dominate the actions of the county officials. Dominant political, public, and media influences are covertly exerting power over the plan to end homelessness as county officials are powerless to oppose them (Poulantzas, 1981; Foucault, 1980). Although it may appear that county officials have control (Gramsci, 1970) over the HAAB, they themselves are subject to domination. This is because pursuing “risk-filled” recommendations to end homelessness, threatens their ability to receive future funds and much needed public support. Thus, it can be reasoned that the plan to end homelessness is being manipulated systemically by capitalist ideology. This bureaucratic “iron cage” phenomena not only controls public sentiment about the homeless, it controls the political process (Weber, 1958; Durkheim; 1952; Marx, 1867). Systemic capitalist ideologies furthered by institutionalized processes undermine humanistic aims, like ending homelessness and “objectify” relationships, furthering an evolution of dehumanization (Marx & Engels, 1844).

The national plan to end homelessness is a goal that almost every HAAB member believes cannot be accomplished. There are also many critiques of this presidential initiative that believe this as well. As Henderson (2010) explains, to effectively address the phenomena of homelessness, it would require recognition of deep systemic dysfunction in “an economic system that relegates people to homelessness as a result of social inequality.”⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Henderson comments on the change.org blog “Why Ending Homelessness Is Impossible.” Retrieved on-line on January 11, 2011, at <http://news.change.org/stories/why-ending-homelessness-is-impossible-and-how-we-can-do-it>.

Although HAAB members support the goal to end homelessness, almost all recognized that this was unachievable in their open interview sessions. Many said they chose to participate on the board, as in the case of the nonprofit providers, because they receive tacit benefits from being involved with the group. This includes having privileged access to information about internal planning efforts of the county and receiving favored status for future funding initiatives (Scott & Scott, 1971).

In the end, discussing the progress and challenges of the ten-year plan to end homelessness was both cathartic and revealing for many members of the HAAB. Open-ended interviews provided an opportunity to inspire praxical thinking (Freire, 1970; Lefebvre, 1972) through exploration of power-based challenges that the plan had faced. In the process of evaluating the current plan and talking about alternative strategies and recommendations that had not been addressed by county officials, praxical thinking (Aristotle, 335 B.C) was inspired and alternative approaches to accomplishing the recommendations of the original plan were developed. It was the desire to achieve praxis which guided my inquiry process, helping to uncover the conditions that promoted alienation and false consciousness within the group (Thomas, 1993). Ultimately, I found that as Crotty (1998) suggests, it was by revealing false consciousness that I was able to "unmask hegemony and address oppressive forces" (p. 12) being experienced by the group.

Building human-focused, rights-driven, dialogue among HAAB members led to a re-exploration of the role of advocacy and public awareness, one of the original recommendations of the plan to end homelessness (hooks, 1992; Burawoy, 2000). As of this writing, some of the non-governmental board members have chosen to work together on the recommendations and plan implementation is taking place outside of the county-controlled boundaries of the group. For

example, the goal of building housing for the chronically homeless is being actively pursued outside of the HAAB by members who were unsatisfied with the county officials' inability to act on the recommendation. Accordingly, praxis has been achieved due to the hermeneutic process of education, reflection and action (Freire, 1970). In the course of exploring how the dominant ideology of capitalism influences power over the group, members were motivated to find alternative strategies to implement the recommendations of the ten-year plan to end homelessness (Prasad, 1983).

In recent decades, classical Marxism has become increasingly marginalized as an intellectual tradition, with academics and advocates actively choosing to ignore the introspective and critical premises that the theory offers as it relates to exploring complex social phenomenon like homelessness (Wesson, 1976; Fukuyama, 2006). Sociological aspects of Marxism build on classical Marxist revelations by illuminating the connection between dominant ideology and capitalist power dynamics that lead to dehumanizing social relationships (Wright & Burawoy, 2004). In this way, Marxist tradition clarifies why growing occurrences of homelessness are happening in our capitalist society (Barak, 1991).

The extended case method approach allowed me to build on the strengths of Marxism to understand the more complex power dynamics that drive homelessness. In this way, it allowed me to reconstruct and extend the theoretical strengths of Marxism by interlinking trends in dehumanization with commodification, alienation, false consciousness and class rights and privileges (Burawoy, 2000). Although Marx speaks to human need for community and relationship, he does not clearly lay out a path on how it can be achieved, even after social transformation occurs. This dissertation suggests that education, informal networks, and a desire

to achieve a more humane world where the homeless are supported is possible when praxical reflection and action occurs.

Marxism helps to reveal the relationship between ideology and power (Evens & Handelman, 2006). In the case of the HAAB, the county-run initiative upholds state-run institutionalized power dynamics due to political and legal superstructures that control county officials' actions and behaviors. Unable to implement recommendations that reinforce advocacy, housing first approaches, and development of regional centers, deflated the hopes of the local group. The plan to end homelessness was indeed nothing more than a plan, and the status quo approach to ending homelessness continues to this day. In the process, the numbers of homeless are increasing in Allegheny County, and the services that are available to them are diminishing.

Olin Wright (1997) and Michael Burawoy (2001) have suggested that a "Marxist sociology" can be developed to better expose how complex social concepts and dominant capitalist ideologies transform the way that we relate to each other as human beings. This dissertation begins to explore this power based social dynamic. Although classical Marxist writings begin to reveal these powerful influences, theory extension and reconstruction may lead to stronger prescriptive actions and theory definition for the purpose of overcoming the dehumanizing effects of capitalism.

Marxism offers a lens is which to view capitalism in its true state, a destructive force that destabilizes and erodes human relationships (Zaloom, et. al, 2006). Increasing levels of poverty and homelessness may be the social phenomena that best reveals the hidden dynamics of this unjust and inhumane way of life. Marx best understood that human beings crave community and caring social relationships. In a capitalized world we become alienated from ourselves and each other through the perverse ideological messages that prop up an elite few.

My research reveals how institutionalized state-run initiatives reinforce this process of dehumanization. My analysis may also prove to be useful to the hundreds of other groups that are working on similar plans to end homelessness in their communities. At this time, few research studies focus on revealing and addressing the powerful influences of capitalism, even though this system of control drives increases in homelessness. I believe that strategies that do not take into consideration these social and relational influences are destined to fail, and will continue to maintain a status quo approach to ending homelessness (Gibson, 1994).

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels (1846) describe how the dominant class ideology of capitalism creates false consciousness and alienation of the masses. Inversely, capitalism continues to define the dominant and powerful ideological discourse of our society and social reality (McLaren, 2005). As a result, our social framework that interprets how we view the world is entrenched with unnegotiated values, ethics, and meaning that is structurally deterministic and limiting (Freire, 1970). As Marx and Engels (1842) explain it, dominant class ideologies control the masses for the benefit of the elite capitalist class. How this is accomplished is theoretically and socially complex, and at times it is submerged and unknown to us, because social relationships have been commodified in such a way that we are alienated from our own need and desire for human relationships.

My original premise was that superstructures were constraining the. I discovered that the opposite is also true. The superstructure reinforces the constraining power relationships of the base. The county officials were constrained by political powers and public perceptions of homelessness) and acts accordingly. In the process of exploration I began to understand how both the base and superstructure are composed of tightly interwoven social relationships and power dynamics. As Marx (1859) states, “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their

existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness." Indeed, government and nonprofit members of the HAAB were constrained by lack of funds, and also by the inability to take on political risky consequences like NIMBYism, which may have resulted if they would have actively chosen to implement the best practice recommendations of plan (Feinerman, Finkelshstein, & Kan, 2004).

Given these findings, I believe that sociological Marxist tradition can be reconstructed and extended to reveal how social relationships are dehumanized by capitalist informed ideologies, state-run institutions, and the superstructures that control them. My research indicates that social relationships have the potential to evolve beyond these powerful constraints through a process of critical reflection and discussion. Furthermore, praxical actions must occur outside of institutionalized structures of control. Extending Marxist theory to consider hidden, dense and socially complex implications builds upon Burawoy's (2009) pursuit of "institutional renovation" (p. 476). It also furthers Freire's (1970) recommendation to pursue transformative praxical change through reflection, education, informed participation, and empowerment.

Following O'Connor's (1973) findings, I believe theory reconstruction should also focus on provoking episodes of institutional renovation within failing bureaucratic group structures and relationships. In the case of the HAAB, non-governmental members were frustrated with the lack of action taken by county officials, creating an impetus to develop their own informal networks to implement recommendations of the ten-year plan outside of the state-run institutionalized structure. This approach follows classical Marxist prescriptions, which promotes innovative changes, but differs in that it looks to build informed, formalized and educated social networks outside of embedded capitalist controlled institutions (Korsch, 1974).

One can argue that a complex structure of organized resistance will not surface quickly but in small evolutionary steps as informal networks are created, connected and sustained to combat social inequities. In the case of the local HAAB, it appears that the top-down un-funded national strategy to end homelessness has been ineffective, given the overarching effects of capitalism. Still, the informal networks that were created by bringing private and public community leaders together to work on the goal of ending homelessness led to increased awareness and plan implementation outside of the state run structure of the HAAB. It can be further argued that without broad-based community involvement, the status quo effort to end homelessness will continue. This study suggests that future efforts should occur outside of the county structure, where deeply embedded institutionalized capitalist constraints obstruct new and alternative approaches to accomplishing the goal of diminishing and ending homelessness locally.

Political sentiment about homelessness has long been in a state of flux since the HAAB was formed five years ago. The conservative presidential regime that first proposed an unfunded ten-year plan to end homelessness is no longer in power. New plans to end homelessness that focus on other “deserving” subpopulations of homeless are already on the horizon. It is evident that short-lived plans do not lend themselves to long-term solutions. This dissertation reveals that deep and transformative change requires bringing to light the systemic influences of capitalism that drive homelessness locally and nationally. Future research studies should build upon the information generated in this dissertation so that strategies to end homelessness will take into account the powerful and hidden dynamics of capitalism that drive poverty and dehumanized social relationships.

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APPENDIX A

Homeless Alliance Advisory Board Description

Membership Structure

- A. The Homeless Alliance Advisory Board is convened by the Allegheny County Department of Human Services by invitation of the Chief Executive and is comprised of representatives from:
 - 1. Allegheny County Government
 - 2. City of Pittsburgh Government
 - 3. City of McKeesport Government
 - 4. Penn Hills Government
 - 5. Public Safety
 - 6. Subcommittee Representatives
 - 7. State of PA Government
 - 8. Public Health
 - 9. Veterans Administration
 - 10. Faith-based Community
 - 11. Academic Community
 - 12. Present or Former Consumers of Homeless Services
 - 13. Foundation Community (1 representative)
 - 14. Business Community
 - 15. Others as appointed by the Allegheny County Chief Executive
- B. The Homeless Alliance Advisory representatives will be appointed by the Chief Executive of Allegheny County or his/her designee.
 - 1. All appointed members must have an interest and commitment in serving on the Homeless Alliance Advisory Board.
 - 2. Sixty-five percent of the Advisory Board of the Homeless Alliance will be from non-governmental bodies.
- C. Members will serve on the Advisory Board for a period of one year and may be re-appointed as long as they meet the requirements for service and have an interest in continuing to serve.

APPENDIX B

Origins and the Reconstruction of the Board

The Homeless Alliance Advisory Board is a public/private partnership formed to assist Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh, the City of McKeesport and the Municipality of Penn Hills in reviewing public policy, programs, activities, data and all other efforts that will eliminate homelessness and improve the wellbeing of homeless persons and families. The board is comprised of appointed members and voluntary sub committees. The Homeless Alliance Advisory Board in Allegheny County has been working on the plan to end homelessness since 2005. Since that time, there have been many challenges to moving the plan forward. The current Homeless Alliance Advisory Board has been restructured, primarily because many of the original members had left the board for a variety of reasons. The purpose of the newly aligned board is as follows:

I. Purpose

The Homeless Alliance Advisory Board will, at a minimum, perform the following:

- A. Review, advocate for and promote positive changes in public policy on homelessness.
- B. Advise Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh, the City of McKeesport, and the Municipality of Penn Hills on issues affecting people who are or who are at risk of being homeless.
- C. Endorse the Annual Submission of the Continuum of Care.
- D. Identify gaps and prioritize housing and services in the Continuum of Care.
- E. Assist in implementing the goals and objectives outlined in the Allegheny County 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness

New Homeless Alliance Advisory Board members are looking to reinvigorate the local goal to end homelessness. Some believe that ideological polarization among original group members resulted in the loss of interest and lack of action taken on the plan in its first three years of existence. Others have stated that 10-year-plan to end homelessness in Allegheny County is nothing more than a plan, and they believe that nothing substantial will occur despite the broad-based efforts put into the initial planning process. For this reason, this research study comes at a pivotal point in time for the Homeless Alliance Advisory Board, which was most recently confronted by a local September 13, 2007 news article that spoke to the barriers faced by the group to date:

The number of homeless people identified in county Department of Human Services counts have remained stubbornly above 2,000 for years, despite the steps taken toward implementation of the [10 year] plan rolled out in February 2005. That plan calls for more permanent housing for the very poor and the creation of an "engagement center" at which multiple services would be offered." "The county has received \$60 million in federal anti-homelessness funds in the last five years, Mr. Mangano said. "We have a concern that the resources that are coming in are not simply funding a status quo that doesn't work.

(Excerpt taken from: Effort to reduce homelessness behind schedule, Thursday, September 13, 2007, by Rich Lord, Post-Gazette)

APPENDIX C

Cities with 10-Year-Plans to End Homelessness

Key: * Completed Ten-Year Plans ▲ 100th ♦ 150th 🕒 200th

Aguada, PR	Charlotte, NC	Greensboro/High Pt/Guilford Cty, NC
Aguadilla, PR	Cheboygan/Otsego Cty, MI	Harrisburg, PA
Aguas Buenas, PR	Chelan/Douglas Cty, WA	Hartford, CT
Akron, OH	Chattanooga, TN	Hattiesburg, MS
Albany, NY	Chicago, IL	Henderson/Vance Cty, NC
Alexandria, VA	Chippewa/Luce/ Mackinac Cty, MI	Hidalgo Cty, TX
Albuquerque, NM	Cidra, PR	Hillsdale Cty, MI
Allegheny Cty, MI	Clackamas Cty, OR	Houston, TX
Allegheny Cty/ Pittsburgh Penn Hills/ McKeesport, PA	Clare Cty, MI	Humaco, PR
Alpena Cty, MI	Clarksville, TN	Indianapolis, IN
Anchorage, AK	Cleveland, OH	Ingham Cty, MI
Arcata/Eureka/ Fontana/Humboldt Cty, CA	Clinton Cty, MI	Ionia/Montcalm Cty, MI
Arenac Cty, MI	Columbia, SC	Isabella Cty, MI
Arlington Cty, VA	Columbus/Franklin Cty, OH	Jackson, MS
Asheville/Buncombe Cty, NC	Conroe, TX	Jackson Cty, MI
Atlanta/Clayton/Cobb DeKalb/Douglas/ Fulton/Gwinnett/ Rockdale Cty, GA	Contra Costa Cty, CA	Jacksonville, FL
Athens/Clark Cty, GA	Corpus Christi, TX	Jayuya, PR
Augusta, GA	Couer d'Alene, ID	Jersey City/Hudson Cty, NJ
Austin, TX	Covington, KY	Kalamazoo Cty, MI
Bakersfield/Kern Cty, CA	Crawford/Oscoda/ Ogemaw Roscom'n Cty, MI	Kansas City, MO
Baltimore, MD	Cumberland Cty, TN	Key West, FL
Baraga Cty, MI	Dallas, TX	Kitsap County, WA
Baton Rouge, LA	Danbury, CT	Knoxville/Knox Cty, TN
Bay Cty, MI	Dayton/Montgomery Cty, OH	Lake Cty, MI
Bayamon Mun., PR	Delta Cty, MI	Lansing, MI
Bellingham/Whatcom Cty, WA	Denver, CO	Lapeer Cty, MI
Benton/Franklin Cty, WA	Des Moines, IA	Laredo, TX
Berrien Cty, MI	Detroit, MI	Las Vegas/Clark Cty, NV
Billings, MT	Dickinson Cty, MI	Lawrence, KS
Biloxi, MS	Dorado, PR	Lawrence, MA
Birmingham, AL	Duluth, MN	Lenawee Cty, MI
Bismarck, ND	Durham/Durham Cty, NC	Lexington, KY
Boise, ID	Eaton Cty, MI	Lincoln, NE
Boston, MA	El Paso, TX	Little Rock, AR
Bowling Green, KY	Eugene/Lane Cty, OR	Livingston Cty, MI
Bradenton/Manatee Cty, FL	Essex Cty/Newark/E. Orange/Irv'nton, NJ	Loiza, PR
Branch Cty, MI	Evansville/ Vanderb'h Cty, IN	Long Beach, CA
Bridgeport, CT	Everett/ Snohomish Cty, WA	Longview/ Cowlitz Cty, WA
Brockton, MA	Fairbanks, AK	Los Angeles Cty, CA
Broward Cty, FL	Fairfax County, VA	Louisville, KY
Buffalo/Erie Cty, NY	Fajarda, PR	Lowell, MA
Burlington, VT	Fall River, MA	Lubbock, TX
Caguas, PR	Fargo, ND	Lynn, MA
Calhoun Cty, MI	Fayetteville/Cumberl'd Cty, NC	Macomb Cty, MI
Cambridge, MA	Fitchburg/Gardner/ Leominster, MA	Macon/Bibb Cty, GA
Camden, NJ	Fort Wayne/Allen County, IN	Madison Cty, IL
Canton/Alliance/Stark/Masillon, OH	Framingham, MA	Madison/Dane Cty, WI
Cape Cod, MA	Ft. Worth/Tarrant Cty, TX	Manchester, NH
Carson City, NV	Gainesville/Alachua Cty, FL	Manistee Cty, MI
Caspar, WY	Galveston, TX	Maricopa Cty, AZ
Cass Cty, MI	Gastonia, NC	Marquette/Alger Cty, MI
Cedar Rapids/Linn Cty, IA	Genesee Cty, MI	Mason Cty, MI
Chapel Hill/Orange Cty, NC	Gladwin Cty, MI	Mayaguez, PR
Charleston, SC	Gogebic Cty, MI	Mecosta/Osceola Cty, MI
Charlevoix/Emmet Cty, MI	Grand Rapids/Kent Cty, MI	Memphis/Shelby Cty, TN
	Grand Traverse Cty, MI	Menominee Cty, MI
	Gratiot Cty, MI	Mercer Cty, NJ
		Miami, FL
Miami-Dade Cty, FL	Savannah, GA	

Middlesex Cty, NJ
 Midland Cty, MI
 Minneapolis/ Hennepin Cty, MN
 Mobile, AL
 Monroe Cty, MI Montgomery, AL
 Montgomery Cty, MD
 Muskegon Cty, MI
 Nashua, NH
 Nashville, TN
 Nassau/Suffolk Cty, NY
 New Bedford, MA
 New Britain, CT
 Newaygo Cty, MI
 New Haven, CT
 New London/ Groton/ Norwich, CT
 New Orleans, LA
 New York, NY
 Newport/Lincoln Cty, OR
 Norfolk, VA
 Norman, OK
 North Charleston, SC
 Norwalk, CT
 Oakland/Alameda Cty, CA
 Oakland Cty, MI
 Oceana Cty, MI
 Oklahoma City, OK
 Olympia/Thurston Cty/Tumwater/ Lacey, WA
 Otsego Cty, MI
 Omaha, NE
 Orocovis, PR
 Placer Cty, CA
 Plano/Collin Cty, TX
 Pittsfield, MA
 Pocatello, ID
 Pontiac/Oakland Cty, MI
 Port Angeles/Sequim/ Clallam Cty+, WA
 Portland/Multnomah Cty, OR
 Portsmouth, VA
 Providence, RI
 Quincy, MA
 ▲ **Raleigh/Wake Cty, NC**
 ☉ **Reno/Sparks/ Washoe Cty, NV**
 Richmond, VA
 Riverside Cty, CA
 Rochester, NY
 St. Clair Cty, IL
 St. Clare Cty, MI
 St. Joseph Cty, MI
 St. Louis/St. Louis Cty, MO
 St. Paul, MN
 St. Petersburg/ Pinellas Cty, FL
 Sacramento City/ Cty, CA
 Saginaw Cty, MI
 Salt Lake Cty, UT
 San Antonio, TX
 San Diego+Cty, CA
 San Francisco, CA
 San German, PR
 San Jose, CA
 ♦ **San Juan, PR**
 San Mateo Cty, CA
 Santa Barbara Cty, CA
 Santa Clara Cty, CA
 Schoolcraft Cty, MI
 Scranton/Lack'a Cty, PA
 Seattle/King Cty, WA
 Shelby, NC
 Shiawassee Cty, MI
 Shreveport, LA
 Ottawa Cty, MI
 Sioux Falls, SD
 Skagit Cty, WA
 Somerville, MA
 Southeastern TX
 Spokane, WA
 Springfield, IL
 Springfield, MA
 Stamford, CT
 Summit/Utah/ Wasatch Cty, UT
 Syracuse, NY
 Tacoma/Lakewood/ Pierce Cty, WA
 Tallahassee, FL
 Tampa, FL
 Topeka, KS
 Troy/Rensselaer Cty, NY
 Tucson/Pima Cty, AZ
 Tulsa, OK
 Tuscola Cty, MI
 Tyler, TX
 Urbana/Champaign, IL
 Van Buren Cty, MI
 Vancouver/Clark Cty, WA
 Virginia Beach, VA
 Oxnard, CA
 Pasadena, CA
 Passaic County, NJ
 Patillas, PR
 Philadelphia, PA
 Waco, TX
 Warwick, RI
 Washington, DC
 Washtenaw Cty/Ann Arbor, MI
 Wayne Cty, MI
 Wexford/Missaukee Cty, MI
 Wilmington, NC
 Winston-Salem, NC
 Wichita/Sedgwick Cty, KS
 Worcester, MA
 Yakima City/ Cty, WA
 Yauco, PR
 Yonkers, NY

APPENDIX D

Open-Ended Guided Questions Format

Thank you for meeting with me. I will be asking you a series of questions to better understand your perceptions of homelessness and to understand how these perceptions may impact the Homeless Alliance Advisory Board's goal to end homelessness locally. These questions should be viewed as discussion launching points helping me better understand your thoughts of what homelessness is, how you arrived at this understanding, and to explore barriers that you may perceive that explain why homelessness continues to persist over time. Finally I will look to understand how you believe you can help prevent or end homelessness locally. There is no right or wrong answer. If you so choose, you do not have to answer any of the questions that I will be asking, and speak instead to what is meaningful to you and your interactions with the Homeless Alliance Advisory Board as you work to end homelessness in Allegheny County.

- A. How do you perceive the word homelessness, what does this term mean to you?
- B. What are your earliest memories about homelessness (did you know someone who was homeless, did you hear others talk about the homeless, did the people around you have certain set beliefs about homeless individuals, etc.)? How did you hear other people refer to homeless people as a child and now as an adult?
- C. How do you believe a person becomes homeless (please provide some examples or reasons if at all possible)? Do you perceive homelessness as something that can be overcome? How would this occur?
- D. How do you perceive that others, or society at large, understands homelessness? Do you agree or disagree with these understandings? Given your work on the board, do you think others have a full understanding of the issue of homelessness?
- E. Why do you think the phenomenon of homelessness has increased in Pittsburgh, over the last ten-years? Why do you think homelessness has increased in the last hundred years in America?
- F. How do you think homelessness has changed over the past decade? Do you think different groups of people are experiencing homelessness? Please explain.
- G. How did you become involved with the Homeless Alliance Advisory Board? Why did you decide to join the group? Since you have joined the board, what has your experience of being a board member been? Do you feel your efforts have been well spent? Please explain. Do you believe that your efforts supported people experiencing homelessness in Pittsburgh?
- H. How do you think the Homeless Alliance Advisory Board can diminish the numbers of homeless in Allegheny County and in the city of Pittsburgh? Are there obstacles to your plans? Can you explain what these obstacles are?
- I. How are decisions made within the group? Are the resources that are needed available to make suggested changes in place? Is the group plans supported or impacted by the structure that is in place in Allegheny County?
- J. Has the Board made head-way in their plans to end homelessness? Please explain in what way. Are there goals that you would like to accomplish but find it difficult to do so? Please explain.

- K. Do you notice a pattern of language used by members on the board when they are addressing the issue of homelessness? Does any one person/organization impact, or have power over, the group decision-making and implementation process in your opinion? If yes, how is this manifested? Why do you think that is happening? How does this play out in the decision-making process? Is this something that you perceive can be changed?
- L. How do you perceive possible obstacles that the group is encountering in their goal to reduce homelessness? Is there any set pattern or explanation that might explain why these obstacles are occurring? Is funding available to make the changes that you would like to institute? Is the support needed to institute the plans in place? Is the federal and local government a part of this process? If yes, in what way? Are other funders backing your plans to end homelessness?
- M. Do you believe individuals or institutions exert power over board members or over the purpose of the group, which is to diminish or end homelessness? If yes, how is this manifested?
- N. Do you believe the board will diminish, prevent, or end homelessness in the short or long term? If yes, how do you think they will accomplish this? If no, why do you think the board will not accomplish this objective?
- O. Are there any other issues or barriers that you would like to discuss related to the board's role in ending homelessness in Allegheny County?

APPENDIX E

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS

Ending Homelessness Now: Creating New Partnerships for Change

In response to The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness's call for ten-year plans to end chronic homelessness across the nation, Allegheny County Chief Elected Official Dan Onorato committed Allegheny County to implementing a ten-year plan to address the array of homeless issues occurring within the county. Through the work of the Allegheny County Homeless Alliance in partnership with Allegheny County, the city of Pittsburgh, the city of McKeesport and the municipality of Penn Hills, this plan was developed utilizing Future Search methodology¹, data and concepts generated from annual reports, national research, local trends and public hearings.

The common ground concept that came forth from the Future Search conference was that "Everyone has Value." This concept must be at the center of all that is done in relationship to homelessness. People have value regardless of their living arrangements. Homeless and formerly homeless individuals and families who received assistance from the system want to be a part of the community-wide efforts to end homelessness.

It is very important to note that homelessness is a condition that is generally not caused by a single issue. There are usually multiple contributing factors that can perpetuate the situation. These can include: lack of affordable housing, lack of a housing/living wage, credit history, employment, domestic violence, disease of addiction, mental health, health issues, physical disabilities, and criminal history.

Since multiple issues cause the condition of homelessness, the plan must be able to address these complex issues. Eight recommendations were endorsed in the plan to be implemented over the next ten-year period. These recommendations include:

- Recommendation 1: To reduce the number of homeless individuals and families entering the system by (1) educating individuals and families on the warning signs of homelessness (2) educating community/social services agencies and organizations on these warning signs so they are better positioned to intervene early with their consumers to avert homelessness and (3) providing county-wide information on how to access resources and assistance in a timely way to avoid a housing crisis.
- Recommendation 2: To increase the affordable housing supply that is accessible to the chronically homeless and homeless over the next ten-years by 1000 units and preserve existing low-income housing units where feasible.
- Recommendation 3: To develop, implement and maintain, as long as there is a demonstrated need, a comprehensive approach to ending chronic homelessness through three major components. They are: an Engagement Center System, Harm Reduction Housing and expansion of Housing First Programs.

- Recommendation 4: To improve how homeless consumers are accessing and receiving housing and or supportive services through the network.
- Recommendation 5: To co-locate homeless services within designated regional centers where a variety of community-related programs and opportunities for resource dissemination, volunteering and socialization, regardless of housing status, is the focal point.
- Recommendation 6: To develop short-term and long-term Public Awareness and Education Programs on Homelessness.
- Recommendation 7: Establish a central repository for financial contributions from private sources. Annually distribute these funds through the homeless network based upon performance, quality of program and responsiveness to identified needs in the continuum of care.
- Recommendation 8: To advocate for comprehensive health and behavioral health services that are accessible, reliable and effective for people experiencing homelessness.

Allegheny County is the designated entity for human services for the entire geographic area. With this authority, the Allegheny County Chief Elected Official, Dan Onorato, is committed to implementing the plan through the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (ACDHS). The Office of Community Services, which is a division of ACDHS, will have the authority to implement the plan. The Allegheny County Homeless Alliance, as a partner in the process, will be responsible for:

1. Assisting in implementation and evaluation towards achieving the recommendations set forth in the plan and modifying the plan, as adjustments are required over the ten-year period.
2. Promoting collaboration and partnerships through Continuum of Care;
3. Appointing representatives to be a part of the annual evaluation process to rank;
4. Reviewing the data generated by HMIS System in order to evaluate the progress made towards achieving the goals established by the Continuum of Care and the Ten-year Plan;
5. Reviewing policy and advocate for changes in public policy related to homelessness;
6. Endorsing the Annual Submission of the Continuum of Care.

The Homeless Alliance has continued to work on their goal of ending homelessness. Since 2003 when the Homeless Alliance was re-formulated, they have focused on providing effective programs with positive outcomes for homeless persons. The Future Search Conference that focused on developing this plan was a valuable experience for the members and now there is a plan to carry the work forward. The mission of the Homeless Alliance is a public/private partnership formed to assist Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh, the City of McKeesport and the municipality of Penn Hills in eliminating homelessness and reviewing public policy, programs, activities, data and all other efforts that will improve the well being of homeless persons and families.

APPENDIX F

County Point in Time Data on Homelessness

Allegheny County Department of Human Services																	
Overview of Point in Time Surveys																	
December 2000 to January 2010																	
	Dec	Oct	Dec	June	Dec	June	Jan	June	Jan	June	Jan	July	Jan	May	Jan	May	Jan
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2003	2004	2005	2005	2006	2006	2007	2007	2008	2008	2009	2009	2010
# of Programs																	
Participating in Survey	82	8	99	99	106	100	97	102	101	96	112	103	111	113	118	107	115
* Includes hospitals, soup kitchens, day programs, street outreach, shelter, transitional and permanent housing for homeless																	
Actual Number of Persons Served in Programs Ranging from Street Outreach to Permanent Housing																	
	Dec	Oct	Dec	June	Dec	June	Jan	June	Jan	June	Jan	July	Jan	May	Jan	May	Jan
# of Persons Served	2000	2001	2002	2003	2003	2004	2005	2005	2006	2006	2007	2007	2008	2008	2009	2009	2010
Adults	1519	1350	1403	1475	1683	1494	1425	1388	1402	1146	1503	1363	1584	1466	1611	1464	1611
Children	400	553	691	783	715	693	522	614	607	528	602	564	546	545	631	565	875
Total	1919	1903	2094	2258	2396	2187	1947	2002	2009	1674	2105	1927	2130	2011	2242	2029	2486
% who are veterans	16	2	17	17	15	21	27	23	24	18	22	2	26	2	17	19	13
* This chart only includes those people that are receiving homeless services.																	
Breakdown by Family Configuration																	
	Dec	Oct	Dec	June	Dec	June	Jan	June	Jan	June	Jan	July	Jan	May	Jan	May	Jan
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2003	2004	2005	2005	2006	2006	2007	2007	2008	2008	2009	2009	2010
Single Women	367	378	297	377	377	369	315	310	263	256	347	292	343	348	330	303	311
Single Men	856	679	665	881	661	728	644	688	711	550	790	746	897	797	890	813	794
Single Adults in HPRP	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	47
Single Women w/kids	255	214	365	353	310	246	326	326	324	269	271	253	234	248	286	270	319
Single Men w/kids	13	18	76	72	87	27	64	64	104	71	32	23	53	31	33	26	24
Adults in Multiple Units	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	63	49	57	42	72	50	116
Children	400	553	691	715	693	522	614	607	528	602	564	546	545	545	631	565	875
* Breakdown by gender does not add up since some providers did not collect gender information consistently.																	

Chart can be found on-line at:

<http://www.alleghenycounty.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=28402>

APPENDIX G

NARRATIVE SUMMARIES

Interview #1 – White Male over 50 – FORMERLY HOMELESS

The first person interviewed is an older man that has experienced being homeless and living on the streets of Pittsburgh. With supports from local service providers he is now housed living in a high rise. We met in a restaurant and talked over lunch.

PERCEPTIONS

First we talked about his perceptions of homeless people. His descriptions were diverse. They ranged from people who were taking advantage of the system to people who would not take anything from someone due to pride and independence. He said that he would trust someone that was homeless, well beyond someone that was not. He believed that 60% of homeless people were homeless by choice and that this was due to actively choosing to do drugs and alcohol.

CHILDHOOD

He stated that he was a very independent and rebellious youth and he wanted to be on his own and independent. That he choose to leave his home and go out on his own surviving any way he could. He reports he is half native American Indian, which accounts for some of his independent spirit.

HAAB

He believes that most people on the board are there to better themselves or to fulfill an obligation. They do not speak up and talk for the betterment of the homeless. They are either afraid to or simply do not care. There are a few people that do care, speak up, but are concerned about their jobs. He believes he is one of the only volunteer board members that speak just for the purpose of helping the homeless.

LARGER SYSTEMS

He believes there should be equal distribution of money to all people. He believes that distribution of funds will occur eventually but not in our life time. States are divided. United we stand but divided we fall. The world as it exists today is akin to slavery. People have to work and still don't make enough to survive on. Some people do not have the capacity to work, but they should be cared for.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
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1) I drink to forget everything. I want to forget what people think of me, and how other people treat me and themselves. Lately, I haven't been drinking because I have friends I care about and they care about me.	1) The larger issue is the distribution of wealth. In the current state of the world only a few control most of the wealth and they don't care about helping the homeless.	1) Most case workers (aristocrats) don't really care about the homeless they just need a paycheck. The people with money (high-class) are worse, they don't care whatsoever.	1) Many think the homeless are bums. There are many that cannot work, who can never work, they deserve to have enough money to live on. I trust the homeless more than I trust other people who speak for the homeless.
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Interview #2 – African American Male over 50 – AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVOCATE

The second person was at one time living in a public housing complex that was taken down without public consent, which resulted in his involvement in advocacy efforts for affordable housing. He is currently president of the board for the National Low Income Housing Coalition. He is a recognized advocate and was invited to participate on HAAB because of this.

PERCEPTIONS

Homelessness only comes to the forefront when something bad happens. We believe that this is “not our problem.” People don’t want to act – they want someone else to keep care of it. Recent example is the G-20 when services were provided so “folks would not be seen.” An end to homelessness might occur if we offered people permanent and safe housing.

HAAB

The leader is doing a good job along with the county administrator. An idea would be to have more committees dealing with specific issues reporting back to the board. Board sets policy agenda. People are focused on their own particular area. Their needs to be more advocacy initiatives happening on the board. Project Home in Philadelphia resonates because it is advocacy oriented. Organizations in Pittsburgh need to step it up. We need more “speaking out” where “voices will be heard” instead of the county dictating where the money goes. We can only get the bigger pots of money if we are out there...an example is the McArthur Fund. Elevate issues, concerns and programs, not just Pittsburgh or the county. Diversify funds in case of shortfalls. Consumers should drive issues and groups. That is how to get people energized. HAAB needs more consumers. Send letters out to board members not coming to the meeting. Sometimes there are more people there from DHS than board members. There should always be open dialogue – ask for responses, the leaders should do that.

SYSTEMS

The federal government wants to get out of housing; they want to sell off public housing to private owners. People don’t want to live in bad communities in sub-standard housing. They want to be with their family and their communities. They don’t want to go to “Northview Heights.” They want a good quality of life. Homeless initiatives are politically driven. Money gets lost from the top down...the trickledown effect does not work. The new administration is

more supportive but housing development is in bad shape. Federal funds are supposed to go to those that need it the most...but that does not happen. We need to hold people accountable for this, including: City Hall, HUD, and the County. We need accountability. Money needs to be evenly distributed. Organizations and nonprofits need to be accountable to the money and put in statements that accomplish this in their strategic plans. We need to be focused on the bigger picture. People are focused on their own organizations. ADOPT a “Brother’s Keeper” approach.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
1) People don’t want to see the homeless; they want them out of mind. 2) People alienated from family structure which could help them in times of situational crisis. 3) Lack of income largest reason for homelessness. 4) Unemployment at highest rate ever = 10.2% 5) Not enough subsidized units available. 6) Young can’t find jobs anymore w/parents	1) The larger issue is the distribution of wealth. In the current state of the world only a few control most of the wealth and they don't care about helping the homeless. 2) Not enough income to pay for so called “affordable” apartment. 3) Cost of living will continue to increase. 4) Desire for more - higher cost to live	1) Most case workers (aristocrats) don't really care about the homeless they just need a paycheck. The people with money (high-class) are worse, they don't care whatsoever. 2) Entitlement – some people want everything for nothing. 3) Middle class is disappearing. 4) Economy is separating people – unemployed up	1) Many think the homeless are bums. There are many that cannot work, who can never work, they deserve to have enough money to live on. I trust the homeless more than I trust other people who speak for the homeless. They don't really know the issues at all. They homeless know the issues.

Interview #3 – African American Male over 50 - Government Administrator

The third person is in a position of power over the rest of the group. He is the highest ranking bureaucrat that decides how funds will be distributed to service providers – with approval from the head of the Department of Human Services, Marc Cherna. I met him in his offices though I did invite him to meet me elsewhere. His office was slightly disheveled. He had used furniture and old phone equipment. He had a private office with a table where we sat.

PERCEPTIONS

He was very talkative and intuitively able to speak to interests that I personally had. I felt slightly uncomfortable going in to the interview and during the interview. The most defining statement that he made was that he was the quarterback, working to have the team play together to achieve the best possible outcome. He said he picked the people that had the best resources and intentions to play on his team. His overall thoughts on why homelessness was increasing were related to external system issues like the economy and class privileges. It seemed clear to me that this was the one board member that had the most control of the direction of the HAAB.

HAAB

We need to raise money for the continuum not “projects.” Need to keep our eye on the big picture, and how needs fit into that picture. The goal of HAAB should be to make sure that the system that is operating in Allegheny County is as efficient as it can be. HAAB needs to be a “broad representative” group. They meet quarterly. People represent special interests. Group members have moved away from being “competitive” to being “consensus” driven. They work together to “build the system.” There must be group trust to get to this point and then the team can work together. We don’t need to “recreate the wheel” to accomplish our objectives. The county is the “quarterback” and looks to have HAAB work in harmony on system issues. GROWTH MUST BE SLOW AND STEADY.

SYSTEMS

He stated “It is impossible to live on minimum wage jobs.” Electric, gas, clothes cost continue to rise. Technology costs have increased peoples expenses and it is perceived that they need the best phone and technology services to stay competitive. But, the entry level worker who makes \$20 - \$25 k – they cannot afford this, yet they need it to get ahead. In some places the cost of living is way beyond the low income worker, Allegheny County is unique because we do not have this dilemma.

POLITICS

Clinton, a democratic, was conservative – more so then Bush where spending went out of the roof. The ideology that is presented is that the far left spends the money on human services, but the real drain happens by the conservatives spending on war time and raising health care costs. During this time there has been systemic improvements made available through congress for the homeless. The Congress controls this more so then the President. New priorities take preference over old ones, like the newly instituted Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP). The Obama administration is focusing on family homelessness and providing more funding to help them, whereas, the Bush administration, focused on the chronically homeless. The government’s plan continues to evolve – with “new reiterations” and “taking advantage of what is available.”

DEATH OF HOMELESS

The only time the red flag goes up is when the homeless die on the streets or they lose limbs. That is why the cold weather shelter is so important and needed to take people in. And everyone that wants to be inside is in. In special cases the homeless are housed in motels – expanding upon existing system. County gives money to those who can do the best job at each level of need in the continuum.

NEW FOCUS OF CONTINUUM

“Everyone needs to feel productive.” Some people will never have a job, but they can be productive at some level. If the homeless are viewed as productive they then are seen as an “asset.” That is why he has hired a new person – Sarah Dix – to head up Project Employ. If people can get a good job, then we can end homelessness. Liabilities can be turned into assets. Need to motivate people to change their lives. We need to articulate the “cost savings” of services. This would help “institutionalize” changes and “raise the bar.” Funds will come if we can measure outcomes and demonstrate them to larger institutions.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
1) It is more difficult to live independently today then it was in the past. 2) Competition among service providers alienates people from working together for systemic improvements. 3) People do not feel valued unless they are productive / have jobs. 4) team building and trusting relationships build better systems	1) Cost of living has put many people into the realm of homelessness. 2) The need for higher level of technological equipment is raising the cost of living. 3) Cost of living will continue to increase. 4) Many parts of the country it is very difficult to live in due to high cost of living. 5) If quantifiable outcomes were realized people would fund.	1) Those who start out with more money can afford education and move to high income level faster. 2) People want to live in their own community of friends but some areas are no longer affordable and there is no housing. 3) Those with resources needed are invited to the table.	1) Homelessness doesn't become an issue until someone dies on the street. 2) It is believed that conservatives save money for the country when they do not. 3) HAAB has shared responsibility but not shared ownership in decision-making processes.

In general this county administrator was very talkative and intuitively able to speak to interests that I personally had. I felt slightly uncomfortable going in to the interview and during the interview. The most defining statement that he made was that he was the quarterback, working to have the team play together to achieve the best possible outcome. He said he picked the people that had the best resources and intentions to play on his team.

Interview #4 – White Female over 50 - City Government Project Manager

The fourth person is a city administrator that has been involved with the planning department as a social worker and is now in the planning department after several decades of working in this government institution. She has been responsible for dispensing federal funds through the city to homeless and hunger providers at a time when staffing for this department has dwindled. Recently, a large amount of federal funds were received by the city for the homeless and this has doubled the amount of work she is responsible for with no pay increases.

PERCEPTIONS

She has been involved with the ten-year plan since the beginning. At one time she was chair for the public awareness sub-committee but interest dwindled and the committee ended. She believes the original initiative as conceived was well intended and created a structure where new stakeholders were brought to the table and learned about homelessness.

HAAB

The first group lost sight of public awareness and hoping the second restructuring of HAAB may take this on. Newer federal programs are taking precedence over the ten-year plan. But one positive is the plan created a structure to receive the new funds. These new funds will be gone in three years so it is important to set outcomes to prove effectiveness of HPRP program initiative.

The ten-year plan did create 1000 new housing units – this is quite an accomplishment. It is a “worthy goal” to end homelessness – yet it is unachievable – there will always be homelessness – especially situational homelessness. Providers are vocal but new members are not engaged.

LARGER SYSTEMS

The new populations of homeless people are different. Housing is available but is in poor shape, renovation will take money. Some units may need to be torn down and rebuilt. The economic downturn is new and creating new set of challenges. What we could do to help: 1) ensure the “basics” for the homeless; 2) CDBG funds should address poverty more then how it is used currently – that was its original intention; 3) Another issue is people perceive that they need “more” to function. They need cable and a cell phone – we don’t need this. They also think they need certain clothing – that is also taking away from the basic needs. It is these expectations that set some people up for homelessness. When will the public realize that taxes need increased? This taxation can be gradual so that it is not so difficult for the working middle class to accommodate. Their needs to be a continuum of resources for people facing homelessness – shelter and housing first to name two components. Currently, shelter time constraints forces the homeless to cycle through shelters in Pittsburgh. This won’t work the support piece is missing. This continuum must be set if homeless hope to become self-sustainable. Giving people ownership of their housing – improves outcomes for the homeless also.

POLITICAL

Currently new funds have been made available for family homelessness but they have been given with no set guidelines and it has been difficult to administer the program. The goal was to get the funds out quickly. The constraint is the time frame that was set up with these funds. It will be difficult if not impossible to meet these new regulations. The hope is that they will extend the timeline.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
1) We don’t give people ownership of space – this alienates them from it. 2) The money for supportive services is not there – without this homeless people will not move forward.	2) There is a materialism that is more prevalent today then twenty years back. People are not spending money on basic needs but buying stylish clothing instead and technology.	1) People feel they have to dress a certain way to be accepted. 2) The political will needed to help improve housing in the city is missing.	1) There is not enough public will to raise taxes to provide the support services that the homeless need. 2) Instead taxes are cut and the city is rapidly deteriorating.

Interview #5 – White Male over 50 – RELIGIOUS LEADER

The fifth person interviewed is a pastor that runs a local drop in center, housing for homeless vets, and temporary cold weather shelter. He has come recently to Pittsburgh from Colorado and is passionate about helping the street homeless. He has single handedly created a new ministry in the heart of downtown Pittsburgh.

PERCEPTIONS

This person talks openly about his experience with unemployment and a suicide attempt earlier in his life. He feels he was saved to do the work he does now and has a strong faith in god that leads him to help the poor, hungry and homeless. He is led to this calling. Previously he worked in an international relief organization where he set up homeless shelters in churches around the country called “Project Home Again.” He has a strong belief in “Gospel Justice” which reflects the heart of god. God picks people up and gives them new chances. He is currently starting up another ministry to teach interns how to minister to the homeless. This ministry is made possible because a church retreat center was donated to him. It houses 50 people and has a kitchen and chapel. It is called the “Burning Bush Ministry.” The goal is to create stewards – so the poor are always taken care of.

HAAB

The first group lost sight of public awareness and hoping the second restructuring of HAAB may take this on. Newer federal programs are taking precedence over the ten-year plan. But one positive is the plan created a structure to receive the new funds. These new funds will be gone in three years so it is important to set outcomes to prove effectiveness of HPRP program initiative. The ten-year plan did create 1000 new housing units – this is quite an accomplishment. It is a “worthy goal” to end homelessness – yet it is unachievable – there will always be homelessness – especially situational homelessness. Providers are vocal but new members are not engaged.

LARGER SYSTEMS

There is a new paradigm occurring within city churches. They are no longer interested in helping the poor. He feels this must be changed and that these churches have deviated from the true intent of God. To create change requires the ability to build wide ranging partnerships. Currently he has 85 to 90 churches mobilized in support of his mission. Some people donate money, some volunteer, some give in-kind donations. Youth groups are very involved in the mission.

Some people will remain homeless. We must always welcome them with open arms and share our resources with them. We need the city and the county to support these goals. He has started a transportation ministry with the homeless. This is greatly needed as a lack of transportation is deeply felt by the homeless. We must partner with other organizations to provide all the services that are needed.

We need to work against the spirit of prejudice. We do not want to segregate people. We need to give everything we have away freely. He talked about the “Christ with” and “Christ against” theory in the church’s homeless movement. Christians indeed have often been viewed as subversive of culture precisely because of their belief in a trans-cultural human destiny. This can be challenged when we work in teams.

He said that the focus should be on “changing life” more than “changing city hall.” Fall in love with people and trust them, offering resources and freedom whenever possible. Replicate this state in yourself. If we can help others then we will be shaping society. The homeless don’t have the same opportunities that we have. We need to develop a “passion for the poor.” We need to build “bridges of trust.” Love causes us to do the things we need to do.

POLITICAL

Pittsburgh is better than other cities. “The society here is more responsible.” We are ethnically sensitive to other cultures. Blending happens here. Religious leaders must join forces with politicians and all other stakeholders if we are to be effective. Pittsburgh has a huge population of homeless vets when compared to other cities. There is a political will to help homeless vets. There is currently an initiative to end veteran homelessness in five years. Faith is available at every level.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
1) The church today is alienated from the poor – once it was their mission to help them. 2) We are alienated from the ability to love ourselves and others. 3) Society does not feel responsible for the poor.	1) People do not have the ability to “give things freely away.” 2) Helping the poor has lost its religious value.	1) If we work to help others then we help ourselves. This is missing. 2) It is not an issue of taking on city hall but changing the way we relate to each other. 3) Homeless have lost all opportunities in life.	1) We have lost the ability to trust others. We need to build bridges of “trust.”

Interview #6 – White Male over 50 – HOMELESS VETERANS/GOVT REPRESENTATIVE

The sixth person interviewed has been involved with HAAB from the very beginning. He was present at the future search conference that developed the recommendations for the ten year plan to end homelessness. He is employed by the federal government and works specifically with homeless veterans and has done so for the past thirty five years.

PERCEPTIONS

The VA has the ability to provide a continuum of services and housing to all homeless veterans. There has been a new plan announced by Obama looking to end veteran homelessness in the next five years. They are fully funded and do not lack the will or the backing of politicians to provide these services. He perceives his involvement on the board as simply to act as a connector for services for vets. He has enjoyed being on HAAB because he has a better understanding of what is going on in Allegheny County. He seemed vaguely distant from the goals of the ten-year planning process and did not see his role as someone that should be more actively involved. The VA serves 800 – 1000 homeless vets a year and the beds are usually 90% filled.

HAAB

The current HAAB leader is a good leader. Focusing the group and trying to accomplish something. The board is only there for oversight purposes but they can give opinions. The county is driving the process. The county reports to the group and members receive valuable information. A focus on awareness and education might help, it seems that the board members are focused on their own particular issues and needs. There is a lack of comprehensiveness. HUD itself is not centralized and they give too much power to the local level to decide how funds and

programs will be distributed. The client gets lost in the shuffle and they lack an advocate to help them connect to services. It is clear that the county is the power holder and they are trying to move in a positive direction forward. People are there to learn, there seems to be peripheral interest in the plan. Board members are not invested in the process. There are presentations and some dialogue, but it is usually the homeless providers that are talking at the table.

LARGER SYSTEMS

In the past homeless veterans usually were in the 40-50 year age range. He is seeing many more younger veterans that are homeless now, some in the 20's. This is younger than expected and this speaks to deep societal issues. The number of homeless veterans in Pittsburgh is nationally lower – only 7% of homeless are veterans compared to 10% nationally. There have always been homeless vets on the streets; the issue is how do we respond to them? Nationally there are 50,000 to 60,000 less veterans on the street. We are never going to eliminate homelessness but we may get to a “minimum” number. Funding is not an issue for the VA, what they hope they can do is taking the burden off of local homeless providers because their services are so comprehensive. One third of the homeless population is vets. Citizens want to help veterans. The VA is able to be more comprehensive and effective because there are centralized controls. Local homeless providers are always in competition, which changes the playing field.

POLITICAL

There is a long political tradition of supporting homeless veterans. If PR focused more on vets there would be more good will generally for the homeless. The veteran administration has long focused on housing. National leaders are not thinking of the complexity of the issue. Not willing to address the importance of supportive services...which are needed just as much as housing is needed. In Pittsburgh the VA is much more advanced than other areas, we have benefited from local leadership...this is why.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
1) Citizens alienated from the homeless unwillingness to see complexity of human condition.	1) Nonprofits are in competition for scarce funds – the client gets lost.	1) Vets have more rights and privileges than homeless civilians.	1) There is a lack of general understanding that homeless needs supports in addition to housing.

Interview #8 – White Female Over 50 – NONPROFIT/FORMERLY HOSPITAL PROVIDER

Generally she was very non-critical and supported the county and its leadership of HAAB. She intoned that she needed to stay on good terms with county as she might be able to receive a future grant for her program. She has a background of nursing and now works at a larger health system that serves the mentally ill homeless.

PERCEPTIONS

Programs and housing for the homeless has grown exponentially over the past few years in the UPMC health system. There are now more than 200 beds of varying sorts. The cold brings out compassion for the homeless. Often there is a dissection between homelessness and panhandling.

HAAB

Mostly the providers are speaking at the meetings. Energy is diffused in the meetings. There seems to be some confusion over the meetings. Interested in what is relevant to them. HAAB serves in an advisory function. The charge of the group is the “10 year plan.” The lead board member is very organized and has a data processing background. He has been able to bring a “bigger buy-in from the community.” We could use more homeless representatives that could speak more to the culture of homelessness. They are responsible for reviewing the HUD applications, making recommendations. The county staff person checks the data and creates a menu of housing options. More group cohesion would help; perhaps have executive meetings to do most of the work before hand. The approach could be solution focused and work on promoting best practices, rewarding innovation, promoting creativity and looking for a new mind set to get things accomplished.

LARGER SYSTEMS

We need more data then what is revealed in a point in time study. Need to recognize how this data is related to the economy. Advocacy is definitely needed to effect change. In general homelessness is a complex issue and people don’t understand that. Providers “get it” but others don’t. In general providers are in competition for funding. It is a desire more so then a priority to help the homeless. There needs to be a general recovery focus on ending homelessness that looks to build independence.

POLITICAL

State health plans are all different. Dollars are separated into silos –there needs to be a co-mingling of dollars. Mike and Reggie have gotten to a point where they trust the providers, and they trust them. Onorato was the impetus behind the plan. County is responsible to report back to him.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
1) Public don’t understand the complexity of homelessness. 2) Need to focus on how data is related to the economy.	1) Nonprofits are in competition for funds. 2) Feels more data would help reveal the issues and the problems.	1) Looking for representation of the homeless on the group – as they can speak best to the culture of homelessness.	1) There is a lack of general understanding that homeless people need support in addition to housing.

Interview #9 – African American Male over 50 –YOUTH HOMELESS PROVIDER

This member has a long history working in the nonprofit field. Prior to that he was involved with sports and coaching and always enjoyed working with youth and feels he can have a substantive impact in their lives.

PERCEPTIONS

He sees issues with the way the universe of homeless services are currently being offered. There are critical gaps in the continuum that are not being addressed and many people are slipping through the cracks. Children have fewer resources and there are limited places where they can go for help. In general society is less giving and less support is available for the homeless. He spent some time talking about how society had changed since the 70's and people were more alienated from each other. He said it is much more difficult to be homeless now.

HAAB

He attends the meetings but rarely speaks; he sees the county doing most of the decision-making and the members go along with whatever they say. Meetings are often cancelled and rescheduled, and many time he will not attend as his time is spread over many programs. He feels the current HAAB leader is organized and doing a good job with the odds he is facing. He has been able to bring a "bigger buy-in from the community." He believes there needs to be more homeless representatives on the board as their point of view is missing.

SYSTEMS

We need more data then what is revealed in a point in time study. Need to recognize how this data is related to the economy. Advocacy is definitely needed to create change. In general homelessness is a complex issue and people don't understand that. Providers "get it" but others don't. In general providers are in competition for funding. It is a desire more so then a priority to help the homeless. There needs to be a general recovery focus on ending homelessness that looks to build independence.

POLITICAL

He sees politicians as not being concerned with the issues of homelessness. He has hope that the Obama administration will start to look at ways to increase funding to the homeless but he doesn't think it will happen overnight, though many people think this is the case and are being disappointed.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
1) There is a general lack of concern for the homeless and in particular homeless youth who have no good male role models and many are coming from broken homes.	1) He sees youth focusing on monetary goals that are meaningless and difficult to achieve. 2) The collective good is missing and only a "me focus" is evident.	1) In the culture he still sees the foundations of racism and class structures that work against the poor and minority youth. 2) there is a much higher prevalence of minority men who are homeless.	1) Homelessness is very much a race and economic definer that stops many from ever achieving the American Dream.

Interview #10 – White Female 40 – NONPROFIT HOMELESS PROVIDER

She has been involved with HAAB since its founding, and even before, when the decision-making process for homeless programs were grounded in the Homeless Alliance – continuum of

care. She is forty and is comfortable expressing her viewpoint despite existing power relationships with the county which controls about 90% of her agency's income. I have known her for quite some time so this may contribute to her ease of expression, but she is known widely for her outspokenness and leadership role in the homeless provider community.

PERCEPTIONS

She has a background in social work and has found her niche in a "caretaking" role even before pursuing her masters and licensure in the field. She also has a degree in political sciences and thinks about broad systemic and process relationships. She perceives that individuals are "me focused" and do not participate in consensus relationships unless it better their own position. She was involved with a variety of nonprofit special interest organizations before becoming executive director of a mid-size nonprofit in Allegheny County. She perceives that the nonprofit community acts upon their own specific interests, and as a role do not participate co-jointly unless there is "something in it for them." Ultimately, nonprofits should be working themselves out of a job, she says, because no one should be homeless – but instead, the desire to build power and job stability drives institutional goals rather than the focus being placed on the individual in need.

HAAB

She feels there has been three phases of the HAAB since it first began. The first was during its origin when many stakeholders came together around the desire to build consensus about ending homelessness. This stage was much more participatory, many ideas and visions were floated and public attention was focused on the desire to end homelessness locally. In its second phase, under this individual from a local university, she perceived some progress being made as the focal point was shifted away from the county (which historically has driven the decision-making process when it comes to addressing the needs of the homeless, as well as the flow of funding) and driven with an academic vision, one that focused on research and outcomes. But this individual left and when he did, HAAB entered its third iteration, which shifted power back to the county with the process driven by a county employee, the county staff person facilitating the group, has a background in housing as it relates to other county authorities. Now the meetings occur sporadically, are often cancelled, and when they occur it is a "dog and pony" show that the county runs to verify with HUD that they are fulfilling the requirement that they set up in order to receive the massive inflow of money that they receive from the federal government which they then dole out to the nonprofit agencies that serve the homeless. The county is "data" focused but this is primarily to meet the requirements that the federal government has put in place. Again, there is a lack of "people focus" for the broader purpose of "institutional well-being" and ensuring the jobs of the people that work in government run agencies. She also reflected on the foundation communities input in the process. She feels that they bring to the table the desire to implement more "national best practices" and that they are disillusioned when they do not occur. She feels that national best practices preclude the important local information that would tailor programs to better meet the need of local homeless individuals and families. The current iteration is continually cancelling meetings and rescheduling...it is time for them to revisit this failed structure. No one wants to be the new chair (the old chair is retiring) and this would be a good time to revisit and change things, but she expects that this will not happen because the county wants to continue to maintain control of the group and the decision-making process. The person with the most power in HAAB is the department of human services

executive who has political desires to become head of the national Department of Public Welfare. Acting against prevailing political sentiment (which is not in support of ending homelessness in a real way) is not something he will choose to do. Dan Onorato (the county executive) and Luke Ravenstahl (the mayor) are not involved in the decision-making process and not interested in helping or taking a leadership role.

LARGER SYSTEMS

She sees larger systems controlling the micro-processes that are occurring in Allegheny County. In addition to the institutional well-being paradigm, there is a swing in political priorities. Moving from new deal – to the great society – leads us to the current theory that people have “personal responsibility” for themselves. These “me focused” stages often pick one particular group to help, rather than looking at the broader occurrence of homelessness and how to stave its occurrence. The focus then shifts to programs rather than with individual people that are homeless. In the meantime, special interest groups fight for scarce resources. This is evident with the new HPRP funds coming down where the city and the county are fighting for their share of the pot, rather than working together, to maximize the effectiveness of programs so that more people will be helped. In general people have the ability to change things by taking ownership in the political process. But this is not happening. We “choose not to change things.” The public is more concerned with their own well-being or with buying and having stuff. This “me focus” isolates them from each other. Without a focus for public well-being, bad will “floats” the process and decisions are made with no strategic thought or direction occurring. This “poisoning of the system with negative perceptions” by people who do not actually participate in change oriented strategies, further break down the system of creating positive change and the possibility of ending homelessness.

Ending homelessness is a vision, but not something that is possible. There will always be homeless people if not because of situational homelessness then because of mental health and drug problems. What could be achieved is a better process and structure that attends to their needs with integrated programs, but she does not perceive that this will happen as the focus is on individual organizational competition for scarce resources. More conservative “right wing” group frame the process by saying we are unpatriotic when we do not fight for people being responsible for their own individual well-being. This promotes insularity and the belief that we “don’t need anyone.” This frontier philosophy of life brings with it the belief that people have the “right to have everything” that they can take ownership of. It is in essence a puritanical mentality that is furthered by the “moral right.” Framing the conversation as morally correct to act independently drives the me-focused culture lessening the possibility that we act for the public good. In the end this is a “ludicrous” system that promotes “group think.”

If there was to be a change for the better then there would be more focus on innovation, transparency, capacity building and working from better information. But she does not believe this will come about given the current weaknesses in the structure and mindset of the American people that is shaped by media leaders like FOX news and NPR.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
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1) General theme that people are isolated from each other and driven by a “me focus” that is furthered by political leaders. Isolation is breaking down the society that we live in. 2) People no longer involved in the political process.	1) Great individual focus on having stuff to feel fulfilled. 2) Nonprofits are concerned for their own well being not on “ending homelessness.” 3) Governmental entities work for their own well being and have become institutionalized, not concerned with helping people. 4) Great desire for “more” for self-interests.	1) Decision-makers are the government and the county who further their own personal agenda and goals rather than act to end homelessness. 2) There is a political mind-set that people have the ability to “fix themselves” and that rights should be focused on individual rights rather than group well-being.	1) The homeless are perceived as looking for hand-outs and should not be “enabled” with public funds and support. 2) The belief that society should support “independent rights” and not “public welfare.” 3) Framing of who the homeless are is totally disassociated with reality of who they are
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Interview #11 – African American Male and Female over 50 – CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY

He was interviewed by phone in his assistant’s office. He was on his way to another meeting. Both are African American individuals who work with subsidized housing complexes in very low income neighborhoods in Pittsburgh. He is the Resident Relations Director for the HACP. His assistant is the Community Program Liaison for HACP. The office is located in the Hill District in the middle of a low income housing development. The building was relatively new and was used as a supportive services center for local residents.

PERCEPTIONS

When I arrived I was asked to wait for about 10 to 15 minutes in a waiting area. This allowed me to observe the activities at the community center. There was a loose flow of ideas and a comfort in communicating between the administrative staff and secretarial staff but attention to the business at hand was there primary focus. I was ushered into an inner office by Barbara Coffee who phoned He Morris so I would be able to speak with him via speaker phone. He was eloquent, persuasive and to the point immediately speaking to leadership issues and feeling that appropriate attention is not being placed on homelessness in the city of Pittsburgh. Barbara echoed his sentiments after he got off of the phone about 25 minutes into our interview. I spoke with Barbara for the remaining 30 minutes. She often attends HAAB meetings and reports that she listens but rarely speaks. An immediate idea was to use one of the empty school buildings in Pittsburgh to house homeless individuals and connect them to employment and education opportunities. Yet, without the necessary leadership, they did not feel that this would be accomplished.

HAAB

Speaking about HAAB, He said that “there would be no buy-in until the elected politicians and agency directors” came to the table to address the issue of homelessness. He said if they wanted to address the issue of homelessness they would because these individuals “have the capacity to make it happen.” He talked about how Mayor Murphy became involved with helping the Somali and Bantu refugee families that were living in Lawrenceville. After delivering meal on wheels in

the area he discovered this large community of refugees living in tents, as many as 50 to 60 families. Immediately, he convened a meeting with decision-makers and set off a chain of activities that eventually housed these families.

Likewise, he said that if Onorato and Ravenstahl chose to work with the URA and the Housing Authority that problem of “emergency shelter could be solved immediately.” And that there are many people that need jobs that could be trained to monitor and provide food at the shelter effectively and efficiently. At this moment in time, there “are enough public buildings available that could be opened for this purpose if this objective were decreed.” Also, it would be possible to arrange for doctors to come into such a facility to provide health care and a coordinated “emergency response” to the situation.

He believed that if the Downtown Partnership would work more closely with homeless advocates then there would be a single coordinated body that could help the street homeless more effectively and connect them to these “Homeless Service Centers”.

From there a program could be designed in which the homeless would work to meet established goals, and then be connected to housing units that they could occupy after completing their program successfully. This is necessary because shelters are not adequate, all people need a home, and some need support to live in that home. Many studies indicate that this would be a much more effective way to address the problem of homelessness.

If Onorato and Ravenstahl partnered on this goal, they could create something similar to a “five point plan.” A strategic approach could immediately address the problem, we are seeing something similar now occurring in Haiti where very poor people are being paid to help clean up the rubble and create new housing.

Power and decision-making processes all go back to Marc Cherna who must act according to the wishes of Dan Onorato. At the HAAB meetings, the people that make decisions are not at the table. The county employees can only report back to the decision-makers and find out what they are allowed, and not allowed, to do. Yes we have a 10 year goal to end homelessness, but what we don’t have is a real plan that would result in significant decreases in homelessness.

LARGER SYSTEMS

In America there is a perception that poor and homeless people “don’t want to work part time” jobs. But this is not the case. We need to provide the poor with a “gateway to employment.” People want to help and working, even part-time is a positive experience for them.

We are fortunate, Pittsburgh is a small city, and there is not a significant population of homeless individuals living here. Nothing really keeps them here. What we do have are people making their living off of the homeless. We are “cliquish” in Pittsburgh. People are “pushed out of neighborhoods” via residential zoning laws. Many neighborhoods don’t have adequate transportation for the poor. And in Pittsburgh, people cannot live off of \$10 an hour. And we also have the highest drop-out rate in the country.

FEMALE ADMINISTRATOR RESPONSE

Things happen here like “One Hill.” Where money allocated to the neighborhood never gets back to the neighborhood. We use schools for voting polls but we can’t seem to use them for housing for the homeless. This is unfortunate because the schools are closed down....why can’t we use them?

HAAB

The county members are “message carriers” that is their job. They don’t make decisions. Why are we blowing up housing facilities in Pittsburgh when we need housing for the poor and the homeless? Why do we break up families to put them in shelters that only take certain age people and certain sexes? If we used abandoned school buildings we could keep whole families together. The cafeteria could be used to feed people. Children could do their homework there. All it would require is some monitors. If Onorato and Ravenstahl wanted to do something they would form a Task Force and deal with the issue of homelessness.

LARGER SYSTEMS

Regan began this period of economic downturn. Obama has his hands full trying to turn things around. We could give a minimum amount of money to everyone to live on. If the government chose to it could offer jobs to everyone. But there is also an entitlement issue. Homeless people are on all different economic levels. People no longer have a foundation of faith to work from. It is not OK for people to live on the streets. Money is not everything and you are not taking it with you. People do not want to be poor and homeless. There needs to be basic support for everyone...including food and a roof over people’s heads. People should be able to be with their families and they should have an opportunity to work.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
1) The family unit is alienated in the current shelter system. 2) Money allocated for low income people does not get back to the neighborhoods but support corporate developments instead.	1) Universal basic funds to ensure that everyone is cared for is needed. 2) Belief that money is everything although you won’t take it with you. 3) Kids want stuff, money spent on things that we don’t need.	1) Those with money have more rights and privileges. 2) Community leaders are not concerned for the poor and homeless. 3) Poor families are broken up when put in shelter.	1) Stigma is that homeless don’t want to work, but people that work feel valued and receive value for giving back to others. 2) People do not “want to be poor and homeless.”

Interview #12 – White Male over 50 – HOUSING AUTHORITY

I met with this board member at a coffee shop in downtown Pittsburgh. He was very supportive and interested in helping me. His mood was relaxed but his answers slightly guarded. He has been a government employee for 18 years. Before that he worked in construction and his specialty is housing. He is responsible for monitoring ADA compliance, Section 504 programs, curb cuts, and he works at Pittsburgh’s Housing Authority. He speaks about housing programs

becoming privatized over the past few years. Now he monitors a mix of public and private housing programs.

PERCEPTIONS

He made the point that we will probably never “solve” homelessness but we can make an impact. He says the problem is bigger than what the community can take on. First, we need to deal with the reasons why people have these problems before we hope to end homelessness, so it is more than just providing a house for people to live in. “Housing is the key.” He says there is “affordable” housing in Pittsburgh available for low income people. This housing is public housing and it has gradually become more utilized over the past few years. What has been a great advantage most recently has been the new “tax credit” programs that allows the city to build new housing development. Private developers are able to take advantage of these tax credits to build the new housing. He does not necessarily see that programs being developed by private organizations as a problem. Often these organizations build the housing developments because they want to earn the 10 to 15 percent developers fees. He feels they develop good housing stock and privatization is a viable option. Although private organizations also like to manage housing, he asserts that it is better if public authorities manage them. This is because that although both public and private management organizations follow the same rules; public organizations are more strictly enforced and monitored.

HAAB

One idea that he had for improvement was that the agenda be developed before the meeting and that there be a singular focus and goal to accomplishment on a yearly or bi-yearly basis. This might more effectively lead to things getting accomplished and done. For example the Engagement Center, although it did not turn out as originally planned some form of an engagement center was accomplished. This was a tangible result and helped the group focus on the idea that something did come out of their efforts. This kind of focus might take longer but it would be more effective.

Right now there is a focus on creating housing units but there are no funds available to accomplish this goal. This is where it might help to have diverse stakeholders at the table to gather together influence and funds. Stakeholders, although they come from different special interest groups, must agree to work together on one goal. Right now Allegheny County housing units are at 99% capacity. This compared to a few years back when capacity was at 70% shows that more affordable housing is needed. Poor people are finally at the point where they are willing to go where the housing is – just to “get in.” An example is Natrona Heights, where 142 units are at, they are now at capacity.

LARGER SYSTEMS

So we need more housing. He is hoping that new funds may be received through the American Reinvestment Act for housing. These are competitive funds for fixed housing, not necessarily new housing. It is readily apparent that we need more public housing for people that are poor and low income. There is hope that Shaun Donovan, federal administrator of housing programs, may have a focus on that. In America these are “tough times.” Funding seems to be coming down through these “tax credit programs, which may be related to political shifts and perceptions of how funds should be allocated. He believes that we could modernize existing units instead of

doing new rebuilds to provide more needed housing units for low income people. It is the time to “think green” and save existing buildings making them energy efficient. People want to live in vibrant communities. Sometimes there is an issue if transportation is not available in these neighborhoods. The homeless in particular need good transportation and that should be factored into the equation.

One last point about the movement to merge the city and the county along with the state and federal funds that they receive. This type of merging would in effect reduce the funds that are available for housing. So the idea of merging governmental entities is not that appealing as their would be a long term loss of funds.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
1) Although both private and public organizations are both regulated, the public organizations are more closely watched. 2) Focus of committee is on a goal that is unachievable because there are no funds available to build new affordable housing for homeless.	1) Tax credit programs are acceptable to more conservative regimes because funds controlled by private owners and businesses. 2) Belief that money is everything although you won't take it with you. 3) Kids want stuff, money spent on things that we don't really need. 4) New shift toward allowing private organizations run public programs.	1) Poor dependent on public funds and tax credits to find housing. 2) Privatization movement is spurred by the incentive to make money from developer fees. 3) When private organizations run housing the benefits are less for the poor because they are not checked on as closely.	1) The HAAB is working on a goal that is unachievable, increased housing. Still the focus of the committee is on this although it won't be accomplished. 2) Solving homelessness is an unachievable goal.

Interview #14 – White Male over 50 – NONPROFIT THAT BUILDS/ MANAGES HOUSING

I met this person in their office. He was interested in helping with this study and took more than an hour out of his busy life to speak about the HAAB and his role throughout the years. His mood was relaxed and he was open and interested in talking about the issue. He has been working at private housing development organization for many years. His specialty is housing programs as it relates to building and managing them. Prior to that, he worked at housing nonprofit and with the URA. He has a Master's in Public Administration. He has a background working at other nonprofits on their boards.

PERCEPTIONS

The economy and real estate are very uncertain at this point in time. Obama is not into taking risks. The debt and the looming Medicare and Medicaid crises does not bode well for the homeless. HUD is at risk of undergoing trimming to balance the budget. There is a stigma about “entitlement” programs for the homeless and congress is not necessarily focused on helping them. At this point in time we may only be able to sustain what we have and not bring in more money.

In the FHLB money is dwindling, and housing which was once funded by this organization is no longer available and difficult to come by.

HAAB

He has been involved with HAAB since its beginning. He perceives HAAB as functioning well and primarily an oversight and advisory board where information is shared. He does not believe that HAAB has the funds they need to accomplish their recommendations. One idea or model that they may want to adopt in the future is an advocacy approach like the Housing Alliance which has been successful working on specific legislation that will help improve the housing market. Laws and senate bills do affect us locally and we could have a bigger impact if we adopted an advocacy role. Perhaps this would build in a level of energy that is currently not present in HAAB. Another idea is to do political endorsements and become known as the voice for the homeless. Currently HAAB reads HUD applications and offers advice. They also meet to hear about other programs and to advise each other and the public.

LARGER SYSTEMS

He has had experiences with NIMBY in the past. Specifically this has happened in the township of Hampton and Upper St. Clair; both are upper income suburban neighborhoods of Pittsburgh. He has had to process NIMBY cases through federal court but has been successful in doing this. His thought is that if you go into a neighborhood before you build you can alleviate many of the fears that the neighbors have. NIMBY will always be there but it is potentially more inhibiting for homeless populations due to stigma. Homeless conjures up the image of “criminals” and “dangerous people.” He recommends following a scattered site housing strategy rather than concentrating housing all in one location. People will say “I have nothing against the homeless, but my children get off the bus here or the elderly live nearby.

There is a process that you can through to address the stigma. This is meeting informally with community leaders first, work with borough and local manager and let folks ask questions so they understand what is going on. The goal is to COMMUNICATE and dispel myths. Then you need to follow up with zoning issues and make sure they are not discriminatory, if they are, then you can take this to the next level and contest discriminatory practices. Reaffirm the law that housing should be fair housing. Sometimes, he has worked to overcome these stereotypes by going door to door in a neighborhood and visiting with the neighbors.

The neighbors may want to be involved and to help as volunteers or as resources of support. If you will have an attorney involved, he advises spending fees on the attorney up front, rather than responding to unhappy neighbors at the back end of the moving in process. Homeless again, are much more difficult to move into a neighborhood.

The state budget will again reach a crisis level again this year, it is sure that there will be cuts and many nonprofits will be affected. One way to deal with this is to continue and consolidate programs. Hospital based programs are much better situated at this time.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
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1) Funds continue to dwindle for public housing programs and he sees no change with the new administration. 2) There is a stigma about homelessness and many people do not want to publically support the homeless let alone have them live in their neighborhood.	1) Zoning issues seem to endorse private wealth rather than public well-being. 2) Hospital organizations receiving funds rather than supported housing programs. 3) Money for housing that at one time came from FHLB is dwindling.	1) To achieve housing rights for the poor you need to enter into the legal system to fight for federal rights. 2) Congress is not focused on helping poor at this point in time. 3) The homeless are not going to receive help for they are a low priority.	1) The homeless are seen as criminal and dangerous. 2) Solving homelessness is an unachievable goal. 3) You can overcome false consciousness by getting to know people better on an informal basis. 4) 10 year goal is nothing more than a goal.
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Interview #14 – White Male 40 – FOUNDATION PROGRAM MANAGER

I met with He in a coffee shop, he was somewhat rushed and had a particular and unique focus on HAAB that I had not heard from the others. There were people coming in to the establishment that he would break conversation with me to speak with. He was late for the meeting and coming from another meeting, then rushing to one right after meeting with me. When he did answer my questions he was very focused and stayed on task well. He was data driven.

PERCEPTIONS

He believes that yes we can end homelessness in ten-years but it will take comprehensive collaborations to accomplish this. He has been with the Heinz Endowments for seven years now. Prior to that he was working at DHS as a policy information management person responsible for evaluation and research. He was familiar with all the departments at DHS at that time.

HAAB

He has been involved with HAAB for the last two years, in its current new restructured phase. He sees the HAAB as a place for DHS updates. Agenda seems to need improved. He is wondering if the Advisory Board is truly engaging its members. Seems that there are always scheduling conflicts, and rearrangements of meetings and times are inconvenient for the membership with HAAB. Attendance varies significantly. The leader is a driving force, but he is wondering how informed people really are? Government staff is very responsive and helpful. Wondering why the housing authority does not appear to be at the table? There appears to be no authority, enforcement mechanism or incentives involved with the board. Also, the plan seems disconnected from the board. Where is the housing plan, is there one? How is it going to happen, there appears to be no strategy and it is hard to understand how all the pieces and organizations that would make this possible would connect.

The data is missing. The Point in Time Survey is not enough information. If it is only a single day during the year, the information gathered is not detailed enough and it could be skewed by the weather. How many homeless people are there and what data describes this population? We

need a “million dollar Murray” the homeless person that would illustrate that millions of dollars are being spent on hospital visits and emergency room interventions. This would then prove that we could save money by spending money by housing the homeless. ECAPS gave more information this. We need to train the consumers to do the data as well.

The plan is lacking coordination. If it were coordinated then perhaps an RFP could be developed to provide the services that are needed. This should be a competitive process. Currently it is clear that DHS is the decision-maker and they leverage their funds well. But homelessness is not high on the agenda at DHS. And it is hard to advocate for a group that does not have a quantifiable pay-off. Instead the focus seems to be on kids. Kids are cute. The homeless are harder to sell and seem to need money over the long-term instead of providing a short term fix for a one time donation. This may be because it is seen as a values issue. It almost sounds wrong to help the homeless.

LARGER SYSTEMS

If we want to make an impact on homelessness it will also require a policy agenda to advocate for real change. We will not be able to shape the agenda without this critical piece. As well there are several systems that serve the homeless but they are neither coordinated nor collective in focus. Other groups are much better at coordinating across sectors to accomplish their goal. We are now in a recession and times are hard. There is a shrinking market in Pittsburgh and we have many underutilized and vacant properties. If we were to build housing it should go through a CDC that is working in partnership with a nonprofit, like ELDI and EECM.

The Supportive Services Fund provided by local foundations to the county fills a gap. But an idea is to start and compare what organization is doing the most effective work with the least amount of money. This might help the foundations move toward a rate structure in the future. Currently the cost for service delivery varies widely across Allegheny County.

Funding should only be accompanied by an outcome, and if a nonprofit cannot achieve the outcomes that they set out to do then they should not receive public funds. It might be better to focus on prevention rather than housing. But prevention funds are always the first to go and they are relatively immeasurable. The data is just not there for preventative services.

These are the questions that he wants addressed: “How many people are homeless?” “How many people are no longer homeless?” Who is the “million-dollar Murray?” “How are we saving money when compared to the prisoner/probation system?” “What is the better approach prevention vs. punitive interventions?”

He feels that most probably we need some type of incentive structure to promote a change in the infrastructure. We need to approach the policy makers with this information.

In the 90’s child welfare was the priority for DHS. With reports they can say that 10 years later things are better for children in Allegheny County. Instead the focus on the homeless seems more focused on how to relocate them so they can redo market square. WSC was an opportunity and it elevated the issue – it gave people a real solution to homelessness in Pittsburgh. But this was in the past; homelessness is no longer on the front page. If we are to hope to end homelessness and

to achieve the 10 year plan to end homelessness then it will need to be brought to a much higher level of attention in the media.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
1) Relate to homeless in terms of money saved for the public. 2) Lack of serious attention to meeting and lack of focus when it occurs. No incentive to participate so people are disengaged from the group. 3) HAAB members alienated from each other and the plan.	1) Homeless services should be data driven. Million dollar homeless Murray as case for saving money for the public. 2) Decisions related to human care should be driven by data and cost expense ratio.	1) Homeless are a low priority and off the screen of leaders and the public. 2) Focus on children takes higher precedence to focus on homeless or poor.	1) There is a plan but no concrete steps to achieve the plan so it is merely a charade. 2) DHS is the decision-maker just a group in the motions. 3) General lack of structure at HAAB.

Interview #15 – White Female over 60 – FOUNDATION SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER

I also met with this person in a coffee shop. In general meeting outside of a foundation office was preferable to me because I felt it would help take staff outside of their element and allow them to focus on ideas that may not have generally been supported by their organization. This individual had many things to say and I found that I had to ask very little questions. She seemed as if she enjoyed speaking about this in an open and unhampered way and had many ideas for improvement to offer. It was as if she had been awaiting the opportunity to speak her mind.

PERCEPTIONS

The city has always had a plan for homelessness in conjunction with the City CDBG funds. She worked with the city before joining the foundation. Only recently have foundations began to take a look at homelessness under the leadership of Laurel Shaw of the McCune Foundation. She joined the foundation group at that time when she was invited by Laurel Shaw to do so.

HAAB

She has been involved with HAAB since it was first started with the Future Search process in 2003. She has found the meetings to be generally frustrating, lacking logic and critical thinking. The newer iteration was to support the coordination of all funding streams with Chuck put in the lead. Foundation supports this structural and staffing change. There have been some accomplishments in general and that must be recognized. She added a level of respect to the old committee. But there was no progress. When the new leader came on board he understood the complexities of housing start up and focused on accomplishing this goal. No leadership from county and all providers doing most of the talking. DHS are not the decision-makers. Dan Onorato told the group that they could own the process. DHS has a community responsibility to own the plan. The DHS has never owned this plan, and the structure and reporting process is the same as well? One positive change is that OBH funds are now mixed and matched, this is a step

forward. The new supportive services funds provided by the foundations are another positive step forward.

One disappointing thing is the lack of movement on the housing first model that representatives went to visit last year. With housing first we could eliminate chronic homelessness in Pittsburgh, yet the county refuses to move on this idea. In fact they are resisting the Housing First (HF) model, even though the foundation community offered to support the idea. Nine people died on the streets last year that is simply unacceptable. If there was moving on HF we could eradicate this problem. It appears that the model would need to be smaller in Pittsburgh. No more than 20 units at one location. But this will never happen because Marc Cherna said he would boycott the idea, even though funding is available for it. Cherna is wedded to the scattered site housing idea. If housing was something that HAAB was seriously working on then they need to have other people on the board like CDC's, PA Housing Alliance and other housing folks. Or perhaps an established organization like WPIC could spearhead the effort.

The foundation officer asked "Why doesn't the county do Housing First, it's an established best practice model, funding is available, but still they don't get it." Why don't they want to get the folks off the street? Every winter people are dying on the streets, but still the county won't take this on. Only time people think about it is when an article appears in the paper about someone dying on the street. The shelter system just rotates people around; it doesn't give them safe and warm housing. Preventative models like these are needed. We should not lose sight of street people even if the new spotlight is on homeless families. The fact that we are allowing this to happen is amazing within itself.

LARGER SYSTEMS

Family homelessness seems to be a new focus of the incoming administration. But it would seem much easier to keep care of chronic homelessness, but the system is not supporting the idea. Dr. Dennis Culhane's new research focuses on the need to create more permanent housing and less shelters. Culhane is a researcher out of the University of Pennsylvania that is widely quoted in homeless research forums and best practices. For some, short term housing is the key; for the chronically homeless, permanent housing is key. Single Residential Occupancy rooms (SRO) like the YMCA are a good alternative too. But the real goal should be to reduce the time people are spending in shelter by moving them to more permanent housing quickly. Since Bush was in power the supply of affordable housing has greatly decreased. The new stimulus funds and HPRP should increase the supply of affordable and clean housing. Federal policy should be shaped for the movement from shelter to transitional to permanent housing dependent on level of need. The homeless should have choices too. SRO's are something that may be more affordable to create. HUD funding continues to vacillate. The federal department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and SAMSHA substance abuse funds should be integrated with HUD to better serve this population. The only dedicated stream of funding available is through the McKinney-Vento Act funds. This creates structural problems. Advocates have great difficulty pushing against the various silos of funds that are out there. One thing that the department of human services has been successful at is pulling from alternative sources of funding and leveraging it to integrate these funding streams. Helping the homeless is not high on the political agenda. Meanwhile, national programs like the National Alliance to End Homelessness is reporting that chronic homelessness is decreasing, which detracts from the larger issue, that, in fact there is an

increase in homeless people overall. The recession has led to an increase in the number of homeless too. Additionally the IRAQ war vets are hitting the streets. The demand is definitely increasing. People may respond to helping homeless vets. People are worried about their own needs and may not have an interest in helping the homeless.

There are now 300 people living on the streets in Pittsburgh. This is an increase, only a few years back the number was 200. If there was to be a real change it would require homeless providers to take more of an advocacy role. But most are afraid to “rock the boat.” Pittsburgh doesn’t really have an organization that takes on advocacy issues for the homeless, in particular policy advocacy issues.

There is a definite need for policy advocacy. We need some kind of a group to take up this cause. It could even be university driven, with research demonstrating the need and the problem. Many are afraid to take on this issue because the money comes from the county. HAAB could be the forum to raise this issue, but this will not happen.

The climate in Pittsburgh is not ripe for advocacy around this issue. Marc Cherna does not want Housing First. He has a billion dollar operation and he is not going to listen to foundations that have only a small amount of money to put into this. Next time I see Reggie Young I am going to ask him why nine people died on the street this year, and what are we going to do about it. DHS continues to be impenetrable.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
1) The only time there is interest in homelessness is when people die on the streets. 2) Although Housing First is the best option the county refuses to work to make it happen. 3) Meetings lack logic and are generally frustrating.	1) Affordable housing steadily decreased when Bush was president. 2) As recession increases so do the number of homeless people in Pittsburgh. 3) People worried about their own well-being more so then helping others.	1) Politicians and the public have very little interest in helping the homeless – they are a low priority. 2) DHS continues to be the one power in control and others not listened to.	1) This is a plan but no real action is taken, frustrating. 2) Even though Housing First was talked about and cities were visited where this is occurring there is no real interest at county level to do it. 3) General disinterest in helping the homeless.

Interview #16 – White Female Over 50 – MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY OFFICIAL

I met with this member at her office in Penn Hills. Generally speaking she was very supportive and interested in helping. You could tell from her work space that she is very busy and she had people calling and stopping by frequently in the middle of our conversation. She had a unique view point with special interest in the municipality of Penn Hills with a planning perspective, as she is a planner. She has enjoyed her time on HAAB as it has given her a different perspective of

homelessness. She feels she is now better informed on the subject of homelessness from being involved with the board.

PERCEPTIONS

Before I began my interview this member wanted to tell me about the story of a young man that had come to the office, homeless, one winter night in the last few weeks. His girlfriend had thrown him out for drinking and his mother did not want him to come home because she already had seven children and felt she could not handle him anymore. The young man came to the police station because he had nowhere else to go. He sat waiting in a chair, and the office workers and police began working and talking together to decide on how to help the boy. Eventually someone spoke to him and found out about his story. They found out that he had a grandfather in North Carolina and they called him to see if he would take the boy. He said he had no space for him...but after some persuasion he said the boy could sleep on the floor in the apartment. The office staff all pooled together their money and sent him on a bus down south. A few weeks later they called to check on him and he was doing fine. This was one instance she said, where they were able to help someone by working together. Penn Hills is a separate borough and is outside of Pittsburgh. They work together to get things accomplished, they have no human services department and this makes it difficult to attend to special needs and circumstanced. She said often that her co-worker went the extra mile on this case. And she felt compelled to help as well because her co-worker took the lead on it.

HAAB

She reports that she has been involved with HAAB since it first began in 2003. She said she has learned a lot about homelessness within this project, things she would have otherwise not known. She has gotten a different view of the world. Future search helped bring everyone to the table. The leader is doing a great job. She usually does not participate in the meetings.

LARGER SYSTEMS

Over time the issue of homelessness has become fragmented. In the 80's attention was focused on homelessness, but over the 90's the political will to help the homeless was lost. We have the same problems since that time, but now they are a bit more complex. For example, we have youth affected by drugs, gangs, killings, and violence is more prevalent now than it was before. On the positive side we see more organizations collaborating. Structures are in place. Supportive housing has been paired with permanent housing, a great move. Now the law enforcement, housing and providers are all at the table together. On the negative side we have shelters that are so highly restrictive that they break up families. Affordable housing is available but only in certain areas.

The homeless are the working poor. A minimum job wage earner cannot make it on one pay check. Even two working poor people cannot live the American dream. There needs to be a living wage.

Although the city and county have affordable and subsidized housing, the rules are strict. This may be necessary as it stops illegal activity. Scattered site housing is the better option. But even in these scenarios the rule that the property manager plays is important. There needs to be onsite management, code enforcement and monitoring of illegal element. Use the yearly up-date of the

occupancy permit as a way to monitor housing situations. Slum landlords abound; they are in it for the money and there are not enough adequate rules to stop them from this behavior. With proper enforcement you can control the behavior of slum landlords but it can be a very long process. In Penn Hills they have about 50 to 60 homeless people. Most homeless are doubled up living with relatives. This information comes from food pantries in the area. There are quite a few pantries in the area. People are struggling more now, economically speaking. Recovery Act funds were quickly used up. Hopefully more money will be coming down the pike. Many people who are homeless have mental health problems. We don't treat mental health well as a society and this just contributes to the problem. But services are not readily available. There are those homeless who take advantage of the system...and they "ruin it for others." This is "human nature." In general perceptions about the homeless are negative. Awareness comes from television. But in reality people are homeless at all income levels.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
1) Homelessness has a negative perception and portrayed negatively in the press. 2) Many have mental health problems but there is no help available for them. 3) Society is becoming increasingly more dangerous and alienated from each other.	1) There is affordable housing but only in certain areas. 2) You cannot afford to live on one salary let alone two salaries. 3) Lack of family unity in current culture and there are barriers to stopping this from happening.	1) The poor must live by restrictions and rules...to get into housing. 2) Homeless live doubled up with relatives, many work and they cannot make it on one paycheck.	1) We are in denial about mental health as a society. 2) Although there is housing available many cannot get into it due to level of restrictions. 3) Homeless are from all income levels.

Interview #17 – White Female Over 50 - HOMELESS PROVIDER

I met with this member in a coffee shop on the East End of Pittsburgh. It was a comfortable enough environment though a little tight and a little noisy. She has experienced being homeless in a former life. She was relayed this experience to me at the beginning of our meeting in a very frank and open manner.

PERCEPTIONS

She is often invited to be on committees, she perceives, because she fills many roles. She is formerly homeless, has a faith-based background, and she is a director of a nonprofit housing program for formerly homeless men with addiction issues.

HAAB

HAAB is in a restructuring phase. At this time, it is expanding to include the needs of homeless families but moving away from focusing on ending chronic homelessness. Housing First, the model, is in demand. It appears that the focus is shifting away from the 10 year plan to end homelessness. Many decisions are being made behind closed doors. Perhaps we can improve by

working from a logic model, and incorporating best practices, these things can help if we use them correctly.

Often times we compare apples to oranges in the continuum of care, we need better data. We have five years of data in the HMIS, how can we use that information in a better way? It is a resource to be used.

SYSTEMS

There will always be some portion of people homeless, because there is the element of freedom, associated with being homeless. Also the economic downturn is resulting in lost jobs. To help the chronically homeless requires the building of trust. Hopelessness and homelessness works together. On the other hand society does not promote the role of taking care of yourself...when it should. Real change to end homelessness would take education, healthcare and training, because you can't make it on just a job without some kind of skills. These support structures are needed in addition to housing for the homeless. On the other hand, at the systemic level, we are sending money that we don't even have to homeless programs. We, as a country, are deep in national debt. We are quickly losing the middle class, and have only the very poor and a few very rich. There is a shift in power to the very rich. Today people are focused on just surviving. Many families are working two jobs, and are doing their best to help their children and get them through college, which is an insurmountable task. Chronically homeless are most likely ending up in the jail system, but is the HMIS system tracking that? Some of the results would be more leveraging of funds across systems, to get better grants and results.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
- chronically homeless are ending up in jail nowadays - almost impossible to try and get ahead	Interestingly had a data driven approach – felt numbers and statistics would move HAAB forward.	- the middle class is disappearing. The upper class is in charge of the resources	- to survive both parents in family must work, but they really can't afford to send kids to college anymore

Interview #19 – White Female over 40 - NONPROFIT PROVIDER

I met this individual in a Panera shop. She had been working overnight at the cold weather emergency shelter and was tired but energized by the topic. She said that she came from a coal mining family in West Virginia and she knew what it was like to try and make ends meet for the family. She views her role in her nonprofit as being a “mother bear” trying to take charge and keep care of the homeless as best as she can. She has a nursing background and has been working for this nonprofit for the past 16 years. She said she would fight to make sure this happens, that the homeless are helped. She believes that it is not acceptable that people are living in shelters. We need to be compassionate, professional and even spiritual in our approach to this problem. She is not “book learned” about homelessness but she has a deep sense of duty about the community and being involved in helping people get off of the streets.

PERCEPTIONS

She works for a nonprofit that serves people who are homeless and living on the streets. She was one of the most impassioned people that I interviewed. She told the story of what she does so well, I am going to commit myself to donating to the organization. Her view point was compelling, both direct and revealing. She sees herself as someone that makes sure that people are helped at the ground level. She manages a group of caseworkers, volunteers, interns and doctors that do just this. At the moment that I interviewed her she had been managing the cold weather shelter in downtown Pittsburgh for more than three weeks because of the extended snow storm that hit Pittsburgh in the winter of 2010. She carried with her the experience of helping people survive the weather, but also having to send them back out on the streets when the shelter closed in the day time. It was a difficult thing to do and she had strong feelings that they system must do better for our vulnerable homeless individuals in Pittsburgh.

HAAB

She has been on the HAAB board for more than two years. She has been working at the nonprofit that helps the street homeless for 16 years. She believes strongly that the work of the HAAB should concentrate on the most vulnerable homeless, the street homeless. There needs to be greater focus on accomplishing the mission of HAAB to end homelessness. The board should be working harder on getting people off of the street. It seems like all they do is talk. They need to deliver the services, house people, and get them off of the streets. The board seems to not have a “spine” to do these things. There is housing available out there, but we are not getting the homeless into the housing. “Where is the disconnect?” We need more advocacy. Why not have a hotline? We need to respond to the need more effectively. How can we better educate the public? This is something the group should be working on. Service learning should be incorporated into everything that we do. The generation that is doing well needs to “roll up their sleeves” and find out what is needed and see how they can help people. A lot of younger people think they need a lot “of stuff” to survive, like blackberries, internet, and other types of technology. These are costly things and they don’t “need” this to have a high quality of life. Talking about how hard it is to survive because of the economy is just an excuse. We want more, but do we really need what we want? This goes for jobs too, we are poor in abilities. We focus on one thing but don’t think holistically about what we can do to gain work. How did we get to this point? “Why do we want all of this stuff?” We need to think about what we are doing and consider...is this something that satisfies me or is this something that makes me happy?

This morning when I left the shelter, some guy who is about to go back out in the cold, asks me if he can sing me a song. That is happiness to me, someone giving me a song is a real gift that I appreciate and value. This also gives him a sense of value that is what we need to do more of, reinforce the homeless people’s sense of value and help them understand what is valuable. “I see many people spending their scarce funds on shoes or designer clothes” that they really don’t need. The homeless providers need to be accountable to the population that we serve. We need to investigate to see if the providers are doing what they said they are doing. This can be a very emotional thing for her as she is the one that has to send people back onto the cold streets in the dead of winter with no place to go. Not even the McDonalds will let the homeless sit in their restaurant to warm up while they wait for the cold weather shelter to open up again. The board should be demanding help because they have the power to do that. The leader does a great job; he has a rhythm that is helping maintain the flow of the board. But we all need to step up to the plate and “believe that we can make a change.” When she is in a meeting the members

“sure are quiet.” They seem to not want to act. They need to step up to the plate and believe in change. They need to find out how they can help. She suggests that everyone take a turn at being the chair, charge everyone with the fundraising task, and make sure that micromanagement does not occur.

10 YEAR PLAN

She said that there have been achievements along the way. The idea of a ten-year plan is a good idea. Achieving the housing goals of the plan is more difficult. Starting up scattered site housing is not that easy. Putting housing out in inaccessible locations doesn't make sense. One funding source that her group obtained was jumpstart funds that allowed them to house homeless straight off of the street, in a harm reduction model that did not require people to be “clean or off of drugs.” The social support services followed the housing arrangement. Usually nonprofits require people to be clean before they get into housing. There are challenges though. Landlords attempt to take advantage of what they perceive to be “government money.” There are many slum landlords that are trying to get as much money as they can possibly get. What the landlords should be doing is offering a discount for people that are homeless. Finding housing for families is the most difficult thing to achieve. There are also barriers to entry. There should be housing available within 24-48 hours, though this is unheard of in present service system models. Another focus that the group should consider is helping people achieve incomes. This could be through employment, or through gaining access to entitlement programs like social security and disability. Along with the issue of income is the fact that people need to feel “satisfied.”

LARGER SYSTEMS

People working to help the homeless should be given the opportunity to do it the best way possible. Give them the resources so they can do the best that they can, their “own little business.” Unrestricted funds would really boost the creativity level of people that are really focused on helping the homeless. She finds that they more liberty that she gives to her staff, the more they are able to work out solutions for the homeless that they serve. This goes for the board as well...we don't need to box in the board with what they are trying to accomplish. If we bring in leaders with the right expertise we could get things accomplished. Advocacy has an important role and we need to listen to what people are suggesting. In Pittsburgh homelessness is not that bad. We should be proud of what we have accomplished. But homelessness is unacceptable and everyone should be supported; 150% of the time. Underlying all we do should be a true sense of dignity and worth of all human beings. People need each other, along with their families...this concept should be built into what we are trying to accomplish. At the end of the day we should all be thinking about “who is not housed?” and are we “doing the right things to get them into housing?” Be accountable.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no one is attending the meetings and when they are there they are silent. Why? - we value things more than we value human 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -People, even the homeless, are focused on having “Stuff” when they don't really need it. - Younger people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People living on the streets is unacceptable, we as a society should reform. - not even the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - there is housing, but we can't get the homeless into the housing...where is the disconnect? - the obvious needs

interaction. - sending people out onto the streets in the middle of winter, with nowhere to go is heartless.	especially feel the need to have technology items for perceived higher quality of life.	McDonalds allows people with no money to sit in their restaurant.	are not being met and no one is addressing this
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Interview #20 – White Male over 60 - NONPROFIT PROVIDER AND CAREER EDUCATOR

I met this gentleman in a Starbucks in downtown Pittsburgh. The weather was bad and most organizations had closed down for the day, but He was preparing to go into to where he works at a nonprofit that he founded after retiring from a lifetime career in education at the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, where he was the Executive Director. He lives downtown and he was active and engaged in the topic and very helpful in answering all my questions.

PERCEPTIONS

He is very educated and sees a larger world picture of homelessness. He believes that some homeless people take an “entitlement” point of view that suggests people use the current system of supports in a way that is enabling them and inhibiting them from becoming self sufficient. A lack of trust in a sense.

He spoke of a “Culture of Poverty.” He believes that we create a population of “couch surfers” by funding the emergency shelter system. He says there are 1,000 couch surfers and 600 are children with their moms in Allegheny County.

He spent his life in education and feels schools can be the key to success for homeless children. Homeless children are the group that he is most concerned about. He believes that if the schools are better supported that homeless children will be better supported. He recently completed an evaluation with the support of a local university addressing how homeless children can be better supported in the Pittsburgh Public school system.

He was an educator for 40 years. During that time he took a special interest in helping homeless children. He came from a coal mining family and it was only through sports and education that he was able to better his life. He realized then that education could help kids move out of poverty. Later in his life, he had teachers that took an interest in him and helped him to succeed in the goals that he set. Being a football star also helped. When he retired he realized that he didn’t want to watch TV all day, so he started an organization that was targeted on helping homeless children through education.

Since the founding of his organization he has started 11 educational resource centers in 11 homeless shelters providing books and technology for students to connect to their classrooms. It is an easy concept to sell and most people want to help. He connects to his peers and to legislators in DC to raise funds and make systemic changes.

HAAB

He has only been a member of HAAB for the last year. He believes that the HAAB has had significant gains since it began. He said the group establishes a process of educating the public, a

way for members to learn, and finally the institutionalization of best practices. He believes research on the current state of affairs is one way to accomplish this. He did this recently with his Children and Family Report of 2010.

He believes that HAAB is a place where funds and resources can be maximized to support the needs of the homeless. HAAB creates a community of learners that can work cooperatively together to solve problems.

10-YEAR PLAN

Although he doesn't think we can end homelessness, he doesn't think we should give up hoping that we can. He believes that ending homelessness can happen for many but it has to start in the shelters. Situational and family homelessness is easier to address than chronic homelessness. There needs to be a shift to helping the families. He feels that the people on the board know this and are ready to shift their focus away from chronic homelessness. Also he feels the political climate is ripe to make this change.

He also feels that rising stress levels in families due to the economy reflects this need. Bush, to his credit, did focus on homeless kids in emergency shelter. This helped expand the McKinney Vento act legislation that made funds for the homeless available through the federal government. He is currently working on revising Senate Bill 2800, clarifying the language so that homeless kids have a place in the schools. He keeps visiting his legislative contacts to keep this line of approach viable. He feels that Foundations are also potential advocacy groups that can help with the implementation of the 10 year plan. He believes there is currently no voice for homeless kids and he wants to make sure that this happens. The role of the school is to provide all children with their basic needs. He describes the stages of passing a bill in congress. It may take as long as 30 to 40 years to process this Senate Bill 2800, which provides essential services to homeless children in the school setting. Right now the rule of the federal government is ambiguous and he feels that this legislation will clarify the rule so that transportation, education, special education, summer programs and other needs are more readily apparent. Segregation is not the answer, integration is. We need to grow a culture of learning taking advantage of the principles of democracy. This will break the culture of poverty. Diversity is needed on the board, without a hidden agenda. Creative and alternative approaches to challenges can help end homelessness.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rising stress levels in families due to economic crisis. - rule of federal government is ambiguous - current trend toward segregation of services for the homeless. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - federal legislation takes 30 to 40 years to pass. - current system creates a sense of entitlement for the poor, they feel that free services are something they deserve. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - we live in a "culture of poverty" that is devoid of principles of democracy...active engagement and participation. - education provides way out of poverty and homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emergency shelters create a system of "couch surfers who never find permanent arrangements to grow sustainable from. - no voice for the homeless in current system

Interview #21 – White Female Over 30 - COUNTY GOVERNMENT

She is in her late thirties and works in the County Economic Development Department. She has an economic background and her main focus in her lifetime career at the county has been housing. She is very successful in her job and highly respected throughout the homeless and government bureaucratic community.

PERCEPTIONS

Some homeless don't want help. They are independent and they want to be left alone. This has to be considered when working on plans to end homelessness. Initially, her frame of reference is more focused on statistics and allocating scarce resources. She is quite eloquent and perceives complex structural issues and willing to critique to current structure despite power bases that control government folks.

HAAB

She feels that the HAAB "is not useful." There seems to be "no sense of mission, no goals, and no attention paid to best practices." There have been trips to see places where there are best practices but no engagement of those practices here. It "seems like these suggestions don't get implemented." One thing that did happen is the engagement center network. The meetings are not very productive and there continues to be "tensions between groups." She finds the meeting to be a "frustrating experience." The chair tries but there is no focus on collaboration and there is a great sense of disengagement. DHS runs this group. The housing goals are unrealistic. 500 housing units is not doable. The meetings are long and the advocates talk more than others. It gets frustrating to hear advocates talk about personal stories of the homeless over and over and no one does anything about it. It seems to be a waste of time for the group to proceed this way. The funders are not engaged in the conversation. She doesn't know what her role is there. How can she help? How can anyone be engaged in this group? The real work happens at the community level. Perhaps we need to consider what the potential of this group is?

10 YEAR PLAN

This is a concrete plan that is not materializing. In the ten-year plan the focus was on ending chronic homelessness. Although it is good to have a main focus like this, she recommends establishing "mini" goals to achieve the overarching one. She recommends having a "project for the year" that speaks to the overall goal of ending homelessness with the ten-year plan. Smaller goals are more achievable and will help the group accomplish benchmarks along the way.

If HAAB can be used as an opportunity to increase support for the homeless then it should be used that way. HAAB could "champion both resources and a strategy." She needs convinced that they are able to do that. There is not enough good data that speaks to: 1) Establishing that the need is there; 2) Demographics in communities; 3) Available social services; 4) Public transportation. The worse thing that could happen is building something that people don't want to live in because these issues were not addressed up front. Getting the needed resources is key but first we need to make sure that all resources are being used effectively. Groups that are receiving the funds need to demonstrate that. Too many nonprofits are doing similar things, but nonprofits are working together better and the work to help the homeless has become less "turfy." Some of the nonprofits don't play well together in the same "sand box." The goal should

be on helping people and sharing resources. We need to give up the old “fiefdom” approach to dispersing funds and helping the homeless. HAAB needs a structured and planful approach. The conversations and work of the group need controlled and redirected. There is too much focus on “storytelling” on the board. The group needs to focus to do the work that needs done. There are resources that are not being tapped as a result of this.

The “perception of the homeless” work needs to be done as well. We would get more funding for the goal to end homelessness if we addressed this with the public, because many people are at threat of being homeless. The face of homelessness is not just a dirty person living on the streets. The homeless is us; although some “choose to bring homelessness on themselves.” With the healthcare crises the situation can only get more complex. This group needs a political champion. They need to bring out priorities and become more innovative in their approach to the issue. The group must work together.

LARGER SYSTEMS

The economy makes it difficult to try and accomplish the goal to end homelessness. Newer populations of people are becoming homeless. More people are living close to the edge. Many are homeless and they also have jobs. This means we need more funding to help the growing numbers of people. But resources change as presidential administrations change. Currently, there is a new source of funding for homeless families through the Obama administration.

Organizations exist to help special interest groups but they don’t address the issue as a whole. NIMBY continues to be an important issue. If there is housing set in one place for more than 20 people than there could be a community reaction to this housing development. The idea is not to concentrate poor people in one location but to deconcentrate them in smaller site locations. Scattered site apartments are the ideal approach to take. Along with this must be the important task of “personal healing” and “employment support.” There are not enough housing units available in Pittsburgh to house low income people, and the quality of existing housing is poor and sub standard. There are issues of maintenance, health and safety that are of concern. The city and other development housing agencies are not willing to take on the long care maintenance of the homeless. Raising taxes is a hard conversation that may never happen. Public housing is available but the restrictions on getting into housing needs to be revamped.

Alienation	Commodification	Class Rights & Privileges	False Consciousness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - homelessness is conveyed to be a “dirty” person who doesn’t deserve support. - homelessness as a broad issue is not addressed. It is only addressed in terms of special interest groups. - NIMBY is an issue because the homeless are perceived as a negative presence and influence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - raising taxes will never happen, the public is not interested in funding social services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - city and housing agencies are not willing to take on the care of the homeless. - lack of health care is creating more homeless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some homeless prefer to be independent and left alone. - some bring homelessness on themselves. - HAAB lacks resources and a strategy.

APPENDIX H

ANOMALIES IN FINDINGS

<p>CAPITALISM: The focus on the overwhelming effects of the economy on increases in homelessness was not as prevalent as I thought it might be. Interestingly, it was the minority members of the group that focused more on the larger picture, rather than the white members of group. Members who were from nontraditional stakeholder groups (foundation, business, and corporations) had an increased focus on data and cost efficiencies. Only one person believed that a homeless individual chooses to be homeless, not understanding the deeper aspects of mental health, minimum pay jobs, lack of affordable housing and other challenges that translate into economic challenges. I did notice a concern for the issue of poverty in general. I did NOT see any CONCRETE STRATEGY that had actually lessened the numbers of homeless as a result of the 10-year plan; instead the numbers of homeless have risen to the highest number in recorded history in Allegheny County.</p>	<p>DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE: Clearly, the county members make the decisions and plan the strategy for the group. What I did not hear was any clear opposition or resentment for this being the case. There may be many reasons, including: 1) Most members receive funds from the county and are not in a position to criticize. 2) There is a recognition that they county has their own set of difficulties dealing with the federal government. 3) Some members feel they do not have the time, energy or resources needed to take up the cause. Decision making is not the result of board member interactions, even in an advisory fashion. All decisions are made by the county. Rather than focusing on how decisions were being made, I heard more demands asking how the county was going to meet voids in services, not how the group was going to act together to meet the challenge. If there had been a level of group investment, group resources might be more available.</p>
<p>POOR ATTENDANCE: I did not realize how poorly attended the meetings were by the members of the board and how well attended it was by guests who were not board members. Most guests were from the nonprofit community. The trend to attend, according to past minutes is declining. Board members are not participating at the level they once did. Another aspect of this is the low participation rate of members. There seems to be only a few vocal members. Many members believe that they are only there to listen and offer advice, though few do, although the board description says they are to be active contributors.</p>	<p>LACK OF ADVOCACY: There appears to be increasing references to the board wanting to take on an advocacy position, although no advocacy has taken place – except for the invitation of a political legislative aide to attend and address a meeting. In the focus group that I conducted, advocacy was the central issue that the group members had an interest in talking about. It may be that the board members will promote this role (as described in its charter) but this has yet to happen. Group members rarely meet outside the context of the larger board, but it is interesting that this topic surfaced within the focus group.</p>
<p>PERSONAL IDEOLOGY OF HOMELESSNESS: Many of my questions focused on how members understood homelessness as related to Marxist ideology. This was based on how capitalism drives</p>	<p>CAN WE END HOMELESSNESS? The main thrust behind the original plan to end homelessness, both locally and nationally, was that belief that homelessness could be ended. When questioned if this was possible, almost</p>

<p>perceptions as related to commodification, alienation, false consciousness and class rights. Though I did note signs of all of these concepts - within ideological thinking – members were not associating capitalism as being a cause of homelessness. Most of the group members perceived homelessness to be related to personal problems (mental/physical) or job loss. Only a few addressed the larger systemic reasons for why homelessness occurs.</p>	<p>all the board members believed that this was a high ideal that could not be accomplished. Many realized that the original intent was to end chronic homelessness, but the Allegheny County 10-year plan did not follow this national initiative. Much discussion was focused on the chronically homeless. HAAB relationships created a structure that made it easier for the county to allocate funds and address gaps in the continuum of care.</p>
<p>LACK OF SUPPORT OF GOAL FOR BUILDING HOUSING FOR CHRONICALLY HOMELESS: It was interesting to find out that the foundation community had actually offered to help fund the creation of new housing for chronically homeless individuals and that the county had refused their support. The original intent behind building these diverse stakeholder public/private groupings were to poll local resources so that the plans recommendations would be locally supported and funded. The exact reasons why the county refused to accept the support cannot be determined from the county board members because they are not sharing this information. But, board members that are from housing groups indicate that the anticipated NIMBY responses are stopping the county from pursuing this course of action. One member intimidated that the political ramifications of such a move would stop future political advancement of the head of the county department of human services – and for this reason they are refusing to take the funds that have been offered to them from the foundation community. This is especially distressing for the foundation community because they have begun to build a foundation coalition to support the goal and hosted trips to other cities to observe best practices for housing for the chronically homeless. Still the local county reps refuse to pursue this course of action.</p>	<p>HOW LONG ARE WE GOING TO LET PEOPLE DIE ON THE STREETS? Perhaps the most direct and passionate point made in the conversations that I had with a board member on HAAB. The numbers of people who are homeless continue to rise in Allegheny County, despite the ten-year plan. Additionally, the numbers of people who are dying on the street are rising as well. One simple way that the deaths on the streets might be addressed is to open a 24/7 centrally located center where the homeless could congregate, especially on dangerously cold and extreme weather days. Pittsburgh is unique in that it runs a “cold weather shelter.” The shelter is open on nights when the temperature dips below 25 degrees. This cold weather approach to housing the homeless has been adopted in some cities, yet many others have shelter available on ALL nights. Fewer have space available on a 24/7 basis in the night and in the day. Pittsburgh is unique in that the county has set up a “chain” of locations. Each open at different times and are in different locations. The fragmentation of this approach creates a chain of miscommunication and is an undependable resource for people who are homeless with no place to access information or support. This fragmentation of services is reflected in the fragmentation of funds to a variety of nonprofits...creating a competition for funds between nonprofits rather than a focus on helping people in crisis.</p>
<p>DIVERSE STAKEHOLDER GROUPS: The requirement of having many different stakeholder groups at the table has both</p>	<p>HOMELESSNESS...THE CONCEPT AND THE STIGMA: Homelessness, the word, is difficult to grasp on</p>

<p>negative and positive side effects on the plan to end homelessness. On the positive side, people from groups outside the nonprofit network of providers are learning more about what homelessness really is, which dispels myths and stigmas. On the negative side, each group seems to be vying for their own particular group's interests. The profit making housing groups are hoping to reap development benefits from their relationship. And even the nonprofit providers seem led by their desire to receive funding from the HUD contracts that the HAAB board reviews on an annual basis. There seems to be a persistent conflict of interest, considering that board members on HAAB also receive funds that the group is responsible for allocating in the community.</p>	<p>many levels especially for individuals who have not experienced it or are not working in the homeless nonprofit community. The concept encompasses people who have lived at all different income levels that have been presented with diverse economic challenges. Often the public perception is negative, i.e. – an image is often portrayed of a man that is dirty, unkempt and labeled a “bum.” This person is portrayed as living on the streets. HAAB members realize this is the case but were not working on rectifying the stigma although it had been their original intention to do so. This is detracting from the overall goal of building community support for the agenda of the ten-year plan.</p>
<p>THE LACK OF KEY COMMUNITY LEADERS AT THE TABLE: A few folks made the excellent point that key leaders (The Mayor and the County Executive for two names) were not involved in the plan to end homelessness. They said that without their involvement there would be no positive action around the goal to end or diminish homelessness. Other points made were the fact that vacant buildings stood ready to shelter the homeless but no action was being taken to make it happen. There was the belief that this was politically unpopular and would not happen. Without key leadership there was the belief that no movement would take place.</p>	<p>KEEPING UP THE STATUS QUO: The charge to create the Homeless Alliance Advisory Board was mandated by HUD for hundreds of localities like Allegheny County to receive its already allotted funding for traditional homeless programs. Yet, this mandate was unfunded. Meeting recommendations and goals that cost money to implement seems almost impossible to achieve. Still, funds have been offered by the foundation community and the county refuses to take a recommended course of action by HAAB. This frustrates the board members and most probably leads to lack of involvement in the board and committee process.</p>
<p>COMPETITION AMONG NONPROFIT PROVIDERS Many nonprofit providers realize the benefit of being on the board is having access to applying for federal funds that are distributed by the county. Each year the board is charged with distributing HUD funds and making sure gaps in the continuum are serviced. If there is a gap, a board member becomes aware of it and can tailor their requests to fill that gap. This to me speaks to a conflict of interest that indicates favoritism and a power relationship between the county and the provider.</p>	<p>THE QUARTERBACK THEME A lead government decision maker felt his role was to be a quarterback. He saw himself as the person that leveraged relationships and funds. This seemed counter-intuitive because his decisions are being made without the insight or shared decision-making, investment, support or ownership of the other board members. This type of bureaucratic control negates innovative thinking and detracts from the possibility of more substantive changes to occur, including the construction of affordable housing for the growing numbers of homeless in the county.</p>